

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

Papers from a conference held at Cecil Sharp House, London,  
25 - 26 March 2017, organized in partnership by Historical  
Dance Society with English Folk Dance and Song Society and  
The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation and Open Morris.

Edited by Michael Heaney

## **'Pilgrimages to Holy Places'**

Matt Simons

pp. 133-149



**efdss**  
english folk dance  
and song society



**English Folk Dance and Song Society & Historical Dance Society  
London 2018**

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ISBN 978-0-85418-218-3 (EFDSS)

ISBN 978-0-9540988-3-4 (HDS)

Website for this book: [www.vwml.org/hom](http://www.vwml.org/hom)

Cover picture: Smith, W.A., ca. 1908. The Ilmington morris dancers [photograph]. Photograph collection, acc. 465. London: Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

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Matt Simons

## **‘Pilgrimages to Holy Places’: the Travelling Morrice, 1924–1939**

### **Introduction**

In the midsummer of 1924, nine young men, mostly from Cambridge, set out on a tour of the Windrush valley in Oxfordshire. They were dressed in white shirts and flannels, decorated with green crossed baldrics, with a sun-like totem on their breast where these crossed over, and ribbons on the back and at their hips. The group styled themselves the Travelling Morrice, deliberately choosing an archaic spelling of the noun to distinguish themselves from other morris dance groups of the nascent folk revival. This inaugural tour of the Travelling Morrice was a landmark event in several respects, not only coinciding with the death of Cecil Sharp, but also in constituting ‘the first contact of the new generation of morris men with those traditional dancers still surviving.’<sup>1</sup>

From 1924 until 1939 there were twenty two official tours of the Travelling Morrice, as well as many more impromptu gatherings and parties. Of the tours, ten of these took place in the area commonly referred to as the Cotswolds, principally in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, but occasionally reaching into other neighbouring counties. The tours were considered reconciliatory gestures by revival dancers, meeting with some of the informants responsible for Cecil Sharp’s canon of dances, and soliciting their opinions of style and form. In taking the morris back to the Cotswold villages, these Cambridge dancers sought an authenticity based on locating the dances within an environment which had until relatively recently supported the custom. Sharp had made a number of universal assumptions about the dances which had, it was believed, been so much a part

<sup>1</sup> John Jenner and Arthur Peck, *The Cambridge Morris Men: Fiftieth Anniversary* (Cambridge: C.M.M., 1974), p. 7.

and product of the places which had fostered them. They had been severed from the *genius loci* and vital social contexts. In an attempt to repair this dislocation, the Travelling Morrice journeyed out in search of an authenticity based on public performances, communing with the past through exchanges with the local populace.

Whilst much has been written about the Travelling Morrice in specialist literature – particularly in the pages of *English Dance and Song*, *Folk Music Journal* and *The Morris Dancer* – this has mostly consisted of uncritical narratives, and it has not yet been scrutinized in detail. These early tours of the Travelling Morrice are interesting case studies for discourses of authenticity in the English folk revival, and ideas of Englishness in the early twentieth century. This paper will begin with an introduction to the concepts of ‘English journeys’ and authenticity, before explaining what the Travelling Morrice was *not* with a brief discussion on Rolf Gardiner. The substantive element of the paper will present these tours as ventures meant to reconnect the morris dance with an identity of place, through reciprocal exchanges and interactions between middle-class dancers of the revival and those people of the Cotswolds for whom the local morris was still in living memory.

## Searching for England

In the years of grievance and uncertainty that followed armistice in 1919, the assumptions and ideas imbued in the nascent folk revival of the late Victorian and Edwardian period assumed a greater presence than ever before.<sup>2</sup> The representative power invested in the morris dance by nineteenth-century antiquarians and musicians, as a surviving article of premodern communal festivities, enjoyed an appreciation in its currency as the search for a stable and peaceful England hastened throughout the 1920s. These desirable post-war virtues, it was understood, were not to be found in the urban conurba-

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Leeds: No Masters, 2010), particularly chapter one; and Theresa J. Buckland, ‘Dance and Cultural Memory: Interpreting *Fin de Siècle* Performances of “Olde England”’, *Dance Research*, 31.1 (2013), 29-66.



tions. An injudicious, urbanized modernity had been complicit in causing rising levels of poverty and pollution, whilst cities had abetted the destructiveness of the war machine by their industries. Meanwhile, the rural countryside had been somehow locked out in suspended animation. There existed in some tracts of English society a desire to take down the apparently thin, transient veneer of modern industrial capitalism, which disguised or even betrayed a truer image and essence of the nation.

It was in this context that a great many journeys in search of England began, through space and print. These journeys were measured in miles, as well as by the inch, guided by Ordnance Survey maps, and chronicled in newspaper columns. Popularized in the previous century, these expeditions remained ubiquitous throughout the inter-war years, facilitated by developments in transport and communications.<sup>3</sup> As H.V. Morton, one of the most prolific of these journeymen, wrote in 1927, 'never before have so many people been searching for England.'<sup>4</sup> Journeys were of multifarious sorts, both intellectual and whimsical. Nevertheless, they shared a common assumption that at the 'edges' of the English nation, survivals of a past epoch could still be found, and these contained secrets for a better present and future. The route was typically from a dominant 'core' to a recessive 'periphery' area: from London to Lancashire, Manchester to Cornwall, or from Cambridge to Gloucestershire.<sup>5</sup>

In 1924 a group of nine young dancers set out on an exploratory venture with a hope to return the morris dances to the places from which they had once been collected. Whilst Cecil Sharp's didactic literature, manifest in the form of *The Morris Book*, provided detailed, though imperfect, descriptions of each dance and its accompanying

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Harrington, 'The Cultural Geographies of Road and Rail in Inter-War England: A Study in the Cultural History of Transport', originally <<https://web.archive.org/web/20091003225940/http://www.greycat.org/papers/roadrail.html>> , available at <<https://web.archive.org/web/20091003225940/http://www.greycat.org/papers/roadrail.html>> [accessed 2 November 2017].

<sup>4</sup> H.V. Morton, *In Search of England* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo, 2002 [1927]), p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 258-72. The examples given here are based on the experiences and writings of George Orwell, H.V. Morton, and the Travelling Morrice. See George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Left Book Club, 1937); H.V. Morton, *In Search of England* (London: Methuen, 1927).

tune, it said incredibly little about the socio-cultural contexts of the places which had until very recently supported these customs.<sup>6</sup> Produced with a desire to disseminate a captured essence of Englishness through dance – ‘to help those who may be disposed to restore a vigorous and native custom to its lapsed pre-eminence’ – Sharp’s book said nothing substantial about England or the people who inhabited it.<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of Sharp’s revival, the custodians of the morris dance were reduced to points of reference to effect a movement: ‘we look to the Morris-men, not primarily as subject-matter for the industrious archaeologist, but as heralds to the sweetening of the town life of England and the re-peopling of her forsaken countryside’.<sup>8</sup>

Members of Cecil Sharp’s English Folk Dance Society (EFDS) were largely isolated from the communities in which the informants of their dances lived; revival dancers were by the early 1920s largely insulated from the cultures that had fostered them. Bucknell, Fieldtown, and Longborough were known by the majority only as descriptors of dance traditions, though their anonymity lent them an alluring and almost mystical charm. According to co-conspirator of the pioneering tour, Arthur Heffer, ‘The Travelling Morrice made its tour to these Cotswold villages as a pilgrim who goes to holy places’.<sup>9</sup> The ideology of the Travelling Morrice was based in a return to the villages to perform informal shows of morris in public, with a desire to capture some of the essences lost in Sharp’s translation.

As Theresa Buckland has ably demonstrated, the criteria by which ‘authenticity’ is proven or challenged are cultural in their origin, founded upon contemporary assumptions and desires.<sup>10</sup> The Travelling Morrice self-consciously deviated from a model of revival which was based on the coyness of Edwardian social *mores*: these young men of the post-war generation preferred bold, public expressions of masculine feeling. To be authentic was not simply to dance the mor-

<sup>6</sup> Cecil J Sharp and Herbert C. Maclwaine, (George Butterworth), *The Morris Book*, 2nd ed., 5 parts (London: Novello, 1912-24).

<sup>7</sup> Cecil Sharp and Herbert Maclwaine, *The Morris Book*, Part 1 (London: Novello, 1907), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Sharp and Maclwaine, *The Morris Book*, Part 1, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Heffer, ‘The Tour of the Travelling Morrice’ [1924], Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive.

<sup>10</sup> Buckland, ‘Dance and Cultural Memory’, p. 32.

ris, but to *be* morris dancers. Their desire, as retold by a member of the group some years later, was 'to get the Morris out of the classroom, out of the examination hall and away from the women, and into the clubs and pubs and streets where the Morris really belong[ed].<sup>11</sup> If the morris dance was to have any place in twentieth century culture, they said, it first had to be returned to the places from which it had been born. Much like many hundreds of thousands of their contemporary Englishmen, and for that matter women, the Travelling Morrice left behind their urban lives for a couple of weeks each year to explore a rural England which seemed so familiar, but which was ultimately unknowable by them.<sup>12</sup>

## Gardiner's Rolfery

The germ of the idea to lead a contingent of dancers on a tour of Cotswold towns and villages originated in Rolf Gardiner, the controversial pioneer of sustainable agriculture, who had been since 1922 engaged in an 'open war' with Cecil Sharp and the EFDS.<sup>13</sup> However, Gardiner's influence on the Travelling Morrice, and later, the Morris Ring, has been exaggerated, particularly but not exclusively by Georgina Boyes.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to the assiduous work of Ivor Allsop and Christopher Bearman, as well as the contributions of Walter Abson, John Jenner, and Robert Ross, this assumption has been rightly challenged.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Gardiner lacked the vital character traits required to hold any great sway in the morris and folk-dance movement, and his involvement was too fleeting. Interestingly, Rolf and his esoteric

<sup>11</sup> Walter Abson, 'The Early Morris Revival', *The Morris Dancer*, 1.4, (1979), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Alun Howkins, 'Discovery of Rural England', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920*, ed. By Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 85-111.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Matthew Jeffries and Mike Tyldesley, eds., *Rolf Gardiner: Folk, Nature and Culture in Interwar Britain* (London: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, particularly chapter seven; her "'The Lady that is with You": Maud Karpeles and the English Folk Revival', in *Step Change: New Views on Traditional Dance*, ed. by Georgina Boyes (London: Francis Boutle, pp. 170-95).

<sup>15</sup> Christopher J. Bearman, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Mary Neal and Rolf Gardiner', *The Morris Dancer*, 5.1 (2009), 17-29; Ivor Allsop, 'Rolf Gardiner', *The Morris Dancer*, 3.11 (2004), 345-54; Walter Abson, letter to the Editor, *English Dance and Song*, 59.3 (1997), 28-29; John Jenner, 'The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men: History and Influences During the Twentieth Century' (2004), <<http://tradcap.com/archive/histrav.pdf>> [accessed 2 November 2017]; Bob Ross '[Review of] *Step Change*', *Folk Music Journal*, 8.4 (2004), 520-23.

behaviour were sometimes described, in a light hearted but nevertheless pejorative way, as ‘Rolfery’.<sup>16</sup> In a community consisting largely of middle-class intellectuals, particularly in Cambridge, Gardiner’s iconoclasm and uncompromising political views finally marginalized his influence.

At the commencement of his ‘war’ in the summer of 1922, Gardiner was only nineteen years old, and was reading modern foreign languages at St John’s College, Cambridge. The young Rolf was ‘charismatic, articulate, and hyperactive’, and for a short time commanded sway over a considerable number of acolytes in the folk-dance crowd, who were themselves disillusioned and frustrated by the urbane conventions of the EFDS.<sup>17</sup> The catalyst for Gardiner’s falling out with Cecil Sharp was his organizing of the *Englische Volksmusik-Vereinigung*, a group of 16 (revival) folk dancers and musicians who toured various provincial German towns and cities over several weeks in the late summer of 1922. The obstinate Gardiner refused to adhere to Sharp’s wishes to ‘avoid all places of importance’,<sup>18</sup> which were predicated on a judgement of the group’s abilities: ‘Your performances ... cannot be adequate or convey anything but a false impression of the artistic value of our dances.’<sup>19</sup> Rolf Gardiner self-consciously and deliberately rebelled against Sharp’s autocratic leadership of the revival, in which ‘Technical, grammatical skill was triumphing over the spirit of the dance.’<sup>20</sup> The tour went ahead as Gardiner had planned, demonstrating his dissatisfaction with the state of the revival led by Sharp’s EFDS.

However, Gardiner’s characteristic literary flair and exuberance regularly lost him support in just the same way as it was gained. Furthermore, his political opinions, in their most extreme form, were re-

<sup>16</sup> This term is particularly common in the personal writings of Arthur Leslie Peck (1902-1974). His diaries are kept at his old college, Cambridge, Christ’s College, Fellows’ Papers, box 182 (vii-viii).

<sup>17</sup> David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920-1970* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 196.

<sup>18</sup> Cecil Sharp, Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 9 July 1922. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive, RG/7.

<sup>19</sup> Cecil Sharp, Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 13 July 1922. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive, RG/7.

<sup>20</sup> Rolf Gardiner, ‘The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men’ [1961]. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive, RG/3.

ceived quite coldly by the majority of the morris-dance fraternity. Whilst many admired his enthusiasm and gusto, they were often keen to distance themselves from the often hubristic young man: 'Rolf was alright for a fortnight, but not much longer.'<sup>21</sup> Gardiner was regularly chastised by Sharp, Maud Karpeles, and Kenworthy Schofield, and in June 1923 he was excluded from attending meetings of the EFDS on account of the form and content of his criticisms against Sharp and the Society.<sup>22</sup>

If Gardiner had one ally capable of granting legitimacy to his schemes from the perspective of the EFDS, it was Arthur Heffer, who he had first met at a folk dance summer school in Chelsea soon before going up to Cambridge in 1919. In the spring of 1924, Rolf went to Arthur with the idea of the Travelling Morrice:<sup>23</sup>

*I ran into the bookshop one day and laying my plans on the table fervently appealed to Arthur: 'Won't you lead the thing?' A smile of acceptance and glowing affirmation was the response. Arthur took the lead. The decision was momentous.*

It was Heffer who did the majority of the organizing, and also seemingly wrote to Cecil Sharp to seek his blessing for the venture.<sup>24</sup> Whilst the germ of the idea originated in Gardiner, and his organicist ideology, it was Arthur Heffer, a talented dancer with an impeccable reputation with Sharp, and a popular figure in both Cambridge and Oxford, who set things in motion.

The authenticity pursued by the Travelling Morrice was broadly congruent with that of Rolf Gardiner's iconoclastic views, but that did not in any way guarantee him unquestioned authority over the

<sup>21</sup> John Jenner, Letter to Ivor Allsop, 16 January 2002, quoted in Ivor Allsop, 'Rolf Gardiner', *The Morris Dancer*, 3.11 (2004), 349.

<sup>22</sup> Bertram Gavin Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 21 June 1923. Cambridge University Library, Gardiner Papers, C3/1/8.

<sup>23</sup> Rolf Gardiner, 'The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men' [1961]. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive, RG/3.

<sup>24</sup> Evidence for the letter is scarce, as nothing appears to have survived. In his unpublished semi-autobiographical novel, 'David's Sling', Rolf Gardiner wrote, in Arthur Heffer's place: 'I wrote to that old boy, and had quite a nice note in return, giving us his blessing.' Rolf Gardiner, 'David's Sling', [manuscripts of an unpublished semi-autobiographical novel], Cambridge University Library, Gardiner Papers, A2/1-6, p. 258.

dancers. To the contrary, for the most part Gardiner remained an outsider, or at least eccentric outlier. Moreover, whilst many admired his ambitions *in principle*, they were put off by his rudeness, élitism, and unwillingness to compromise. At a time when the folk-dance movement was still relatively small, to assert any influence Gardiner had to rely upon operating through those friends who were patient enough to put up with his foibles.<sup>25</sup> In November 1931, Arthur Heffer died from pneumonia after brief illness, and so Gardiner lost his most dependable and patient ally. His involvement with the group was brief: of the twenty-two Travelling Morrice tours which took place between 1924 and 1939, Gardiner attended only the first five. With the notable exception of 1961, when a new generation of the Travelling Morrice visited his farm in Dorset, Rolf Gardiner's involvement with the tours ceased in 1927.<sup>26</sup> Although these tours were originally born out of his strongly felt desire to break away from convention, Rolf Gardiner's influence and legacy was restricted by his imprudent behaviour and wild exigencies.

## Cycling Through Arcadia

The Travelling Morrice sought to relocate performances of the morris in an historical, cultural, and social setting, based on that which had been the backdrop to the collecting of Cecil Sharp, Mary Neal and their contemporaries. The rationale behind the first tour was 'to dance the Morris in its real context, not in a precious or academic one.'<sup>27</sup> Whilst this can be applied most obviously to the prejudices of Gardiner, and his disdain for middle-class intellectualism, the idea of a 'real context' is one that appealed more broadly. Moreover, ideas of 'authenticity' were never universally agreed upon, and depended on very personal, subjective projections of a desired aesthetic. It seemed that the authenticity of their performance was woven through every detail of their tours: in taking to the Cotswolds on bi-

<sup>25</sup> Bearman, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Rolf Gardiner, 'The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men' [1961]. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive, RG/3.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Best, 'The Travelling Morrice', in *Water Springing from the Ground: An Anthology of the Writings of Rolf Gardiner*, ed. by Andrew Best (Shaftesbury: Springhead Estate, 1972) p. 53.

cycles, they sought to rid themselves of their twentieth-century, middle-class self-consciousnesses.

In stark contrast to the culture of urban bourgeois decadence in the interwar years, the tours of the Travelling Morrice were deliberately modest affairs, devoid of luxuries. Their diet and accommodation were simple, designed to reinforce their intimate contact with nature and place. Not dissimilar to other contemporaneous movements into the countryside, simplicity and modesty was the fashion: the vehicle of choice, at least initially, was the bicycle, and their nights were spent under canvas.<sup>28</sup> Only in one instance, where their erstwhile musician, Captain Frederick Maynard, refused to camp on account of his hay fever, is there record of a man regularly paying for accommodation at hotels and inns during the tours. In many respects, these ventures shared in common fashions for camping, hiking, and cycling. The countryside was increasingly imbued with connotations of wholesome living, and good health, in contradistinction to the grimness of some urban areas. Holidays spent out of doors, and out of cities, were increasingly popular in interwar England.<sup>29</sup>

For many of the early tours, the majority of the party travelled on bicycles, having been delivered to the locality through a nearby railway station. The safety bicycle had allowed earlier folklorists and collectors to reach nearly anywhere at a low cost, and was still in this period an affordable form of transport in the ascendancy across nearly all bands of society.<sup>30</sup> However, the bicycle's monopoly was short-lived, with supplementary motor transport in the form of Alec Hunter's car taking some of the strain on the two tours of 1925. Indeed, the fifth tour, in 1927, was conducted entirely by private motor-vehicle transport, and by the time of the eleventh tour in 1932, cycling had become the exception rather than the rule. Cycling was in this instance at least, ultimately a pragmatic choice for a group of young enthusiasts who wanted to gain access to the countryside.

<sup>28</sup> See, for instance Harvey Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Peter Bishop, 'Constable Country: Diet, Landscape and National Identity', *Landscape Research*, 16.2 (1991), 31-36.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher J. Bearman, 'The English Folk Music Movement, 1898-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hull, 2001), pp. 123-24.

However, not all of their activities were quite as wholesome as those endorsed by other, more temperate, outdoor movements of the period. Public houses and inns, in particular, performed an important role throughout the tours, as centres for communication and local knowledge, points of reference, spaces for meetings and convivialities, as well as supplying refreshment. On visits to Stow-on-the-Wold, for instance, the Travelling Morrice visited the Unicorn public house, where in 1925 ‘a very jovial party ... ate and sang in the parlour’, and in 1929 they partook in a number of ‘very good supper[s] at the modest price of 2/6,’ in the company of ‘an habitué of the bar who was reputed to imbibe 14 pints of beer daily’.<sup>31</sup> Excess, though not to this extent, was commonplace, almost an integral part of the role in taking on the character of the ‘Morris Men’. Veiled by opaque euphemism, Arthur Heffer wrote of the enjoyable effects of consuming alcohol: ale was the ‘nectar’ in which they found ‘inspiration and energy’.<sup>32</sup> Gardiner, on the other hand, was apt to exaggerate their rebellious intent: ‘Usually we pitched our tents on the glebe of the local parson, not infrequently desecrating his front lawn with the Rab-elaisian quaffing of beer and cider much needed for the masculine exertions of the morris.’<sup>33</sup> That morris dancers are partial to beer-drinking is now a popular stereotype,<sup>34</sup> but to the Travelling Morrice it was a central feature in being authentic to the custom, enjoyed in spaces where they could access the communities most immediately. For the majority of the men who took part in these tours, these were rare opportunities to eschew the social *mores* imposed by the bourgeois, urban, academic environment of Cambridge. Their boisterous and ribald behaviour should not, however, be mistaken for imitative mockery of a stereotypical working class, based on middle-class prejudice. Neither were these symptoms of mere escapism: for many

<sup>31</sup> Conway Waddington, ‘An Account of the Third Tour of the Travelling Morrice’ [1925]; Jan Durrant, ‘The Log of the Seventh Tour of the Travelling Morrice’. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive.

<sup>32</sup> Heffer, ‘The Tour of the Travelling Morrice’.

<sup>33</sup> Rolf Gardiner, ‘Travelling Morrice’, [no date]. Cambridge University Library, Gardiner Papers, C3/4/-.

<sup>34</sup> For evidence of this often unfortunate stereotype in contemporary popular culture, see for instance the letter from Simon Bonsor, ‘Ambridge Slur on Morris Men’, *Radio Times* 5-11 September 1987, p. 91, criticizing the BBC for allowing morris dancers to be caricatured as drunken and destructive in an episode of the popular Radio 4 soap opera, ‘The Archers’.



of the dancers, they were journeys of personal discovery, undertaken at a time which was for many a formative stage in their early adult lives. These nascent tours of revival dancers offered moments of revelation, experienced and retold by 'emotions of delight and enthusiasm'.<sup>35</sup> By breaking out of the physical and aesthetic confines of the EFDS, the Travelling Morrice sought to portray a more spontaneous, public, and 'authentic' image of morris dancing than that promulgated by Cecil Sharp and his devotees.

## Revising Authenticity

In their pursuit of the authentic morris, the Travelling Morrice adhered to no single orthodoxy about exactly what an authentic performance should look like, and how it should be achieved. The dancers' views varied depending on their ideological assumptions and, to a greater extent, methodological prejudices. For Rolf Gardiner this was founded upon a belief that the morris was in essence a 'spiritual rather than technical' discipline.<sup>36</sup> Place and people triumphed over form, and made the morris come to life. However, the single most popular alternative to this very organicist and communal assumption was that of an empiricist view, whereby dances could be refined over time by testing them against the recollections of old dancers of the pre-revival era. The Travelling Morrice took Sharp's revival morris back to its original source, seeking communion with the *genius loci* and corroboration from the last of the indigenous custodians.

The most proactive of the empiricists was Dr Robert Kenworthy Schofield, a physicist and defender of the EFDS style and methods. He was initially reluctant to participate in the 1924 tour, presumably on account of what Gardiner contemptuously described as Schofield's 'usual constitutional reservations,' but Arthur Heffer was eventually successful in persuading him to attend.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Kenworthy Schofield soon realized the potential to test his knowledge and assumptions against the experience of the Cotswold elders, and fol-

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Heffer, 'The Second Tour of the Travelling Morrice' [1925]. Cambridge Morris Men and Travelling Morrice Archive.

<sup>36</sup> Katie Palmer Heathman, 'Revival: The Transformative Potential of Folksong and Dance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2016), p. 167.

<sup>37</sup> Rolf Gardiner, 'David's Sling', p. 258.

lowed these encounters by publishing a number of articles disseminating new perspectives, tunes, and dances.<sup>38</sup> The dances, it was implied, could be amended to reflect the 'new' recollections of those who were part of the village teams, and tested against their scrutiny.

It is difficult to ascertain quite how immediate an influence Kenworthy Schofield's fieldwork had on the style of revival morris in the 1920s and 1930s beyond that of the Cambridge group. Roy Dommett argued that this 'new' information was actually not widely taken up until Russell Wortley became a more active proponent in the post-war era, and Sharp's *Morris Book* remained the source of authority for most dancers.<sup>39</sup> However, it was an opportunity to put the aesthetic style of the revival to the test, though Kenworthy Schofield, as a committed advocate of the EFDS, was careful not to express much overt criticism of his predecessors. Writing of his meeting with John Hitchman and Charles Benfield of Bledington, he said: 'There could be no mistaking their surprise and pleasure in seeing the dances so faithfully reproduced, but there were three points in which ... the performances differed from those of the native side.'<sup>40</sup> Schofield was a revisionist: his objective was to complement, rather than supersede, Sharp's theses.

The 1924 tour of the Travelling Morrice was the first time a quorum of revival dancers had penetrated into the region where much of the vital information for their dances had once been gleaned from human sources. There was it was considered virtue in returning to the places which had until recently incubated this popular custom. In making their journeys through the Cotswolds they sought communion with history, traversing time as well as space as they searched for vestiges of summers past. Though this disagreed on many aspects of their activities, Gardiner and Kenworthy Schofield were united in their assumption that the old dancers possessed something which

<sup>38</sup> For instance, R. Kenworthy Schofield, 'Morris Dances from Field Town', *Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*, 2nd series, 2 (1928), 22-28; 'Morris Dances from Longborough', *Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*, 2nd series, 3 (1930), 51-57; 'Morris Dances from Bledington', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 1.3 (1934), 147-51.

<sup>39</sup> Roy Dommett, 'Comments on John Forrest's "Here We Come A-Fossiling"', *Dance Research Journal*, 17.1 (1985), 40-41.

<sup>40</sup> Kenworthy Schofield, 'Morris Dances from Bledington', p. 147.

had hitherto been lacking in revival performances. For Gardiner, these veterans were the embodiment of a diminishing peasant culture, genuine expressions of rural England in human form; whereas for those like Schofield, they were the ultimate authority in matters of style and content. These two men shared in a common belief that it was the inhabitants of these places who were the true and proper arbiters of authenticity.

For other members of the Travelling Morrice, it was a matter of 'overcom[ing] ... social differences' by sharing in something which ostensibly belonged to a class which was outside of their own personal experience.<sup>41</sup> Whatever their political hue, these middle-class revival dancers all shared in celebrating the importance of geography to historical customs, described by Joseph Needham as a 'naturalness' of order, produced by communities of people within a place.<sup>42</sup> They enjoyed the reciprocity with audiences who had prior knowledge and sympathy. As Lionel Bacon later reflected, 'The morris was far from well-known in the country generally, though in the Cotswolds memories of it lingered ... Away from the Cotswolds we were objects of curiosity, and occasionally of some derision.'<sup>43</sup> In returning the dances to the places where they had been known, the Travelling Morrice sought to restore the dances to their former use: as a festive entertainment, rather than an article for instruction, demonstration, or physical recreation. Dancing in the lanes, and on the greens of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, these young men were free from the condescension of urban bourgeois society.

Drinking ale in pubs gave the Travelling Morrice some degree of access to the communities these places served. In common with the assumptions and methods of other folklorists, musicians, anthropologists, and later social observers, public houses 'seemed to offer a point of entrance to working-class communities,' as well as a space where the old men of the villages could be persuaded to reveal their

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Needham, 'Speech at the Golden Jubilee Dinner of the Morris Ring, Birmingham, 12 May 1984'. Cambridge University Library, Needham Papers, A.850.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Needham, 'The Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 3.1 (1936), 1-40.

<sup>43</sup> Lionel Bacon, 'A Few Personal Reminiscences', *The Morris Dancer*, [1].9 (1981), 12-18 (p. 13).

knowledge without entirely sacrificing their privacy.<sup>44</sup> Though the men of the Travelling Morrice never became *part* of the community themselves – both visitors and inhabitants chose to keep a respectable distance – the pub was a space where exchanges could take place, and tongues loosened. Of course, it was to some extent something of a fantasy, and the majority of the young men from Cambridge never actually wanted to *be* working-class. However, on the whole they treated their audiences, informants, and hosts with respect and understanding that seemed to transcend upbringing and education. In the moment, socio-economic status dissipated, and all were able to share in a common celebration of dance, music, and song.

The virtue of authenticity was in the spontaneity and reciprocity of performance - in meaningful exchange between performers and audiences - rather than solely in the dances themselves. Furthermore, the value of joining together in a club or team, rather than in a classroom environment, appealed to others within the revival, culminating in the foundation of the Morris Ring in 1934 as a national organization for morris-men's clubs, bringing them together for 'mutual encouragement'.<sup>45</sup> In the new revival clubs, which were based on small groups of individuals connected to a specific locality, the morris once again had something to say about local identity and tradition.

Immediately following the first tour in 1924, Arthur Heffer wrote:<sup>46</sup>

*there was something quite mystical about the end of the tour, a completing of the magic circle in that the Travelling Morrice took back the dances to the villages from which Mr Cecil Sharp collected them years ago. They learnt when they got home that Cecil Sharp had died on the last day of the tour.*

Over the course of these nascent Cotswold tours, the Travelling Morrice met with more than thirty people who claimed direct links to local music and dance as participants. To quote the esteemed folklorist Katherine Briggs, the men from Cambridge carried out 'excellent

<sup>44</sup> Ben Clarke, "'The Poor Man's Club': The Middle Classes, the Public House, and the Idea of Community in the Nineteen-Thirties', *Mosaic*, 42.3, 39-41.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Peck, *Fifty Years of Morris Dancing* (Letchworth: The Morris Ring, 1949), pp. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> Heffer, 'The Tour of the Travelling Morrice'.

work in the encouragement and preservation of local Morris dancing'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, they did not merely gather remnants from these places as cultural souvenirs, but also rekindled in the inhabitants of these places memories of youth, and inspired new generations to continue local customs. In Chipping Campden, for instance, it was the visit of the Travelling Morrice in 1932 that inspired Lionel and Don Ellis to revive the morris, which had lapsed shortly beforehand.<sup>48</sup> In the context of such exchanges, the already problematic appellations of 'revival' and 'traditional' become particularly difficult to maintain as general categories. Visits of the Travelling Morrice seemed monumental occasions for visitors and locals alike. For the young dancers of Cambridge, their experiences informed their attitudes to their performances, and provided them with inspiration which was apparently lacking in the gymnasia of the EFDS schools. Their tours inspired real emotion in these men who were themselves still developing into adults, and so must have truly felt like pilgrimages in the proper sense.

## Conclusion

The Travelling Morrice challenged the hegemonic voices of 'authority' in revival performances of morris dancing in England. This was not, however, a discourse of contesting 'facts' or 'faithful replications', but of a demonstration of the potential for joy through dance. These Cotswolds tours were momentous occasions for those who participated, exciting emotion and developing a sense of presence, as well as contributing to their own selfhood. This is important, because it is through emotion that individuals ally themselves to communities and interact with them. Identity creation is an inherently emotional process. Indeed, authenticity is a highly subjective and amorphous concept, largely because it is constituted by and a constituent of an individual's whole sight view: it is made and remade in light of experience, and can become a strongly emotive idea. The English folk revival needs to be seen as one constructed by emotion and feeling rather than ideology. Recent developments in the history of emotion,

<sup>47</sup> Katharine M. Briggs, *The Folklore of the Cotswolds* (London: Batsford, 1974), p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Jenner, 'The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men'.

by scholars such as Claire Langhamer and Susan J. Matt, make the present time conducive to such work.<sup>49</sup> For too long, historians of the twentieth-century folk-dance movement have been preoccupied with the warring ideologies of Gardiner, Sharp, and Neal, and have given scant regard to the complex nuances of intimate and personal experience, which was constitutive of the movement.

Morris dancing, like all forms of folk dance, is an 'embodied performance,' imbued with a representational power that makes claims to an authentic Englishness.<sup>50</sup> The Travelling Morrice was ostensibly predicated on a common assumption that rural England still contained some traces of a pre-modern nation, untainted by industrial capitalism, which would inform the post-1919 generation on how their lives could be lived. To some extent, the interactions of the Travelling Morrice with the old dancers and musicians reflected contemporary developments in British anthropology. With the growing importance of fieldwork, studies were moving away from evolutionary terms towards ideas about 'present and ongoing functions.'<sup>51</sup> Those who had learnt their art in Cambridge or in London were disillusioned by a movement which placed undue emphasis on the replication of a limited, essential repertoire of dances. They wanted to find an environment which was conducive to learning, just by intuition, how to dance 'authentically'.

When journeys are particularly emotional – at least, when they are described in relation to their resonance on the self – they can become pilgrimages.<sup>52</sup> The tours of the Travelling Morrice were indeed emotional occasions, and were described as such in the log books and other personal accounts. Their interactions with veteran dancers and musicians provided these young men with a sense of continuity, linking them to a pre-war generation. Although they were indeed

<sup>49</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: An Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); her 'An Archive of Feeling?: Mass Observation and the Mid-Century Moment', preprint at <<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/63043/>> [accessed 2 November 2017]. Susan J. Matt, 'Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out', *Emotion Review*, 3.1 (2011), 117-24.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Snape, 'Continuity, Change and Performativity in Leisure: English Folk Dance and Modernity, 1900-1939', *Leisure Studies*, 28.3 (2009), 297-311.

<sup>51</sup> Colls, *Identity of England*, pp. 266-67.

<sup>52</sup> Colls, *Identity of England*, pp. 258-64.

fruitful in yielding additional information and music, that was but one part of a fuller, more enriching series of cultural exchanges. These tours comprised of a series of unique events, where revival morris was performed before an audience comprising of people who knew of the dance through family or locality, within an informal, public setting. In these precious moments at least, the morris seemed to be very much alive in England once again.