

# **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



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## Introduction

In 2016 the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) and the Historical Dance Society (HDS), with the support of the three morris-dance organizations (The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation and Open Morris) agreed to organize a conference on 'The Histories of Morris'. Use of the plural was deliberate: we felt that there were many strands of historical research into the morris dance, whose paths did not always cross, and that it would be useful to bring them together so that each might illumine the others.

The Conference Committee consisted of two representatives from the HDS –Peter Barnard (Chair) and Anne Daye (Director of Education and Research); two from the EFDSS – Katy Spicer (Chief Executive and Artistic Director) and Laura Smyth (Library and Archives Director); and two active researchers in the field, Theresa Buckland and Michael Heaney.

The call for papers went out in June 2016 and received a good response. Eighteen presentations and three posters were accepted for the conference, which was held at Cecil Sharp House in London, headquarters of the EFDSS, on 25-26 March 2017. All but one presentation and one poster are represented in this volume.

The event was also enlivened by performances from Hammersmith Morris and Innocent Hare Morris during the intervals, and some of the presentations themselves included live demonstrations from the group lightningtree.

The divisions in this volume reflect the different strands represented in sessions at the conference. A look at 'The History of History' is an appropriate place to start, given the importance of John Forrest's book for the early period of morris history, and its crucial reliance on evidence and data to reach conclusions. The 'Morris at Court' section looks at the earliest period. Anne Daye focuses on the morris dance presented as an antimasque to the Jacobean court masque *Pan's Anniversary*. Its unusual presentation as a friendly and successful competition with the court dancers is indicative of the appreciation of morris dancing by King James, the royal family and the court. Jennifer Thorp looks at Francis Isaac's 'The Morris', advertised as 'a new

Dance for 1716', for which we have a full notation, revealing its antecedents in the high-class ballroom.

Moving from the earliest history to the 'dark ages' of the eighteenth century, Jameson Wooders and Michael Heaney each investigate morris dances and dancers in their wider social milieu, and their reception (or disavowal) in a variety of social and civic contexts. Peter Bearon sheds light on the origins of that most mysterious of dances, the coconut dance, revealing most unexpected connections.

The revival is itself now part of history – there are few alive whose memories stretch beyond 1930. Katie Palmer Heathman looks at what might be termed – in more senses than one – the spiritual home of the revival and the role of Conrad Noel, his beliefs and their embodiment in Thaxted church. Matt Simons's contribution on the Travelling Morrice describes the first steps to take morris dancing beyond Sharp and the English Folk Dance Society, and examines their motivation in trying to reconnect the morris with identities of place and belonging. The Travelling Morrice was in many ways atypical, but Roy Fenton describes the life of an almost archetypal morris team from the 1920s, still going strong, Greensleeves Morris Men. This section concludes with Elaine Bradtke's review of James Madison Carpenter's work with Cotswold morris fiddlers, bringing out the nuances in their playing and the distinctiveness of their styles.

The first contribution in the section on 'The Later Revival' does in fact cover much the same period, but extends into the middle of the twentieth century: Sue Allan explores the complex development of morris dancing in Cumbria, and her work in reviving the dances in the latter part of the century. Derek Schofield's 'A Different Sort of Revival' looks at the transplantation of the Royton dance to rural Cheshire while remaining very faithful to the traditional form of the dance. Sean Goddard and the late Ed Bassford look at the transplantation of North-west morris into a Cotswold morris side, and the issues faced by modern teams who dance in a variety of different styles. Finally, Robert Dunlop takes a long view on the Kirtlington Morris and its Lamb Ale, from the earliest records through to its revival in the 1970s and continuation to the present.

Although the heated discussions of the 1970s and 80s about the role of women in morris dancing are now behind us, there were real issues at the time, some but not all arising from male antagonism: how to devise suitable apparel, matched to specific dancing styles seen as not too invasive of men's morris. Sally Wearing discusses these specific issues, while Val Parker looks at how women's teams organized themselves in the face of male indifference or hostility, and then loosened the gender restrictions as teams became more confident of their place in morris. Lucy Wright, on the other hand, examines a quintessentially female form of the dance, carnival morris, whose origins she shows to be much more complex than the received wisdom of a direct development from the male North-west morris.

The final section looks at the material appurtenances of the dance. Chloe Metcalfe takes apart the origin myths of the wearing of white by teams dancing Cotswold morris, and looks at current pragmatic drivers of the choice of clothing. David Petts considers the relics of morris dancing to be found in museums, the tangible manifestations of our intangible heritage. They are surprisingly few, and divided into a few nineteenth-century objects, and modern regalia from the second half of the twentieth century, found primarily in local collections.

The conference stimulated lively debate and a fruitful exchange of ideas and expertise, and we hope that this volume captures some of that and makes the contributions available to a much wider audience than those who came and enjoyed the two days of discussion and performance.

*Michael Heaney*

*January 2018*



## **The History of History**





John Forrest

## How to Read *The History of Morris Dancing*

Scholars are influenced by the scholarship (and worldview) of their time. I am. We all are. Speculations about the origins of morris dancing that were prevalent for most of the twentieth century grew out of nineteenth-century social anthropology. We've moved on in anthropology but certain cherished notions from the nineteenth century won't die even though they have zero support in primary sources. The idea that morris dancing is some ghost of a fertility ritual of some vaguely perceived pagan past is, for whatever reason, attractive and won't go away regardless of the utter lack of evidence. Several points trouble me here. At the outset, there is the bogus notion of the 'origins' of any custom. There are certainly some specific events that spawned annual celebrations: Bonfire Night is an excellent example. We 'Remember, Remember the Fifth of November' for good, clear historical reasons. But so many other customs – like having a sense of dread on Friday the 13th – are very vague to begin with and are unlikely to have a single point of origin. Morris dancing fits in the latter category, not the former. Historical research must look at the dance in different time periods and in different social contexts instead of focusing on one founding moment (or custom) – which does not exist. That was my aim with *The History of Morris Dancing*,<sup>1</sup> but before I could get to that point I needed a solid database of primary sources to work with.

The great flaw of nineteenth- and twentieth-century speculations about the history of morris dancing was that they relied on very limited data *and* that scholars began with a set of preconceived notions and worked back from them to interpret the data available: terrible methodology. The prevailing belief in the nineteenth century, touted by the likes of E.B. Tylor and James George Frazer, was that folk customs were 'survivals' into modern times of ancient, possibly prehis-

<sup>1</sup> John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing (1458-1750)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1999).

toric, ritual.<sup>2</sup> They were working on the belief that all societies evolve according to certain general evolutionary principles and that bits of past epochs survive; just as the appendix survived in human evolution – a useless remnant of something that was once functional (prevailing medical/evolutionary theory at the time). According to one version of this theory, cultures evolve in their basic worldview from magic through religion to science, but traces of magic remain into the modern (scientific) era.<sup>3</sup> Hence, by these lights, morris dancing is the cultural equivalent of the human appendix, a once thriving component of ancient magical rituals that ensured an abundant harvest through sympathetic magic – leaping high to encourage tall growth of crops and shaking handkerchiefs and bells to ward off evil spirits. The magical rituals are gone but the leaping and bells remain. Nice try, no cigar. Historical sources beg to differ. There is zero historical evidence – none – that such rituals ever existed, nor that dances evolved from them over time. Unfortunately, when cherished (but false) beliefs butt up against historical facts, the false beliefs have a bad habit of winning because they feel good. Cecil Sharp held the view that morris was a survival of pagan ritual – following the anthropology of his day – and even as late as the 1970s semi-respectable academic publications touted it, even though scholars had mostly moved on to more productive speculations.<sup>4</sup>

Let's wind the clock back to see how I came to the position I now hold. I began dancing in 1967 with the Datchet Morris Men, at that time a generic Ring side, and then in 1970 I joined the Oxford University Morris Men (OUMM) when I went to Oxford as an undergraduate. From the Datchet men I learned the usual story – morris was the survival of pagan rituals, etc., etc., but I wasn't satisfied. I bought all of Sharp's books available and dug into the history as best I could. But there wasn't much there. Sharp's books are primarily

<sup>2</sup> E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871) 1:70-72; James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan, 1906 – 1915).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret T. Hodgen, 'The Doctrine of Survivals: The History of an Idea', *American Anthropologist* 33 (1931), 307-24.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Brody, *The English Mummers and their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

dance manuals, not serious historical scholarship. It wasn't until I got to Oxford that things opened up.

First of all, OUMM did many, many more dances than Datchet, and so I got introduced to a vastly broader vision of what morris was. Furthermore, I was able to go around to all the villages which up to that point had just been names – Bledington, Bucknell, Kirtlington, Bampton, Headington. In my final year as an undergraduate I had that sudden flash of insight that comes once in a while. My main library was the Bodleian where I toiled over my weekly essays. One day, perhaps more bored than usual as I paged through some text or other, I realized that the Bodleian was a legal deposit library (that is, a library where publishers are required to send a copy of all printed materials), so, theoretically, everything printed on the history of morris dancing should be there. Actually, it's not as simple as that, but it was a good start. I abandoned my 'studies' and headed for the index room.

Figuring out the indexing system of the Bodleian's holdings in the 1970s was a joy in itself. Books in the closed stacks were listed by author's last name only, pasted on squares of paper into large volumes in the index room. Computer-based indexing was a long way in the future. Even photocopying was difficult and very expensive, so most of my copying I did by hand. It took time, but I collected all kinds of references, and began my own archive which I knew intimately because I had hand copied it. I did that until 1975 when I left Oxford and went to the University of North Carolina (UNC) for post-graduate studies. There I turned my growing archive into my master's thesis which eventually got published as *Morris and Matachin* which had multiple purposes, one of which was to point out that the New World matachines dance is related (in some way or other) to certain types of morris dancing.<sup>5</sup> My thesis director at UNC, Dan Patterson, suggested that I follow the lead of Joann Kealiinohomoku, who worked on the anthropology of dance, and instead of just comparing one dance type to another heuristically, he advised that I

<sup>5</sup> John Forrest, *Morris and Matachin: A Study in Comparative Choreography* (Sheffield: Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, 1984).

should construct a taxonomic classification system for organizing my sources.<sup>6</sup> So, I ordered each source under such headings as venue, costume, characters, movements, accoutrements, and the like. That system made comparing sources much more precise.

Fast forward to the late 1980s. As I continued my work on my archive, which had grown to include European and worldwide data, I met Keith Chandler, who, at the time, was working on the social history of morris dancing in the South Midlands. He then introduced me to Mike Heaney and the three of us made some decisions about how we should divide our time and resources so as not to duplicate each other's work. Keith was the one who suggested that Mike and I work together on the older materials because our strengths lay there, while Keith would focus on South Midland archives. It was Keith who suggested 1750 as the dividing point.

It took some time for Mike and me to merge our data, especially since we were both still very active in finding new sources. Our idea was to produce a definitive indexed archive of all known sources, which we eventually published jointly as *Annals of Early Morris*.<sup>7</sup> We worked together on both sides of the Atlantic using computer resources that would be laughable nowadays. Starting with my model from *Morris and Matachin* we devised a much more comprehensive database model to use for coding the information. I bow to Mike's expertise in this realm. As a librarian – more like information analyst – he was pivotal in making sure our initial database model was rational and comprehensive. It was broken into categories such as Setting, Dance Type, Dance Elements, Accompaniment, Costume, and so forth, with each category broken into specific sub-categories. I believe there were 128 sub-categories, the maximum allowed by dBase III which is what we were using back then.

There was no such thing as Windows in those days. My software, dBase III, was a DOS-based program that I had to code by hand using a specialized programming language. While I was building the data-

<sup>6</sup> Joann W. Kealiinohomoku, 'Theory and Methods for an Anthropological Study of Dance' (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *Annals of Early Morris* (Sheffield, Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language in association with the Morris Ring, 1991).

base structure, Mike collated the data we had collected into a single file and hand entered it on his computer. When completed, he sent the text file to me which I then entered into the database. I won't be modest here; this was excruciatingly difficult work for both of us. I had to use two computers side by side, with Mike's text on one, and the dBase files on the other. I read the text on one machine, and coded on the other. Switching between applications on the same computer was a thing of the future.

As *Annals* was in its finishing stages, I went back to my dBase files for more of the analysis which Mike and I had done a little of. Jointly we produced 'Charting Early Morris (1450-1750)' which appeared in *Folk Music Journal* in 1991.<sup>8</sup> We discussed our general findings from the archive and I made a series of maps at 30-year intervals showing the distribution of morris events. After we had finished our joint work I applied many more analytic tools from my bag of tricks as an anthropologist. What I want to emphasise most ardently is that if you want to come up with conclusions that are remotely plausible you have to be both comprehensive and rigorous.

You have to consult *The History of Morris Dancing* for the full story of what I tried to achieve. Here I'll just point in the direction of three obvious analytic tools: mapping, seriation, and graphing. My first step, which I never publicized and which is now lost because of all my moves plus the changes in computer technology, was to program an animated map using compiled BASIC that plotted the appearance of morris events year by year from 1466 to 1750. It's very helpful to have a visual display of where and when morris appeared over a long period. You do *not* see the familiar clustering of North-west morris in Lancashire and Cheshire, Border morris in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire, and South Midland morris (or Cotswold morris) in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. That regional grouping did not emerge until the eighteenth century. Before that time the picture was much more fluid.

<sup>8</sup> John Forrest and Michael Heaney, 'Charting Early Morris (1450-1750)', *Folk Music Journal*, 6.2 (1991), 169-16.

What you do find is a general spreading outward across the country (with no special focal points) from around 1500 until around 1630, followed by a sharp period of decline to about 1690, and then a new burst of enthusiasm in the early eighteenth century centred mostly on the South Midlands (Figure 1).

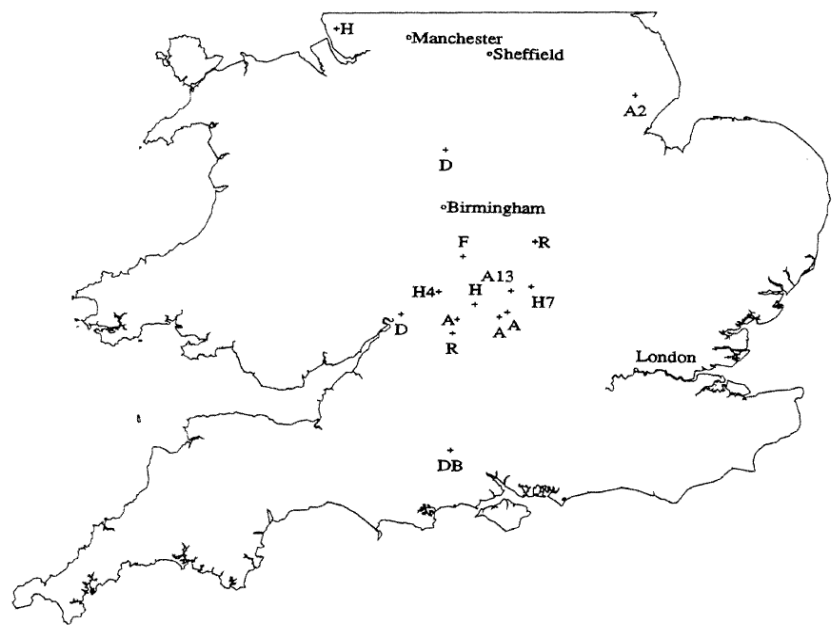


Figure 1: Morris events 1721-1750 (A=domestic records; B=guild records D= non-fiction narrative F=local records; H=personal records; R=non-theatrical advertisements; with number where >1).

Simple plotting of location is not the only part of the story, however. It helps to know other things about these events: Who sponsored them? What kinds of venue did they take place in? and so forth. Here seriation is very helpful.

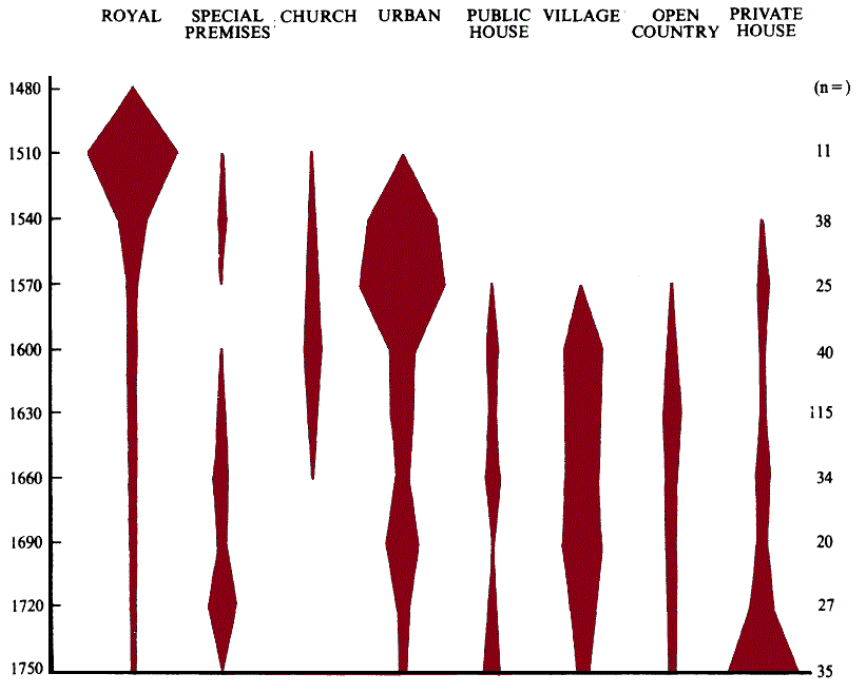


Figure 2: Seriation of venue.

I don't have space to explain the details of seriation as a technique.<sup>9</sup> It is a method that originates in archaeology which I adapted for my own data. Figure 2 shows a seriation graph of morris dance venues over time.

What should be evident is that over time morris events shifted from royal courts at the outset to urban streets to church property and finally to various rural locations. Seriation of financial support confirms this progression (Figure3).

The sources in the database also confirm that the dances performed in these different venues and different time periods were radically different: they bore virtually no resemblance to one another. Bells are about the only common denominator. What we know now as morris would be completely unrecognisable to a sixteenth-century audience. This fact alone puts paid to the idea that nineteenth- and

<sup>9</sup> See James Deetz, *Invitation to Archeology* (New York: Natural History Press, 1967).

twentieth-century morris is a survival of ancient practices. It has been a constantly evolving affair.

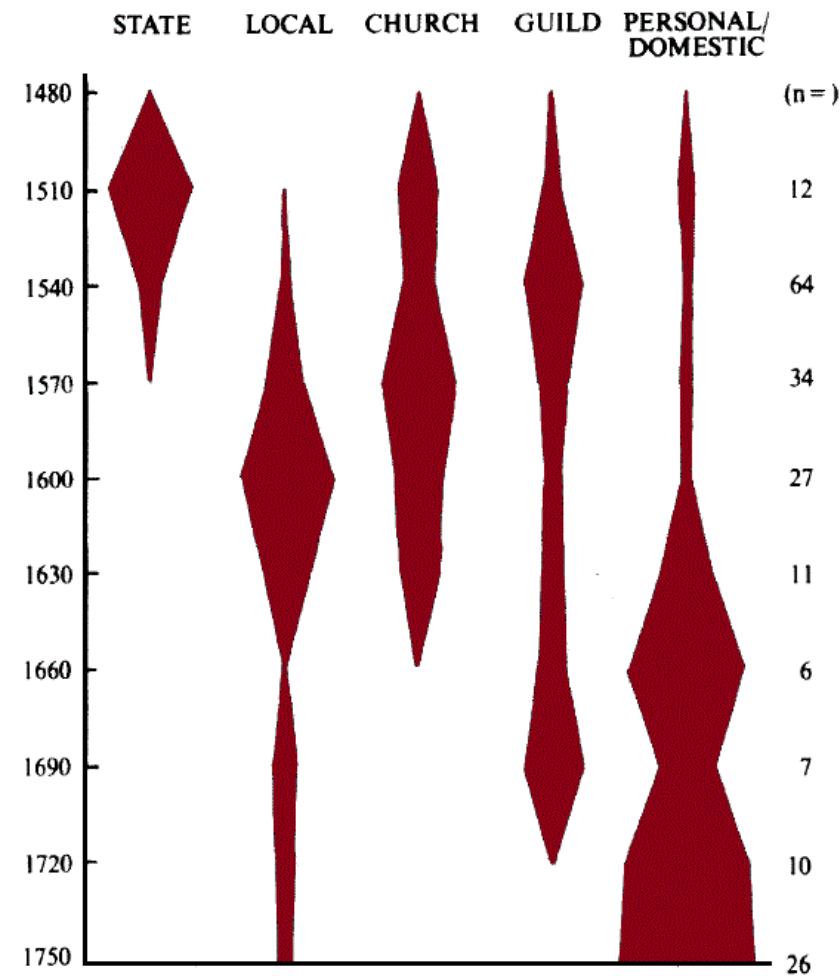


Figure 3: Seriation of financial support.

To finish I'll draw a few simple conclusions for you in terms of current practice. The idea that morris is the survival of ancient ritual, has no historical support yet it clings on and has pushed the practice and evolution of the dance in certain directions in the twentieth century. I'll begin by saying that I don't care what contemporary dancers believe or what they do. It's not my intent to influence current practices. But the endless dissemination of false history does irk me.



Nowadays hundreds of sides worldwide get up before dawn on May 1st and ‘dance the sun up’ as it is usually described. Many (perhaps most) believe that this is an ancient tradition. It is not. I’m sorry to say that I had a small hand in the spread of this modern custom. In the 1950s, Oxford University Morris Men reconstituted after the war years. OUMM were actually founder members of the Morris Ring, but the new dancers were such novices that they had no idea of the history of the morris in Oxford including that of OUMM. In fact they applied to be members of the Ring and were surprised to discover that they already were.

Roy Judge, one of the members of the 1950s OUMM, eventually wrote the definitive history of the morris revival in Oxford, which started in the early years of the twentieth century. Judge published some of his extensive findings<sup>10</sup> but a good many of his notes are still in manuscript form within OUMM. On May Morning in those days the Magdalen College choir used to sing a hymn to the dawn from the top of the college tower, as they had done for hundreds of years, and the event was well attended by college students. In 1923, OUMM began a custom of processing up the High Street after the choir had finished singing, along with dancers from the Oxford branch of EFDS. When OUMM reconstituted in the 1950s they expanded the May Morning festivities by including a Jack-in-the-Green which had been a town custom of local chimney sweeps until the 1920s, and danced at numerous sites around town before breakfast.

The event steadily grew in popularity and pretty soon OUMM was inviting other sides to join in – including Oxford City, Headington, Abingdon, and Bampton. From there it snowballed but was still just an Oxford event. As the morris revival gained steam in the 1960s more and more sides angled for an invitation. In 1972 when I was leading a tour of Buckinghamshire with the Ancient Men (OUMM’s touring side), I added in Roger Cartwright from the Pinewoods Men in Massachusetts, who was over for a visit, because we were short of men and he had a car. Next year when I was squire I invited Roger to

<sup>10</sup> Roy Judge, ‘A Branch of May’, *Folk Music Journal* 2.2 (1971) 91-95; ‘May Morning and Magdalen College, Oxford’, *Folklore*, 97.1 (1986), 15-40 (pp. 33-34).

May Morning to dance with OUMM, and he took the idea back to the United States. He encouraged sides in the Boston area to do the same and the custom took off. Now it is pretty nigh universal. There is some historical precedent for dancing on May 1st but none for dancing at dawn. Yet the practice is here to stay because it fits in with the false conception that morris is an ancient fertility ritual (and that somehow May Day is a holdover from pagan times).

The same can be said for the rigidity with which some branches of the morris revival insist that dancing be performed by men only. Certainly men dominated in the past (although there have always been women participants), but this is not because of some ancient ritual tradition but because for many centuries it was not considered appropriate for women to perform in public. We all know, for example, that in Shakespeare's day all parts, male and female, were acted on stage by men or boys. Women were forbidden. Modern recreations of the old theatre aside, I don't hear any great hue and cry for restricting acting on stage to men only – not even for classic Shakespeare – just because that's how it always was.

This raises my final question. What is it that dancers think they are doing nowadays when they perform in public? Having fun, no doubt – but what else? Do they think they are upholding traditions that are centuries old? Are they trying to link the performances to other traditions that they believe are equally old? How does this perspective affect how they interpret dances as they dance (and invent new ones)?

## **Morris at Court**



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 *ballet de cour* of France, in other words, the earliest form of dance theatre. However, the performance still formed part of a high-ranking so-

<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.

cial occasion, with a ball at the heart of the event between the masquers 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 com-

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

mentators on Jonson's text. No music, costume or set designs survive, 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 antimasque 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.



Jennifer Thorp

## **Rank Outsider or Outsider of Rank? Mr Isaac's Dance 'The Morris'**

Francis Isaac (c.1650s-1721) was an English dancer who had trained in France – indeed within polite society in London he was often referred to as 'Monsieur' Isaac, in recognition of that early training and of his prestige as a dancing-master. He had returned to London in the 1670s and became an acclaimed dance teacher in his own version of the style developed by the French royal academies and known as 'noble dance' or '*la belle danse*'. In London he numbered among his pupils many high-ranking members of the royal court, and after his death a colleague wrote of him: <sup>1</sup>

*The late Mr Isaac, who had the Honour to teach and instruct our late most excellent and Gracious Queen when a young Princess, first gained the Character and afterwards supported that Reputation of being the prime Master in England for forty Years together: He taught the first Quality with Success and Applause, and was justly stiled the Court Dancing-Master.*

This description immediately associates Mr Isaac with a particular category of polite society, and one which by the early eighteenth century seems no longer to have had any connection with morris dancing even in court entertainments. Mr Isaac is best known today for his sophisticated dances created either to celebrate the birthdays of Queen Anne or as new repertoire for the coming year's season of private and public assemblies. His twenty or so surviving dances are nearly all duets for a man and woman, and they survive because they were written down in a French system of dance notation known as Beauchamps-Feuillet notation; this in itself reduces the likelihood that 'The Morris' had any affiliation to morris dancing, since Beauchamps-Feuillet notation did not work well for group dances. The

<sup>1</sup> John Essex, *The Dancing-Master: or, The Art of Dancing Explained ... done from the French of Monsieur Rameau* (London: Essex & Brotherton, 1728), p. xi.

notated dances were engraved and sold to dancing-masters and members of the public as teaching aids, souvenirs, and examples of prestigious ballroom repertoire (Figure 1).

The duet called 'The Morris' dates from towards the end of Mr Isaac's career and was the last dance he created that still survives. Its notation was sold as 'a new dance for the year 1716', and four engraved copies of it are known: one in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House and another in the British Library (both lacking the dated title page), and two more (still with the title page) in Dundee City Library and the Houghton Library at Harvard.<sup>2</sup> The two extant title pages read 'The MORRIS a new Dance for the Year 1716 Compos'd by Mr: Isaac. Writ by Mr Pemberton & Sold by him against Mercer Street Long Acre'.

It has been suggested that Mr Isaac's 'The Morris' was a unique form of 'élite morris', which itself had close connections with country dancing as practised by polite society in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England.<sup>3</sup> There are indeed steps within this duet that are also found in French and English country dances of the time: for example, sequences of hopping, springing and jumping the feet together.<sup>4</sup> Such steps however also appeared in many ballroom and theatrical dances, and did not necessarily reflect morris dancing traditions. For example, all but the first and last sections of 'The Morris' duet end with some form of *coupé assemblé* (step and jump the feet together), which is found in many country dances and also in theatre dances for such characters as Spaniards, sailors, and peasants.

<sup>2</sup> London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, QL.5.4; London, British Library, h.801.c.2; Dundee, City Library, G10.440.H; Cambridge Massachusetts, Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, TS 552.13.51.

<sup>3</sup> John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing* (Cambridge: James Clark, 1999), p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> See Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Recueil de contredances* (Paris: chez l'auteur, 1706), préface, and its English translation by John Essex, *For the Further Improvement of Dancing* (London: Walsh & Hare, 1710), pp. 11-12.

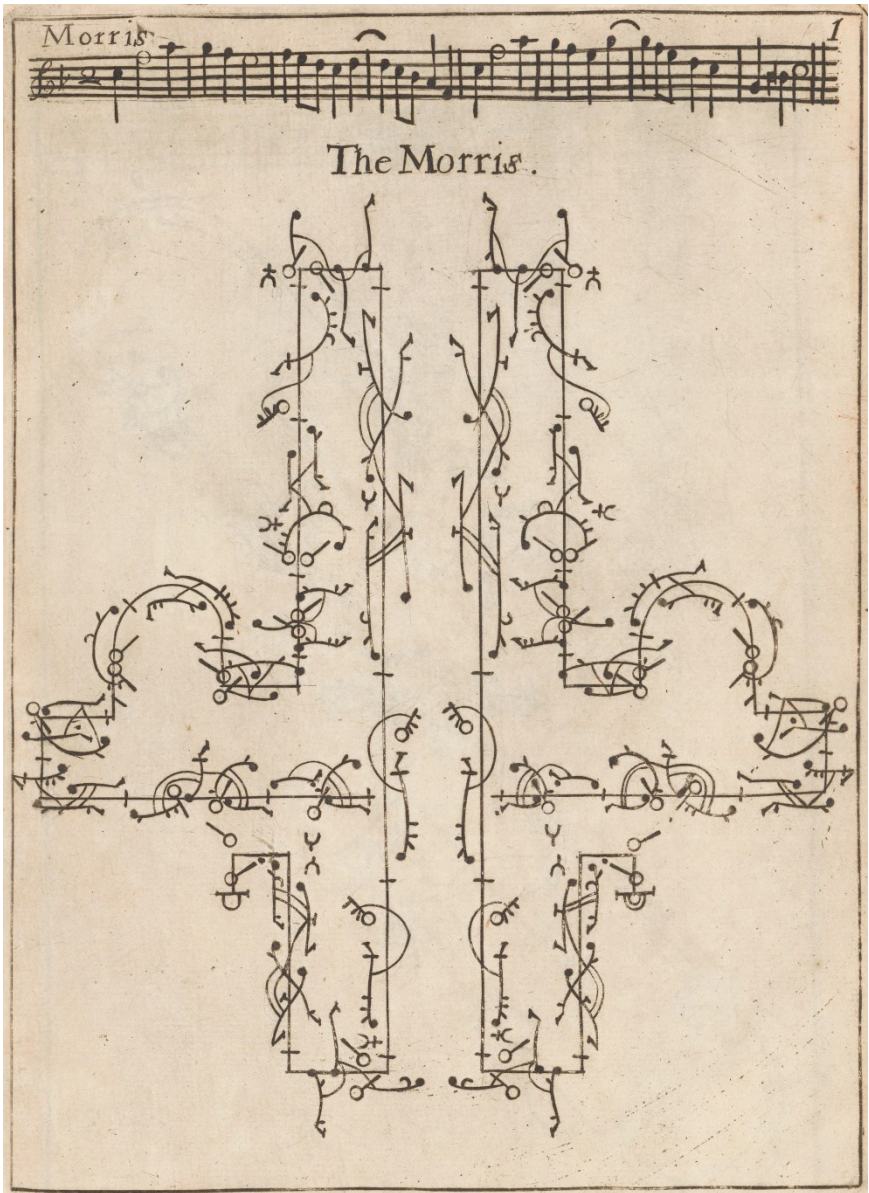


Figure 1: The first page of notation of Mr Isaac's 'The Morris' (Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, QL5.4).

Two longer sequences of steps in Mr Isaac's duet have a very strong sense of theatrical 'character' dancing. The first is the intricate four-bar sequence of 'footing' in the first section of the dance (bars 13-16), during which the heel is placed on the floor, without putting any weight onto it, to end bar 13 and to begin bar 16. This timing is

unique in Mr Isaac's extant dances, although several of his other duets employ stepping onto the heel in the middle of the step known as *pas de bourrée*. Complex sequences of 'footing' with cross rhythms do exist in morris dances today, of course, as some valuable discussions with Barry Honeysett and John C. Lewis revealed at the Histories of Morris conference, but the eighteenth-century evidence indicates a clearer alignment between the example in Mr Isaac's 'The Morris' and some of the peasant steps published in Nuremberg by Gregorio Lambranzi in 1716. Placing or striking the heel on the ground for comic effect was also part of the opening 'salutation' of two French theatrical dances for Harlequin, and a dance for two French country (as in rustic) men, all of which date from between c. 1700 and 1720.<sup>5</sup> So, perhaps, less a reflection of English morris dancing and more a tribute to rustic and comic theatrical dance popular in Europe at that time.

The second 'theatrical character' sequence in 'The Morris' reinforces a notion of French interpretations of 'Germanic' dance. Its unusual and distinctive arm positions are described verbally below the notation on page 4:

*At ye 2<sup>d</sup>. Bar set the Arms a Kimbow, & at ye 5<sup>th</sup>. ye left hands behind, & w<sup>th</sup> ye right hand Arms with each others left, joyning the inward parts of ye right arms together.*

When the sequence is repeated on page 5, the instructions merely say 'The same as in the Preceeding Couplet [page], only Arms with ye contrary Hands'. In other words, the dancers come together to link arms in an 'allemande hold', circle round clockwise with arms so linked, and then part (eight bars), before repeating the steps anti-clockwise (eight bars). Since Mr Isaac rarely re-used his own, or copied other people's, choreography in his extant dances, this section of 'The Morris' must be significant, and its purpose was probably to

<sup>5</sup> Gregorio Lambranzi, *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tanz-Schul*, 2 vols (Nuremberg: Wolrab, 1716), I, 4, 8, 9, 11; 'Chaconne d'Arlequin de Monsieur de la Montagne', Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Rés 817/7, bars 1-4 <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8599563>> [accessed 25 October 2017]; F[erdinand] Le Roussau, 'Entrée for Two French Countrymen' (bars 58-59) and 'Chaconne for Arlequin' (bars 1-2), in his *Collection of New Ball- and Stage Dances, 1720* (facs. of Edinburgh University Library MS La.III.673, with introductory notes by Jennifer Thorp (Morrisville, NC: Lulu.com, 2008), pp. 64, 69.

honour or flatter the new Hanoverian King, George I, with a sequence of dancing perceived as typically 'Germanic'. The figure and steps are almost identical to part of Guillaume-Louis Pécour's stage dance named 'L'Allemande', published in Paris in 1702 and subsequently enjoying a long life in the ballroom; the distinctive linked arms in 'allemande hold' were drawn in a thumbnail sketch beneath the relevant notation, and would appear again later in Jean-Baptiste Pater's oil painting of c. 1725, *Fête Galante with a Dancing Couple*, now on display at the Wallace Collection in London.<sup>6</sup> In fact neither Pécour's 'L'Allemande' (and thus the relevant section of Isaac's 'The Morris' also) nor Pater's painting bore much relation to genuine Germanic dance steps or music; and while the perception may have been significant for the public in Paris and London, it would have been less meaningful for the Hanoverian royal family.<sup>7</sup> It did nevertheless capture the growing sense of 'genteel-pastoral' which came to typify much of English Arcadian culture under the Hanoverians in later years. But it had nothing to do with morris dancing.

Although the notation of Mr Isaac's 'The Morris' was published for the ballroom, it was also performed on stage in London. Michael Heaney has made the valuable point that various forms of morris and associated country dancing were seen on stage and at masquerades during the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Mr Isaac's 'The Morris', however, was a stand-alone duet deriving from the French style of noble dancing, and was recognised as such at the time. Thus it followed many of the conventions of the French style that London's polite society admired in the early eighteenth century. That is to say, it had an extensive and complex step vocabulary, and it used progressions of symmetrical figures, its two dancers starting in mirror symmetry (that is, making the same steps but on opposite feet), then changing to co-axial sym-

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Ricardo Barros for drawing my attention to this painting, which may be viewed on the Wallace Collection's website <<http://www.wallaceprints.org/image/322985/jean-baptiste-pater-watching-the-dance>> [accessed 25 October 2017].

<sup>7</sup> See Rebecca Harris-Warrick, 'Allemande' in Selma Jean Cohen (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), I, 45-47, and Jennifer Thorp, 'Pécour's *L'Allemande* 1702-1765: how 'German' was it?', *Eighteenth-century Music* 1.2 (2004), 183-204.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Folk Dance and Theatrical Performance in the Eighteenth Century', *Folk Music Journal* 11.2 (2017), 6-16, with thanks to Ian Cutts for drawing my attention to this article.



metry (that is, both starting their steps on the same foot, and often facing and circling round each other, as in 'L'Allemande'), and returning to mirror symmetry towards the end of the dance. Like several of its French counterparts, 'The Morris' sometimes included dance steps associated with the lower ranks of society, for it was fashionable for the upper classes to sometimes copy the lower classes (albeit in a very genteel way) just as the lower classes often copied 'polite' dancing – the appeal worked in both directions.<sup>9</sup> But the social functions of the dances were different, and it seems more likely that these different worlds of dance – theatrical, polite, urban lower-class, rustic, morris, folk – did not merge completely, but existed in parallel, happy to borrow now and again from each other but nothing more than that. Perhaps it is only today that we strive to find meaningful links between the genres, whereas people in the early-eighteenth century did not think much about it. For instance, we can read too much today into the closing sequence of Mr Isaac's *The Morris* – a two-hand turn and cast out. It is reminiscent of a country-dance manoeuvre for progressing down a set, but is actually just a visually pleasing way to end the duet, and has none of the characteristics of social interaction implicit in a progressive country dance.

None of this however answers the question why Mr Isaac's duet was called 'The Morris' if not deriving from morris dancing. Mr Isaac named one or two of his dances after events (for example, 'The Union' (1707), referring to the Act of Union between England and Scotland), but he named no fewer than eight of his dances after people (for example, 'The Marlborough' (1705) after the military duke, or 'The Spanheim' (1706) after the Prussian ambassador to London).<sup>10</sup> He did call a few dances after named dance types, such as 'The Rigadoon' in 1706, or the 'Chaconne and Minuet' in 1711 but, in their steps and musical characteristics, they are more recognisably associated with rigaudons, chaconnes and minuets than 'The Morris' is with

<sup>9</sup> Extant stage- and ball-dances in the French noble style incorporating rustic and comic elements for peasants, shepherds, and commedia characters are catalogued in Meredith Little and Carol Marsh, *La Danse Noble: An Inventory of Dances and Sources* (New York: Broude Bros, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Discussed further in Jennifer Thorp, *Mr Isaac, Dancing-Master to the Court of Queen Anne* (forthcoming).



morris dancing. It may be therefore that 'The Morris' was not named after a dance type at all but after a person, a proposal also suggested by events that occurred during the Jacobite Rebellion in the winter of 1715/16.

In March 1715 the Earl of Mar had raised a rebellion in Scotland to recognise James Stuart, 'the Old Pretender', as the rightful king of Britain, and by October some of the Jacobite forces were ready to march south into England. They got as far as Preston in Lancashire before meeting regiments loyal to King George.<sup>11</sup> The Battle of Preston began on 12 November, and proved a significant success for the government forces. The Jacobites surrendered early in the morning of 14 November and one of the British Generals immediately sent word of the victory to the royal court in London. The messenger he sent, who must have almost killed himself making the long journey in two-and-a-half days, was Colonel Maurice van Nassau, whose family were kinsmen of King William III and had settled in England as the Earls of Rochford. As a younger son, Maurice had taken up a career in the British Army.

Mr Isaac by this date was quite elderly and no longer had the direct connection with the Court that he had enjoyed throughout the reigns of William and Mary and Queen Anne. Moreover, because of his even earlier links with the Restoration Court, Mr Isaac had been hounded throughout his London career as a papist. It could be that, by 1715, terrified of also being thought a Jacobite, he saw the Battle of Preston as an opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to King George by creating a dance to celebrate the news of the Jacobite defeat. He may have had good reason for his fears, for hints provided by Jacobite correspondence even before 1715 frequently referred to individuals by code-names – often theatrical characters, singers, actors, or people connected with public events whose names would seem innocuous within apparent references to the theatre or ballroom. In particular the 'trimmer' Earl of Cromarty, who had shifted his allegiance towards and away from the Jacobites several times over many years,

<sup>11</sup> See John Baynes, *The Jacobite Rising of 1715* (London: Cassell, 1970).

was code-named 'Mr Isaac'.<sup>12</sup> This may have been simply a coincidence, but since it was common knowledge that such ciphers were in use, and if Francis Isaac was aware of their form, his anxiety would be understandable.

The news of the Government victory at Preston reached London on 16 November and occasioned much celebration, as Lady Cowper noted in her diary: '1715, November: The 16<sup>th</sup> came the News that the Rebels had surrendered to the King's Forces at Preston [...] The surrender of these Prisoners filled the Town [London] with Joy.'<sup>13</sup> It is not difficult to imagine that, as soon as he heard about it, Mr Isaac determined to create a dance to honour the occasion. Since he no longer had any standing at court, he looked to have the dance published and sold for the upcoming ball season. Thus Edmund Pemberton, his dance notator at that time, took out a newspaper advertisement at the end of November that 'On Monday next will be published *The Morris*, a new dance for the year 1716, Compos'd by Mr Isaac. Writ by Mr Pemberton, and Sold by him against Mercer-Street, Long-Acre', and on 6 December it was duly reported as 'Just publish'd'.<sup>14</sup> By now Colonel Maurice van Nassau's name must have been widely known in London, but it would have been tactless to call a dance designed to flatter the Hanoverian King after a member of the Dutch dynasty that had supplied one of his predecessors; and it would have been pointless to try to interest London's high society in a dance named after a far-distant Lancashire town. Thus, feasibly, the dance was named 'The Morris', with suitably anglicized spelling of the Colonel's forename; and perhaps also – if the mid-eighteenth century colloquial expression was in use as early as 1715 – it provided a gentle pun on the verb 'to morris', meaning to decamp or rush off in a hurry, as Colonel Maurice van Nassau surely must have done for his epic ride from Preston.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *HMC Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar & Kellie* (London: HMSO, 1904), pp. 553-56.

<sup>13</sup> Mary, Countess Cowper, *The Diary of Mary Countess Cowper...1714-1720*, ed. by Spencer Cowper, 2nd ed. (London: Spottiswoode, 1865), pp. 56-57.

<sup>14</sup> Advertisement placed in the *Evening Post*, 29 November to 1 December 1715, 6 December 1715. It could still be purchased from Pemberton's shop several months later: see *Evening Post* 24 May 1716. I am most grateful to Mike Heaney for these references.

<sup>15</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the term 'morris' in this sense back to c.1765, but it could well be older.

There is no evidence that the dance ever did get taken up by the Court, but it was performed on stage at Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, probably on 18 November 1715 (two days after the news reached London) and certainly on 10 January 1716, in a performance by Mr Isaac's former protégé Charles Delagarde and Mrs Ann Bullock dancing the same programme as on 18 November 1715, 'particularly a New Dance call'd The Morris, composed by Mr Isaac'.<sup>16</sup> The January performance reflects a resurgence of interest in Colonel Maurice Nassau as the talk of the town, for it fell only four days after the Old Pretender had arrived in Dundee to find that support (and money) for his cause had well-nigh vanished, and by 10 January that news was all round London. The rumour machine was probably also working, and a few days later a grateful Treasury did indeed authorize a large reward to the Colonel; this resulted in the King signing a warrant, on 31 January, for £500 (approximately £40,000 today<sup>17</sup>) to be given to Colonel Maurice Nassau for 'coming express from General Wills with an account of the defeat of our rebellious subjects at Preston in Lancashire'.<sup>18</sup> In the first week of February the music publishers Walsh and Hare scrambled aboard the bandwagon and advertised the music of 'The Morris' as a 'French Dance for 1716', in a publication promptly pirated by Daniel Wright; a sure sign that it was attracting public interest.<sup>19</sup>

The country dance named 'The French Morris', which was first published c. 1726,<sup>20</sup> was not by Mr Isaac, for he had died some years previously, and it simply re-used the tune of his duet. The composer of

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Courant*, 10 January 1716.

<sup>17</sup> Comparative data from The National Archives, 'Currency Converter', <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>> [accessed 25 November 2017].

<sup>18</sup> *Calendar of Treasury Books: Preserved in the Public Record Office*, ed. by William Shaw, 32 vols (London: HMSO, 1904-57), XXX, 2, 94.

<sup>19</sup> Walsh and Hare's publication of 'All the newest Minuets, Rigadoons with the new Morris and Shepherds French Dances for 1716, price 6d.' was advertised in *The Post Man & Historical Account*, 2-4 February 1716: see William C. Smith, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by John Walsh 1695-1720* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1968), p. 142, no. 490. Walsh's publication does not survive, but a unique copy of the pirated version by Daniel Wright is extant (London, Royal College of Music Library, F32), albeit with folio 3 (music for the 'new Morris') torn out.

<sup>20</sup> John Young, *The Dancing-Master: or, Directions for Dancing Country Dances, with the Tunes to each Dance for the Treble-Violin: The Third Volume* (London, William Pearson, [c.1726]), p. 195. I am grateful to Nicholas Wall for confirming the accuracy of the directions from VWML, ref. QS 35.4.

the music is not known, although in earlier years Mr Isaac had worked closely with the French-born court and theatre musician Jacques Paisible (c.1656-1721). It is in AABB form, consisting of eight-bar and twelve-bar phrases respectively. The dance directions in Playford (which are problematical in places) are as follows:

*The French Morris: Longways for as many as will. Note: Each strain twice over.*

*The first and 2d. Men, and the first and 2d. We. all 4 fall back Sides, and the Men cross over in-to their Partners places, and the We. into their places at the same time; and the first Man go round till he comes into his own place, the other three follows till they come to their places [sign for end of A strain]. Then the first Cu. cross over and half figure at top [sign for end of repeated A strain].*

*The first Man cast off below the 3d. Man, and the first Wo. cast up above the 2d. Wo. and then they cast both round into the 2d. Cu. place, then the first Cu. lead up thro' the 2d Cu. and turn till they come on their own Side [sign for end of B strain]. Then first Cu. cast up at top, and cross over and half Figure at top, and lead thro' the 3d. Cu. and turn your Partners once round [sign for end of repeated B strain].*

But was it yet a morris dance? It was the seventh out of eleven Playford country dances with the term 'morris' in their titles, but without better knowledge of how morris dancing was performed in the early eighteenth century we cannot be sure of any connection. Was it French? There is a hint of a French influence, for this country dance has a highly unusual opening – 'The first and 2d. Men, and the first and 2d. W[om]e[n]. all 4 fall back Sides, and the Men cross over in-to their Partners places, and the We. into their places at the same time.' The directive 'fall back sides' as an opening figure is very rare, possibly non-existent, in English country dance sources of the time, but it had appeared in 1712 as the opening to three French *contredanses*

published in Paris by Jacques Dezais.<sup>21</sup> Yet the other figures of 'The French Morris' include standard English country-dance manoeuvres such as 'half-figure', 'casting off', and 'leading through', and as such it took its place in English country-dance collections up to the 1750s. By this time however all memory of Mr Isaac or any hint of a morris connection, had long since disappeared and the tune was re-used for a new country dance named 'Blazing Star' published to coincide with the appearance of spectacular comets in 1737 and 1745.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Le Sieur Dezais, *II<sup>e</sup> Recueil de nouvelles contredances* (Paris: chez l'auteur, 1712), pp. 37 (*La Conti*), 173 (*Plaisirs sans crainte*) and 21 (*La Badine*, the 'sides fall back' being preceded by a *pas de rigaudon*).

<sup>22</sup> See *The French Morris* in Walsh's *The Compleat Country Dancing-Master Volume the Third* (London: J. Walsh, 1745), p. 221 and ...*Volume the Fifth* (1755), p.165; and *Blazing Star*, in Walsh's *Caledonian Country Dances 1737-1755* editions and in J. Johnson's *Two Hundred Country Dances*, 1742 and 1755 editions.



## **The Morris Dark Ages**





Jameson Wooders

## **‘Time to Ring some Changes’: Bell Ringing and the Decline of Morris Dancing in the Earlier Eighteenth Century**

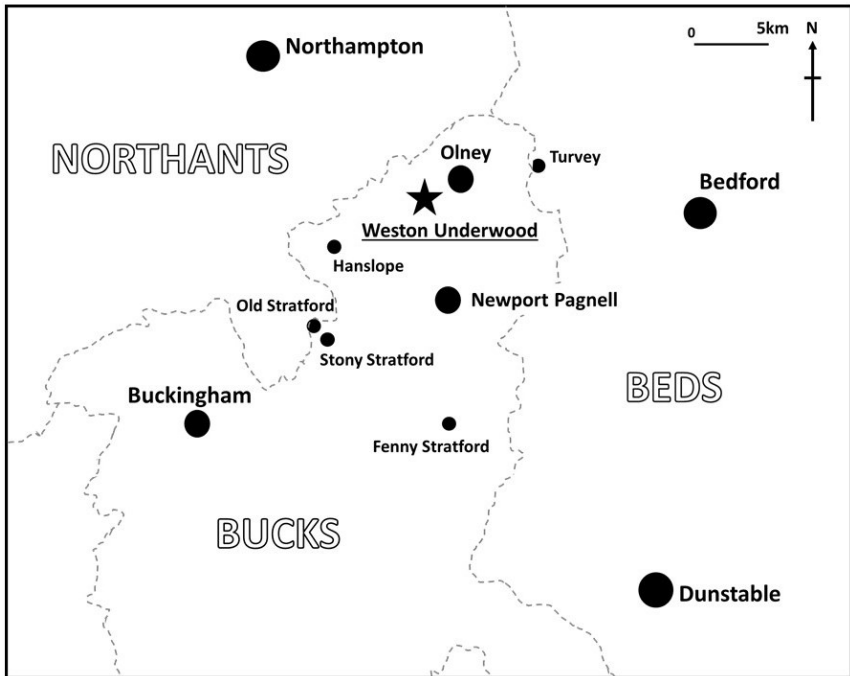


Figure 1: Places mentioned in the text

The decline of popular recreation between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries is usually seen as the result of social and economic changes driven from above, with the lower sorts of people perceived as helpless victims in the face of attacks upon their leisure time from the demands of industry, enclosure, the rise of gentility and evangelical religion.<sup>1</sup> This paper, based on preliminary research using early eighteenth-century household accounts of the Throckmorton family of Weston Underwood in Buckinghamshire, argues that the lower sorts actually had more agency than that with which they have pre-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 89–157.

viously been credited. Rather than seeing the decline of popular recreation as resulting from the withdrawal of customary benevolence from above, there was in fact a mutual renegotiation of the customary contract in favour of some traditional activities at the expense of others.

The parish of Weston Underwood lies between Olney in Buckinghamshire and Northampton, so it is just outside the South Midlands region most commonly associated with morris dancing at a slightly later date (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> During the earlier eighteenth century, the manor there was held by Robert, 3rd Baronet Throckmorton (born 10 January 1662, died 8 March 1720/21), and his eponymous son the 4th Baronet Throckmorton (born 21 August 1702, died 8 December 1791).<sup>3</sup> Nothing now survives of the Throckmorton manor house except a pair of stone gate-posts and a small seventeenth-century building crowned by a clock.<sup>4</sup>

Two Throckmorton account books survive at the Berkshire Record Office.<sup>5</sup> Volume I covers the years 1698 to 1733. The disbursements up to 1718 include payments for clothes, food, farm stock and entertainments at local fairs. After 1718 the accounts are in a more illiterate hand and deal mainly with farm work and purchases.<sup>6</sup> Volume II covers 1731 to 1745, with the accounts after 1739 again being written in a different hand from those before this date. Disbursements include wages, local taxation, purchases of livestock and various items for house and garden.<sup>7</sup>

It is, of course, entirely possible that the trends explored here might be attributed to the predominant concerns of the various stewards

<sup>2</sup> See Keith Chandler, *"Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles": The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660–1900* (London: Folklore Society, 1993), and Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660–1900: A Chronological Gazetteer* (London: Folklore Society, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> 'Person page – 14658', *The Peerage* <<http://www.thepeerage.com/p14658.htm#i146572>> [accessed 21 September 2017].

<sup>4</sup> 'Parishes: Weston Underwood', in *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 4*, ed. William Page (London: Victoria County History, 1927), pp. 497–502.

<sup>5</sup> Manorial documents and papers of Buckland and other estates of the Throckmorton family, including bailiffs' or stewards' accounts for the Throckmorton family estates in Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire, 1698–1748. Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/Ewe.

<sup>6</sup> BRO, D/EWe A1.

<sup>7</sup> BRO, D/EWe A2.

maintaining the accounts at different times, but certain kinds of disbursement occur consistently throughout the records suggesting this is not the case.

The account books show that the Throckmorton family patronized a variety of local customary activities, including morris dancing (Table 1).

Table 1: Payments to Morris Dancers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

16 June 1701	By y <sup>e</sup> order to y <sup>e</sup> Morris Dancers	2s 6d
27 December 1701	To the Morris dancers	2s 6d
1 January 1704/05	To a morris dancer from Stratford	1s

Morris dancers performed at Christmas and New Year as well as in the summer. A solo dancer was paid 1s in 1705 compared to the 2s 6d paid for the teams in 1701: the dancer came from ‘Stratford’, probably nearby Stony Stratford, Old Stratford or Fenny Stratford, but possibly Stratford-upon-Avon given that the Throckmorton family also held Coughton Court in Warwickshire.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the local dancers had already stopped and someone had to be brought from elsewhere; certainly there are no further references to morris dancing at Weston Underwood after 1705.

Morris dancing occurred alongside other customary activities: the dancer from Stratford on 1 January 1704/05 may have been accompanied by mummers (Table 2).

Table 2: Payments to Mummers and ‘Maskareders’ in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

1 January 1701/02	To the Maskaredors from Newport	5s
1 January 1704/05	To ye mumers at Xmas	2s

<sup>8</sup>‘Person page – 14658’.

Whether the ‘Maskaredors’ (presumably from nearby Newport Pagnell) performed mumming or another entertainment is unclear, but they too appeared at New Year. References to mummers and ‘maskaredors’ also cease after 1705.

Morris dancing and mumming were clearly closely connected and, even if not performed by the same participants here, other studies have emphasised individual involvement in multiple customary activities. The author’s own previous research at Brightwalton in Berkshire showed that morris dancers in a mid-eighteenth century village also constituted the church band, choir and bell ringers.<sup>9</sup> At Castleton in Derbyshire the ringers paraded with their garland and also performed a morris dance.<sup>10</sup> Keith Chandler noted connections between morris dancing, bell-ringing and the church band in the nineteenth-century diaries of Richard Heritage of Marsh Gibbon in Buckinghamshire.<sup>11</sup> At Adderbury in Oxfordshire members of the Walton family also belonged to both the morris dancers and the church bell ringers.<sup>12</sup> At Sherborne in Gloucestershire it was said that ‘a lot of those morris dancers were in with the mummers’.<sup>13</sup> Even into the twentieth century, William Nathan ‘Jingy’ Wells of Bampton was also associated with the local mummers, whilst William Kimber was a member of the Headington Quarry mummers and handbell ringers.<sup>14</sup> Chandler suggests such men were ‘important bearers of multiple forms of cultural tradition within their immediate peer groups and localities’.<sup>15</sup> These examples warn against studying customary activities aside from the wider societies in which they operated: by seeing different customary activities as inter-related aspects of the same

<sup>9</sup> Jameson Wooders, “‘With Snail Shells instead of Bells’: Music, Morris Dancing, and the ‘Middling Sort’ of People in Eighteenth-Century Berkshire”, *Folk Music Journal*, 10.5 (2015), 550–74.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (London: Junction Books, 1982), p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Chandler, ‘Popular Culture in Microcosm: The Manuscript Diaries of Richard Heritage of Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire’, *Folk Music Journal*, 9.1 (2006), 5–55.

<sup>12</sup> Chandler, “*Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*”, p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> Noman Pitts, a relative of Thomas Pitts, cited in Chandler, “*Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*”, pp. 2, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, p. 19.

overall culture, it is possible to gain greater insights into the development of each.<sup>16</sup>

Table 3: Payments to Wassailers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

30 November 1698	To two poor Soulgers and a vessell Cup	1s
12 December 1699	To a vesseller	6d
10 December 1702	To the Wassalers	6d
18 December 1702	To the Waselers & boys	1s
4 February 1703/04	To two waselers	6d
1 January 1704/05	To Wasselers at times	9d
28 November 1705	To 2 Wasellers	6d
31 December 1705	To ye wassellers	6d
14 December 1708	To Wassellers at 2 times	6d
16 December 1709	To 2 fiddlers from Hanslope & to Wassillers	1s
2 January 1710/11	To Wassalers	6d
31 December 1711	To Wassellers & to the poor this month	2s 6d
27 December 1712	To ye poor this month, & to the Wasellers	2s 6d
25 November 1713	To Wasselers	6d
28 December 1714	To ye poor, Wassellers & Madwom-an this month	2s 6d
26 December 1715	To ye poor & to Wasellers fiddlers & c this month	4s

Other entries in the Throckmorton accounts further reveal the local customary calendar. The morris dancers and mummers in January 1704/05 were accompanied by wassailers. Indeed, there are fre-

<sup>16</sup> Keith Chandler stresses that 'the isolation of any subject from the numerous other factors in operation in the work/leisure pattern of the society within which it functioned may dangerously distort the actual historical reality'. Chandler, *"Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles"*, p. 1.

quent payments to wassailers in the accounts (Table 3). Up to 1709 the records usually mention wassailers only; thereafter those in receipt of payments also include fiddlers and the poor. In December 1709, 1s was paid to wassailers and two fiddlers from nearby Hanslope. In December 1715, 4s were to be shared between wassailers, fiddlers and the poor, whilst in 1714 those in receipt also included a mad woman. Payments to wassailers, with or without others, cease after 1715.

Table 4: Payments to Fiddlers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745  
(Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

10 December 1702	To ye fiddlers at 2 times	1s
25 January 1702/03	More to him [Will Morrill] for fiddle strings for James Sturdy	1s 3d
28 December 1703	To Olney fiddlers by my Masters order	1s
May 1704	To a blind fiddler	1s
15 June 1704	For 2 fiddlers	1s
24 March 1704/05	For fidle strings for James	2s 6d
4 February 1705/06	To a Fidler by my Ladys order	1s
22 December 1707	To ye fiddlers of Olney	4s
31 March 1708	To 2 fidlers p my Mastrs order	1s
9 June 1708	To 2 fiddlers from Bedford	1s
14 December 1708	To 2 fidlers	6d
17 December 1708	To 2 fidlers by my Ladys ordr	1s
14 December 1709	To two Fiddlers from Turvey and a Blind fiddler	1s 6d
28 November 1712	To 2 ffiddlers	1s
12 January 1719/20	To the poor and fidlers this Xmas &c	3s
16 June 1743	To three Fidlers of Northampton for ye Ball	£1 11s 6d

The accounts contain further payments to fiddlers at Christmastide, though performances also occurred during spring and early summer

(Table 4). Visiting fiddlers came from Olney, Bedford and Turvey. Payments largely cease around 1720, though three fiddlers from Northampton were paid the considerable sum of £1 11 shillings 6 pence to play for a ball in 1743.

Other references to musical entertainments occur throughout the accounts (Table 5). Musicians came from Northampton, Olney, Huntingdon, Dunstable, Bedford, Hanslope, Turvey and ‘out of Warwickshire’, as well as from London in May 1707 and ‘ye Waites from Cambridge’ in October 1711. Some must have been summoned, whilst others turned up more speculatively.<sup>17</sup> Entries include a woman ‘playing of ye musick 3 nights’ in September 1713, ‘the musick ye Feast Day’ in December 1701 and ‘ye Musick dineing ye Tenants’ in December 1709. The annual parish feast was an important holiday for the common people and, as here, might be arranged by the gentry for their workers.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the occasion, payments to musicians largely cease around 1720.

The Throckmorton accounts also record May Day celebrations (Table 6). The usual payment was 2 shillings 6 pence, although just 1 shilling was given to the Mayers in 1706; perhaps the steward was reluctant to pay anything at all but grudgingly gave a reduced amount ‘by my Mastrs order’. Payments to Mayers were frequent until 1716, but occur more sporadically after 1720. A reference to Rogationtide processioning in 1726 may be associated with Maying customs.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the Throckmorton accounts contain numerous payments for the ringing of bells (Table 7).

<sup>17</sup> c.f. Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 144.

<sup>18</sup> Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 16–19, 59–64.

<sup>19</sup> Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 58–59; Bushaway, *By Rite*, p. 100.

Table 5: Payments to Musicians in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

28 December 1698	To the Trumpeters	2s
24 March 1698/99	To a drummer	1s
10 February 1698/99	To Museick	1s
12 April 1699	To the Museick at Northampton	5s
3 May 1699	To Museick	1s
14 August 1699	To Mr Sherwood what he gave to Olney Museick	2s
20 November 1699	To the Museick Come out of warwickshire	1s
27 November 1699	To the Museick of Huntingdon	2s 6d
6 December 1699	To Museick	1s
Imp January 1699/1700	To two Drummers	2s
8 January 1699/1700	To a drummer	1s
8 January 1699/1700	To Museick	1s
26 January 1699/1700	To Museick out of warwickshire	1s
19 December 1701	To three Drumers	2s 6d
18 August 1701	To Olney musick	2s 6d
15 December 1701	To Olney musick	2s 6d
31 December 1701	To the musick ye Feast Day	2s 6d
6 January 1701/02	To A Drumer from Newport	1s
3 March 1701/02	To Dunstable Musick	2s
Imp April 1702	To Bedford musicke	2s
3 August 1702	To Olney musick	2s 6d
24 August 1702	To Dunstable Musick	3d
20 December 1703	To Bedford Drumers	2s
28 December 1703	To a Dromer from Newport	1s
17 May 1703	To Olney musick	5s



Table 5 (continued)

16 August 1703	To Olney musick	2s 6d
19 April 1704	To the Musick	2s 6d
23 December 1705	To Musick by My Ladys order	2s
11 August 1706	To Olney Musick	3s
20 December 1706	To Musick p ordr	1s
10 May 1707	To Musick from London p ordr	2s 6d
22 September 1707	To Dunstable Musick p my Mastrs order	4s
16 April 1708	To 3 Droomers p my Mastrs order	2s 6d
16 April 1708	To Mr Chapman which he gave 2 Dromers p my Ladys ordr	2s 6d
November 1708	To a Dromer at Coughton	2s 6d
31 December 1709	To ye Musick dineing ye Tenants	7s 6d
7 December 1709	To ye musick from Bedford	2s
11 April 1710	To two Drumers	1s
23 October 1710	To Musick by My Ladys order	2s
31 December 1711	To ye Militia Drumer his Xmas box	1s
19 November 1711	To Hanslupp musick p ordr	1s
24 October 1711	To ye Waites from Cambridge	5s
9 September 1712	To ye Musick at Dunstable	5s
9 September 1712	To Northampton Musick	10s
September 1713	To a woman playing of ye musick 3 nights	7s 6d
25 November 1713	To Bedford Musick p my Ladys ordr	2s 6d
25 November 1713	To Northton and Handslopp Musick	3s 6d
18 December 1714	To Musick p ordr	2s

Table 5 (continued)

18 December 1714	To Turvey Musick p ordr	2s
26 December 1715	To a Drumer	1s
1 April 1716	To Musick by my Ladys order	1s
17 May 1716	To ye Musick	2s
20 August 1716	To Northton Musick p order	2s
December 1718	To a Drumer	1s
11 June 1720	To Northampton Musick	10s

Table 6: Payments to Mayers and Processioning in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

Imp May 1699	To the Mayers	2s 6d
29 April 1702	To the Mayers	2s 6d
Imprimis May 1705	To the Mayers	2s 6d
May 1706	To ye Mayers by my Mastrs order	1s
May 1707	To the boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
Impris May 1708	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
Impris May 1710	To the Mayers	2s 6d
2 May 1711	To the May Bush boys	2s 6d
May 1712	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1713	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1714	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1715	To ye Boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1716	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
18 April 1721	Gave the bwayes on mayee for thare boosh	2s 6d
1726	Spent when we went a Posseshining	6s
24 April 1732	Gave for the maiboosh	2s 6d

Table 7: Payments to Bell Ringers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

16 December 1698	To the Ringers upon my Litle master birth day	5s
26 December 1698	To the Ringers	2s 6d
7 December 1699	To the Ringers being my Little Master berth day	5s
26 December 1699	To the Ringers of Weston	2s 6d
29 December 1701	To the Ringers	2s 6d
17 August 1702	To the Ringers	5d
7 December 1702	To the Ringers	2s 6d
18 December 1702	To the Ringers	2s 6d
28 September 1703	To ye Ringers	5s
May 1704	To ye Ringers at Coughton	5s
29 September 1704	To the Ringers	2s 6d
7 December 1705	To ye Ringers by order	2s 6d
22 July 1706	To the Ringers	2s 6d
7 December 1706	To ye Ringers on Esq George's Birthday	2s 6d
26 December 1706	To ye Ringers	2s 6d
Imprimis October 1706	To the Ringers at Weston	5s
January 1707/08	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	5s
November 1708	To ye Ringers at Weston	2s 6d
9 December 1708	To ye Ringers on Mr Throckmorton's birth day	2s 6d
26 December 1708	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	2s 6d
26 September 1709	To ye Ringers when Mrs Throckmorton came home	5s
30 September 1709	To ye Ringers by order	2s 6d
15 October 1709	To ye Ringers at Buckland	5s
November 1709	To ye Ringers at Wollhampton	5s

Table 7 (continued)

November 1709	To ye Ringers at Weston	5s
24 December 1709	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	2s 6d
2 January 1710/11	To ye Ringers there Xmas box & p Esqr George Birthday	5s
10 November 1711	To ye Ringers p ordr	2s 6d
7 December 1711	To ye Ringers on Mr Throckmortons Birthday	5s
26 December 1711	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	5s
9 September 1712	To Olney Ringers	10s
27 December 1712	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	5s
12 September 1713	To ye Ringers & Clarke at Somerton	7s 6d
23 December 1713	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	5s
22 April 1714	To ye Ringers when my Mastr came from London	5s
22 April 1714	To ye Ringers p my Mastr ordr	5s
26 December 1715	To ye Ringers there Xmas box	5s
13 September 1716	To ye Ringers when Mr Throckmorton came home	5s
19 June 1717	To ye Ringers	5s
28 December 1719	To ye Ringgers	5s
21 May 1722	Gave the Ringars on my mastars burth day	5s
26 December 1733	To ye Ringers on St Stephen	5s
9 January 1733/34	To ye Ringers on Master Throckmortons birth day	5s
23 July 1734	To ye Ringers when my master came from Paris	7s 6d
21 August 1735	To ye Ringers on my masters birthday	7s 6d
26 December 1739	To Weston ringers on St Stephen's day	5s

Table 7 (continued)

6 January 1739/40	To ye ringers on Miss Ann's birth day ye 4th of Jany	10s 6d
10 April 1740	To ye Ringers on Mrs Throckmorton's birth day	5s
1 October 1740	To given to Weston Ringers by your Order	10s 6d
1 October 1740	Ditto to Oulney Ringers	10s 6d
28 December 1740	To ye ringers on St Stephen's day	5s
26 December 1741	To Weston ringers on St Stephen's day	5s
3 January 1742/43	To ye Ringers on St Stephen's day	5s

Christmastide was an important occasion for bell-ringing, but ringers also celebrated family birthdays: payments were made 'To the Ringers upon my Litle master birth day' on 16 December 1698; 'To ye Ringers on Esq George's Birthday' on 7 December 1706; 'To ye ringers on Miss Ann's birth day ye 4th of Jany' in 1739/40; and 'To ye Ringers on Mrs Throckmorton's birth day' on 10 April 1740.

Bells also celebrated homecomings, including payments 'To ye Ringers when Mrs Throckmorton came home' on 26 September 1709, 'To ye Ringers when my Mastr came from London' on 22nd April 1714, and 'To ye Ringers when my master came from Paris' on 23 July 1734. Bells also welcomed the Throckmorton entourage as it toured their Berkshire estates at Buckland and Woolhampton in October and November 1709, and as it returned to Weston Underwood later that month. Another payment 'To ye Ringers at Coughton' in May 1704 presumably celebrated a visit to the family's main seat.

The account books thus show that the Throckmorton family was fully engaged with the traditional customary economy at the start of the eighteenth century: morris dancing, mumming, wassailing, maying, music and bell-ringing were all patronized by an English gentry fami-

ly (Figure 2). By the mid-eighteenth century, however, perhaps accelerated by the death of Sir Robert, 3rd Baronet Throckmorton, in 1721, the situation had changed. Payments for morris dancers, mummers, wassailers, mayers and musicians had all largely ceased, with only payments to ringers continuing (albeit after a short break) into the 1730s and 1740s. (The considerable sum paid to three fiddlers from Northampton in June 1743 has already been noted, but this was for the specific occasion of a ball and must, therefore, be regarded as exceptional.)

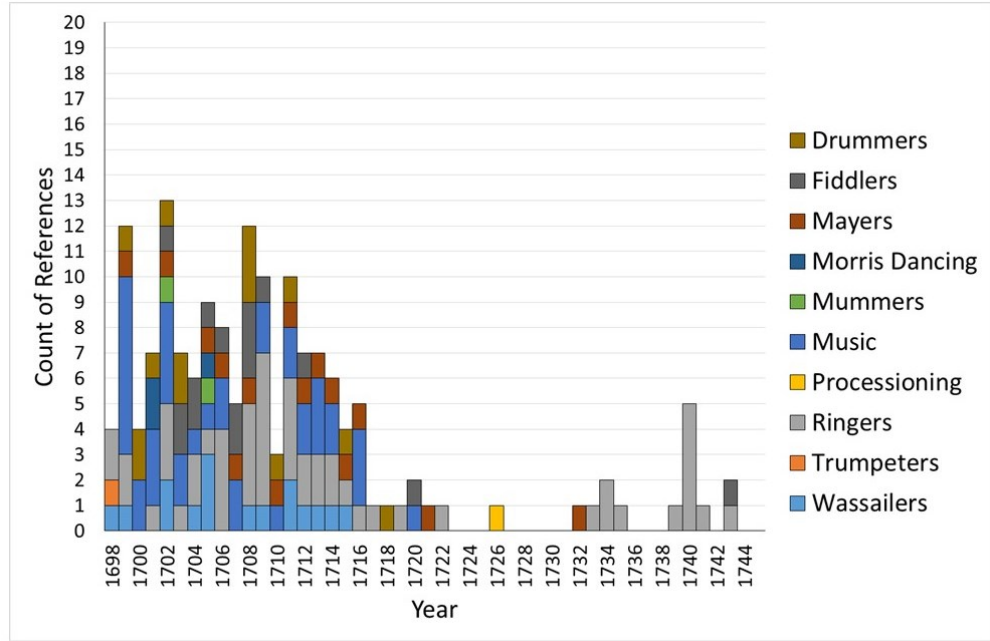


Figure 2: Incidences of payments to customary performers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts (Source: BRO, D/EWe)

This indicates a radical change in the relationship between parishioners and gentry. The increased separation between polite and plebeian cultures is revealed, not by the removal of elite patronage from customary activities altogether, but by its focus on bell-ringing. Whereas morris dancing, mumming, wassailing and music-making generally depended upon patrons and performers occupying the same physical space, this was not necessary with the ringing of

church bells. Rather than welcome the lower sorts into their own houses at festive times such as May Day and Christmas, the Throckmortons effectively paid for the parishioners to keep their distance – both actual and social – by restricting their customary activities to other locations such as the parish church. The gentry's focus on bell ringing as a means of maintaining at least some form of customary relationship with the parishioners is further revealed by the amounts paid: the total budget spent in 1740, for example, compared very favourably to that provided earlier but, rather than being divided between several different customary groups, it was paid wholly to bell ringers (Figure 3).

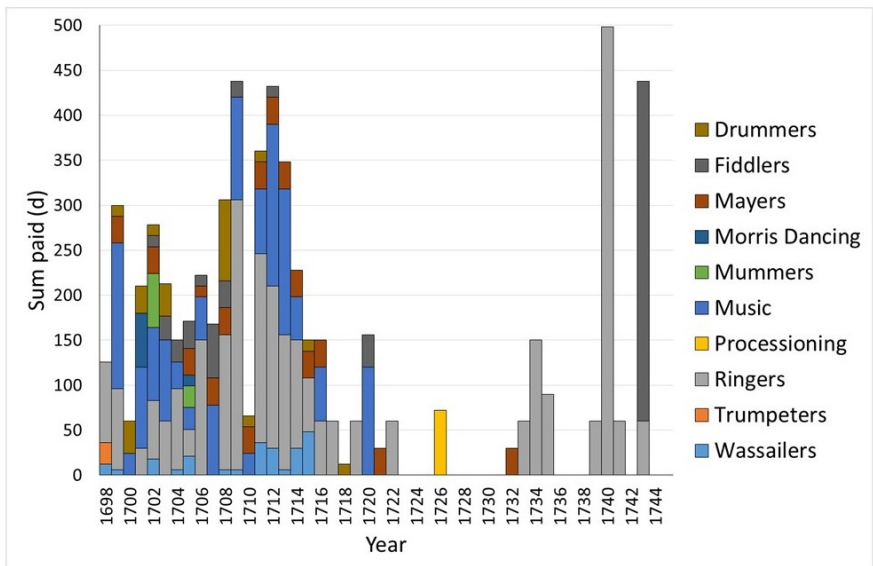


Figure 3: Sums of money paid to customary performers in the Throckmorton Household Accounts (Source: BRO, D/EWe)

Of course, the cessation of payments for many customary activities in the accounts does not necessarily mean that performances stopped altogether, only that they ceased to be patronized by the Throckmorton family: they too may have continued in other contexts away from the country house.<sup>20</sup> However, the withdrawal of a vital source of patronage must inevitably have affected the pursuance of these ac-

<sup>20</sup> Emma Griffin, for instance, has emphasised the importance of the village green as a venue where popular recreations might take place; Emma Griffin, *England's Revelry: A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 197-199.

tivities. John Forrest suggests that, without the support of the gentry, few if any morris teams in the first half of the eighteenth century could have survived.<sup>21</sup>

What prompted this change? Studies of early modern England have demonstrated how living standards improved drastically at this time.<sup>22</sup> Lorna Weatherill's study using probate inventories belonging mainly to the lesser gentry, professions, merchants, farmers and craftsmen showed that the range and quantity of their household goods increased substantially between 1675 and 1725.<sup>23</sup> Peter Earle's study of 'middling' Londoners similarly showed how their homes were transformed in the same period.<sup>24</sup> Matthew Johnson asserts that houses underwent a process of 'closure' in which they became more comfortable, more private and exclusive, and less open to the community and traditional outdoor culture.<sup>25</sup> Johnson's idea of 'closure' might be particularly relevant to the present study since Weston Underwood manor had been improved during this period by Robert, 3rd Baronet Throckmorton.<sup>26</sup>

As the parishioners were increasingly kept away, the accounts from the 1740s show an increase in music-making within the home, often of the latest fashionable pieces, with less reliance on traditional performers brought in from outside (Table 8).<sup>27</sup> Christopher Marsh

<sup>21</sup> John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1999), p. 332.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984); Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean, and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Johnson relates these changes to wider issues such as enclosure of the landscape, class polarization and cultural centralization, the increase in literacy, and the break-up of the pre-industrial community. Matthew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1993), p. x; Matthew Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford: John Wiley, 1996), pp. 79-80; Matthew Johnson, 'Rethinking Houses, Rethinking Transitions: Of Vernacular Architecture, Ordinary People and Everyday Culture', in *The Age of Transition: The Archaeology of English Culture 1400-1600*, ed. By D. Gaimster and P. Stamper (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), pp. 150-152.

<sup>26</sup> 'Parishes: Weston Underwood.'

<sup>27</sup> cf. Johnson, *Archaeology of Capitalism*, pp. 169-170. A later account book for the Throckmorton family, held at the Warwickshire Record Office, and detailing expenses mostly at Bath be-



notes how the cultured amateur – 'a creature of the indoors' – did not mix with street music.<sup>28</sup>

Table 8: Payments for 'Fashionable' Music in the Throckmorton Household Accounts, 1698-1745 (Source: Reading, Berkshire Record Office [BRO], D/EWe)

November 1709	To Mr Morriss Tuneing ye Harpsicall	10s
28 May 1740	To Handel's Organ Concertos	10s 6d
28 May 1740	To Geminrani's Solos	£1 5s
2 June 1740	To Handel's Overtures	£1 16s
2 June 1740	To Dtto's Grand Concertos	£1 11s 6d
2 June 1740	To Hasse's trios	9s
28 May 1740	To Porpora's Trios	15s
12 September 1740	To Handel's 36 Overtures for ye Harpsicord	18s
18 September 1740	To a new piece for ye German flute	5s 6d
20 September 1740	To a cover for ye fiddle case	1s 6d
6 November 1740	To Hasse's Solos	3s 6d
18 April 1741	To porge of a Harpsicord	1s
4 May 1741	To Mrs Chilcot for hire of a harpsicord	7s 6d
19 May 1741	To musick paper	3s

In effect, from the 1720s onwards, morris dancers and other customary performers were paid to stay away. In a contemporary letter, Lady Fermanagh of Claydon House (Buckinghamshire) complained of the 'abundance of rabble and the worst sort of company' that ar-

tween 1753 and 1756, continues this pattern, with no additional payments to customary activities. Small account book entitled: 'Great Accounts ...from... 1753 to ... 1756 ...', containing household accounts, mostly at Bath, of Sir Robert Throckmorton, later entered in a 'Great Account Book', Warwick, Warwickshire Record Office (WRO), CR 1998/LCB/41.

<sup>28</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 84.

rived at Whitsuntide and stated that she 'can't help giving the Morris money when they come, for they tell me everybody doing it is the best way to send them going'.<sup>29</sup>

Interest in the kinds of customary patronage that had once been widespread was waning. John Forrest has argued that, by the eighteenth century, morris performances were shifting from the incorporative to the transactional due to a distancing in the relationship between farmers and workers as agriculture became more commercialized.<sup>30</sup> Customary performers effectively became wage labourers, hiring out their services to the lord of the manor as required, and remunerated by the steward for their 'work' according to their worth. Customary activities became inter-changeable. Whereas villagers were once paid to morris dance in the homes of the gentry, now they were paid to stay away, ringing bells at the parish church. Their 'labour' done, parishioners took their 'wages' to spend elsewhere (perhaps to the village pub), rather than drinking with the squire.<sup>31</sup>

Emma Griffin has emphasised how 'all popular recreations were dependent upon the consent of those in the local community who exercised control over the spaces in which they were performed, and thus how vulnerable they were to any shifts in opinion regarding the value of popular recreation that they might have'.<sup>32</sup> Popular culture was not simply the preserve of the lower sorts: this group alone did not have the power to determine all elements of the form, location, and timing of their recreations. Popular culture was the product of on-going negotiations between different sections of society, negotiations which were sometimes harmonious, sometimes acrimonious, always complex.<sup>33</sup>

Such developments have been seen as one-sided, initiated by the gentry at the expense of the lower sorts. Villagers themselves, how-

<sup>29</sup> Cited in John Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance: A Look at Morris Dancing from its Earliest Days until 1850* (Alton: Dance Books Ltd, 2005), p. 7. See also Michael Heaney, 'Morris Dancers in the Political and Civic Process', in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 348-349; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>32</sup> Griffin, *England's Revelry*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Griffin, *England's Revelry*, pp. 166, 254.

ever, may not have shared these feelings, for the commutation of payment in kind for payment in cash provoked few recorded disturbances.<sup>34</sup> Morris dancers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were not necessarily the labouring poor that they were to become later. At Salisbury in Wiltshire up to 1800, the Wyndham (then Arundell) family included payments to morris dancers (as well as to drummers, trumpeters and to the bell ringers at St Thomas's church) amongst their Christmas boxes for local tradesmen rather than amongst those to the poor, who were listed on a separate schedule.<sup>35</sup> At Brightwalton in Berkshire too, the morris dancers came from the 'middling' sort – yeomen, tradesmen and craftsmen – important local families, holders of public office and often of long-standing in their parishes. They saw themselves as the natural representatives of their home community, and colluded with the gentry in the enclosure of the parish. They were not overly concerned with the preservation of traditional culture when they thought they themselves might profit.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the gentry did not withdraw their support altogether but continued to patronize the parishioners via bell ringing. 'News of early modern politics', suggests Christopher Marsh, 'flew through the air on sonic waves generated by church bells'.<sup>37</sup> Ringing at this time was not necessarily associated with religion – other than that the parish church merely provided the bell tower.<sup>38</sup> Later Tudor and Stuart monarchs had instituted a new cycle of celebrations and bell ringers were also paid by the churchwardens to commemorate royal birthdays, anniversaries of coronations, military victories, royal marriages, and so forth.<sup>39</sup> Together with the round of aristocratic birth-

<sup>34</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 345.

<sup>35</sup> Arundell of Wardour Castle – List of Christmas gifts to the poor, to servants and prisoners by the Wyndham then Arundell family at Salisbury, Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2667/23/5, including payments to Morris dancers, 1744-1769, 1795-1797.

<sup>36</sup> Wooders, "With Snail Shells instead of Bells", pp. 563-569.

<sup>37</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 481-482.

<sup>38</sup> John Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing* (Oxford: Shire, 2016), pp. 35-36.

<sup>39</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, p. 326; Griffin, *England's Revelry*, pp. 37-39; Bushaway, *By Rite*, p. 50; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 259-260; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National*

days and home-comings, ringing may thus have afforded a more consistent flow of income than seasonal morris dance performances in any case.

Morris dancing too might be used to celebrate local politics.<sup>40</sup> It was not uncommon during the eighteenth century for sets of morris dancers to be hired to provide spectacle and entertainment during political rallies. In 1722, during a visit to Abingdon by its MP, 'the Morrice-Dancers and several young Maids dress'd in White with Garlands of Flowers, met them at the Foot of the Bridge, and went before them thro' the Town, to the House of Clement Sexton, Esq; the late Mayor; all the Bells in the Town ringing; where all the Company were handsomely and splendidly entertain'd at Dinner'.<sup>41</sup> In 1740/41 the Duke of Buckingham paid two morris teams to perform in several local villages in connection with his political campaign. In 1774 another side was paid to entertain on one candidate's behalf during the election at Marlow, while another was sponsored by the Duke of Buckingham to dance in a procession from Wootton Underwood to Aylesbury during the same election year.<sup>42</sup> Morris dancers too honoured a royal visit to Stowe House, Buckinghamshire, in 1805, and celebrated the coming of age of successive eldest sons in 1797, 1818 and 1844.<sup>43</sup>

The art of change ringing also grew from such local and national celebrations. Bell ringers developed patterns and disciplined combinations.<sup>44</sup> Like morris dancing, this required teamwork as well as physical effort. By the seventeenth century, recreational ringing was already loud enough for one German visitor to note that the English were 'vastly fond of great noises that fill the air, such as firing of cannon, drums, and the ringing of bells, so that in London it is common for a number of them that have got a glass in their heads to go up in-

*Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabeth and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Morris Dancers in the Political and Civic Process', in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> Abingdon, Oct. 11', *Daily Post*, 13 October 1722, p.1; see also Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 328-330.

<sup>42</sup> Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Chandler, "Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles", p. 200.

<sup>44</sup> Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing*, pp. 35-36; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 70.

to some belfry, and ring the bells for hours together, for the sake of exercise’.<sup>45</sup>

‘The people are so fond of this amusement’, wrote another observer, ‘that they form societies amongst themselves for carrying it out’.<sup>46</sup> Ringers formed a tight-knit group and, like morris dancers, were an important customary presence in the local community. Indeed, bell ringing must have satisfied many of the same personal motivations for the performers as other customary activities.<sup>47</sup> Christopher Marsh suggests ringers enjoyed ‘a sense of fellowship that was warm, masculine and competitive’.<sup>48</sup> Ringers worked together, but they also pulled against each other.<sup>49</sup> Local youths regularly competed over who could ring the longest or the loudest, and often placed bets upon the outcome. Whilst there must inevitably have been occasional confrontations, internal tensions within the group were probably ‘dissolved in alcohol’, as they adjourned from the belfry to the alehouse.<sup>50</sup>

Ringling societies often had elaborate codes of conduct. Those at Tong in Shropshire dating from 1694, stated: <sup>51</sup>

*If that to Ring you doe come here,  
you must Ring well with hand and eare.  
keep stroak of time and goe not out,  
or else you forfeit out of doubt.  
Our law is so concluded here;  
for every fault a jugg of beer,  
if that you Ring with Spurr or Hat,  
a jugg of beer must pay for that.  
If that you take a Rope in hand;  
these forfeits you must not withstand,*

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Marsh, “‘At it ding dong’: Recreation and Religion in the English Belfry, 1580-1640”, in *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 155; Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Bushaway, *By Rite* pp. 48–57.

<sup>48</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 491–93.

<sup>49</sup> Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 493.

<sup>51</sup> Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing*, p. 27.

*or if that you a Bell overthrow,  
 it must cost Sixpence ere you goe.  
 If in this place you sweare or curse;  
 Six pence to pay pull out your purse:  
 come pay the Clerk it is his fee;  
 for one that swears shall not goe free.  
 These Laws are old, and are not new;  
 therefore the Clerk must have his due.  
 George Harison*

Similar rules applied to novice morris dancers, such as those at Bicester Kings End in 1790 where dancers were subject to fines of 5 shillings should they ‘flinch from their proposed plases if the[y] are able to sarve them’.<sup>52</sup> There may have been beer and banter aplenty but etiquette still had to be observed.<sup>53</sup>

Ringin contests were sponsored by local innkeepers.<sup>54</sup> On 7 August 1744, the *Gloucester Journal* carried a notice that six hats were to be rung for at Melksham, following dinner at the White Hart: <sup>55</sup>

*This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen RINGERS, THAT there  
 are to be Rung for, on the Eighth of October next, at  
 Melksham in the County of Wilts, Six HATS, with Silver But-  
 tons and Loops, Value 10s. 6d. each Hat: Every Sett to ring a  
 Peal of half an Hour. The Bells shall be high enough to set;  
 and the Preference in Performance determin’d by three skill-  
 ful Men of that Profession, their Names unknown. Any Sett is  
 welcome to try the Bells on any Day they think proper; and  
 all the Sets that ring, are to dine at the White-Hart in  
 Melksham aforesaid.*

The same publication gave notice of a morris dance competition at the Swan in Coln St Aldwyn near Fairford in Gloucestershire just a few weeks earlier on 1 May 1744: ‘Likewise, on the Morrow, there

<sup>52</sup> Chandler, *“Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles”*, p. 122.

<sup>53</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 494.

<sup>54</sup> Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Cyril Wratten, *Order and Disorder in the Eighteenth Century: Newspaper Extracts about Church Bells and Bellringing* (The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 2010), p. 70.

will be six exceeding good KNOTS to be Morrice-danc’d for, Free Gift, and Six Pairs of Gloves to be Bowl’d for at Nine-Pins’.<sup>56</sup> A local newspaper notice for a fair at Towcester, Northamptonshire, in 1766 further drew attention to contests for bell ringing, morris dancing, and a match at singlesticks.<sup>57</sup>

Like morris dancers who travelled to London following the hay harvest, ringers too might journey from home. In June 1770 ‘the Sherwood Company of Change-Ringers in Nottingham (who generally go to spend two or three Holidays in the Country at Whitsuntide) went this Year to amuse themselves upon the melodious Peal of eight Bells at Burton-upon-Trent, in Staffordshire, but were greatly disappointed in finding the Bells in very bad Order’.<sup>58</sup>

Ringling tours and competitions provided opportunities to impress the opposite sex. In 1630 at Staunton (Nottinghamshire), a group of young women crowded into the belfry to watch the young men in action. Unfortunately, on this occasion one of the women became tangled in a bell-rope and was seriously hurt.<sup>59</sup>

Fuelled by a potent mixture of testosterone and alcohol, bell-ringing could prove addictive and ringers occasionally found it difficult to stop.<sup>60</sup> In his youth, John Bunyan had found ‘much delight’ in ringing but by the 1640s he considered it vanity. Bunyan had married, suggesting that he perceived bell-ringing as a young man’s pastime, inappropriate for a more sober and settled individual. Bunyan struggled to adhere to his decision, however: in the months that followed, he often went to the belfry to watch the young men ringing. His yearning endured until he imagined the bells and steeple crashing down upon him as a punishment for his vain and worldly desires.<sup>61</sup>

Bell-ringing had nonetheless once been considered an acceptable recreation for gentlemen.<sup>62</sup> *The School of Recreation, or the Gentleman’s Tutor: to those most ingenious exercises of hunting, racing,*

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Marsh, ‘At it ding dong’, pp. 159-160; Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 488-489.

<sup>60</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 486.

<sup>61</sup> Marsh, ‘At it ding dong’, pp. 156-159; Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 486.

<sup>62</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 484; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 70.

*hawking, riding, cock-fighting, fowling, fishing, shooting, bowling, tennis, ringing and billiards*, published in 1684, describes ringing as: 'highly esteemed, for its excellent Harmony of Musick it affords the ear, for its Mathematical Invention delighting the Mind, and for the Violence of its Exercise bringing Health to the Body, causing it to transpire plentifully, and by Sweats dissipate and expel those Fuliginous thick Vapours, which Idleness, Effeminacy, and Delicacy subject men to'.<sup>63</sup>

An earlier Throckmorton account book held at the Warwickshire Record Office reveals that throughout his teenage years during the 1650s Sir Francis, 2nd Baronet Throckmorton, regularly paid the clerk a few pennies for access to ring the bells.<sup>64</sup> This is reminiscent of the cavaliers carousing with morris dancers as social equals at Witney Wakes in May 1646.<sup>65</sup> Gentlemen might be distinguished from commoners, but ringing and dancing suggested the existence of certain bonds that tied them together: they enabled each group to escape, at least temporarily, into the world of the other.<sup>66</sup>

To conclude, morris dancing and bell-ringing constituted just two of several different customary activities patronized by the gentry at the turn of the eighteenth century. Morris dancing and ringing were performed by the same sorts of people and fulfilled the same motivations, and might in fact be regarded as interchangeable. They both played their part in local and national celebrations, and provided a sense of belonging, status and reward for the performers.<sup>67</sup> Aristocratic participation was not unknown, so customary performers re-

<sup>63</sup> Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>64</sup> E.A.B. Barnard, *A Seventeenth Century Country Gentleman (Sir Francis Throckmorton, 1640-80)* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1944), p. 21; Account book inscribed 'James Smith', containing accounts of James Smith for money received from Thomas Sheldon and disbursed in personal expenses for Sir Francis Throckmorton, his master, part of the time at Cambridge, Warwick, Warwickshire Record Office (WRO CR 1998/LCB/39); Account book of the receipts and disbursements of Francis Reeve for Sir Francis Throckmorton, Baronet, relating to Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Buckinghamshire. Disbursements are mainly on the estate, but include some household and personal expenses of his master. [tall, narrow folio, 2 gatherings detached] (WRO CR 1998/LCB/26).

<sup>65</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>66</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 58, 389.

<sup>67</sup> Chandler, "Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles", pp. 3, 95, 195, 204; Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 349; Griffin, *England's Revelry*, p. 27.



garded themselves as intermediaries between the country house and the wider community.

As society became more commercialized and houses more private, the later Throckmorton accounts show increased separation between polite and plebeian culture as the family patronized activities that might only be performed at a distance. In this context, morris dancers switched to bell-ringing: the performers would have been paid regardless, whilst the apparently addictive nature of ringing no doubt provided some compensation for the withdrawal of opportunities to engage in other customary practices.

Of course, at this stage these conclusions must remain speculative based, as they are, upon a very limited dataset, and it is entirely possible that the limited evidence presented here has been stretched too far. But they do at least provide a working hypothesis that might be tested through further research.<sup>68</sup> No doubt a far more nuanced picture will emerge in due course. Our conclusions here do not explain, for instance, why morris continued in some areas – there were still a number of gentlemen, such as the Cartwrights at Aynho, the Duttons at Sherborne and the Temple/Grenvilles at Stowe, who, for various reasons, continued to support traditional practices into the later eighteenth century and beyond<sup>69</sup> – but they may help to explain what happened in the areas where morris vanished between 1650 and 1750. John Forrest has previously highlighted the shift in locations of morris performance from East Anglia to the south Midlands following the English Civil War.<sup>70</sup> Morris dancers may not have disappeared from these areas altogether; they may simply have rung different kinds of bells.

<sup>68</sup> The author's research is currently continuing.

<sup>69</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 328-329; Chandler, *"Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles"*, p. 47; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp. 158-166; Account Book labelled 'Dayly Receipts and Payments ... beginning ao 1708', Gloucester: Gloucestershire Archives (GA), Dutton Family Papers, D/678/148b; Account Book labelled 'Book of what I laid out for James Dutton Esq begun the 23 Octbr 1775', GA, D/678/FAM/96d. Account Book kept for Thomas Cartwright by Joshua Burton, October 1691-1722, Northampton: Northamptonshire Archives (NA), Cartwright Papers, ML 1306; Account Book bearing the legend on the cover: 'Josh Burton. Begun July 1722 ended [illegible word] 1735, NA, ML 1307.

<sup>70</sup> Forrest, *History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 35-46.



Michael Heaney

## Morris Dancers in the Political and Civic Process

As my starting off point I want to refer you to two excellent books, Ronald Hutton's *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*<sup>1</sup> and David Underdown's *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*.<sup>2</sup> These show how morris and maypoles became focal points for defining loyalties in the decades leading up to the Civil War and Commonwealth.

The low point came perhaps in 1654, during the Commonwealth, with the *Ordinance for ejecting scandalous, ignorant & insufficient schoolmasters*, passed on 28 August. This provided that:<sup>3</sup>

*such Ministers and Schoolmasters shall be deemed and accounted scandalous in their Lives and Conversations, as shall be proved guilty of ... or do incourage and countenance by word or practice any Whitson-Ales, Wakes, Morris-dances, May-poles, Stage-plays, or suchlike Licentious practices, by which men are encouraged in a loose and prophane Conversation...*

With the Restoration there was a deliberate policy to encourage the revival of such customs. As King Charles II made his triumphant progress to reclaim his kingdom, on 29 May 1660:<sup>4</sup>

*he set forth from Rochester in his coach; but afterwards took horse on the farther side of Blackheath: on which spacious plain he found divers great and eminent troops of horse, in a most splendid and glorious equipage; and a kind of rural triumph, expressed by the country swains,*

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> 'An Ordinance for Ejecting Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters,' in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, ed. By C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, 3 vols, (London: H.M.S.O., 1911), II, 968-90 (p.977).

<sup>4</sup> 'England's Joy, or, A Relation of the Most Remarkable Passages, from His Majesty's arrival at Dover, to his entrance at Whitehall,' in *An English Garner: Stuart tracts 1603-1693*, with an introduction by C.H. Firth (Westminster: Constable, 1903), pp.425-30 (p.428)

*in a morrice dance with the old music of taber and pipe; which was performed with all agility and cheerfulness imaginable.*

But something rather odd happened. I'll adduce two pieces of evidence in support of that. The first is the Maypole in the Strand, erected the following year in celebration of the Restoration. One exuberant report described it thus:<sup>5</sup>

*The Maypole then being joynted together, and hoopt about with bands of Iron, the Crown and Vane with the Kings Armes richly gilded, was placed on the head of it, a large top like a Belcony was about the middle of it. This being done, the Trumpets did sound, and in four hours space it was advanced upright, after which being established in the ground, six Drums did beat, and the Trumpets did sound again, great shouts and acclamations the people gave, that it did ring throughout all the whole Strand, after that came a Morice Dance finely deckt, with purple Scarfs, in their half-shirts, with a Taber and Pipe the antient Musick, and Danced round about the Maypole, after that Danced the rounds of their Liberty.*

On the other hand, a diarist – Thomas Rugg – who does not seem to have an axe to grind described it rather differently:<sup>6</sup>

*Ap. 1661. A May pole in the Strond set up. ... Under the new May pole in the Strand, 41 yards high, in the balconie that was made about on storie high, were wine, musick, and under it a knot of morris dancers, the worst that ever were.*

Rugg is not anti-morris, he is just disparaging about the quality of the dancing and so he is unenthusiastic about it. Morris dancing is to be scorned rather than railed against.

<sup>5</sup> *The Citie's Loyalty Display'd* (London, 1661), p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Rugg, *The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg 1659-1661*, edited by William L. Sachse (London: Royal Historical Society, 1961), p.175.

The second piece of evidence comes from the Oxford chronicler Anthony Wood. In his entry for 1660 – so again, at the Restoration – he writes:<sup>7</sup>

*This Holy Thursday [this dates it to 31 May, two days after the dancers in King Charles's procession] the people of Oxon were soe violent for Maypoles in opposition to the Puritans that there was numbred 12 Maypoles besides 3 or 4 morrises, etc. But no opposition appearing afterwards, the rabble flagged in their zeal; and seldom after above 1 or 2 in a year.*

The rabble and everyone else flagged in their zeal and morris dancing ceased being a badge of political allegiance. It engendered indifference instead of passion, and sank into rural obscurity before emerging in the nineteenth century in the memories of old dancers collected by antiquaries at the end of that century.

Except, of course, it didn't.

There are two arenas in which morris dancers continued to be used, and to appear, in public events. The first was in civic celebrations; and the second, parliamentary elections. In 1685 a new city charter was granted to the city of Bath by James II. A total of £15 5s. was paid for the celebration including trumpets, ringing and morris dancers; and for their meat, drink, wine, beer, &c.; 'when the charter was brought home'. Of this the dancers themselves received 5s.<sup>8</sup>

A generation later, in 1727, the city of Bath celebrated the King's birthday, described thus:<sup>9</sup>

*At four a Clock in the Morning the Bells struck out, a Bonfire was lighted, and a whole Ox set a roasting, with a Quantity of Liquor, and Huzza's to his Majesty's Health: At six the Drums beat the young Gentlemen Volunteers to Arms; by eight an hundred and sixty assembled themselves together at the Colonel's House; by ten they were ready to march, but first*

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695*, described by himself, collected from his diaries and other papers by Andrew Clark, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891-1900), I, 317.

<sup>8</sup> 'Municipal Feasting', *The Bath Chronicle* 8 November 1866, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> 'London, November 11', *The Country Journal, or, The Craftsman* 11 November 1727, p.2

*every Man drank a Glass of Brandy to his Majesty's Health,,,  
By twelve they marched thro' the best part of the Town, with  
two Sword Bearers, a set of Morris Dancers, and Martial Mu-  
sick before them; then came to the Market Place, where they  
drew up in order for Fire...*

Between these two events we have an account of proposals to celebrate, on 11 April 1698, King William III's safe return at the conclusion of the Nine Years' War. This was 'A letter to the loyal apprentices in and about London and Westminster, for their making of a noble, extraordinary, rejoycing prosession', and promised a band of music over 400 strong, distinctive liveries for each company of apprentices, champions in armour and a personification of Britannia in a procession of chariots. Moreover, 'There is to be Morris-Dancers and Anticks, with other strange Raritys'.<sup>10</sup>

At the other end of our period under review we get to 1802 and Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. This was again a celebration of peace after war:<sup>11</sup>

*On Friday last peace was formally proclaimed in this town, by the Corporation walking in procession fro the Guildhall to the Market Cross, where the Town Clerk read his Majesty's Proclamation, and repeated the same in the Butter Market, and on Angel Hill. – They were preceded by the Volunteer Corps, and a band of music playing the favourite airs of God save the King and Rule Britannia, amidst the shouts of a joyful people. – A female was carried round the town, personating the Goddess of Peace, and several emblematical representations of the woollen manufactory, with a Jack of the Green, and morris-dancers, accompanied the procession.*

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Stampe, *A Letter to the Loyal Apprentices in and about London and Westminster, for their Making of a Noble, Extraordinary, Rejoycing Prosession on Monday the Eleventh of April, 1698: Being His Majesties Coronation Day, in Congratulation of His Majestys Safe Return Home; and for the Honourable, Firm, and Lasting Peace*. London: E. Whitlock, 31 December 1697.

<sup>11</sup> 'Bury, May 12, 1802', *The Bury and Norwich Post: Or, Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, and Cambridge Advertiser*, 12 May 1802, p.2.

Though we have comparatively few records, it is not surprising that these should be within urban settings, as that is where the civic structure is in place to support such events. Where livery companies survived, as with the Tailors' Guild at Salisbury, it was natural for them to participate in civic events, so in 1746 in celebration of the defeat of the Jacobite rising at Culloden,<sup>12</sup>

*It is agreed that the Giant, Hobnob and Morris Dancers be made use of, on the next general thanksgiving day, and that a new banner and two new scarves be bought, to be worn as occasion shall offer, and this Corporation may direct; and that the same be bought by direction of the Wardens and the Chamberlain.*

As the Salisbury and Winchester Journal reported:<sup>13</sup>

*To divert the populace, the "Giant" (a colossal figure, near 25 feet high) with Hobnob, his renowned 'squire, encircled with morris dancers, went up and down the town.*

In 1784 at the celebration of the peace after the American War of Independence morris dancers again accompanied the Salisbury Giant.<sup>14</sup>

In all of these instances the community is coming together in celebration and it's perfectly obvious that morris dancers are still very much in the public eye; but similar civil processions took place in connection with parliamentary events. At Abingdon in 1722:<sup>15</sup>

*On Tuesday last Robert Hucks, Esq; our Representative in Parliament, being lately return'd from his travels, came to this Place: At Dorchester he was met by a considerable body of Horse from Wallingford...from thence they proceeded to Clifton, near which Place they were met by a Party of 300 Horse from this Town, with all the Town Musick and Drums,*

<sup>12</sup> Charles Haskins, *The Ancient Trade Guilds and Companies of Salisbury* (Salisbury: Journal Office, 1912), p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 13 October 1746.

<sup>14</sup> Sarum Morris, 'Giant and Hob-Nob'

<<http://www.sarummorris.co.uk/New%20Giant%20and%20Hobnob.htm>> [accessed 21 October 2017].

<sup>15</sup> 'Abingdon, Oct. 11', *Daily Post*, 13 October 1722, p.1. Jameson Wooders also refers to this report in his chapter in this volume.

*and two Colours belonging to this Corporation; this Body was drawn up in a very regular and handsome Manner on the Heath, where having join'd the other, they march'd in very good Order to this Town, preceded by the Servants and Musick; all the Street were strew'd with Rushes and Flowers, the Houses cover'd with Garlands and Greens, the Windows crowded with People, the Morrice-Dancers and several young Maids dress'd in White with Garlands of Flowers, met them at the Foot of the Bridge, and went before them thro' the Town, to the House of Clement Sexton, Esq; the later Mayor; all the Bells in the Town ringing; where all the Company were handsomely and splendid entertain'd at Dinner, the Town Musick playing all the Time, and several Barrels of Strong Beer were given to the Populace in the Market-Place.*

In Bury St Edmunds in 1807:<sup>16</sup>

*The election of two Representatives for this Borough came on at the Guildhall on Friday morning last, when after the usual formalities, Lord Charles Fitzroy and Lord Templetown, (the two late Members) were respectively nominated, and unanimously chosen; after which they each returned thanks, in concise speeches, for the honour conferred upon them, and were chaired round the town, (preceded by a garland and morris-dancers) amidst the loudest plaudits of the populace; among whom 12 barrels of beer were given away in different parts of the town.*

It is not coincidental that a distribution of beer is also a feature of both these processions! They are all about the bestowing of largesse on the populace. In both of these cases the celebrations were after the event. But dancers also appear in the run up to elections. The same Bury St Edmunds newspaper reported 14 years later in 1821:<sup>17</sup>

*Died. ...*

<sup>16</sup> 'Bury, May 13, 1807', *The Bury and Norwich Post: Or, Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, and Cambridge Advertiser*, 13 May 1807, p.2

<sup>17</sup> 'Died', *The Bury and Norwich Post: Or, Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, and Cambridge Advertiser*, 26 December 1821, p.2.



*On Friday last [21 December],... aged 63, William Lomax, who had been for 36 years grave-digger, in this town, and still longer, we believe, morris-dancer at the Borough elections.*

Although these records point to a well established and continuing practice, Bury St Edmunds is not normally seen as an area in which morris dancing remained endemic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Cotswolds, however, are such an area and it is not surprising to find references from there. At the election rally held at Woodstock on 23 August 1727 (one week before the actual election) morris dancers were paid £1 1s.<sup>18</sup>

In 1727 Oxfordshire and the candidate hiring the dancers were Tory. One of the most bitterly fought elections of the eighteenth century was the Oxfordshire election of 1753-54, when Sir Edward Turner and Lord Parker, supported by the Duke of Marlborough and Lords Macclesfield and Harcourt, stood this time on the new or Whig interest, against the Tories, Lord Wenman and Sir James Dashwood. *The History of Parliament* describes it as 'probably the most notorious county election of the century, and no expense or chicanery was spared by either side'.<sup>19</sup> The run-up to the election was protracted, and among the events:<sup>20</sup>

*The glorious D[uke] of M[arlborough] made his entrance into the town [Burford] ... Before his coach caper'd a long train consisting of Grenadiers, Sword bearers and Morris dancers.*

At the same election in Wootton Bassett:<sup>21</sup>

*We hear that Counsellor Provenance and \_ Cressel, Esq: intend to stand as candidates for Wotton Basset, in Wiltshire. There was a grand Entertainment given by them on Tuesday at Pinkney, near Great Sherston; at which were present above*

<sup>18</sup> Blenheim papers, vol. 368, London, British Library Add. MS 61468, fol. 183.

<sup>19</sup> 'Constituencies: Oxfordshire, 1754-1790', *The History of Parliament* <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/constituencies/oxfordshire>> [accessed 21 October 2017].

<sup>20</sup> 'Election News', *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 23 June 1753.

<sup>21</sup> 'Bath, June 11', *The Public Advertiser*, 21 June 1753, p.1.

*150 Persons, who, the next Day, went in Procession through Malmsbury, to Wotton Bassett, where they were received and attended through the Town by the Corporation, the Bells ringing, the Musick playing, and Morrice Dancers dancing before them all the Way.*

Fourteen years later at Abingdon in 1768:<sup>22</sup>

*On Friday last the Forty-five Club here, after breakfasting at one of their Members, set out to meet our new Candidate, Nathaniel Bailey, Esq. of Dover-street, attended by all the Post-Chaises and Carriages in Town, besides a large Number of Horsemen. At Half past One they returned, and paraded it round the Town in great Order and Solemnity. First came the Morrice-Dancers; after them, Drums, Fifes, Hand-bells and Violins; next, the Horsemen, two and two; these were succeeded by the Post-Chaises and other Carriages; then came a Landau and Six, with Gentlemen in it; after that, two Post-Chaises and Four with the new Candidate and Mr. Rook; a Band of French Horns brought up the Rear. A handsome Dinner was provided at the New Inn; where eighty Voters more promised, who, if they keep their Word, make up the whole Number, already engaged to the new Candidate, two hundred and six.... In short, there is nothing but grand Doings here every Day; Bells ringing all Friday and Saturday, &c. &c.*

And twenty years later again, at Banbury:<sup>23</sup>

*On Wednesday we were greatly rejoiced with the arrival of Richard Lloyd, Esq. of Baddenham, Bucks, who had been invited by the principal inhabitants, to offer himself as a candidate to represent this borough; the joy of all the people is impossible to describe. On Thursday Mr. Lloyd canvassed the town, attended by seven hundred people, all the flags, streamers and staves of the wool-combers and shag-weavers, morris dancers, fifers, &c. bells ringing, &c....*

<sup>22</sup> 'Extract of a Letter from Abingdon, Jan. 10', *The St. James's Chronicle*, 9-12 January 1768, p.4.

<sup>23</sup> 'Extract of a letter from Banbury, April 5, 1784', *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 10 April 1784, p.3.

The report continues with partisan attacks on the rival candidate Lord North.

One of the questions I asked myself in looking at these reports is, who likes morris dancers? Who uses them? In the eighteenth century we did not have the strictly demarcated partisan politics of today, allegiances could shift and party labels were fluid things, but on the whole the century was dominated by the Whigs, supporting the aristocracy, against the monarchist Tories, in what's known as the 'Whig supremacy' (and this is a gross oversimplification). As the Whigs were so dominant, factionalism arose within the grouping and as far as I can tell, most of the reports of morris dancers are associated with 'opposition Whigs'.

But now I want to turn to those two great Buckinghamshire houses, Stowe and Claydon, the first the seat of the Grenvilles, the second the seat of their rivals the Verneys.

For both of these houses the family and estate papers are preserved in great quantity: in the case of Stowe, at the Huntington Library in California, and in the case of Claydon, in Claydon House itself. I've been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go through both of these sets of papers.

There are references of payments to morris dancers in each of the families' papers. Two already well-known ones are that in 1844 the Duke of Buckingham at Stowe paid for the morris costumes for two teams to dance at his sons' coming-of-age – that being the third successive ducal coming-of-age to hire morris dancers<sup>24</sup> – and in contrast Lady Fermanagh at Claydon wrote in 1716:<sup>25</sup>

*We have whisen ayls all about us, w<sup>ch</sup> brings such abundance of rabble & y<sup>e</sup> worst sort of company round us y<sup>t</sup> I wish noe mischife Happens - old Oliffe alarmed all y<sup>e</sup> town a sunday night <.> cry<sup>ing</sup> out thives & all y<sup>e</sup> neighbours went to his assistance vpon his letting of 2 gunns - his daughter was come*

<sup>24</sup> Michael Heaney, 'With Scarfes and Garters as you Please: An Exploratory Essay in the Economics of the Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, 6.4 (1993), 491-505 & frontispiece.

<sup>25</sup> E. Fermanagh, Letter of 22 May 1716, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Films dep. 1299, and reproduced in *Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century from the Mss. at Claydon House*, edited by Margaret Maria Lady Verney. 2 vols (London: E. Benn, 1930), II.41.

*home to him without cloaths & he sent her back againe for y<sup>m</sup>, & it is thought some of the Kings Companions did it to fright y<sup>e</sup> old man. - I cant help giveing y<sup>e</sup> morrices monny when they come, for they tell me everybody doing it is y<sup>e</sup> best way to send y<sup>m</sup> goeing - there is one at S<sup>t</sup>p Claydon [margin interpolation: one at Hoggshaw] one at Buckingham & one at Stratten audley...*

Four days later she wrote:<sup>26</sup>

*I thank God all y<sup>e</sup> routs now as to y<sup>e</sup> whitsun ayles is over - it has cost 2 half Guineas and half a Crown in all - and yet I gave as Little as anybody...*

More evidence of their support for morrises and Whitsun ales is found in their respective responses to requests from their villagers for a maypole. In In 1688 five men and two women from Claydon asked the steward to write to Sir Ralph Verney to give them a maypole as had been the previous practice, and they were given ten shillings towards the same. The same amount was given several times over the following decade.<sup>27</sup>

Now this may seem generous till you compare it with the Stowe accounts. These are a century later but inflation in the interim meant that Sir Ralph Verney's ten shillings would have been about thirteen shillings had he given an equivalent amount in 1782.

It was in 1782 that Lord Temple at Stowe, to quote his steward's words in instructing the estates keeper:<sup>28</sup>

*...gives the people of Whitchurch a Maypole, which they are to fetch on Wednesday, you will therefore get some Timber down in Grenville's Wood as fall [sic] as you can, in order to have some proper for the purpose. I fancy it must be of three pieces, viz. -- a Stock, middle piece, and Spire. The Stock I suppose to be about 25 feet long, and 18 or 20 inches square*

<sup>26</sup> E. Fermanagh, Letter of 26 May 1716, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Films dep. 1299.

<sup>27</sup> Claydon House, Verney papers 4/5/41/31; 4/5/41/46; 4/5/42/8; 4/5/47/18; 4/5/47/21; 4/5/49/37; 4/5/49/40; 4/5/51/14.

<sup>28</sup> San Marino, Huntington Library, STG Correspondence Box 225, Folder 17, fol.1<sup>r</sup>.

*at the bottom, which will diminish 5 or 6 inches, as it may happen, the next piece of course must diminish in proportion, and be 20 or 25 feet long as it happens, and then any long taper Small Tree for a spier. If such pieces as I have described [crossed through: may] are not proper let them have such as are so.*

Not only is this a much more 'hands-on' approach by Lord Temple, we also have the valuation of the wood supplied, exactly as specified, and it cost £7 18s 4½d.<sup>29</sup> In other words Lord Verney's ten shillings represented around one tenth of the true cost of a maypole.

That gives a flavour of their attitudes to morris, and it's backed up by literally dozens of payments to teams visiting Stowe on their annual circuit,<sup>30</sup> but hardly any at all from Claydon.

In the case of both families we have sets of election accounts, though these vary in their detail – in most cases they are just summaries. But it's not surprising that it's the Stowe accounts that provide more detail. We have the accounts for expenditure of George Grenville in elections as M.P. for Buckingham in 1741 – that's the town not the county, though Richard Grenville was contesting the county at the same time:<sup>31</sup>

*8 Morrice given by Chandler 3 by Doggett*

*Winchendon Westcot Boarstal Dyntor Horwood Adstock*

*Preston Chandon Northmaston Tuston     5 15 6*

(There are only ten places mentioned for the 11 performances; and each performance was paid 10s 6d. Contrast this with the Oxfordshire election in 1727, when the dancers' payment was £1 1s.)

On the next leaf we have the total spent in the county so it seems that the accounts for the two elections have been conjoined. But the total expense for the county was £926 – that's equivalent to around £60,000 today. The morris dancers are clearly only a minimal ex-

<sup>29</sup> San Marino, Huntington Library, STG Correspondence Box 225, Folder 17, fol. 2v.

<sup>30</sup> Heaney, 'With Scarfes and Garters as you Please'.

<sup>31</sup> San Marino, Huntington Library, STG Elections Box 1 Folder 4.

pense – much more is spent on bands of music, on ringers and on food and drink for the populace.

The map (Figure 1) indicates the places in which performances were held, and the seats to the two county families. No centre of gravity is obvious from the relative location for either of the two providers of the morrises, who have not been further identified.

According to *The History of Parliament* ‘Grenville and Verney seem to have had no liking for each other... but Verney was never claimed by the opposition’;<sup>32</sup> George Grenville, on the other hand, was very much a government man.

I do not think we have enough evidence to draw firm inferences – a slight hint of a support base among Opposition Whigs – which may seem surprising, as *a priori* the Tories might be expected to be more sympathetic to customary practices – but the Stowe and Claydon contrasts show, I think, that personalities were the predominating factor rather than policies. In the nineteenth century members of the Stowe household were certainly Tories, but by that time the significance of party allegiance had changed. The Tories were certainly dominant in the 1727 Oxfordshire election, but by 1753 the Duke of Marlborough supported the Whigs against them.

Most activity died down after the great Reform Act of 1832, and certainly after 1854 when the secret ballot was introduced. We do have one late reference from 1832 itself when at Chacombe near Banbury:<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> ‘Member Biographies: Verney, Ralph, 2nd Earl Verney [I] (1714-91), of Claydon House, Bucks.’, *The History of Parliament* <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/verney-ralph-1714-91>> [accessed 21 October 2017].

<sup>33</sup> A Spectator, ‘[Letter] To the Editor of the *Oxford Journal*’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 16 June 1832, p.2.

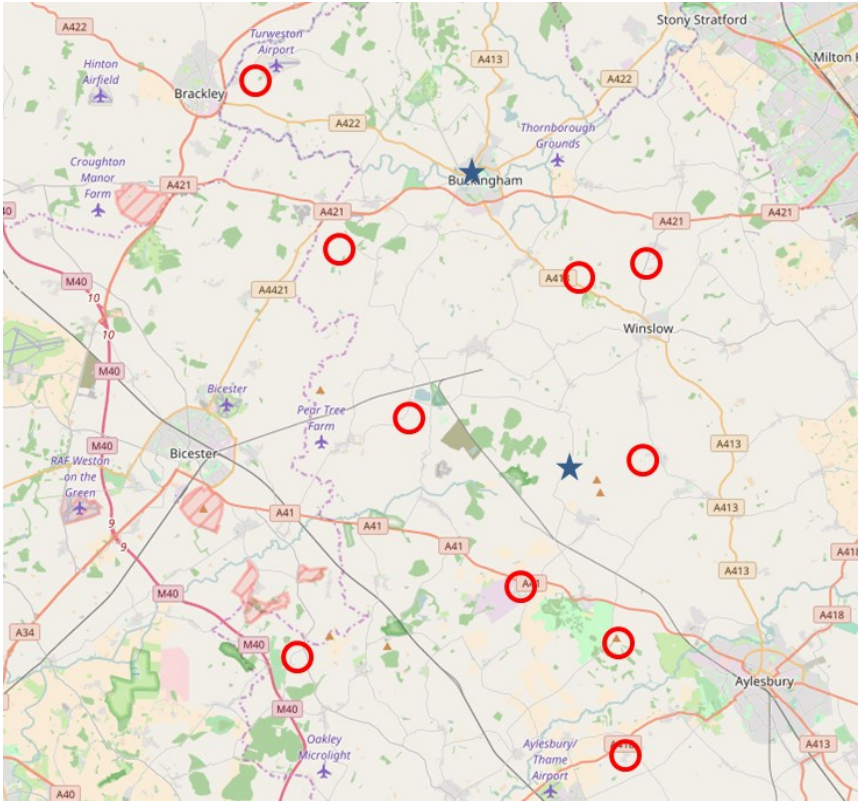


Figure 1: Buckingham election morrises 1741. (Red circles: performance venues; blue stars: country seats (Stowe northerly, Claydon southerly.)

*It appears that it is the annual custom of the Club of that village to assemble on Whit-Monday, with their banner, music, morris dancers, &c., to enjoy the usual convivialities of villagers. On this occasion, to mark their respect for the worthy resident of the Priory, who at this time aspires to the honour of representing the freemen of Banbury in Parliament, the villagers had manufactured a flag in their rustic way, kept out by sticks, to exhibit more conspicuously the very honourable motto – a more gratifying one than King’s could give – viz., “Mr. Pye, the Poor Man’s Friend”. ...*

In the event Pye withdrew after there were riots and disturbances in Banbury; he would have been a Liberal supporter if elected (the bor-

ough was still in the hands of the Marquis of Bute, and his subsequent nominee did win the seat for the Liberals).

I think the main lesson that emerges from this review is that, far from being invisible to the upper classes, morris dancers were known to them and used by them as a means of engaging the support of the local population as part of the civic and political process. Ironically, it may have been the introduction of the secret ballot and the disappearance of large-scale bribery of the electorate that took it off the public radar just as the first antiquaries were beginning to take their own interest in it.



Peter Bearon

## **Coconut Dances in Lancashire, Mallorca, Provence and on the Nineteenth-century Stage\***

This article started life many years ago when I realized that the tune used by Els Moretons in Mallorca bears a striking similarity to the tune collected by Anne Geddes Gilchrist and known as ‘The Rochdale Coconut Dance’.

In May 2016, I eventually saw a performance by Els Moretons and posted a video of them on the Traditional Customs Facebook page. This led to some discussion as to whether there could be a connection between the coconut dance traditions in Mallorca and Lancashire.

The first part of this article considers the similarities between the Mallorcan and Lancashire dances. The article goes on to consider a third coconut dance tradition from the Provence region of France. It then looks at the many references in newspapers throughout the nineteenth century to coconut (‘cocoa nut’) dances on the stage and in circuses. Finally, it considers the similarities between the tunes mentioned above.

I have drawn extensively on previous work undertaken by both Theresa Buckland and Roy Judge, but hope that there is enough new material and comparative analysis to be of interest.

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\* The scope of this chapter did not include consideration of any potentially racist aspects of coconut dances, or of the obvious racism in some of the quoted historical sources. Neither the author or the publishers (EFDSS and the HDS) condone any folk dance that could be considered racially offensive through (for example) the use of blackface make-up. Read about how EFDSS is reassessing its historical archives at <https://www.efdss.org/reassessing-our-archives>.

## **A comparison of Els Moretons, Manacor, Mallorca and the Coconut Dancers in the Rossendale Valley, Lancashire**

### **The two traditions today**

#### **Els Moretons**

Els Moretons is a dance group from Manacor, the second-largest town in Mallorca, which lies approximately 7 miles inland from the

south-east coast. The present team is comprised of boys of around 12 years old. They perform at the Festes de Sant Domingo. This festival used to occur on 4 August, but support for the custom dwindled as the people of Manacor preferred the coast to the town at this time of year. The last time the Moretons danced on 4 August was in 1963. After a few sporadic occurrences during the 1970s, the Festes de Sant Domingo was moved to May in 1985. Since then the Moretons have danced out every year. The actual date in May is a bit of a moveable feast and is very difficult to ascertain very far in advance.

The main times that Els Moretons perform are the Friday evening and the Saturday daytime of the Festes when they dance through the streets of Manacor accompanied by Giants, Caparrots (Big Heads) and s'Alicorn (a rather strange character with a dog's head that is dressed in a priest's robe. It is smaller than the Giants and larger than the Caparrots and sits in a three-wheeled chair). In 2016 the dates were 21 and 22 May. This was unfortunately after I had left the island as I had been told by two sources that the Festes would take place a week earlier. Fortunately, Els Moretons also danced at the opening celebrations of the Festes de Sant Domingo which in 2016 were during the evening of Tuesday 17 May. This event started with Els Moretons processing into the old convent cloisters (the convent is now used for council offices and a library). They then presented a basket of flowers on a temporary altar. After this there were some long speeches, including one by a Dominican brother who was born in the area, followed by Els Moretons going once through their

dance. After the close of the celebration biscuits and wine were provided for the audience.

My video of this performance can be found as 'Els Moretons, Manacor, Mallorca' on the Vimeo platform and also on the website for this book (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Els Moretons, Manacor, Mallorca (video by Peter Bearon).<sup>1</sup>

### **Rossendale Valley Coconut Dancers**

The only current practitioners of the coconut dance in the Rossendale Valley are the Britannia Coconut Dancers. On the Saturday of Easter weekend (commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as Easter Saturday), the Britannia Coconut Dancers start the day at the Old Travellers Rest Inn on the border between Britannia and Whitworth at 9 a.m. Accompanied by members of the Stacksteads Silver Band, they then dance through the streets of the town until they reach the centre of Bacup around lunchtime. At this point they split into two groups for a short while. After this they continue their perambulation finishing at about 7:30 p.m. Details of the tour can be found on the Coconutters' website.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Available at <<http://www.vwml.org/hom>>.

<sup>2</sup> Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup, 'Easter Saturday 2017', <<https://www.coconutters.co.uk/events/easter-saturday/>> [accessed 12 October 2017].

My video of some of the 2016 performance can be found as 'Britannia Coconut Dancers Easter 2016' on the Vimeo platform (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Britannia Coconut Dancers, Bacup (video by Peter Bearon).<sup>3</sup>

## The history of the two traditions

### Els Moretons

In the past there have been various hypotheses regarding the origin of the dance. According to the Els Moretons website,<sup>4</sup> some researchers believed that the dance was tied to the arrival of the Dominican Friars in Manacor in 1576. Another researcher believed that the dance was introduced in the eighteenth century by a monk, Pere Bennàssar, first son of a Spanish Dominican convert. There are also researchers who believe that despite there being no documentation prior to the nineteenth century, it is a war dance inspired by the old customs of the Arabs. An old Spanish soldier is supposed to have witnessed a nearly identical dance being performed in a Moroccan camp to celebrate victory after a battle.

The current view of the organizers of Els Moretons is that the dance was created by Dominican Father Pius Caldentey Perrelló in 1854 and that it was created to heighten the papal dogma of the Immacu-

<sup>3</sup> Available at <<http://www.vwml.org/hom>>.

<sup>4</sup> Els Moretons, 'El ball dels Moretons' <<http://www.elmoretons.com/moreto.html>> [accessed 12 October 2017].

late Conception of Mary.<sup>5</sup> This still begs the question of where Father Pius got the ideas for the dance.

### Rossendale Valley Coconut Dancers

Although the Britannia Coconut Dancers are the only extant team in the Rossendale Valley, there have in the past been other teams. Theresa Buckland has written a number of articles on the tradition.<sup>6</sup> The longest lived of these teams up to the First World War was the Tunstead Mill Nutters who then handed on their traditions to the Britannia team in the 1920s. The Tunstead Mill team was formed in 1857, although the first mention of this date is in newspapers in 1907 when they celebrated their jubilee.<sup>7</sup> The date of 1857 is repeated in subsequent years' reports, in 1909 (52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary),<sup>8</sup> 1911 (54<sup>th</sup> anniversary)<sup>9</sup> and 1914 (this report makes specific mention of the custom being started in Tunstead (Bacup) in 1857).<sup>10</sup>

Although there are no specific newspaper references to the Tunstead Mill Nutters prior to 1907, there are other references to Coconut Dancers in the area. The first newspaper reports mentioning Easter-tide coconut dancing by name occur in 1882.<sup>11</sup> However, the *Rochdale Observer* includes the following in a report on the Whitworth Wakes in September 1860:<sup>12</sup>

*The rush cart, which from time immemorial has graced or disgraced the scene, was this time given up, owing, among other causes, we think to the growing intelligence of the in-*

<sup>5</sup> Antoni Oliver, email to the author, 10 January 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Theresa Buckland, 'Black Faces, Garlands, and Coconuts: Exotic Dances on Street and Stage', *Dance Research Journal*, 22.2 (Fall 1990), 1-12; 'The Tunstead Mill Nutters of Rossendale, Lancashire', *Folk Music Journal*, 5.2 (1986), 132-49; "'Th'Owd Pagan Dance": Ritual, Enchantment, and an Enduring Intellectual Paradigm', *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement*, 11.4/12.1 (2001/2002), 415-52.

<sup>7</sup> 'Local Notes', *Burnley Express*, 30 March 1907, p. 7, col. 4 and 'Nut Dancing, Curious Rossendale Custom', *Bury Times*, 3 April 1907, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>8</sup> "East Lancashire, Trippers Leave for Seaside", *Lancashire Evening Post*, 10 April 1909, p. 3, col. 4 and 'Rossendale "Cocoanutters"', *Manchester Courier and General Advertiser*, 12 April 1909, p. 10 col. 5.

<sup>9</sup> "'Nutter's" Carnival, Fifty-Fourth Celebration of a Quaint Custom', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 17 April 1911, p. 10 col. 6.

<sup>10</sup> 'Rossendale's Easter Dance', *Manchester Evening News*, 13 April 1914, p. 3 col. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Buckland, 'Black Faces, Garlands, and Coconuts', p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> 'Whitworth, The Wakes', *Rochdale Observer*, 15 September 1860, p. 3 col. 2.

*habitants. A feeble attempt has [sic] to keep up the boorish custom was made by the youths of Shawforth, and resulted in the construction of a rush cart there, but so uncouth an object that we do not apprehend its reproduction. A fantastic piece of timber framework clothed with heather, slightly ornamented, and mounted on a cart was drawn about Bridgemill, &c., accompanied by a number of its young men, in grotesque attire, as dancers, a portion of whom were begrimed over with some dark compound, and bedixened out in some red trappings, for the purpose of mimicking the antics of South Sea cannibals in a cocoa-nut dance, a parody, forsooth, upon their own intellectual progress.*

It is unclear from this whether the cocoa-nut dancers mentioned are from Bridgemill which lies more or less in the centre of Whitworth, or Shawforth which lies between Whitworth and Britannia, approximately 1.5 miles to the north of Whitworth. However, this report shows that coconut dancers were performing on the streets to the south of Bacup in 1860, only three years after the Tunstead Mill Nutters were reported to be formed.

On the website of the current Britannia team it says: <sup>13</sup>

*...the dances are known to be originated with Moorish pirates which the costume is that of what a Moorish pirate would wear. The Moorish pirates which originated from North Africa are said to have settled in Cornwall and they became employed in local mines. As mines and quarries opened in Lancashire in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century some of the Cornish men headed north bringing their mining expertise with them and it is with these men that the dances were reputedly brought into this area, in particular two Cornish men who came to work in Whitworth (this was relayed by a former team member many years ago).*

<sup>13</sup> Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup, 'History' <<https://www.coconutters.co.uk/history/>> [accessed 13 October 2017].

It is true that there were Cornish settlers in the area. However, on checking census records for 1851, 1861 and 1871, it appears that the first records of Cornish settlers in the area are in 1871. There are families living in Tunstead Mill, Stacksteads and Lee Mill (a small settlement about half a mile from Tunstead Mill). Only one of these families has anyone working as a miner – Richard Thomas in Tunstead Bottoms. His youngest child is 9 in 1871 and was born in Cornwall, so it is likely the family did not move into the area until after 1861. The rest of his family and the other Cornish families are recorded as working mainly in the cotton industry, with a few who are labourers. Most of the families have young children born in Cornwall, which suggests that there was a migration into the area of families from Cornwall between 1861 and 1871. This would be too late to have brought the dance with them as the Tunstead Mill Nutters were reported as having been formed in 1857. There are no families in Whitworth in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses shown as originating in Cornwall.

Roy Judge believed that the coconut dance ‘derived in some way from the kind of stage performance given by the Chiarini family’.<sup>14</sup> This may seem unlikely at first glance, but the Chiarini family were a very popular entertainment group on the stage in the nineteenth century. They did circus acts, but there are also many playbills showing that they were performing the ‘Pas de Coco’ in the 1830s and 1840s and later. There were other theatrical groups who performed the dance, but it was the Chiarini family that seems to have made it particularly popular.

The following extract from the *Halifax Guardian* in August 1838 shows how the transmission from stage dance to street dance might have occurred:<sup>15</sup>

*The Chiarini family, in their admirable Cocoa Nut Dance, still elicit applause. This dance has now (we believe) been performed four weeks, and it appears as likely to run another*

<sup>14</sup> Roy Judge, “‘The Old English Morris Dance’: Theatrical Morris 1801–1880’, *Folk Music Journal*, 7.3 (1997), 311–50.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Ryan’s Circus’, *Halifax Guardian*, 4 August 1838, p. 3, col. 1.



*four weeks. Mr Ryan, by the aid of the Chiarinis, has made a decided hit in this dance. At every street-corner in Halifax, and in every bye-lane in the country, young men and children may be observed imitating the grotesque features of the Cocoa Nut Ballet, and it is ten to one, that, out of 20 lads whom you meet whistling in the town, nineteen have the Cocoa Nut tune in their mouths.*

Roy Judge also believed that ‘shadowy figures [from the theatre] [. . .] were the means by which dance ideas and techniques were passed from one context to another’.<sup>16</sup> The coconut dance as a stage dance is further considered below.

There was also a Cocoa Nut Dance performed by the Morris dancers in Buxton in 1859<sup>17</sup> – this is only two years after the Tunstead Mill Nutters were reportedly formed.

## **The costumes**

### **Els Moretons**

Each dancer wears a headdress consisting of a red and yellow head-band with a silver crescent at the front. The points of the crescent face upwards. Red and yellow ribbons are attached to the rear of the headdress and fall down the back of the dancer to his waist.

Each dancer wears a loose-fitting white shirt and blue breeches. Over the top of the breeches is a short, patterned skirt trimmed in either red or yellow (three of each).

Each dancer wears long white socks with either red or yellow canvas shoes. The colour of the shoes matches the colour of the trimming on the skirt. These are fastened with Roman gartering over the white socks.

Each dancer has small wooden round blocks attached to his hands and just above the knees. There is a further, slightly larger, round

<sup>16</sup> Judge, “The Old English Morris Dance”, p. 339.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Buxton Well Flowering, Midsummer-1859, Second Edition’, *Buxton Herald*, 23 June 1859, p. 8, col. 4.



wooden block attached to the waist by a belt. The block on the waist is worn centrally.

The dance costume is very similar to that seen in a photograph from 1943 that appears on the Els Moretons website,<sup>18</sup> although this is in black-and-white. In this photograph the dancers appear to have small pompoms on the top of their canvas shoes.

### **Britannia Coconut Dancers**

The Britannia dancers wear a similar costume to their forebears, the Tunstead Mill Nutters.

Each dancer wears a white hat decorated with braid, a feather, pompoms and a rosette together with a black sweater and black knee breeches with bells on the side. The hems of the breeches are trimmed with red. The dancers wear white socks and Lancashire clogs. Over the top of the breeches they wear a 'kilt' which is white with three horizontal red stripes. The kilt has a white strap which goes over either the right or left shoulder.

Each dancer has small wooden discs attached to their hands and just above the knees. As with Els Moretons there is another larger block on the waist attached by a belt. This block is smaller than Els Moretons' waist block and is worn slightly to one side.

The faces of the dancers are blackened.

## **The dances**

### **Els Moretons**

Only the first two figures of the dance have any age. The rest of the figures have been added from 1960 onwards. According to their website, there are currently seven figures of which six were danced when I recorded them. The figures are very simple with each figure lasting once through the tune. The dancers stop between figures.

<sup>18</sup> Els Moretons, 'El ball dels Moretons'.

The characteristic movement in all the figures is clashing the wooden blocks held in the hands with those on the knees and waist and clashing them together.

### **Britannia Coconut Dancers**

The Britannia dancers have five garland dances plus two coconut dances. The coconut dances are quite complex but have the same distinctive movement of clashing the wooden blocks together in a similar way to Els Moretons. They also clash hands with other dancers, which the Moretons do not.

There is one other similar feature to Els Moretons. During the dance pairs of dancers point fingers at each other. The Els Moretons' pointing movement involves putting their hands together and pointing to one side and then the other.

### **The tunes**

#### **Els Moretons**

Figure 3 is the version of the tune as published on Els Moretons' website.<sup>19</sup> In private correspondence with the group I have been told that the earliest manuscript version of the tune is from the early twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Britannia Coconut Dancers**

The Britannia Coconut Dancers use one tune ('Tip Toe Polka'<sup>21</sup>) when dancing with the brass band plus a second tune ('Shooting Star') when dancing to concertinas. I do not know how long these tunes have been associated with the dance and neither tune bears any resemblance to Els Moretons' tune. However, there is another

<sup>19</sup> Els Moretons, 'El ball dels Moretons'.

<sup>20</sup> Antoni Oliver, email to the author, 11 January 2015.

<sup>21</sup> The tune goes under various other names including 'Tip Top Polka' and 'Clow Bank'. Mary Yates, who was brought up in Bacup, has recently given the author a copy of a handwritten manuscript for a piano arrangement in which the tune is simply entitled 'Bacup "Nutters" Marching Tune'. This is thought to have been written out for Mary's father in Bacup in the 1950s.

well-known coconut dance tune, which is commonly called the 'Rochdale Coconut Dance'.



Figure 3: Els Moretons tune.

The tune known as the 'Rochdale Coconut Dance' was sent to Anne Geddes Gilchrist in 1927 by Henry Brierley. He was in his eighties at the time and said that he remembered the coconut dancers and the tune from when he was a lad between 1852 and 1860. Rochdale is approximately three miles from Whitworth and six miles from Bacup. I have been told by other dancers in the area that there is no record of coconut dancers in Rochdale. However, Henry Brierley clearly states in his correspondence with Anne Gilchrist that the Rochdale carts were 'generally attended by a band of what they called "Cocoanut Dancers"'.<sup>22</sup> However, in a subsequent letter he says that he never saw them actually dancing, but just standing and beating out the rhythm of the tune. He continues: 'perhaps I ought to say I only remember them thus, for as they must have accompanied the

<sup>22</sup> Henry Brierley, Letter to Anne Geddes Gilchrist, 19 February 1927, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, AGG/4/50.

Rushcart some job of dancing or prancing with the cart drawers seems inevitable'.<sup>23</sup>

Henry Brierley was an antiquary and was very involved in various Lancashire parish register transcriptions. Prior to his correspondence with Anne Geddes Gilchrist, he had published a book, *The Rochdale Reminiscences* in which he also mentions the cocoanut dancers.<sup>24</sup> Whether being an antiquarian makes his evidence more or less reliable I am not sure. However, his work on the Lancashire Parish Records would require accuracy and copies of these transcriptions are still being used today. I would therefore suggest that his evidence should generally be taken as reliable.

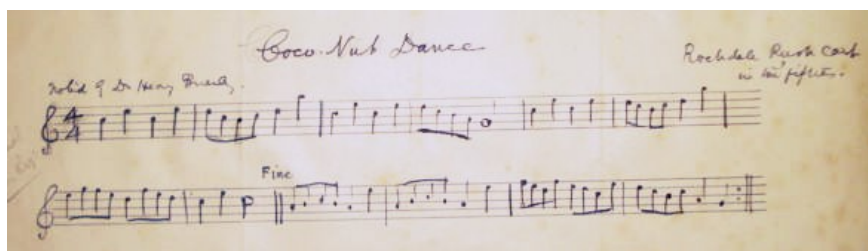


Figure 4: Rochdale Coco Nut Dance.

Figure 4 shows the tune as sent by Henry Brierley to Anne Geddes Gilchrist.<sup>25</sup>

The tune used by Els Moretons and the Rochdale Coconut tune share a lot of similarities which are discussed below.

## Coconut Dances in the Provence Region of France: Lei Cocot

There is a third coconut dance tradition called 'Lei Cocot' or 'Les Cocons' from the Provence region of France. All the current exponents seem to be 'Groupes Folkloriques'. They do, however, all use the same tune which does not appear to be related to either the Els

<sup>23</sup> Henry Brierley, Letter to Anne Geddes Gilchrist, 2 March 1927, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, AGG/4/50.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Brierley, *The Rochdale Reminiscences* (Rochdale: Rochdale Times, 1923), p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Enclosed with letter from Henry Brierley to Anne Geddes Gilchrist dated 2 March 1927, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, AGG/4/50.

Moretons or Rochdale Coconut tunes or to those used by the current Britannia Coconut Dancers.

According to Theresa Buckland the dance appears to have died out in the 1890s.<sup>26</sup> However, a group did perform at a 'jeux floraux' organized by 'Le Félibrige' in Aix-en-Provence in 1913.<sup>27</sup> Le Félibrige is an organization originally set up in 1854 to promote all things Provençal. The earliest reference to 'Lei Cocot' seems to be in 1864 in *Lou tambourin* by François Vidal.<sup>28</sup> 'Tambourin' is the name given to a type of drum played in Provence. The book is divided into three parts. The first two concern the history of the instrument and the method of playing the galoubet (a three-hole pipe) and tambourin. The third section is devoted to the national airs of Provence. It is in this section that the tune for 'Lei Cocot' is given, plus a short text in the Provençal dialect.

Figure 5 shows the tune as given by Vidal and used by the current revival groups. The accompanying text translates as:<sup>29</sup>

*Eight, ten or sixteen dancers wearing white breeches, coloured shirts with their faces disguised, each having eight coconuts fixed to the knees, breasts, hands and also the elbows, go forward to their partner and back and cross over in all directions, and dance gaily to this tune, which they accompany in rhythm by hitting their instruments against each other, or even against those of the dancers they meet, whether they are opposite or alongside.*

*I was told by an old witness, that not more than fifty years ago, one named Curet (from Aix-en-Provence), then a dancer at the theatre in Lyon, taught the chorus of our theatre the ballet Paul et Virginie, and that the steps which the pretend Moors of Provence have executed, very gracefully, ever since,*

<sup>26</sup> Buckland, 'Black Faces, Garlands, and Coconuts', p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> 'Jeux floraux et cours d'amour, Aix-en-Provence fête Mistral', *Le Radical*, 13 May 1913, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>28</sup> François Vidal, *Lou tambourin: istori de l'estrumen provençau* (Aix: Remondet-Aubin; Avignon: J. Roumanille, 1864), p. 280.

<sup>29</sup> Translation by Alison Whitaker and Thierry Cerisier using Frédéric Mistral, *Tresor dòu Félibrige: dictionnaire provençal-français* ([Aix]: Remondet-Aubin, 1878).

would be nothing more than the dance of the Negroes performed in this ballet. – Whoever doesn't believe it, should see for themselves.



Figure 5: Lei Cocot.

In *Statistique du Département des Bouche-du-Rhone* (1826), a section is devoted in great detail to the customs and dances of the area.<sup>30</sup> This mentions many of the dances included in Vidal's book, but makes no mention of 'Lei Cocot'. Given the detail within the book on the various customs and dances, this would tend to imply that the dance did not exist in the area in 1826. Although this is by no means conclusive, it would seem likely that 'Lei Cocot' appeared sometime between 1826 and 1864. Together with the theatre reference in *Lou tambourin*, there appears to be a similar pattern to the Rossendale Dance.

Monique Decitre includes 'Lei Cocot' in her *Dances of France*, published in 1951.<sup>31</sup> The dance is published in great detail, but it is unclear whether the figures are from the nineteenth century or a product of the revival.

## Cocoa Nut Dances on the Nineteenth-century Stage

The earliest reference I have found to the cocoa nut dance being performed on the stage is in 1824. The *Public Ledger and Daily Advertis-*

<sup>30</sup> Christophe de Villeneuve, *Statistique du Département des Bouche-du-Rhone* (Marseille: Antoine Ricard, 1826) III: 208-211.

<sup>31</sup> Monique Decitre, *Dancez la France* (Paris: Dumas, 1951) II: 214-218.

er carried the following advertisement for Davis's Royal Amphitheatre, Westminster Bridge, London: <sup>32</sup>

*EVERY EVENING during the Week, the unprecedentedly magnificent Representation of The BATTLE of WATERLOO; with, first time in England a grand Equestrian Ballet, called The CARNIVAL of VENICE; or, The Masquerade on a Horse in full gallop. Invented by Mons. Ducrow, and in which, without quitting his Horse's back, he will personate the Characters of Polichinel, Pierrot, Harlequin, Colombine, Bacchus, and Adonis. After which, Exercises, by the Turkish Mare Beda, and the little Horse Harlequin – Mons. DUCROW's Feats on Two Horses. To conclude with a new Entertainment, by Mr. W. Barrymore, called AGAMEMNON, the Faithful Negro; in the course of which, a grand Ballet and Cocoa Nut Dance.*

In the same paper later in the month there is a review of the performance:<sup>33</sup>

*DAVIS'S AMPHITHEATRE. – We again visited this amusing and fashionable place of diversion on Saturday night, and were highly gratified to find 'The Battle of Waterloo' had lost none of its attractions by its frequent repetitions. We have already given in detail our opinion on this meritorious piece; suffice it therefore to say it is, in our estimation, the best got up Military Spectacle ever produced at any Theatre; Du Crow's Horsemanship, we repeat, stamps him, without exception, unrivalled in the equestrian art. The Horses, undoubtedly, for tractability and beauty, are unparalleled; and as to their manoeuvres, particularly those of the Turkish mare Beda, and the little horse Harlequin, they must be seen to be believed, as they absolutely beggar all description. The entertainments concluded with a pleasing Bagatelle, called 'Agamemnon; or, the Faithful Negro', which met with much applause from the Deities in the higher regions, though candour compels us to say, that neither consistency nor*

<sup>32</sup> 'Davis's Royal Amphitheatre', *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 7 June 1824, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>33</sup> 'Davis's Amphitheatre', *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1824, p. 3, col. 5.

*probability form its prominent feature. In the course of the Piece is introduced a new Ballet by Monsieur Chappe, in which that Gentleman and Mrs. Serle were the leading characters; a Cocoa Nut Dance, by Negroes, forms a part of the Ballet. We can only say of it, that we heard no complaints of its brevity.*

Although 'The Battle of Waterloo' ran for many weeks, Agamemnon with its associated cocoa nut dance ran for only approximately three weeks.

By February the following year, the Theatre Royal in Manchester was advertising the last week of 'The Battle of Waterloo' together with a production of 'The Slave's Revenge'. This had a much larger billing as this advertisement from the Manchester Mercury shows:<sup>34</sup>

*THEATRE-ROYAL MANCHESTER*

*THE LAST WEEK OF WATERLOO; And Second Night of a New Piece, called*

*THE SLAVE'S REVENGE*

*THIS PRESENT TUESDAY, the Evening's Entertainments will commence with an entirely new interesting Melo Drama, in two acts, (partly founded on facts) with new Dresses and Decorations.*

*THE SLAVE'S REVENGE*

*This Piece written by and produced under the direction of Mr W. Barrymore; the Music composed by Mr. Thomas Hughes; the Scenery painted by Mr. Phillips; and the Machinery executed by Mr. Caygill, - In the course of the Piece, will be introduced the celebrated COCOA NUT DANCE.*

The review of 'The Slave's Revenge' in the same paper the following week is not particularly flattering, but does include the following: 'In the course of the piece the cocoa-nut dance was introduced, in which slaves, with a shell in each hand, strike a tune on others attached to the knees and chest - a curious specimen of African amusement.'<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> 'Theatre-Royal, Manchester' *Manchester Mercury*, 8 February 1825, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>35</sup> 'Theatre-Royal', *Manchester Mercury*, 15 February 1825, p. 3, col. 2.



In the same month at the Olympic Circus in Liverpool, a 'Grand Cocoa Nut Dance' was included in a production depicting Captain Cook's second voyage to the Sandwich Islands.<sup>36</sup>

The cocoa nut dance, coconut dance or Pas de Coco appear regularly in advertisements and reviews throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and all over the country.

During the 1830s the dance is often called the SHAW-WA-SHEW and crops up in productions of the melodrama 'Mungo Park', often in a circus environment although also in theatres, especially in pantomimes. The names of the circuses change: Batty's Circus,<sup>37</sup> Ryan's Circus,<sup>38</sup> Hengler's Circus,<sup>39</sup> Cooke's Royal Circus<sup>40</sup> and others. They all appear to have similar acts and were probably closely connected.

There is also more than one group of performers doing the dance. In addition to the Chiarini family mentioned above, there were the Dalhi Family,<sup>41</sup> the Four Liliputian Africans,<sup>42</sup> the Four Kaffirs,<sup>43</sup> the Ethiopian Brothers,<sup>44</sup> the Plege Family,<sup>45</sup> the Ginnett Family,<sup>46</sup> the Four Ricardos<sup>47</sup> and many others. However, it is the Chiarini family that gets the highest billing throughout the 1840s.

The dance is also often performed by the 'Corps de Ballet'<sup>48</sup> or by juvenile groups.<sup>49</sup> It appears to be very much a novelty act that is shoe-horned into all sorts of productions, although mainly circuses and pantomimes. The setting of the dance's supposed origins varies from

<sup>36</sup> 'Olympic Circus, Christian Street, Liverpool' *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 February 1825, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>37</sup> 'Unprecedented Attraction at Batty's Circus Royal' *Hampshire Advertiser*, 8 March 1834, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>38</sup> 'Ryan's Circus, North Street' *Bristol Mercury*, 20 September 1834, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>39</sup> 'Hengler's Grand Cirque, Curzon Hall, Birmingham' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 30 April 1868, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>40</sup> 'Cooke's Royal Circus, Nethergate, Dundee' *Dundee Courier*, 15 March 1880, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>41</sup> 'Royal Grecian Saloon, City Road' *Morning Advertiser*, 7 August 1839, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>42</sup> 'Ducrow's National Olympic Arena of Arts' *Bristol Mercury*, 2 April 1842, p. 8, col. 1.

<sup>43</sup> 'Lincoln Arboretum' *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 2 August 1878, p. 4, col. 5.

<sup>44</sup> 'Red Cow Gardens, Dalston' *Morning Advertiser*, 2 August 1844, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>45</sup> 'Theatre-Royal, Ducrow's' *York Herald and General Advertiser*, 17 June 1843, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>46</sup> 'Ryan's Royal Circus, North Street, Bristol' *Bristol Mercury*, 28 November 1840, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>47</sup> 'For coming Pantomimes, The Five Ricardos', *The Era*, 31 August 1879, p. 15, col. 1.

<sup>48</sup> 'Public Amusements at Liverpool, Theatre Royal' *The Era*, 27 February 1853, p. 11, col. 4.

<sup>49</sup> 'Hengler's Grand Cirque, Haymarket, Newcastle-on-Tyne' *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 5 October 1868, p. 2, col. 1.

the West Indies,<sup>50</sup> to Africa,<sup>51</sup> to India,<sup>52</sup> to China<sup>53</sup> and to the South Seas,<sup>54</sup> depending on which production the dance is being performed in.

By the 1870s, the dance is sometimes referred to as the 'old' cocoa-nut dance. It was also performed at the Folies Bergères Music Hall in Paris which had engaged the 'celebrated Hanlon Family'. A review in *The Era* gives a description of various acts and continues: 'Then the trio of juveniles go through the famous old cocoa-nut dance'.<sup>55</sup>

By the 1890s the dance has become firmly established in the repertoire of minstrel groups such as the Gaiety Minstrels,<sup>56</sup> the Stowell Memorial Amateur Minstrels<sup>57</sup> etc. particularly as part of a sketch called 'Granny's Birthday'.

One reference which may be of particular importance in tying the stage productions in with 'Lei Cocot' is this extract from a review in October 1870 of London Amusements: 'The Olympic Programme has been varied by [. . .] the production of a new extravaganza called "Paul and Virginia," borrowing, however, nothing from the original story but the title'.<sup>58</sup>

The same review goes on to say: 'but the best thing in the extravaganza is a cocoa-nut dance by "ten little niggers" performed in faint remembrance as to tune and style of the original one introduced at the Strand Theatre thirty years since by the Chiarini family'.

Another review of the same production states: 'One laughable effect is the introduction of "ten little niggers" who dance to the well-known tune with a cocoa nut accompaniment'.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 'Splendid Equestrian Novelties, Circus, Widemarsh St., Hereford' *Hereford Times*, 29 October 1836, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>51</sup> 'For Eight Nights Only, Ducrow's National Establishment' *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 December 1841, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>52</sup> 'Preston, Theatre Royal and Opera House' *The Era*, 6 January 1878, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>53</sup> 'Cooke's Circus' *Aberdeen Journal*, 26 January 1886, p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>54</sup> 'Olympic Circus, Christian Street, Liverpool' *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 February 1825, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>55</sup> 'The Drama in Paris, The Folies Bergère Music Hall' *The Era*, 17 November 1872, p. 10, col. 1.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Gaiety Minstrels at St. Julian's Hall' *The Star* (Guernsey), 3 December 1896, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>57</sup> 'Mayoral Entertainment at Pendleton' *Manchester Courier, and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 7 January 1895, p. 7, col. 3.

<sup>58</sup> 'London Amusements' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 21 October 1870, p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>59</sup> 'Public Amusements, Olympic Theatre' *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 October 1870, p. 5, col. 3.

'Paul and Virginia' was a popular piece on the stage in Britain from the late eighteenth century onwards. It was variously described as an opera,<sup>60</sup> a musical drama,<sup>61</sup> musical farce<sup>62</sup> or ballet.<sup>63</sup> It started life as a French story, 'Paul et Virginie', set in Mauritius and written by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. It was first published in 1788. Advertisements for an English translation by Helen Maria Williams were appearing by 1798.<sup>64</sup> In France the story was turned into a play set to music by Rodolphe Kreutzer and performed for the first time by the Comédiens Italiens on Saturday 15 January 1791.<sup>65</sup>

In May 1803, the following advertisement had appeared in the *Manchester Mercury*:<sup>66</sup>

*For the Benefit of Mr Connor, Box Office Keeper, Theatre-Royal, Manchester*

*On Friday next, May 27th, 1803, will be acted a favourite Comedy, called*

*WILD OATS; or, The Strolling Gentlemen.*

*To which will be added, the admired Musical Piece of*

*PAUL and VIRGINIA.*

*A Characteristic Dance by Four Indians, And Cymbal Dance*

*In the Character of a Negro, by Mr Mills.*

The *Manchester Mercury* was a weekly paper in 1803, but unfortunately there is no review of this production in the next edition of the paper. Is the characteristic dance by four Indians a forerunner of the cocoa-nut dance that appears on the stage twenty years later?

<sup>60</sup> 'By Desire of the Young Ladies of Mrs. Jedwine's School' *Kentish Chronicle*, 28 May 1802, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>61</sup> 'Theatre, Canterbury' *Kentish Gazette*, 29 May 1801, p. 1. col. 1.

<sup>62</sup> 'Theatre-Royal' *Caledonian Mercury*, 29 May 1809, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>63</sup> 'The Morning Post, King's Theatre' *Morning Post*, 26 June 1819, p. 3, col. 2.

<sup>64</sup> 'New Books for Youth, 16, Paul and Virginia' *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, 4 August 1798, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Rodolphe Kreutzer, *Paul et Virginie*, (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1791)

<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90673057/f3.image>> [accessed 13 October 2017].

<sup>66</sup> 'For the Benefit of Mr. Connor' *Manchester Mercury*, 24 May 1803, p. 1, col. 1.

## A Comparison of Coconut Dance Tunes

In addition to the tunes mentioned earlier in the article, there is a tune called simply 'The Cocoa Nut Dance' which appears in *The Musical Casket: or, Melodies for the Million* published in 1843.<sup>67</sup> The publication contains popular tunes of the day so it is a distinct possibility that this is the tune for at least one of the early stage versions of the coconut dance (Figure 6).

### Musical Casket Cocoa Nut Dance Tune v Els Moretons tune

Figure 7 compares the A music from the *Musical Casket* Cocoa Nut Dance with the A music used by Els Moretons. Bars 1 to 6 and 8 to 12 are very similar. The *Musical Casket* version is syncopated in places where the Els Moretons tune is not and the tune goes up rather than down in bars 4 and 12. Bars 7 and 8 may appear different at first glance, but the two versions harmonize perfectly. Bars 13 and 14 follow the same pattern of notes, but are either a tone or semitone apart. Bar 15 of the Els Moretons tune ends with a run down to the final note rather than the 1843 version that has a run up followed by an octave drop. The differences are fairly minor and the two are clearly versions of the same tune.

In the *Musical Casket* version, three paused notes are shown for the introduction. This is similar to the music used by the current Els Moretons team whose musicians start the tune with one long note.

<sup>67</sup> James McEwen, *The Musical Casket: or, Melodies for the Million* (no 6) (London: Duncombe & Moon, 1843), tune number 131, p. 47, copies in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and the Bodleian Library.. What may be a variant issue or a bibliographical ghost with an attributed date of c. 1830 is held by Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, USA.



Figure 6: Cocoa Nut Dance from *The Musical Casket*.

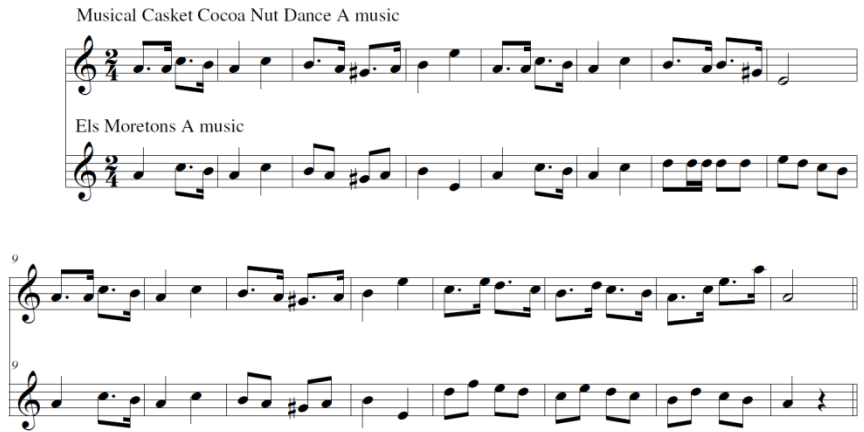


Figure 7: Musical Casket Cocoa Nut Dance Tune v Els Moretons tune

## Musical Casket Cocoa Nut Dance Tune v Rochdale Coconut Dance

Figure 8 compares the B music from the Musical Casket Cocoa Nut Dance with the A music from the Rochdale Coconut Dance.

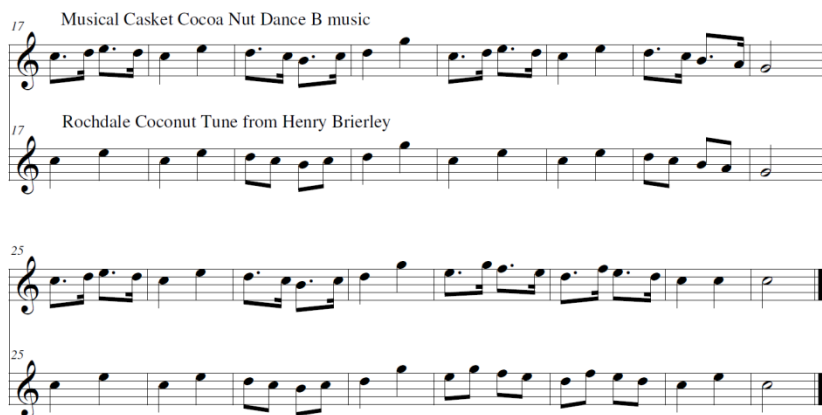


Figure 8: Musical Casket Cocoa Nut Dance Tune v Rochdale Coconut Dance

Here the similarities are even closer. The only differences are a few extra passing notes in the *Musical Casket* version, the syncopation and an alternative note in the penultimate bar.

It is quite remarkable that an octogenarian in the 1920s would remember the tune from his youth in the 1850s and for it to have altered so little.

It is clear that the tune used by Els Moretons and that collected from Henry Brierley started life as the same tune. Els Moretons use the A part of the tune and Henry Brierley used the B music as his A music. In each case the other half of the tune does not match the *Musical Casket* tune. Where did these come from? In both cases, it could simply be that they are harmony lines which have changed over the years to become the main line of the tune. The Henry Brierley tune works better as a harmony than the Els Moretons tune.

There is one further item of information regarding the Rochdale coconut dance tune. In a phone conversation on 1 September 2016 with Clive Morton of the Whitworth Morris Men, he informed me that when they first started dancing in the 1970s, a Mr Greenwood helped them to re-create the Whitworth dances. Unlike the Britannia Coconut Dancers, the Whitworth dancers of the late nineteenth century had two separate teams, one of which performed garland dances and the other a coconut dance. Mr Greenwood never danced with the coconut dancers, but his father was the captain of the last nutters team and he was their mascot. The team practised in Shawforth ra-

ther than Whitworth itself. Mr Greenwood sang the tune that the coconut dancers used, and according to Clive Morton, this was the same as the Rochdale Coconut Dance tune, except that it started with the minor music rather than the major. This would match the version in *The Musical Casket*. As far as I can gather, the tune was never notated or recorded from Mr Greenwood.

From the analysis of the tunes, it now seems likely that the Lancashire and Mallorcan coconut dances started life as a stage dance, probably in the first half of the nineteenth century. The tune was well enough known to be included in *The Musical Casket* along with other popular tunes of the time.

## Summary

There are a lot of similarities between the Els Moretons and Rossendale coconut dance traditions:

- The costumes of both traditions include a headdress, breeches, skirt over the top of the breeches and wooden discs attached to hands, knees and waist;
- In both dances there is a characteristic movement using the wooden discs;
- The Britannia Coconut Dancers have a story that the dance originated with Moorish pirates. Els Moretons have stories of the dance having been seen by a Spanish soldier in a Moroccan camp;
- The tune heard by Henry Brierley in Rochdale in the 1850s and the tune used by Els Moretons appear to have a common ancestor published in 1843 as 'Cocoa Nut Dance';
- It is likely that the Cocoa Nut Dance tune was that used by early versions of the stage dance;
- Newspaper references show the popularity of the stage dance. There is also a reference from 1838 that shows that in Halifax 'young men and children may be observed imitating the grotesque features of the Coco Nut Ballet';
- The likely dates for the start of both the Rossendale and Mallorcan dances are in the 1850s.

There are also similarities between these two traditions and 'Lei Co-cot' from Provence. There is the reference to the dance having been performed on the stage in a production of the ballet 'Paul et Virginie' no more than 50 years before 1864. A coconut dance was performed on the stage in London in 1870 called 'Paul and Virginia'. The review of this makes reference to the original of this piece being performed in the past. The reviewer also refers to the Chiarini family, but it is unclear if this is specific to 'Paul and Virginia' or specifically the cocoa nut dance.

'Paul and Virginia' was performed on the English stages from the late eighteenth century onwards. In the Manchester production in 1803 it was followed by a characteristic dance by four Indians. Is it possible that this was a forerunner of the cocoa nut dance?

## Conclusion

If we take 1854 as being the starting date for Els Moretons and 1857 as the starting date for the coconut dancing in the Rossendale Valley, then it would seem unlikely that there was any direct cross-fertilization of ideas between the two teams. This would point to there being another means of transmission of the dance from which both groups developed independently.

As we have seen above, the newspaper reports of performances by the Chiarini Family clearly show that people were copying the dances from the stage and dancing them on the streets. Roy Judge also believed that dancing masters may have had a hand in the transmission of dances from stage to street. He cites Paul Valentine (1839-1924), a well-known ballet master at Drury Lane, as having the Cocoa Nut Dance in his repertoire. He taught this to a group of factory workers in St Mary Cray in 1894.<sup>68</sup>

The Chiarini family travelled extensively with their performances, not just in England, but throughout Europe, America and Australia. It seems quite feasible that at some stage they visited either Mallorca

<sup>68</sup> Judge, 'The Old English Morris Dance', p. 339.



or possibly somewhere that Father Pius Caldentey Perrelló trained as a priest. However, there were also many other stage groups that performed a coconut dance and it might be one of these groups that influenced the priest.

There seems to be a strong parallel between the development of the coconut dance in Lancashire and the 'Lei Cocot' dance in Provence.

It does seem highly likely that the coconut dances originated on the stage and then moved to the streets. The street versions and stage versions then carried on in parallel until the late nineteenth/early twentieth century when the stage version appears to have died out.



## **The Early Revival**



Katie Palmer Heathman

## **'I Ring for the General Dance': Morris and Englishness in the Work of Conrad Noel**

Conrad Noel, born in Kew in 1869, became infamous as the 'Red Vicar' of Thaxted due to his flying of the Red Flag and preaching of Christian socialism in Thaxted church.<sup>1</sup> Many readers of this paper will recognise Thaxted for its longstanding tradition of morris and the important role the town and its dancers played in the foundation of the Morris Ring. This paper hopes to explain the strong links between the two.

After completing his theological training, Noel was refused ordination, most notably because one bishop believed he was a pantheist, an objection stemming from his insistence that God dwelt within all men and women on earth, sanctifying humanity itself.<sup>2</sup> His eventual appointment to Thaxted in 1910, where he remained vicar for the rest of his life, came from Daisy Greville, the Countess of Warwick: she was the patron of this and several other livings, and following her conversion to socialism appointed prominent Christian socialists to these positions.<sup>3</sup> Before forming his own organization the Catholic Crusade in 1918, Noel had been, along with fellow Christian Socialist and folk revivalist Charles Marson, a member of the Church Socialist League. The CSL was distinctly more rooted in economic socialism than its predecessors the Christian Social Union and Guild of St Matthew, and was more clearly linked with the socialism practised by secular organizations. Noel himself was the chief policymaker. But this sterner, more economically focused socialism did not mean that it had forgotten either its Christian basis, or, as was strongly present in Thaxted, its tradition of aesthetic socialism in the William Morris mould previously embodied in the GSM. The 'democratic common-

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Leech, 'Conrad Le Despenser Roden Noel, 1869-1942', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37813>> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>2</sup> Noel Conrad, *An Autobiography*, ed. By Sidney Dark (London: Dent, 1945), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement: An Adventure in Christian Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 1967), p. 190.

wealth' the CSL wished to create would, of course, be a Christian as well as a socialist utopia, but importantly, it would also be one of song, dance, and joy.

Noel's strategy for bringing about such a commonwealth in Thaxted was formed of a drawing together of several key elements: socialism, national identity, and gaiety, all of them intersecting of course with his Christian faith. By gaiety, Noel meant dance, song, colour, art, music, processions, and recreation: in short, a community participating in joyful activity together, as an expression of faith but also of happiness. The folk revival offered all of these things. Miriam Noel's invitation to Mary Neal's *Espérance* Guild to teach morris in Thaxted not only began a long tradition of morris in the town, but also enriched and enhanced Conrad Noel's preaching, aesthetics, socialism, and most of all, the sense of strong community he promoted as both the means and the end of his Christian socialist project to build the Commonwealth of God on earth in a small Essex town.

As well as a fervent hope for a new Socialist International, Noel also professed a love of nationalism, expressed through his flying of the St George and Sinn Féin flags alongside his famed red flag. This may at first seem counterintuitive. Dave Harker wrote in *Fakesong* that vastly different types of nation state shared a common need to reinforce nationhood through state sponsorship of organizations which promoted folk arts, because nationalism was inherently disruptive to the building of 'the only power which can challenge them – international working class solidarity'.<sup>4</sup> C.J. Bearman, in turn, accused Harker and fellow Marxist assessors of the folk revival of disliking the movement because of its inbuilt cultural nationalism, as Harker and his colleagues had 'a fundamental hostility towards nationalism, and a more generalized antipathy towards the concept of tradition'.<sup>5</sup> Bearman argued that 'Revolutionaries' 'tend to dislike traditions because established practices of any kind are a bar to the complete

<sup>4</sup> Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), p. xi.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher J. Bearman, 'The English Folk Music Movement, 1898-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hull, 2001), pp. 1-2.

transformation of society that they wish to accomplish'.<sup>6</sup> But the case of Noel contradicts both Harker and Bearman. Noel absolutely saw 'established practices' and traditions, both religious and folkloric, as a starting point for the transformation of society. And for Noel, as it later was for Vaughan Williams, nationhood and cultural nationalism were a basis for internationalism, engaging in a symbiotic relationship in which international solidarity was strengthened by the unity of equal but individual nations, each bringing to the whole the very best they had to offer.<sup>7</sup>

For Noel, folk culture was important to the building of this international community, especially so because it represented an idea of nationhood based upon the history and culture of the people, not of the State. Noel saw the Kingdom of God on earth which he hoped for as a 'Divine International', and had blazoned across the Red Flag which hung in Thaxted church the motto 'He hath made of one blood all nations'.<sup>8</sup> Noel did not wish to deny the nation a place in the International, and wrote that 'Christ's Co-operative Commonwealth was to be no mere cosmopolitan world, secured at the expense of national variety'.<sup>9</sup> Noel's situation of English nationhood within a strong International was an ideal configuration shared with the wider British Left of the time: Paul Ward argues that their internationalism was often fitted 'around an affection for English traditions', rejecting 'the Marxist axiom that "workers have no country" [...] in favour of a view of the plurality of national identities'.<sup>10</sup> It was these independent, strong nationalities working in 'comradeship and mutual service' to build an equally strong Socialist International that Noel hoped for.<sup>11</sup>

Nationhood for Noel was a careful balancing act. It balanced the need for unity and the shared identity of a community, be it parish or a

<sup>6</sup> Bearman, 'The English Folk Music Movement', p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Nationalism and Internationalism' in his *National Music and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Kennedy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 154-59 (p. 155).

<sup>8</sup> Conrad Noel, *The Battle of the Flags: A Study in Christian Politics* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: England, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), p. 52; p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, p. 96.

country, with the hope for much wider fellowship amongst the whole human race. Such a bond of national identity between individuals functioned in a similar way to the relationship between strong nationalities in an international commonwealth, each being a communion between a smaller unit and a larger whole that Noel thought to be 'the basis and meaning of all human life' through a 'Social God, in the Blessed Trinity, One-in-Many, Many-in-One, VARIETY IN UNITY'.<sup>12</sup> A revival of dance as a shared heritage could bring about this communion of the individual with the wider community, a small and local beginning upon which to base a wider movement towards the adoption of unity and co-operative living which would grow outward in ever-widening circles to form the Divine International Noel craved. Noel declared that 'the Source of our life is the Triune God, the Comm-Unity, and that the substance of all life is Community'.<sup>13</sup> It was because of his deep-seated belief in the value of community that Noel poured so much energy into his work in Thaxted. Both his friends and the patron, who had appointed him because she wished for him to use the position as a base from which to tour, lecturing and fighting the socialist cause while a curate did the actual parochial work, were surprised by his efforts. But as John Orens notes, Noel believed that it was 'in the parish that the life of God's Kingdom is born and nurtured'.<sup>14</sup>

This balance of local community and global fellowship, of inward-looking social bonds and outward-facing internationalism, was delicate. Both nationalism and internationalism had the potential to become 'evil'. Noel believed that 'Nationality is evil when it denies the International, and [...] the International is evil when it scoffs at Nationality'.<sup>15</sup> The British Empire provided a new host of problems. It was formed by the kind of narrow and insular patriotism Noel eschewed: its relationship with the international was acquisitive, not

<sup>12</sup> Conrad Noel, *The Catholic Crusade, 1918-1936: A Reprint of its Original Manifesto*, with an introduction and notes by Reg Groves (London: Archive One, 1970), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Conrad Noel, *Jesus the Heretic* (London: The Religious Book Club, 1940), p. 219.

<sup>14</sup> John Orens, 'Conrad Noel: Vision and Paradox' in *Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusade: A Critical Evaluation*, ed. by Kenneth Leech (London: The Jubilee Group, 1993), pp. 23-42 (pp. 29-30).

<sup>15</sup> Noel, *Catholic Crusade*, p. 9.



co-operative. Its own internationality denied the variety and difference of its subject nations, demolishing the harmonious symbiosis of a true International and creating instead a blank uniformity of centralized power. To halt the growth of this catastrophic imperialism, the right kind of nationalism, able to take its place in the Socialist International and the Divine Commonwealth, was needed, and Noel intended to provide it.

Noel became infamous as the Red Vicar predominantly for his hanging of the Red Flag and Sinn Féin flag in his church, and for his refusal to fly the Union Flag. He flew the Sinn Féin flag not only to protest against British dominion over Ireland, but also because of the meaning of the words 'sinn féin', 'ourselves': one of the conditions of membership of the Catholic Crusade was belief in the self-determination of nations. The proliferation of empires precluded the ideal harmony and interdependence of the international preventing the necessary self-determination of each nation.<sup>16</sup> A major strand of the manifesto of the Catholic Crusade was a call to 'shatter the British Empire and all Empires to bits' in order to 'Create a Free England in a Communion of Free Nations'.<sup>17</sup> Instead of the Union Flag, Noel hung in his church the flag of St George, which alongside the Sinn Féin flag attested to his beliefs in nationhood. The Red Flag represented the community of Free Nations which would come to make up the Divine International, the blood of all nations being the same red. Nations could be both Christian and socialist: Empires emphatically could not.

Noel's belief in nationhood as immanent in the people reflected his religious belief that God is within men and women themselves. God and his kingdom dwelt within humans on earth, and so did the potential for the coming of Noel's Divine International: <sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Noel, *Catholic Crusade*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Noel, *Catholic Crusade*, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, p. 48.

*the passages of the New Testament which the nineteenth century referred to a life beyond the grave undoubtedly refer to the coming of the Kingdom here. [...] [Christ] laid the stress undoubtedly on what our Evangelical friends call the Millennium [sic], ie, the Golden Age to be established here.*

The potential Kingdom was not only to be realized on earth and within the people on earth but was also directly affected by them: it could be 'delayed or hastened' by their actions.<sup>19</sup> In order to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, Christians (and socialists) could take part in preparations:<sup>20</sup>

*The Preparation for Christ's Kingdom meant the conversion [...] of mankind from injustice and greed, impurity and cowardice, to justice, generosity, purity, courage, and the Kingdom itself meant either (a) the natural expression of this common conversion in a New Order of things where all should serve each other in joy and life and peace, or (b) the coming down in some more sudden and miraculous way of just the same order of things in answer to this same preparation. Either the coming on the clouds [...] is [...] poetry or [...] fact, but there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Kingdom was to be realised here, and was to be enjoyed by those of mankind who had prepared themselves in the above manner for it.*

The key here is that these preparations could in fact actually constitute the Kingdom itself, by virtue of the altered behaviour of men and women towards their fellows. Because he and his followers had to be 'impatient' to bring about the Kingdom, and not wait 'complacently', Noel tried throughout his life and especially during his time in Thaxted to undertake as much as preparation as possible.<sup>21</sup> He, along with his wife Miriam, his followers and latterly his son-in-law, curate and eventual successor Jack Putterill, endeavoured to create a

<sup>19</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Noel, *Jesus the Heretic*, p. 60.

small corner of the Kingdom in Thaxted, whether as a preparation for or as that 'natural expression' of a better way of life.<sup>22</sup>

The preparations were also to be joyful, to form a fitting prequel to the merry utopia of the coming commonwealth: 'why should not the cry of "St George for merry England" drown the bombastic cry of St Jack for dismal Empire?' and 'why should not the patriot's festival of St George replace, as it does in Thaxted, the new-fangled festival of Empire?'<sup>23</sup> In Thaxted, St George and England had, through flags and festivals, replaced the British Empire, and Noel tried to make his England really a 'merry' one too, and this is why he turned to the folk revival. It offered him a national culture he felt to be based in that of the people, but also fulfilled through its inclusion of folk-dance forms an expression of the gaiety and joy he believed to be implicit in Christian and socialist tradition. One of Mary Neal's articles for Noel's parish magazine, *The Country Town*, also positioned present-day merry-making as a prequel to a coming happier time, that of a new socialistic society full of joy for the youth of England: 'May this May-time in England be a foretaste in all days to come when English youth will be a real May-time both for the girls and the boys'.<sup>24</sup> As with preparations for the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth actually constituting that kingdom, so too could happiness now engender future happiness.

The idea of a coming better time anticipated with joyful celebration was itself an historical one, another aspect of the medieval Christianity Noel drew so heavily upon. Noel loved the medieval poem 'The General Dance', also known as 'Tomorrow Shall be my Dancing Day', and sometimes read it from the pulpit instead of giving a sermon.<sup>25</sup> The poem describes the ministry of Christ as a dance, to which will call his 'true love', Christian believers who will dance with him in joy. Gustav Holst, a resident of Thaxted between 1914 and 1925, composed a new setting for Noel, dedicated to him as a birthday gift. Dur-

<sup>22</sup> Noel, *Jesus the Heretic*, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Neal, 'The National Revival of Folk Art. IV: May Day Revels', *The Country Town*, 2.4 (1912), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Noel, *Autobiography*, p. 102.

ing this period of residency in Thaxted, Holst was also working on 'Hymn of Jesus', a setting of his own translation of the apocryphal Acts of John, in which the heavenly spheres make music for Jesus and his disciples to dance together in worship on the night of the last supper:

*And he gathered us all together and said: 'Before I am delivered up unto them, let us sing a hymn to the Father'. He bade us make, as it were, a ring, holding one another's hands and himself standing in the midst, and said:*

*The Heavenly Spheres make music for us;*

*The Holy Twelve dance with us;*

*All things join in the dance!*

*Ye who dance not, know not what we are knowing.*<sup>26</sup>

Imogen Holst recalls in her account of her father's time in Thaxted his deep involvement in the musical life of the church, and his friendship with Noel.<sup>27</sup> The role of music and dance in their religion, both within the Bible and in Christian practice, was a subject in which Noel and Holst shared a strong interest, and which ran as a current through their respective work at this time. Such was Noel's love for the General Dance that it almost had its own altar in his church (Figures 1 and 2):<sup>28</sup>

*We have a version of The General Dance in coloured manuscript, framed in carved wood. It hangs over the chest by the entrance door. This chest was carved by Arthur Brown, with panels, beginning with the preaching of the Gospel from Thaxted pulpit, resulting in the treading down of dynasties and crowns; the hammer and sickle adorn the third panel, the symbol of artisans and labourers coming into their own, and the fourth panel represents the music of the spheres, which will be the music of the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. On*

<sup>26</sup> Gustav Holst, *The Hymn of Jesus*: words translated from the Apocryphal[sic] Acts of St. John: set to music for two choruses, semi-chorus & orchestra, op. 37 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1919).

<sup>27</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst and Thaxted: A Short Account of the Composer's Association with the Town of Thaxted between 1913 & 1925*, repr. by Mark Arman for the Parochial Church Council, 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Noel, *Autobiography*, p. 102.

*this hutch rest the delicately shaped "Praying Hands" by Eric Kennington, flanked by two shapely candles in black.*



Figure 1: The display described by Noel as it currently appears in Thaxted, showing the manuscript of 'The General Dance', carved trunk, and praying hands. Photograph taken by the author in 2016.



Figure 2: Carved panels on the trunk, depicting the hammer and sickle and the making of music. Photograph taken by the author in 2016.

This display demonstrates just how interwoven Noel's religious, political, and aesthetic beliefs were, particularly regarding music and

dance. His successor Jack Putterill continued in this vein, and when four of the church's bells were recast in 1949 they were given names, decorations, and dedications related to the ongoing political and cultural traditions of the Thaxted Movement. The recast third bell was named the 'Justice Bell', and was engraved in large letters with the motto 'I RING FOR JUSTICE IN ALL THE EARTH' (Figure 3). 'He hath made of one blood all nations', the motto used on Noel's Red Flag, was engraved on the shoulder of the bell. The recast fourth bell was paid for by the Morris Ring, and was called the 'Dance Bell', its large motto being 'I RING FOR THE GENERAL DANCE' (Figure 4). This bell was also decorated with a large embossed frieze of morris and country dancers, and a verse from Psalm 150: 'Praise him in the cymbals and dances; Praise him upon the strings and pipes'.<sup>29</sup> The bells themselves were music for praise and to call worshippers together, and through their new decorations and dedications, were strongly linked to the political concerns of the Thaxted Movement.

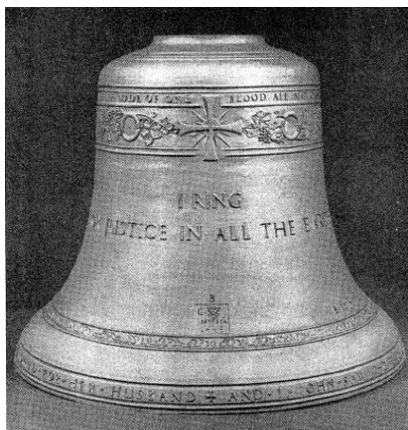


Figure 3 (left): Photograph of the Dance Bell: the motto, psalm verse and frieze of dancers can be seen as described by Putterill; Figure 4 (right): Photograph of the Justice Bell: note the 'blood of all nations' motto. These images from Jack Putterill's pamphlet *Thaxted Bells* are used by kind permission of Sylvia Heath and the officials of Thaxted church. The author is grateful to Sybil King for her help in obtaining this permission.

<sup>29</sup> Jack Putterill, *Thaxted Bells* (Linton: Plumridge, 1949), pp. 5-11.



Noel clearly saw dance and music as important to his theology as an expression of the joy of Christian belief, as well as an allegory for the rich harmony of the commonwealth to come:<sup>30</sup>

*And if Variety in Unity, the rich harmony of Being, be indeed our source, it is no dull world of uniformity that we shall be building, [...] In the New World Order then, there will be an infinite variety of types, of persons, of families, of nations - no longer divided and disharmonious, but expressing themselves through their different instruments in the great orchestra of God's will.*

It was also a foreshadowing of the happiness and fellowship to be had in the Kingdom to come. So as preparations for coming of the Kingdom would actually constitute the Kingdom itself, either upon the wings of angels or by a change in attitudes and restructuring of society, Noel set about not only foreshadowing the communal joy of the Kingdom but attempting to create it. He transformed the church into the aesthetic expression of his Christian socialism with flags, flowers and poetry, instituting mixed choirs with girls in brightly-coloured headscarves, and processions of colourful banners. His wife Miriam began organizing morris-dancing lessons for the residents of Thaxted in 1910, a development which was a wholly natural fit in a town that was quickly responding to Noel's combination of aesthetic socialism and divine (inter)nationalism.<sup>31</sup> The people of Thaxted were taught by Blanche Payling, a member of Neal's *Espérance Club*, despite the fact that Noel knew Sharp and had even lectured on Ibsen at the Hampstead Conservatoire at his request during Sharp's tenure as Director.<sup>32</sup> Neal's approach, focused on the joy of communal activity, would have presented a far stronger appeal to the Noels, considering that they, like Neal, were attempting to foster a strong sense of shared community and social gaiety. Noel wrote that alt-

<sup>30</sup> Noel, *Jesus the Heretic*, p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> Noel, *Autobiography*, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Noel, *Autobiography*, pp. 104-5.

though the dancing of Sharp's team was beautiful to watch, both he and his patron Daisy Greville found it spiritually lacking:<sup>33</sup>

*Lady Warwick [...] was disappointed because I had told her that the dances were for [...] working people, and although the team contained wonderful performers, such as Douglas Kennedy, who [...] is, perhaps, the most blithe and graceful dancer I have ever seen, the team at Easton Lodge was certainly not of the soil, and unkind critics might have said it smacked of Bloomsbury.*

Despite the central role later played by the post-war Thaxted men's morris side in the formation of the Morris Ring, the beginnings of morris in Thaxted were firmly rooted in the social ethos of Neal's Espérance Club. As Arthur Burns argues, the encouragement of morris dancing in Thaxted by the Noels should not be 'treated as a mildly risible distraction from more serious matters': Noel's intermingling of politics with his liturgical and cultural interests was a key element in his worldview.<sup>34</sup> Rather than 'diluting' the 'message' of Noel's politics, the dancing and other related cultural pursuits 'gave the tradition traction well beyond those who might have rallied to a more narrowly articulated political argument, fostering involvement and commitment'.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Orens notes that Noel's zeal could easily have turned Thaxted into a 'spiritual boot camp' if it were not for the fact that he 'desired more for his parish than stern alarums. There must also be merry music; for God's people do not simply await the Kingdom, exhausting themselves in struggle'.<sup>36</sup> The choice to bring morris to Thaxted stemmed from the desire for a communal activity having its cultural and aesthetic roots in English folk culture: a national culture as an antidote to bombastic imperialism, an expression of joy in dance as the rightful inheritance of a medieval English tradition of Christian gaiety, and a socialistic expression of corporate unity in shared activity.

<sup>33</sup> Noel, *Autobiography*, p. 106.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Burns, 'Beyond the "Red Vicar": Community and Christian Socialism in Thaxted, Essex, 1910-84', *History Workshop Journal*, 75 (2013), 101-124 (p. 120).

<sup>35</sup> Burns, 'Beyond the "Red Vicar"', p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> Orens, *Conrad Noel*, p. 30.



By July 1911 the morris dancers of Thaxted numbered 60 strong, and included a youths' team, girls' team and two children's teams.<sup>37</sup> The teams performed to an audience of 2,000 at a flower show in nearby Stisted, and Mary Neal was drawn to visit in spring 1911 by reports of the huge take-up, selecting some of the best dancers to perform alongside her *Espérance* teams at the invitation of Rupert Brooke in Cambridge.<sup>38</sup> Groves described the summer of 1913 as being a high-point for the Thaxted Movement in terms of dance, with much of the town participating, if not in morris but in country and social dance. He states that the phenomenon had taken off across all social classes, breaking down barriers between landowners, clergy and sweet-factory workers. Here he quotes Arthur Caton, a Thaxted resident:<sup>39</sup>

*You try to tell people what it was like then, and they don't believe you [...] You say everyone danced, and they look at you. Everyone? Well, it was true, everyone did, [...] - why, I me'self was taught to dance by the two sons of a Tory farmer! People would come here then - and just stare and listen in amazement. They couldn't believe it when they saw it. There was everyone, everywhere in the town, dancing or singing or whistling. It was like a wave running over the town!*

It was the joyful and participatory nature of folk dance which made morris perfect for Miriam and Conrad to foster in Thaxted. Noel saw himself as an anti-Puritan (according to Judith Pinnington, he was prone to 'labelling everything he liked as "Catholic" and everything he disliked as "Protestant" irrespective of historical context'<sup>40</sup>). He believed that 'carousing is a Christian duty' and the bright colours, merry-making, and music of morris appealed to his sense of religious

<sup>37</sup> Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement*, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement*, p. 74; Mary Neal, 'As A Tale That Is Told: The Autobiography of a Victorian Woman', manuscript of unpublished autobiography, London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, MN Box 1, p. 151.

<sup>39</sup> Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement*, p. 136.

<sup>40</sup> Judith Pinnington, 'Gentlemen into Social Democrats: An Anglican Evolution', in *Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusade: A Critical Evaluation*, ed. by Kenneth Leech (London: The Jubilee Group, 1993), pp. 1-22 (p. 18).

gaiety.<sup>41</sup> After Noel's death, his friend Kingsley Martin described the legacy of his work in Thaxted:<sup>42</sup>

*There was fun [...]: streamers with happy devices; children's drawings; the women wore bright handkerchiefs on their heads, and the congregation was expected to take part in the service. I won't say there was nothing precious about Thaxted. There were odd-looking men in sandals and women in hand-woven costumes, and [...] a certain artiness in the shops. True, Conrad's disciples did dance morris-dances in the road and deliberately revive a medieval atmosphere. But the dancing was fun, and [...] It would be a superficial observer who dismissed Thaxted as 'ye olde'.*

Noel himself did not take part in the dancing, but his curates did, including his son-in-law Jack Putterill, who danced into his 70s and played pipe and tabor into his 80s.<sup>43</sup> Noel liked the dancing because it was fun, and this was something he increasingly found lacking in the wider British Left. He worried that Marxism would 'imprison the human soul in a regime of grey and joyless uniformity', and despised the 'Fabian Desire for Tidiness, Order, Efficiency', so instead injected colour and raucousness wherever he could.<sup>44</sup> Groves writes that Noel was disappointed by the 'imaginative and intellectual poverty of Labour's leaders', and felt they would have their followers 'accept a handful of grudgingly-given bribes in place of the bright, generous world which [William] Morris and others had called upon them to win'.<sup>45</sup> For Noel, the object of socialism was not to manage an economy, but to transform a society, and though these objectives were undeniably related, they were not the same.

Contemporary Marxists and Fabians both appeared to Noel in the guise of Puritans, casting a disapproving eye over the traditional

<sup>41</sup> Orens, *Conrad Noel*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Kingsley Martin, 'As his friends knew him, I', in Noel, *Autobiography*, pp. 125-28 (pp. 125-26).

<sup>43</sup> Mark Arman, *Conrad, Miriam, Jack and Barbara: For 63 Years They Influenced Thaxted Church and Thaxted Town* (Thaxted: The Workshop Press, 1992), pp. 1, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Orens, *Conrad Noel*, p. 37; Noel, *Catholic Crusade*, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement*, p. 75.

merriments of the English, a birthright and heritage he believed to have been stolen before by the first Puritans. Noel, and Neal too in her writing for his magazine, held up their revival of Morris and country dancing as a rejection of Puritanism:<sup>46</sup>

*We of this generation have changed these scruples and we see in the dancing feet the merry song and happy laughter of the children and of the young men and women, that which will make England a land of which we can be proud.*

An England that Noel and Neal could be proud of was one in which all could be happy. The rightful heritage of merry traditions, stolen by Puritans and seen as unimportant by modern-day Marxists, was bound up with Merrie England's other heritage of freedom, justice, and fairness. These joint inheritances could not thrive independently:<sup>47</sup>

*IF, while you believe in dancing, colour, merry-making, you are not deluded into thinking that these things can be restored, while Justice, Comradeship, and Liberty are refused, HELP THE CRUSADE.*

While dancing and merriment would help the socialist cause, the true goal of happiness, and likewise the Kingdom of Heaven, could not be achieved without the establishment of the right conditions: a society anchored by the principles of justice, comradeship, and liberty.

Along with the potential for joyous activity in building God's Kingdom in Thaxted, Noel was attracted to the folk movement because it so strongly aligned itself with nationalism and put its music and dance forward as a national art. Noel seemed very drawn to Ireland as an example of a nation in touch with its cultural identity, holding it up as a model for what England could hope to achieve in self-recognition and celebration. By the time Noel came to hang the Sinn Féin flag in Thaxted church, the cause of Ireland and Irish independence had become a representative of the idea of national identity it-

<sup>46</sup> Neal, 'May Day Revels', 6.

<sup>47</sup> Noel, *Catholic Crusade*, p. 11.

self, and Noel used this as a symbol to demonstrate his political and theological views on the freedom and independence of nations:<sup>48</sup>

*The [...] tricolour of Ireland hangs in Thaxted church as a symbol of the right to freedom of Ireland and of all oppressed nations. [...] The Sinn Fein flag is, then, the emblem of the principle of self-determination, for which we are supposed to have fought the war.*

The English, via Noel's reasoning, had also to embrace such self-determination, not only politically but culturally. Claiming ownership of a shared cultural heritage, including folk songs and dances, would be also to claim a stake in society itself: self-definition would lead to self-determination. Mary Neal's letter to the Thaxted dancers makes clear this link:<sup>49</sup>

*When you dance the Morris Dances and sing the folk songs I want you to feel that you are part of the truest and best movement towards righteousness and sincerity and upright dealing. And I want every boy and girl to realise the inspiration which only comes from this consciousness of communion with the whole nation, with the universal and with God.*

If the nation's culture were to be determined by the communal cultural inheritance of the people, then so too could its society and its politics be determined by its people.

The Noels made use of the material and the associations of folk revival in a way which was intended to be socially useful. Conrad Noel believed in a deep intersection between cultural movements and social change, with the expression of communality through shared culture and the revivifying effects of joyful dance and song helping to drive social change through the building of a strong community of active and engaged individuals. Folk song and dance strongly appealed to Noel's politics and his religion, because he believed in both a culture and a God which were embodied in the common people. Noel's commitment to his preparations for the Kingdom of Heaven

<sup>48</sup> Noel, *Battle of the Flags*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Neal, 'To the Thaxted Morris Dancers', *The Country Town*, 1.9 (1911), 8-9 (p. 9).

on earth may not have brought about the Divine International, but they did lay a strong foundation for an ongoing religious, cultural, and political tradition in his own parish, and the flourishing of the morris in Thaxted in turn had a strong effect on the history of morris in Britain in the twentieth century.



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 prescience 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. MacIlwaine, (George Butterworth), *The Morris Book*, 2nd ed., 5 parts (London: Novello, 1912-24).

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

<sup>8</sup> Sharp and MacIlwaine, *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/histtrav.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 gymnasias 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.





Roy Fenton

## **‘Destruction not Inscription’: How a Pioneering Revival Side Developed**

This paper considers the theory and practice behind the formation in 1926 of Greensleeves Morris Men, one of the earliest revival sides and the oldest surviving morris club in London (Figure 1). It explores how this club, now in its 91st year, has built on these foundations, and how it has adapted as attitudes to the morris have changed.



Figure 1: One of the earliest photos of Greensleeves, dancing 'Brighton Camp' during a competition at Lilford Hall, Northhamptonshire in July 1927. Greensleeves' kit has changed in the succeeding 90 years, but not the clubs dislike of dancing on grass (Greensleeves Archives).

### **‘Unpretentious Individuals’**

Greensleeves Morris Men was formed in 1926 by men who had attended the classes started by Cecil Sharp at the English Folk Dance Society. To quote its first squire, the idea was that ‘a really good team can be built up of unpretentious individuals if they practise constant-

ly and regularly together'.<sup>1</sup> The spoonerized motto 'Destruction not Inscription' reflected Greensleeves' approach to tuition. There was no foreman originally, although a 'sergeant major' was appointed, presumably to maintain order.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2: 'Green sleeves' evident as young members dance North Skelton (Photo: Dave Hayes).

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter of 8 June 1926 from Greensleeves' founder to a prospective member, Greensleeves' Log, vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Greensleeves Log, vol. 1.

Greensleeves' ethos is still to dance as well as possible, and – especially – as a side. Most newcomers to the club have no previous experience of the morris, although there has been a small, regular influx of men from other sides. All recruits serve an apprenticeship and, when the club as a whole agrees that they are ready, they 'dance in' with a jig. They then become full members with voting rights and are awarded their 'green sleeves', or armbands in recognition (Figure 2).

## **Accomplishment and Entertainment**

Alongside dancing to a good standard is the important issue of offering entertainment, especially when the typical 'lay' audience can be expected to distinguish only between the stick and the handkerchief dance. This problem has exercised successive squires, and arguably the trend here may run contrary to the aim of a polished display of morris. Greensleeves' repertoire once majored on just two Cotswold traditions, Fieldtown and Sherborne, with the aim of excelling at both.

However, today a show may well include dances from half a dozen traditions. Some of the more 'interesting' dances from other villages have joined the repertoire, including Lichfield stick dances, 'Brighton Camp' from Eynsham, 'Shooting' and 'Jockey to the Fair' from Brackley. By giving a change of pace, North Skelton longsword also proves very effective at reviving an audience's interest. And the dance that generates most positive comment from the audience started out a long way back as a border dance, Greensleeves claiming that it is now so different from the Upton-on-Severn Stick Dance as collected that it deserves a new name, and call it 'Twin Sisters' after its tune (Figure 3).



Figure 3: 'Twin Sisters' on Boxing Day. Stepping and figures from the Upton tradition (Photo: Dave Hayes).

In this expansion of repertoire, Greensleeves are being true to their roots. Early logs record at least ten Cotswold and as many longsword and rapper traditions being performed, whilst North-west has also been danced out. There is even a precedent for the mumming play which is updated and performed with gusto at each year's end (Figure 4).

## Gender: The Last Bastion?

Early practices were sometimes adjourned for country dancing with an associated women's side, Lumps of Plum Pudding, and the two teams often performed together. And Greensleeves' earliest musician was a Mrs Matthews, who sometimes joined the practice set to make up numbers. Contrast this with what members joining in the 1970s encountered: reluctance and even refusal to dance when a female side was part of the same show. It has to be said that this ethos was at the time characteristic of a number of clubs belonging to the Morris Ring, of which Greensleeves were founder members.





Figure 4: 'Although he lies there in a stupor, it's all OK, 'cos he's in BUPA'. Greensleeves' updating of the traditional mummers' play (Photo: Dave Hayes).

Greensleeves remains a men's side. However, there is no longer any question about not dancing with female or mixed sides; indeed any team as long as they respect the morris. Several men also dance in mixed teams, and the club has supported days of dance organized jointly by the Morris Ring, the Morris Federation and Open Morris.

## **From Albert Hall to Albert Arms**

Early logs suggest that Greensleeves' performances were essentially exhibitions, often at festivals including the annual EFDS(S) event in the Albert Hall and – something unknown in Cotswold circles today – competitions (Figures 5 and 6).

GREENSLEEVES.

Miss Karpeles' criticisms on competition dances, December 2nd,  
1926.

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"ROOM FOR THE CUCKOO".

"That was a really fine sturdy performance. I particularly liked the quiet hand movements - they gave one a real sense of the ceremonial underlying the dance."

"JOCKIE TO THE FAIR" (Brackley).

"That was a really thrilling performance. I felt it was a great moment. That dance was a living thing, not just something which had been taught. I got from that dance something of the feeling that one gets from seeing traditional morris. In fact I felt those six men might have been the sons of the two old men I saw dance this dance."

Figure 5: Maud Karpeles's enthusiastic comments on Greensleeves' dances in a competition to select sides for the EFDS's All England Festival at the Albert Hall on 31 December 1926. Music was provided by Mrs Matthews and Miss Avril, the former an honorary member of Greensleeves (Greensleeves' Log, vol. 1).

Performances only gradually took on the pattern they have now with dancing in public places and especially outside pubs. Although Greensleeves continue to perform with other clubs, the objective is to attract, retain and entertain an audience, and this is best achieved with a tight, considered show, starting at the advertised time and not being unduly prolonged. 'Leave 'em wanting more' is the aim.



Figure 6: 'Brighton Camp' at the EFDSS event at the Albert Hall in 1965 (Greensleeves Archives).

## Where is the Club Now?

Like most clubs, Greensleeves face challenges about recruiting and retaining dancers, especially younger ones. Experienced has suggested that the answer is the same as it has been for the past nine decades: dance well, be welcoming to newcomers, but above all be seen to enjoy ourselves. Modesty forbids the author to make claims for Greensleeves, but most of its peers in the morris world would probably agree that Greensleeves has been true to its founders' precepts (Figure 7).



Figure 7: With the late Sir Terry Wogan after performing together for Comic Relief 2015 (Photo: Roy Fenton).

## Sources and Acknowledgements

Dr Roy Fenton has been a full member of Greensleeves for over 35 years, has served a term as its squire, has organized its annual week-ends of dance and kept its logs for a number of years. Greensleeves' almost continuous set of logs and scrapbooks is the major source for



the history of the club, and the author would like to thank other keepers of logs and scrapbooks for their efforts, particularly former squire Alan Jeffries and current incumbent David Legg for their help. Needless to say, the opinions expressed herein are entirely those of the author.



Elaine Bradtke

## **Morris Tunes Collected by James Madison Carpenter**



Figure 1: James Madison Carpenter (American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, PH 099).

Mississippi-born, Harvard-educated James Madison Carpenter (1888-1983; Figure 1) travelled around Britain between 1928 and 1935 with a cylinder recording machine, capturing songs, stories,

tunes and customs. Because his work falls chronologically between that of Cecil Sharp and Percy Grainger at the beginning of the twentieth century, and later field recordings made by the BBC in the middle of the century, it provides an important glimpse into this otherwise neglected era in British traditional culture. In 1972, the Library of Congress purchased Carpenter's collection for the American Folklife Center Archive. In the first few years of the twenty-first century it was digitized and catalogued. Despite his intentions, Carpenter's collection was never published, or until recently, fully indexed, therefore it represents a relatively untapped resource. An international team has been cataloguing and editing the Carpenter collection over the years and has just added the raw material to the EFDSS digital archives. This paper serves as a glimpse into some of the morris-related materials in the collection.

## **The Fiddle Players**

Carpenter made approximately sixty recordings of fiddle music from a handful of musicians, primarily in the English South Midlands. It is important to note however, the fiddlers were not recorded in the act of playing for dancing. In addition to the recordings, Carpenter took down words to some of the morris ditties (including a few from William Kimber), but no descriptions of the dances. There are photographs of the original Bampton side, the second Bampton side started by Wells, various groups of dancers with whom Sam Bennett was associated, some English Folk Dance Society dancers, and one as yet unidentified group of young female morris dancers. From further north there are photographs of Goathland Plough Stots, Kirkby Malzeard and Ampleforth sword dancers.

His three main sources of morris music were John Robbins of Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, Sam Bennett of Ilmington, Warwickshire and William Wells of Bampton, Oxfordshire. One additional tune was recorded from an unidentified musician near Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire. From outside this region there is an example of the Greatham (County Durham) sword-dance tune. Although Carpenter taught himself to transcribe music in order to notate the songs, he did not notate any of the fiddle tunes and made only one transcription of dance music (from a concertina player).

As part of a long-term project to publish Carpenter's collection, the author has transcribed the fiddle tunes from the recordings. In the course of this work, it became possible to build up a picture of individual playing styles, through their use of drones, double-stops, slurs and ornaments. This became useful in correcting the finding aid for the collection, as Carpenter's own documentation was sometimes lacking in information or inaccurate.

Each of the three men bestowed a legacy to future generations of morris dancers and musicians, and Carpenter's collection is part of the larger picture. William Wells had a tremendous influence in Bampton and in the wider revival. He came from a family of dancers, started one of the extant Bampton teams, taught outside of Bampton, and was sought out by members of the Morris Ring and the English Folk Dance Society. Recordings of his playing along with his musings and recollections of morris dancing have been published and preserved in various archives. Bennett's influence was also wide, through the work of Mary Neal, his own teaching and performing in Ilmington and elsewhere, and his appearance in an early sound film. Robbins was more of a morris outsider, he did not perform or teach the dances, but his music found its way to a wider audience through print publications.

William Nathan (Jingy) Wells, 1868-1953, was morris dancer and fiddler for Bampton Morris (Oxfordshire). His family had been part of the morris in Bampton for generations, and he joined them in 1886 as fool. A few years later he started fiddling for the group, having taught himself to play on a homemade instrument. In 1925 there was an internal conflict among the Bampton dancers, and Wells left to form a side of younger men. He was regarded as an exceptionally good dancer and musician, capable of dancing a solo jig and playing at the same time. He continued to play for morris dancing after his sight failed and he ceased to dance. His last appearance with the Bampton Morris was on Whit Monday 1949 after more than 60 years of nearly continuous involvement.<sup>1</sup> Douglas Kennedy said of Wells:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Biographical details for Wells are taken from the following sources: Keith Chandler, '150 Years of Fiddle Players and Morris Dancing at Bampton', *Musical Traditions*, Article MT 051 <<http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/bampton.htm>> [accessed 10 February 2010]; Douglas

*He had such drive and rhythm. He lifted you up and kept you up. It was music to move to, not to listen to. He played in his own mode. Sometimes a violin-playing friend would take his fiddle and tune it for him. He always turned the knobs and untuned it again, for his music was different from theirs.*

Wells was recorded several times in his life: by Carpenter in 1933 and by the BBC in 1936, 1937, and 1943. Russell Wortley recorded Wells in December 1936 (in London, these were issued as EFDSS recordings) and April 1937 (in Bampton, for the BBC) as well as another unknown BBC recordist in April 1937. Cecil Sharp (1909, 1914) and Clive Carey (1912) both notated tunes from Wells. An interview with Wells was published in the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* in 1956 as an obituary.<sup>3</sup>

Sam Bennett (1865-1951) did not come from a family of morris dancers, but shortly after being given a second-hand fiddle, he learned the Ilmington tunes from a village pipe-and-tabor player named Thomas Arthur. He also learned Bampton morris tunes from Edward Butler (an occasional musician for the Bampton side), and following the split in the late 1920's when Wells started a new side, Bennett sometimes played for the old Bampton side. Bennett became involved in the revival of the Ilmington morris dances in the 1880s and continued to be active in one way or another for many decades. During his long life, he played the fiddle, sang, danced, assumed the role of the hobbyhorse, and taught traditional dances locally as well as in Wales, Devon, and in London. He appeared on several radio broadcasts, and a BBC programme was made about him. Deeply enthusiastic about traditional music and dance, he instructed groups of local children in maypole, social, and morris dancing, and lead social dances at events such as the Ilmington Empire Day celebrations. His playing style is quite rhythmic, with heavy use of drones and very lit-

Kennedy, 'Billy Wells of Bampton', *English Dance and Song*, 18.4 (1954), 115-16; William Wells, 'William Wells 1868-1953: Morris Dancer, Fiddler and Fool', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8.1 (1956), 1-15; Keith Chandler, *Bampton Morris Dancers 1915-1945: The Newspaper Accounts* (Eynsham: Chandler Publications, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Kennedy, 'Billy Wells of Bampton', *English Dance and Song*, 18.4 (1954), 115-16 (p. 116).

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, 'Billy Wells of Bampton.'

tle ornament. He often sang to his fiddle (morris ditties, ballads, and lyric songs) and like Wells, tended to tune the fiddle to lower than concert pitch. Bennett was a tireless promoter of the local traditional culture and became something of a celebrity. He attracted the attentions of folk-music collectors such as James Madison Carpenter, Cecil Sharp, Mary Neal, Percy Grainger, R. Kenworthy Schofield, Clive Carey, Alfred Williams and Peter Kennedy. Grainger, Carpenter, and the BBC made recordings of him. Mary Neal brought him to London to teach dances to the Espérance Girls' Club and perform with them. He was also a regular at the Stratford-on-Avon festivals. In 1926, Bennett and his Ilmington dancers (girls and young women) were the subject of a De Forest film *Dances by Ilmington Teams in the Grounds of Peter De Montfort's House: Fiddler Sam Bennett*.<sup>4</sup> This early film (pre-dating *The Jazz Singer* by a year) features a simultaneous soundtrack throughout, allowing us to see and hear the dance and music. Both Wells and Bennett's playing appear on recordings issued by Peter Kennedy, but he did not make the original recordings.<sup>5</sup>

John (sometimes known as Jack or Tom) Robbins (1868-1948), was recruited by Ernest Richard D'Arcy Ferris (1855-1929) to provide music for his re-invention of the Bidford morris tradition.<sup>6</sup> He and the dancers gave a series of public performances in 1885-1886. The Shakespearean Bidford Morris Dancers outlasted this brief flirt with theatrical morris and went on to appear at local events until the First World War. Robbins came from a musical family, was musically literate<sup>7</sup> and was a proficient violinist when Ferris recruited him. Fer-

<sup>4</sup> *Dances by Ilmington Teams in the Grounds of Peter De Montfort's House: Fiddler Sam Bennett*, dir. By Lee De Forest (1926), British Film Institute, 757445.

<sup>5</sup> Biographical information on Sam Bennett is taken from the following sources: John H. Bird, *Sam Bennett the Ilmington Fiddler* (1952); Keith Chandler, "Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles": *The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900* (London: Folklore Society, 1993); Elaine Bradtke, 'Sam Bennett: A Case Study in the English Fiddle Tradition from James Madison Carpenter's Ethnographic Field Collection', in *Driving the Bow: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic*, 2 (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2008), pp. 57-73; Keith Chandler, 'The Archival Morris Photographs - 4: "The Old 'Uns and the Young 'Uns", Bampton, Oxfordshire, 1927', *English Dance and Song*, 47.3 (1985), 26-28.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Judge, 'D'Arcy Ferris and the Bidford Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, 4.5 (1984), 443-80.

<sup>7</sup> Keith Chandler, 'Musicians in 19th Century Southern England: No 16, John Robbins of Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire (1868 - 1948)', *Musical Traditions*, Article MT 189, 2006 <[http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/mus19\\_16.htm](http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/mus19_16.htm)> [accessed 13 January 2010].

ris felt the pipe and tabor was more suited to the Shakespearean theme, so Robbins was sent to Ilmington to learn to play the pipe and tabor, and acquire the morris tune repertoire from James John Arthur (1828-1906)<sup>8</sup>. It proved difficult to obtain a pipe for him to use on a permanent basis, therefore Robbins often played fiddle instead.<sup>9</sup> Robbins's morris career was shorter than that of Bennett and Wells, and he attracted less attention from collectors. Sharp notated and published some material from Bidford, retracting them in later editions after discovering they were not as old as he originally thought. Mary Neal published a Bidford dance in the first part of the *Espérance Morris Book*,<sup>10</sup> and in 1907, John Graham published his notations of the Bidford tunes and description of the dances.<sup>11</sup>

All three men were the subject of varying levels of interest on the part of collectors, revivalists, and authors of books, but importantly, James Madison Carpenter was the only person who recorded the playing of all of them. It is often said about recordings of traditional morris fiddlers, Wells especially, that they were made when the men were past their prime, and out of practice. However, Carpenter's recordings captured all three musicians in fine form, and while Wells and Bennett were still actively performing with morris dancers.

## Repertoire

Of the morris tunes in Carpenter's collection, Bennett and Wells had the largest number of tunes. Thirteen are from Bennett (plus another dozen songs with fiddle and social-dance tunes) sixteen from Wells and ten from Robbins. The overlap between the three is enlightening. All three men played two tunes, 'Constant Billy' and 'Shepherd's Hey'. Bennett and Wells shared seven tunes in common, Bennett and Robbins shared four tunes, and Wells and Robbins shared three tunes.

<sup>8</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), pp. 140-41.

<sup>9</sup> Chandler, "Musicians in 19th Century Southern England: No 16, John Robbins."

<sup>10</sup> Mary Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book: A Manual of Morris Dances, Folk-Songs and Singing Games*, 2 parts (London: Curwen, 1910-12), I, 7, 20; II, 2, 11, 30.

<sup>11</sup> John Graham, *Shakespearean Bidford Morris Dances: With an Introduction, Description of the Dresses and the Dances, and Hints on Adaptation to Schools* (London: J. Curwen, 1907).



Some of the overlapping repertoire between Wells and Bennett is due to Bennett being invited to play for the old Bampton team after the split. Carpenter happened to be in the area during one of the years in which both the old Bampton side and Wells's new side danced out.<sup>12</sup> He photographed both groups in the same location, probably on Whit Monday, 1933. The Carpenter collection includes several photographs of Bennett playing for Bampton dancers (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Sam Bennett playing at Bampton, 1933. (American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, PH 034).

Bennett was well travelled and knew quite a few tunes outside of the Ilmington and Bampton morris repertoire, including a few Playford era country dance tunes. There is a close musical relationship between the tunes shared between Robbins and Bennett.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere there has been some discussion of possible borrowing between the

<sup>12</sup> Keith Chandler, *Bampton Morris Dancers 1915 - 1945: The Newspaper Accounts* (Eynsham: Chandler Publications, 1986), pp. 25–26.

<sup>13</sup> Elaine Bradtke, 'John Robbins and the Shakespearean Bidford Morris Tune Repertoire', in *Routes and Roots, Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic*, 4 (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2012), pp. 34–50.

Ilmington and Bidford traditions (the hobby horse being a highly visible similarity).

One example of this may be the tune for the Ilmington dance 'Bumpas o' Stretton', which is the same tune that is used for Bidford's 'Abraham Brown'. Since Robbins learned at least part of his repertoire from an Ilmington musician, it is not surprising that there are similarities between his and Bennett's renditions of tunes. But it is not always possible to tell which way the borrowing went.

### **Playing Style, What we Can Learn from Carpenter's Recordings**

In a letter to Kitteredge, dated 21 November 1933, Carpenter reports that he had collected 'at least two score of morris-dance and folk-dance tunes, with nearly a score of the droll, enigmatic word-sets that were sung in snatches to the accompaniment of the tunes'.<sup>14</sup> The technology that Carpenter was using was not capable of recording the fiddlers while they were playing for dancers. Indeed, the portable dictating machine that Carpenter had was not designed for recording instrumental music at all. The sound was funnelled to the cutting stylus by means of a speaking tube, held close to the speaker's mouth. Carpenter must have used some ingenuity to record Sam Bennett's singing and fiddle playing on the same track. In order to eke more recording time out of his cylinders, Carpenter habitually slowed down the recording speed (which makes the pitch higher and speed faster on playback). The wax cylinders themselves were not meant for long-term use or storage, and because of his working methods and subsequent storage in poor conditions, Carpenter's field recordings are notable for their generally dreadful sound quality. Carpenter did make disc copies of most of his cylinders, and sometimes the disc survived when the cylinder did not. When the Library of Congress digitized the collection, they included both the original cylinders and the disc copies. The discs have a fainter sound, but it is possible to

<sup>14</sup> 'The James Madison Carpenter Collection', American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, MS p. 06395.

compare the relevant tracks from both formats and fill in some of the gaps.

Despite the issues surrounding the speed and pitch of the performances and the signal to noise ratio, there is a lot of information to be extracted from the recordings. For instance, the notes, as fingered, may be derived through the reference points provided by open strings and drones. Due to the deterioration of the cylinders, surface noise often masks the sound of bow changes, but it is still sometimes possible to hear slurs and tied notes. Ornaments, when present are fairly easy to hear, especially if the listener uses digital slow down and loop software.

After thorough listening, some generalizations about the fiddlers are possible. William Wells was the most nimble-fingered of the three; his playing is full of ornaments and double stops. Sam Bennett had a more straightforward, driving style and he supplemented the melody with lots of open-string droning. John Robbins had a lighter touch; he used fewer drones and practically no ornamentation, in line with his more formal musical background.<sup>15</sup> He also played some tunes in a way that shows the influence of the pipe and tabor. Based on these differences in style, it is possible to identify the performer on the recording when Carpenter's attributions were absent or incorrect.

If the speed and pitch are adjusted so that the speaking voice sounds reasonable (admittedly, this is an educated guess), Carpenter's recordings of Wells illustrate his preference for tuning flat. He used to sing while playing his fiddle (this is sometimes audible in Carpenter's recordings), and the low tuning suited his vocal range and gives his violin a distinctive sound. He also embellished his tunes with little runs of grace notes or ornaments, and added drones and double stops to reinforce the sound. Writing specifically about Carpenter's recordings of Wells, Townsend states 'The tone is well-produced, the intonation reliable, and all the stylistic features clear, and the playing is of an intricacy hardly hinted at even in the 1936 recordings'.<sup>16</sup> Photographs from the Carpenter collection and elsewhere show that he

<sup>15</sup> Chandler, 'Musicians in 19th Century Southern England: No 16, John Robbins.'

<sup>16</sup> Dave Townsend, 'When James Met Billy : The Earliest Recordings of Jinky Wells', *Fiddle On Magazine*, 21 (2006), 10–13 (p. 12).

used a relaxed, dropped-wrist position, no shoulder or chin rest (Figure 3). His bow was pulled quite tightly, to the point of lacking a reverse curve (much like a baroque bow). This larger gap between the wood and horsehair makes it easier to play on multiple strings simultaneously (Figure 4). The playing position and tuning are indicative of a fiddler who, if he had any formal training, went on to devise his own technique.



Figure 3: William Wells's playing stance. (American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, PH 030).

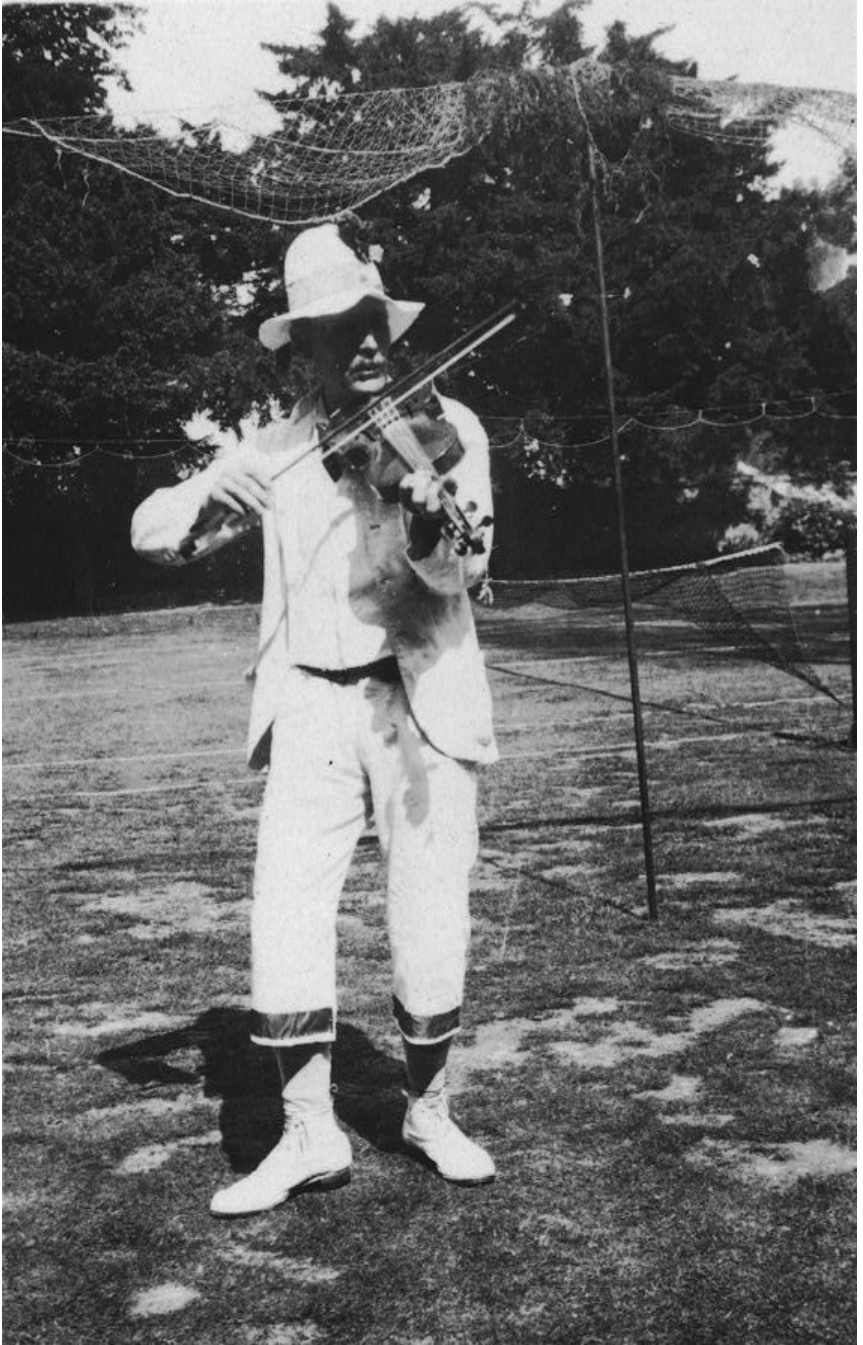


Figure 4: William Wells's bow. (American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, PH 049).



Sam Bennett's recordings for Carpenter cover a wider spectrum. Not limited to the expected morris dance tunes, he played social dance music, ballads, and quite a number of humorous songs. Many of his songs were based on dance tunes, and even in the case of the songs not associated with dance, he played the fiddle before, after or even during singing. In addition to the Ilmington tunes, he knew enough of the Bampton tunes to be able to accompany the morris dancers. Of the three, his style is what one might expect from a morris fiddle player. Rhythmic, with little embellishment, but liberal use of drones, his playing is emphatic rather than expressive (Figure 5). Though he rested his fiddle on his collarbone, photos of him playing show that he doesn't hold it with his chin, and his bow, unlike Wells's, retains the reverse curve. Bennett occupies the middle ground between Wells and Robbins, both in repertoire and in playing style.



Figure 5: Sam Bennett. (American Folklife Center Archive, Library of Congress, AFC 1972/001, PH 036).



Figure 6: John Robbins and the Bidford side (London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Photograph Collection D21).

Carpenter's recordings from Robbins represent that of the Bidford side, as Ferris assembled it from various sources (Figure 6). His tunes feature very stable melodies, with little variation on the repeats. Robbins used little to no ornamentation, and fewer dotted notes than Bennett and Wells. His playing also lacks the drive found in that of Wells and Bennett, and this may be because he was no longer involved in playing for morris dancing at the time of recording. Robbins learned and performed at least some of these tunes on the pipe and tabor, and this has left its mark on his fiddle playing. Passages where Robbins plays what appear to be transpositions into a lower register, or alterations to avoid chromatic notes may be due to the restrictions of the tabor pipe. Conversely, Robbins's use of the raised pitches in the B section of 'Constant Billy' (see Figure 7) suggests that this tune was not learned on the tabor pipe, but rather on the fiddle. He also played it in D, higher than the common key of G used by Bennett and Wells. There are no photos of Robbins in the Carpenter collection, but from other sources we know that he used a fairly formal playing position.

Constant Billy

**A**

Bennett

Robbins

Wells

**B**

B

R

W

**B**

B

R

W

**B**

B

R

W

Figure 7: ‘Constant Billy’ comparison of Bennett, Robbins and Wells.

Looking at the specific example of ‘Constant Billy’, the differences in musical style become clear. Robbins’s line (the notation is transposed for ease of comparison) is sparse, undotted, and lacking ornament. Wells and Bennett dot many of the strong beats and add drones and double stops. Wells embellishes his tune with extra semi-quavers. Finally, Wells added an extra beat at the end of his phrases, to accommodate the different steps used in a particular version of



the dance. In a discussion of 'Constant Billy' Wells stated that 'They used to do it three different ways' incorporating different steps and jumps into the choreography.<sup>17</sup> This is not noted in Sharp's published dance notations.<sup>18</sup> The version that Carpenter recorded is for one of the alternate ways of performing this dance.

## Conclusion

The foregoing has merely scraped the surface of what is in the Carpenter collection. Certainly, the morris material is a small but significant segment of the whole. While there is a great deal of raw data such as photographs, song texts and sound recordings, without the work of other researchers such as Keith Chandler, Roy Dommett, Roy Judge, John Forrest, and Mike Heaney it would be much harder to put these items from the Carpenter collection in context and make sense of them. Between these three contributors we can begin to see a web of interrelationships, hints at how the village traditions shifted and evolved with the movements of musicians. We may never know how extensive this was in earlier generations, but Carpenter's collection opens a window into the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century south Midlands morris.

<sup>17</sup> William Wells, 'William Wells 1868-1953: Morris Dancer, Fiddler and Fool', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8.1 (1956), 1-15 (p. 5).

<sup>18</sup> Cecil Sharp (with H.C. MacIlwaine), *The Morris Book, Part III*, 2nd ed. (London: Novello, 1924), p.49.



## **The Later Revival**



Sue Allan

## **Merrie England, May Day and More: Morris Dances in Cumbria in the Early Twentieth Century**

When I first became involved in playing music for Cotswold morris in the early 1970s, my mother, Margaret Allan, and my grandmother, Maggie Williamson (née Peel), both told me they'd done morris dancing in the local carnival in my home town of Wigton when they were children. My grandmother then gave me two photographs of her dancing the morris in what appeared to be Wigton Carnival in 1911 (she was seven), which I pored over with some fascination, but also with puzzlement as I summarily dismissed the idea that this could be 'real' morris, as there was to my knowledge no form of morris indigenous to Cumberland (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Younger girl morris dancers, Cornmarket, Wigton 1911– one of whom is the author's grandmother.

Through my involvement with Carlisle Morris from 1974, who performed then mainly Cotswold morris, I soon became aware of North-west morris and the women's morris movement, and through a friend in Lancashire, Jenny Potts – who was researching her local dance traditions and went on to found Rivington Morris – I learned that many of the Lan-

cashire and Cheshire dances had in the past been performed by girls. This appeared to give some underpinning of what I then thought of as ‘authenticity’ to the tradition of ‘morris dancing’ I had stumbled across on my own doorstep.

On my quizzing my grandmother more closely, she was able to remember that in her day the bigger girls wore garlands of flowers around their heads, while she and the smaller girls wore ‘clottie bonnets’, one file wearing blue bonnets and the other pink. All the girls, she said, wore white dresses, black stockings and black shoes, had ankle garters with bells sewn on and danced with handkerchiefs with bells sewn on each corner and a loop in the centre so they could be suspended from a finger. Her photographs show some of the older girls danced with beribboned sticks (Figure 2), while photographs which have come to light since then show that boys also danced, but my grandmother did not mention either, and my mother claimed that in her day (in the early 1940s) the dancers were all girls and only used handkerchiefs. Both women, sadly, had only the haziest memory of the figures, remembering clearly only the chorus and right- and left-hand star movements, and the fact that they danced to ‘100 Pipers’, played by the town band.



Figure 2: Older girl morris dancers, High Street, Wigton 1911.

The carnival in Wigton went into abeyance in the early 1960s but was revived around 1970 by a teacher at St Cuthbert's RC Primary School in the town, a nun: the redoubtable Sister Aquinas. In 1977 I approached the Sister in order to find out more, and learned that she had managed to revive the morris dance by tracking down the last person to teach the dance, a Mrs Lily Scholey of Carlisle, then aged around 90, who was then brought in to instruct new dancers. Teams of girls, mostly from St Cuthbert's School, then performed the dance at the head of the carnival for the next twenty years, in a costume which seemed to change yearly, but always dancing to the same tune, 'A Hundred Pipers', played by a brass band. Sister Aquinas was more than happy to gather a cohort of girls to demonstrate the dance for me, and the Wigton Carnival Dance then went on to become central to the repertoire of the women's morris team I formed in 1977, Throstles Nest Morris.<sup>1</sup> Most of our repertoire consisted initially of Lancashire and Cheshire dances, thanks to notation supplied by the Women's Morris Federation (now Morris Federation), along with two from Cumbria, the Keswick Road Dance and Keswick Stage Dance; but the Wigton Carnival Dance was the jewel in our crown, later joined by the Blennerhasset Garland Dance, another local dance I collected in 1978 from a former teacher in the village of Blennerhasset, some eight miles away.

Further research soon revealed a raft of other morris dances performed by children at carnivals and hospital parades in West and South Cumbria in the early twentieth century, along with dances performed at May Day celebrations in the Eden Valley and in Keswick, where May Queen celebrations and maypole dancing had been a popular annual feature of town life from 1885 to 1938. This was a period notable for the great national upsurge of interest in things quaint, rural and 'English', which encompassed morris dancing, carnivals, Rose Queens and May Day celebrations with their May Queens and Maypoles: a 'Merrie Englandism' celebrating 'a world that has never actually existed, a visionary, mythical landscape, where it is difficult to take normal historical bearings.' The definitive

<sup>1</sup> 'The Throstle's Nest of all England' had long been the nickname for the town of Wigton.

study of this phenomenon is Roy Judge's 1991 paper which characterizes 'Merrie England' as an 'abstract literary concept deriving from the antiquarian's study, or an entertaining diversion at the theatre,' based on evidence from early nineteenth century books like Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes* (five editions 1830 – 1841), Hone's *Every-Day, Table and Year Books* (1825-1832), Walter Scott's version of Strutt's incomplete *Queenhoo-Hall* and the writings of Washington Irving.<sup>2</sup>

Theresa Buckland suggests that Eric Hobsbawm's concept of the 'invention of tradition' informs the Merrie England trope, feeding an agenda of nostalgia and patriotism: 'Events such as festivals, pageants and plays re-produced on the original site profiled the stability and legitimacy of established families, institutions, towns and cities, cementing them as both national and local heritage.'<sup>3</sup> As E.P. Thompson notes, 'far from extinguishing local traditions [...] the early years of the Industrial revolution saw a growth in provincial pride and self-consciousness', while Frank Trentmann suggests that activities like rambling and morris dancing 'were cultural as much as physical exercises' and the popular appeal of country dance 'stemmed largely from its conscious attempt to restore a spiritual tie between modern reality and rural past.'<sup>4</sup>

The expansive Knutsford May Day (later Knutsford Royal May Day) celebrations were established in 1864, in the heyday of Merrie Englandism, and spawned many similar May Day celebrations across Cheshire and Lancashire. Johnny Haslett's assiduous work in researching newspaper reports of morris dancers and maypoles on the Lancashire plain from the 1860s through to 1919 gives some idea of the number and scale of such events.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, in the south of

<sup>2</sup> Roy Judge, 'May Day and Merrie England', *Folklore*, 102.2 (1991), 131-48 (p. 131).

<sup>3</sup> Theresa J. Buckland, 'Dance and Cultural Memory: Interpreting Fin de Siècle Performances of "Olde England"', *Dance Research*, 31.1 (2013), 29-66 (pp. 29, 44); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1966), p.407; Frank Trentmann, 'Civilization and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth Century Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29.4 (1994), 583-625 (pp. 593, 598).

<sup>5</sup> J. Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens: An Anthology of Reported Carnivals and Galas in West Lancashire to 1900* (Leyland: Fairhaven, 2005) ['Volume 1']; J. Haslett, *Morris Dancers and*



England from 1885 onwards professional pageant master D'Arcy Ferris was busy organizing similar events in villages and cities, and some twenty years later a Merrie England Society was formed to encourage May festivals and local pageants, fostering a nostalgia for an England that never was.<sup>6</sup>

Earlier maypole traditions in villages would no doubt involved dancing, but folklorists agree that the plaited ribbon dance which most people today associate with maypoles has a history of only around 180 years, having been introduced to England 'by professional choreographers in numerous theatrical pieces, organized fetes, and revived or created May Day customs from about the 1830s' and was then in classic Merrie England style immediately declared to be 'an old English custom', despite its lack of historical roots.<sup>7</sup> By the later nineteenth century, it was being enthusiastically disseminated through the English school system by teachers. In a similar fashion, the morris dances which became popular features of such events throughout the nineteenth century probably had their roots in theatrical performances, although the precise nature of these is often difficult to gauge. Such dances became less fashionable in the theatre later in the century, but were then taken up by dancing masters and schools and organizers of town and village celebrations. Roy Judge notes that: 'The apparent relation of morris to the 'olden times' in fact gave ballet masters greater freedom to explore the possibilities of its various images', although it was 'clearly seen as a fresh revival of an antique and patriotic custom...'<sup>8</sup> The widespread enthusiasm in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century for 'patriotic'

*Rose Queens, Volume 2: An Anthology of Reported Carnivals and Galas in West Lancashire 1900-1909* (Leyland: Fairhaven, 2013); J. Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens, Volume 3: An Anthology of Reported Carnivals and Galas in West Lancashire 1910-1919* (Leyland: Fairhaven, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Roy Judge, 'D'Arcy Ferris and the Bidford Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, 4.5 (1984), 443-80; Judge, 'May Day and Merrie England', pp. 132-141.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Roud, *The English Year: A Month-by-month Guide to The Nation's Customs and Festivals, from May Day to Mischief Night* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 219; see also Roy Judge, 'Tradition and the Plaited Maypole Dance', *Traditional Dance*, 2 (1983), 1-21; Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 296-297.

<sup>8</sup> Roy Judge, "'The Old English Morris Dance': Theatrical Morris 1801-1880', *Folk Music Journal*, 7 (1997), 311-30 (pp. 334, 336).

May Day and carnival dance performances was reflected in the initiation of similar performances not only in Wigton, but also at Keswick, Cockermouth, Blennerhasset, Aspatria, Cockermouth, Workington, Whitehaven in Cumberland, Temple Sowerby in Westmorland and Ulverston, Barrow and Dalton in the Furness district of Lancashire (i.e., the modern county of Cumbria) (Figure 3). A discussion of these follows, beginning with the earliest – May Day celebrations in the Lake District town of Keswick – and concluding with the Wigton dance, which continued to be performed for the longest period.

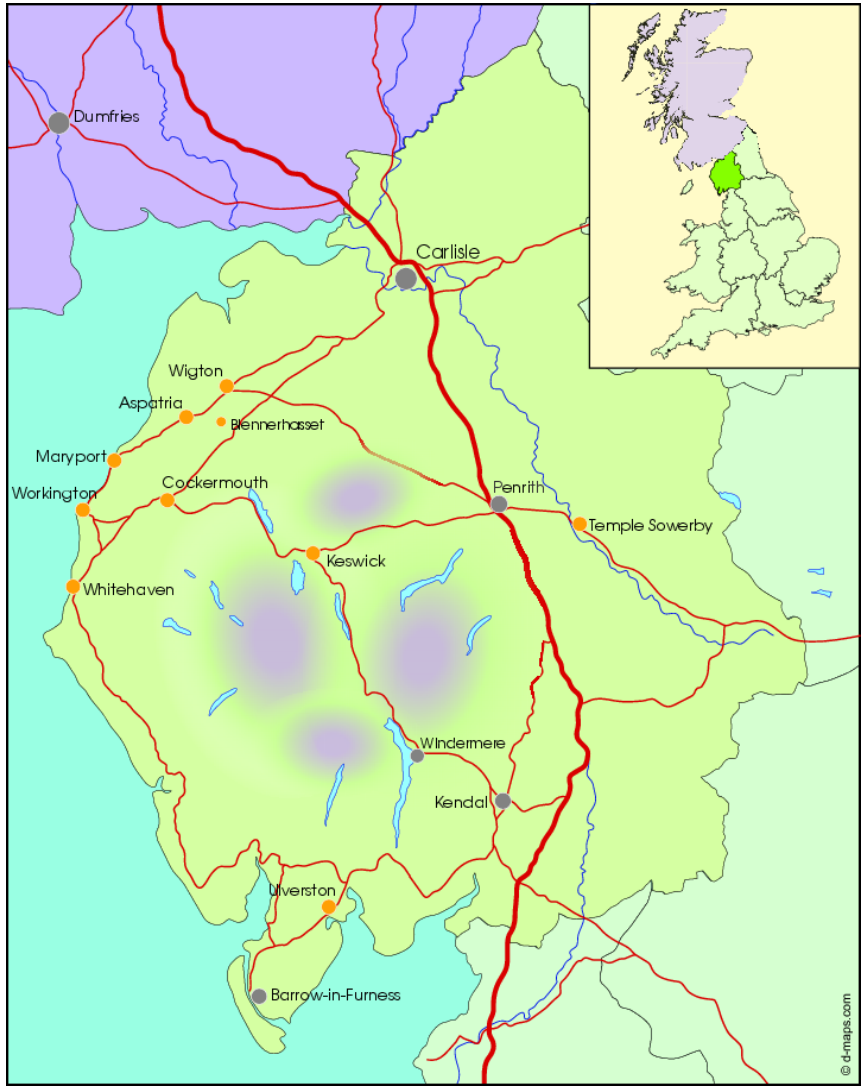


Figure 3: Map of Cumbria showing locations of dances referred to (orange circles).

## Keswick May Day 1885 – 1938

May Day celebrations in Keswick were first proposed as an additional attraction for visitors by tradesmen in the town, to be held on the first Wednesday of May, which in 1885 was half-day closing. Muriel Spedding of Greta Bank was the first May Queen, elected by a Ladies' Committee who supervised the dress making and flowers, and with an entourage of twelve maids of honour, or sometimes page boys; she led a grand procession from the Market Place, around the town and on to Fitz Park. In the park, the May Queen was crowned and there was a host of activities for children including maypole dancing, morris dancing, a choral singing competition, Cumberland Three Reel dancing, an essay competition, skipping competitions, races and high jump (Figure 4). The day was rounded off with an evening concert at the Queen of Lakes Pavilion just across the River Greta from the park.<sup>9</sup> From 1896 to 1938 the organization of the celebrations was taken on by local Band of Hope groups rather than the tradesmen. There were twelve such groups in the Keswick area, associated with different churches, and each took it in turn to present a May Queen, elected by the children, with Maids of Honour named after spring flowers, for example in 1912 Nora Green chosen by Under-skiddaw Band of Hope.<sup>10</sup>

Canon Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley (1851 -1920), vicar of Cros-thwaite Church, Keswick from 1883-1917, was involved from the beginning and enthusiastically took on the organization of the event and was undoubtedly instrumental in shaping the May Day celebrations (Figure 5).

<sup>9</sup> Information on Keswick May Day from archives of Keswick Museum & Art Gallery, following their exhibition 'May Day in Keswick', 1 May–11 June 2016, which included over 70 photographs, most from the museum's Joe Brownrigg Archive, along with some costumes, documents and cuttings researched and curated by local historian Brian Wilkinson. Additional information from *Preston Guardian*, 27 April 1885, quoted by Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens*, [Volume 1], p. 165.

<sup>10</sup> The Band of Hope Union, founded in 1855, was a Christian temperance organization for children up to age 16, which encouraged children to live healthy lives without alcohol and also organized activities for them. There were 65 Band of Hope groups within the Carlisle Diocese in 1880, see Lyn Murfin, *Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 142-43.



Figure 4: Keswick May Day 1892 - maypole dancers at Fitz Park, Canon Rawnsley with back to the camera giving instructions to the dancers (Photo: Brian Wilkinson).



Figure 5: Keswick May Day 1907: May Queen Isobel Gardiner and her attendants, with Canon Rawnsley (Photo: Joe Brownrigg Collection, Keswick Museum & Art Gallery).

His friend and mentor, art critic, artist, geologist, writer and social thinker John Ruskin (1819-1900), who had moved to Brantwood on Coniston Water in 1871, had in 1881 been influential in setting up the extravagant annual May Queen Festivals at Whitelands College, a

London training college for female teachers. The festivals managed to combine Ruskin's romantic ideas of old English customs and rituals with the High Anglican tradition of the College, fanning the flames of enthusiasm for May Day festivities nationally as Whitelands-trained teachers spread the ideas around the country.<sup>11</sup> Rawnsley led the Keswick May Queen's carriage and wrote her proclamation virtually every year until his death in 1920. The proclamation asked the people of Keswick, particularly the children, to show love and gentleness to all around them – both people and animals – 'a sort of early countryside code'.<sup>12</sup>

A keen conservationist and supporter of the arts and crafts movement, Rawnsley was described by one of his parishioners as 'the most active volcano in Europe': one of the founders of the National Trust, he was also a keen supporter of the arts and crafts movement – setting up the Keswick School of Industrial Art and Ruskin Linen School and helping to found Keswick Museum and Art Gallery, Keswick Cottage Hospital and Keswick School. Additionally he was involved with local colleges, nature clubs and the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association. In his free time, he wrote sonnets and campaigned against alcohol and saucy postcards. He describes a May Day in Keswick in one of his books – over-romantically, in florid prose and with disingenuous descriptions (writing as if he had just come upon the event rather than actually organizing it!)

## Keswick Dances

The reference to Keswick May Day in 1895 mentioned above also alludes to morris dancing being part of the event, as well as maypole dancing, and in fact two of the first dances Throstles Nest performed in 1978 were the Keswick Stage Dance (intended for display on a stage) and Keswick Road Dance (a simpler, processional form). The dance notation came from the Women's Morris Federation, and was headed: 'As danced by the girls of St John's School, Keswick, c.1910-

<sup>11</sup> Dave Walker, 'The May Queens of Whitelands College: The Early Years', <<https://rbkclocalstudies.wordpress.com/2015/04/30/the-may-queens-of-whitelands-college-the-early-years/>> [accessed 14 November 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians: The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 97.

12 and led by Miss Hayes. Seen by Mary Neal and Clive Carey, who commented on the stepping', given to them by dancer and researcher Roy Dommett. The notes allegedly came from the Carey collection.<sup>13</sup> However, no evidence of the Keswick dances has been found in the Carey collection, although it certainly appears in the manuscript collection of Cecil Sharp, where in his notes on 'Mandesley Morris' (this is an error: it should read 'Mawdesley') Sharp writes that the dance 'was taught to Keswick children by a Mandesley man [*sic*], J.T. Southworth (32). He met me at Keswick by appointment, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1911'.<sup>14</sup> Sharp goes on to say that the dance was learned by the 'Mandesley' men from a dancer who came from Leyland, going on to give notation for both a processional 'Road Dance' and a stationary 'Stage-dance'. The history of the Mawdesley dance is most clearly outlined by Roy Smith in 2010, who notes that John Thomas Southworth moved to the Keswick area and taught the dance to the girls of St John's School, presumably for the May Celebrations.<sup>15</sup>

## Ulverston, Furness

The morris dance performed in the annual Hospital Parade in Ulverston also appears to have been a direct import from Lancashire. Tom and Joan Flett include a note about it in their 1979 book on Cumbrian step-dances, saying that that the morris in Ulverston died out around 1910 but 'girls' dancing troupes such as the Dalton Merry-makers, from the neighbouring town of Dalton-in-Furness, developed from it.<sup>16</sup> Reports in the *Lancashire Daily Post* from 1901, 1906 and 1908 all mention the morris dance, in 1906 '... under the direc-

<sup>13</sup> Roy Dommett, 'Keswick Stage Dance', *Roy Dommett's Morris Notes*, edited by Anthony G. Barand, 2nd ed., 5 vols (n.pl.: CDSS, 1986), II, 57-58.

<sup>14</sup> The Women's Morris Federation became the Morris Federation in 1980. For further information see Morris Federation, 'Our History' <<http://www.morrisfed.org.uk/about/our-history/>> [accessed 14 November 2017]; 'Mandersley Morris', Cambridge, Archive of Clare College, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, ACC1987/25, CJS2/11/2/17 <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/2/17>> [accessed 14 November 2017].

<sup>15</sup> Mawdesley is a village in Lancashire, some eight miles from Leyland. Roy Smith, 'Mawdesley Morris Dancers Remembered', *The Morris Dancer*, 4.2 (2010), 21-33. <<http://themorrisring.org/sites/default/files/docs/mdancer/volume-4-number-2.pdf>> [accessed 14 November 2017]. Although Smith says Southworth moved to St John's in the Vale, it seems more likely that the dancers of 'St John's School' are actually girls from St John's School in Keswick itself, rather than the tiny school in the hamlet of St John's in the Vale.

<sup>16</sup> J.F. and T. M. Flett, *Traditional Step-Dancing in Lakeland* (London: EFDSS, 1979).



tion of Miss Edith Malone, and flower queens and maidens under Miss E. Lawrence...’, while a report of a very rainy Barrow Hospital Saturday in 1907 records ‘troupes of young dancing girls from Ulverston, who had come down to assist’.<sup>17</sup> In 1981 I corresponded with three morris men who I believed had some information about the Ulverston dance: Julian Pilling of Colne Royal Morris Men replied, ‘I have no knowledge that I am prepared to pass on to instigators of women’s morris’, but Dan Howison, formerly of Manchester Morris Men, and Stuart Lawrence of Furness Morris were much more helpful. Dan said that the morris dancing in Ulverston flourished for only a few years around 1900, organized by the daughter of a local chemist, while Stuart’s further researches had revealed that this was Mrs Hayes, who wanted to liven up the local Hospital Parade so visited Bolton to see the dancers there, noting figures and adapting them for the Ulverston team, originally made up of boys but very soon also including girls. Stuart quotes from Mrs Gabbatt of Ulverston, the daughter of Mrs Hayes, that ‘The Bolton dance was a stationary dance and the Ulverston parade marshal did not want to the procession to stop, so mother had to devise a dance at the speed of the procession’. Mrs Gabbatt thought the dance was performed from 1902 to around 1910.<sup>18</sup>

## Temple Sowerby, Westmorland

Information on the dancing performed by girls at Temple Sowerby May Day came about because of a chance meeting whilst performing with Throstles Nest Morris at a garden fête in the village in June 1979. I had spotted some lovely black-and-white photographs in a local history display and ascertained these were from local resident Mrs Kate Hindle, then aged 82½ years. At around eight years old, Kate was the youngest of the dancers in the photos, which feature the girls who performed a ‘tambourine dance’ and a ‘hoop dance’ - both dances typical of the ‘fancy dances’ taught by dancing teachers at the time (Figure 6). She could not, sadly, remember anything of

<sup>17</sup> Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens, Volume 2*, pp. 15, 201, 258 and 238.

<sup>18</sup> Sue Allan, private correspondence with Dan Howison c. 1981 (original letter mislaid), and with Stuart Lawrence, 12 October 1981.

the actual dance figures but did recall that they also did a maypole dance, and performed in neighbouring villages as well as Temple Sowerby.<sup>19</sup> Haslett includes a report headed 'Queen of Villages: Westmorland May-Day Festival Revived' from the *Lancashire Daily Post*, 15 May 1908, saying that after a lapse of a quarter of a century 'the famous May Day festival was yesterday revived at Temple Sowerby, near Penrith, which claims to be "the queen" of Westmorland villages'. The report goes on to detail the costumes of the May Queen and her attendants, as well as the tableaux in the procession, and the performance of 'old English dances'.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 6: Temple Sowerby hoop or garland dancers, 1909.

## Cockermouth, Cumberland

Another instance of a fruitful chance meeting whilst performing with Throstles Nest Morris occurred in summer 1979 at a fête in Cockermouth. Here I met two former girl morris dancers from the town: Mrs Skilbeck and Mrs Benson. They informed me that they had danced in carnival processions in the 1920s, to the tune '100 Pipers',

<sup>19</sup> For more on 'fancy dances' see Flett, *Traditional Step-Dancing in Lakeland*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens*, Volume 2, p. 249.



along with their female classmates from two different primary schools, Fairfield and All Saints. At that period, I was informed, the schools competed with each other and would perform different dances. A further visit to Mrs Benson, who had attended Fairfield School, yielded little in the way of information about the dance itself, but she did have some photographs from around 1925, when she had been around eleven years old, showing girls in classically styled tunics and cross-gartered Greek sandals, dancing with handkerchiefs, which Mrs Benson said were emerald green and red (Figure 7). A photograph of 1928, however, shows dancers wearing dark skirts and waistcoats.



Figure 7: Cockermouth carnival c.1925: morris dancers from Fairfield School.

## Aspatia, Cumberland

The mining town of Aspatia was another with a flourishing carnival tradition throughout the first half of the twentieth century, with girls doing morris dancing in the carnival in the 1920s. Dressed in white dresses with coloured sashes and handkerchiefs, they danced four

abreast to 'Cock o' the North' played by Aspatria Colliery Band, with hand movements similar to those of the Wigton dance.<sup>21</sup>

## **Whitehaven and Workington, Cumberland**

In 1981 Marion Cowper, of the Cowper Dancing School in Whitehaven, but originally Workington, was able to provide information on the morris dances. The school had been founded by her grandfather Oliver Cowper in 1871, who taught many styles of dance to both adults and children both at his premises and also in the towns and village round about. As well as ballroom dancing for adults and 'fancy dances' for children, he and his sons taught clog and trained teams of girls to do morris dancing in the Workington and Whitehaven carnivals, to the tune '100 Pipers' played by brass band. The popularity of carnival dancing seems to have been widespread throughout West Cumberland in the earlier years of the twentieth century, and the Fletts also note that Will Wright of Seaton, near Workington, who often helped out at Oliver Cowper's classes, went on to train troupes of carnival dancers – distinct, it seems, from morris dancers – from the 1920s to 1960.<sup>22</sup> According to his grand-daughter Marion, for the morris dances, which were performed with hankies or sticks and sometimes tambourines, Oliver always insisted on white dresses for the girls, who were accompanied in the procession by a 'jester' in a red and white costume with bells sewn on who did 'acrobatic dancing'. Unfortunately, Marion could not remember any of the dance steps or figures.<sup>23</sup>

## **Blennerhasset, Cumberland**

Much more information was forthcoming from the two informants I interviewed in the village Blennerhasset near Aspatria about its two carnival morris dances: a former dancer, Mrs Sally Rowlinson, and Miss Hilda Lawson, who had danced and then gone on to teach the

<sup>21</sup> Information from Mrs Sally Rowlinson of Blennerhasset in 1978 communicated to Sue Allan; information communicated to Mike Jensen of Carlisle Morris by Mrs Dixon of Aspatria, 17 February 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Flett, *Traditional Step-Dancing in Lakeland*, pp. 12-13, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Information from Marion Cowper, interviewed by Sue Allan, 17 September 1981.

dances to girls in the village. As far as can be ascertained, the dances - a morris dance and a garland dance - seem to have been performed to the accompaniment of a brass band and date back to at least 1918. In the 'morris' dance hankies with bells sewn on each corner were used, and both the garland dance and morris used a country-dance-style double step appearing similar to that of the Wigton dance. The girls wore white knee-length dresses with bells around wrists, a ribbon sash tied at the waist, garters with bells on the ankles, and ribbons or bows in the hair. The garlands used were cane hoops or half hoops covered with flowers and/or ribbons, and all dances were performed to '100 Pipers' played by a brass band. Hilda Lawson, who was able to provide many figures for both dances, said that in earlier days some dancers used tambourines instead of garlands and in later days, in the 1920s, they would sometimes dance four abreast instead of two. Teachers of the dance had included Mr Jack Martin of Blennerhasset School, and possibly also Mrs Ginnie Lightfoot of Harriston and Mrs Tinnion of Aspatria, with Mrs Bessie Dalton playing melodeon.<sup>24</sup>

## Wigton, Cumberland

Back now to where I began, my home town of Wigton and its morris dance (which we in Throstles Nest Morris called the Wigton Carnival Dance). My researches have continued over the years and many more photographs have come to light. Some of these, like those of my grandmother, date back to 1911 (Figure 8) and reveal that both boys and girls were dancing at that time, and that there were a lot of them - one photograph shows 16 boys, two of them dressed as jesters, and 30 girls posing for the camera. There are also extant a few photographs from later years from the 1920s through to the 1970s (Figure 9).

<sup>24</sup> Information from Sue Allan interviews with Mrs Sally Rowlinson and Miss Hilda Lawson of Blennerhasset, winter 1978.



Figure 8: Morris dancers leading the procession for the George V coronation celebrations, 1911, Market Place, Wigton.



Figure 9: Girls from St Cuthbert's School perform the Wigton dance in the 1975 carnival procession, with teacher Sister Aquinas walking alongside.

My mother danced in annual carnival in the 1930s, a period for which I have not found any photographic records, nor any of the period in the 1940s when the dance was taught by Ethel Bragg, the

mother of broadcaster and writer Melvyn Bragg (Lord Bragg of Wigton), who wrote about this in a lightly fictionalized account in his autobiographical novel *A Place in England*, with the fictional 'Betty' representing his mother:<sup>25</sup>

*Betty was in charge of the dancers. There were about thirty girls, dressed in white, with four bells on a white handkerchief, bells on their wrists and bells around their ankles, small, on grey elastic, shining like little bubbles of silver. The girls walked in pairs directly behind the band, jangling in the wind, and danced every four hundred yards when the band stopped. The dancing was called Morris Dancing but had long lost any relationship it might have had with the Maypole and yip-haw, the dialect and sticks of those revived original dances which are a mixture of pedantry and Swedish drill set to slender melodies that often shudder at the impact. No, the girls danced a very formal, very simple, skipping and chain-making dance nearer to a Scottish reel than to the pure source of Morris. The band accompanied them with Scottish tunes, 'A Hundred Pipers' [...]*

Some weeks before, he says, a hand-written notice in the newsagent's window had advertised for dancers: 'Will all girls between the ages of 7 and 15 who would like to be in the Morris dancing please meet at the West Cumberland Farmers Building at 5.15 next Monday.' And what he says about 'Betty' in the novel rings true as a description of his mother Ethel, whom I knew quite well:

*Everything about it appealed to Betty. The girls took their places in accordance with age, the younger ones leading – and so it was fair. The dance was so easily learnt that there was little nervousness. The business of getting them all to move at the same time was difficult enough to make it exacting work, but not so difficult as to make it hard work. Most of the girls had white dresses and, if not, they could easily be*

<sup>25</sup> Melvyn Bragg, *A Place in England* (London: Sceptre, 1970), pp. 112-13.



*made – while J & J Airds sold the bells for a penny each – so few could feel barred through poverty...*

The rehearsals at that time took place at the West Cumberland Farmers' building on Monday evenings, and during a conversation with Melvyn Bragg in early 2017, when I mentioned I was writing about his mother teaching the dance, he volunteered the information that he had clear memories of when he was ten or eleven years old being taken along with his mother to West Cumberland Farmers to help at the rehearsals, his mother saying: 'Come on Melvyn, there's a lot of girls tonight so I need you to come along and help'. In the novel his character, Douglas, 'soon picked up the dance and so further established himself by being able to teach it to some of the more tardy girls.'<sup>26</sup> He did not, however, give any indication that he could still remember the figures of the dance, although almost all informants seem to have remembered the distinctive processional chorus figure with the lines of dancers doing dipping and diving movements with the right hand, holding hankies or sticks.<sup>27</sup> The remaining five simple country dance style figures are: lines cross over, partners passing right and then left hands; right- and left-hand stars; cross over with partner shaking sticks or hankies; right-hand file dance forward with right hand/stick/hankie down then up to shoulder, left-hand file go down first and then up on shoulder; chain in fours, starting by facing partner and giving right hands across the set.

It is natural to assume that the dance from Wigton, and similar dances performed in the carnivals at Workington, Whitehaven, Aspatria, Cockermouth and Blennerhasset, all have their roots in the processional morris of the North-west of England, an assumption reinforced for me as I have a copy of Cumbrian musician John Graham's 1911 book on Lancashire and Cheshire morris dances inscribed on its cover with the name of Wigton National School teacher George Scott.<sup>28</sup> Although Scott was indeed a pupil teacher at the school in

<sup>26</sup> Bragg, *A Place in England*, p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> Throstles Nest Morris only ever performed the dance with sticks, and adapted the processional figure to do four steps forward and four back if required as a stationary dance.

<sup>28</sup> John Graham, *Lancashire and Cheshire Morris Dances* (London: Curwen, 1911). Graham was born in Carlisle.

1911, and in the 1920s became its headmaster, the assumption that the dances came from Graham's book has been proved wrong. The headmaster in 1911 was Alexander Macfarlane, an enthusiastic organizer of patriotic musical performances and celebrations, including large-scale town celebrations to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 as well as the celebrations at which the morris dances were performed in 1911. This, it emerges from contemporary local newspaper reports, was not actually a carnival but Wigton's celebration of the coronation of George V on Thursday 22 June.<sup>29</sup> According to *The Wigton Advertiser* the previous Saturday, this was to comprise a large number of dancers, bands and floats processing through Wigton's two main streets up to Highmoor Park on the southern edge of the town – the home of businessman and philanthropist Edwin Banks, who made the park grounds freely available for local people to enjoy. The procession was to start at 5 p.m., ending up at Highmoor at 6 p.m., and at 7 p.m. there would be children's sports, maypole dancing and a 'children's display of morris dancing on the platform'.<sup>30</sup>

The following week's *Wigton Advertiser* described the procession: '... following the band come the "Morris Dancers" – 50 CE School children, prettily attired lads and lasses, who danced their gay and picturesque "promenade" through the streets. Some of the girls wore pink and blue bonnets, and others wreaths of flowers, whilst the boys were in white with red, white and blue sashes, and ribbons and bells. They were undoubtedly the feature of the procession.'<sup>31</sup>

Then, at the entertainment at Highmoor: 'Considerable interest was taken in the attractive dances, on a raised platform, of a number of C.E. Day School children, who had been specially trained under the supervision of Mr I.O. Cowper, Workington, and the Headmaster Mr McFarlane – the morris dancers by Miss K. Thompson. "Rainbow Dances" and "Coronation Cotillion" were the work of Mr Cowper.

<sup>29</sup> T.W. Carrick, *History of Wigton, Cumberland, from its Origin to the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (Carlisle: Thurnam, 1949), pp. 249-53.

<sup>30</sup> 'Wigton and the Coronation: Outline of the Arrangements', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 17 June 1911, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Coronation: The Grand Procession', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 24 June 1911, p. 4.

Miss Gertie McFarlane (Head's daughter) made her debut as accompanist.' The dances listed are: 'Rainbow Dance', 'Morris On', 'Bean Setting', 'Country Gardens', 'Shepherd's Hey', 'Blue-Eyed Stranger', 'Morris Off' and 'Coronation Cotillion', all of which, apart from the 'Rainbow Dance' and 'Coronation Cotillion' had recently been published in Cecil Sharp and Herbert MacIlwaine's *The Morris Book* in 1907. The article then quotes *The Carlisle Journal's* 'Borderer' (Henry Penfold of Brampton) stating that one of the prettiest sights of the whole day had been the Wigton children's display of morris dancing, 'for which they had been specially trained.'<sup>32</sup>

On 8 July *The Wigton Advertiser* announced there would be a reprise of 'The Entertainment by the Morris Dancers', at which the morris dancers 'who attracted so much attention on the Coronation Day [...] in the procession and on the ground are to give two of their delightful entertainments at the Market Hall (on an elevated stage) in the afternoon and evening (today)', the use of the stage apparently because they couldn't be seen well on the day because of the crowds but here 'they will be able to do justice to themselves'. The report of the following week detailed two performances, afternoon and evening, prior to which the morris dancers had marched down the main street doing their 'promenade dance', accompanied by the Wigton Territorial Band.<sup>33</sup>

There seems to have been an attempt to replicate the success of the 1911 event the following year, with an advertisement placed by Wigton C.E. Schools in the local press in June that a 'Grand Children's Fête in Highmoor Park' would be held on Saturday 6 July. It would commence with a 'Street Promenade' with morris dancers accompanied by the town band 'leaving Market Hill at 4.15 pm prompt', followed by 'Maypole Braiding, Set Morris, National and Display Dances, and Sports'.<sup>34</sup> In the remaining years before the First World War, *The Wigton Advertiser* yields no further information on morris dancing. However, it is interesting to note that the first edition of *The*

<sup>32</sup> 'Children's Dances', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 24 June 1911, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> 'The Entertainment by the Morris Dancers', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 8 July 1911, p. 4; 'Report on the Entertainment by the Morris Dancers', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 15 July 1911, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> 'Grand Children's Fête', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 29 June 1912, p. 1.



*Wigton Advertiser* in January 1912 includes a front page advertisement by Oliver Cowper, evidently attempting to capitalize on his 1911 successes in Wigton by advertising dancing lessons:<sup>35</sup>

*Dancing and Music: Mr Oliver Cowper will resume his elementary and advanced classes for the above Arts in the Assembly Room of the King's Arms Hotel, Wigton on Friday January 12<sup>th</sup> 1912. The latest Ball Room Novelties at Merit (??) including the various Bostons, One Step, Five Step, Raglan, Minuets, Gavottes, Jigs, Reels, Flings, Hornpipes, Tarantellas etc will be taught in the classes. Fees 10s6d for Class Courses, Juveniles at 5.30; Adults at 7.30 (address given as 11 Christian Street, Workington) ... but not morris dances.*

Furthermore, it should be remembered that Oliver Cowper was also teaching dance classes in towns and villages over a wide area of west Cumberland, including Workington, Whitehaven, Cockermouth, Aspatria and Blennerhasset, so it is quite possible that their processional carnival morris dances were choreographed by Cowper. Further research into reports in local newspapers covering these areas may well prove fruitful.



<sup>35</sup> 'Dancing and Music', *The Wigton Advertiser*, 6 January 1912, p. 1.

Figure 9: Throstles Nest Morris perform the Wigton Carnival Dance at Milburn in Cumbria, 1979 (Photo: Sue Allan).

## Some conclusions

We can characterize morris dancing as a trope of 'Merrie Englandism', a form of national dancing adapted from the stage, adopted by D'Arcy Ferris and absorbed into May Day festivities since the early nineteenth century and popular in patriotic celebratory events of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Whether there exists much civic desire to continue such events, in the form of community carnival processions, is open to debate. In Wigton today, for example, a carnival is still held each June but it is a poor shadow of its former self, with fewer, less elaborate, floats and many fewer people taking part and lining the streets to watch the procession. The carnival has not featured its distinctive morris dancers since at least 1990, although if dance were to be revived then at least the notation for the dance exists: there is video of Throstles Nest Morris performing it, and there are still former Throstles Nest dancers around capable of teaching it. This offers some hope for the morris dance to continue to be performed by the town's children in the future, but only if there is the will to do so, which is by no means certain.

Further research needs to be done, particularly in local newspaper archives, in order to build up a more complete picture of these under-researched Cumbrian dances and the contexts in which they were created, borrowed, performed and sustained. In addition, there is scope for a lot more research nationally into the lives, work and repertoires of the many local dancing masters who plied their trade from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. My own research into folk song in Cumbria highlighted how the involvement of a small number of 'activists' seem to have ignited local interest and taken songs from one place to another – in just such a way, in the field of dance, we have seen in the case of J.T. Southworth and the Mawdesley/Keswick dance and Oliver Cowper and the carnival dances he taught and, most importantly, choreographed.<sup>36</sup> As George

<sup>36</sup> Susan Margaret Allan, 'Folk Music in Cumbria: A Distinctive Regional Repertoire?' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Lancaster University, 2017).

Revill argues, singers and dancers are not artless carriers of tradition but rather creative musicians moulding repertoire, in what Michael Pickering calls a 'process of localization'.<sup>37</sup> As for me, I am, it seems, neither an artless carrier of tradition nor an impartial academic researcher, having adapted children's morris dances for adult dancers and with my own heritage of, and personal involvement in, the Wigton dance no doubt colouring my views and interpretation of the research. Theresa Buckland refers to this as the 'collapsing of boundaries between self and other', and whilst welcoming 'the voice of the native researcher' cautions against automatically supposing that the native researcher necessarily guarantees an authenticity of knowledge in and of itself, and so, dear reader, beware ...<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> George Revill, 'Vernacular culture and the place of folk music', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 6 (2005), 693-706 (p. 700). Michael Pickering and Tony Green, *Everyday Culture: Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987). p.12.

<sup>38</sup> Theresa Buckland, 'Being Traditional: Authentic Selves and Others in Researching Late-Twentieth Century Northwest English Morris Dancing', *Dancing from Past to Present*, ed. by Theresa Buckland (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 199-237 (p.222).



Derek Schofield

## **A Different Sort of Revival: The Life and Times of the Manley Morris Dancers**

It's 1934 and you want to start a morris team. What do you do? Where and how do you recruit dancers? What do you dance? How do you dance? How do you learn? Who teaches you? Where do you find a musician? How do you organize it? Where do you dance?

In twenty-first century Britain, these might seem like ridiculous questions; but perhaps not in 1934, the year that the Morris Ring, and the Manley Morris Dancers were founded. After the Ring was established with the six original members, Walter Abson wrote, 'Morris Men at Chelmsford, St Albans, Bovingdon, Clifton, Liverpool and Wargrave formed themselves into clubs, and these [. . .] applied for association in the Ring.'<sup>1</sup>

To answer some of my questions, the English Folk Dance (and Song) Society (EFD(S)S – the name changed in 1932) was central to the process of recruitment and teaching. Branches of the Society throughout the country held classes in country dancing, morris and sword, many of them taught by branch teachers, mainly women. Out of those classes grew morris sides: the key words in the above quote 'formed themselves into clubs' indicate this sort of transition from class to club. The word 'class' is an indication of the discipline required and the inevitable assessment through examination. Dancers could achieve the coveted silver badge, indicating that they had achieved proficiency. Such examinations required standardization of movement, of style.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Mary Neal's *Espérance Club*, Cecil Sharp's

<sup>1</sup> Walter Abson, *The First Logbook of The Morris Ring* (n.pl.: The Morris Ring, 1991), pp. 4-5. Representatives of five clubs met at Thaxted on 2 June 1934: Cambridge, East Surrey, Greensleeves, Letchworth and Thaxted. Oxford was missing from the meeting.

<sup>2</sup> For Oxford University Morris Men, see Roy Judge, 'The Ancient Men: OUMM and its Background', revised and produced in chronological form by Ian Hall and Gerard Robinson (1993) <<https://oxforduniversitymorris.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/oummhist.pdf>> [accessed 11 October 2017], For Cambridge Morris Men see John Jenner, 'The Travelling Morrice and the Cambridge Morris Men: History and Influences During the Twentieth Century' (2004), <<http://tradcap.com/archive/histtrav.pdf>> [accessed 2 November 2017]. For Manchester Morris Men, see Derek Schofield, 'Eighty Years of Manchester Morris', *English Dance & Song*, 72.2 (2010), 20-21, 23.

EFDS rarely, if ever, used traditional morris and sword dancers to teach revival dancers, and Neal only used them until her dancers were proficient.<sup>3</sup>

The repertoire was, of course, drawn from Cecil Sharp's books.<sup>4</sup> They were all Cotswold morris and sword dances. The examinations required dancers to know a variety of dances from several village morris traditions, and this contributed to revival morris dancers knowing a variety of village styles, rather than the traditional practice of just knowing your own village style. Over time, individual morris clubs developed their own style, but for a long time – and still – it is possible for a dancer to move from team to team and fit in. Musicians, mostly classically trained, played the piano (which did not make the peripatetic nature of morris dancing outdoors later on very easy) or violin.

In terms of organization, the role of the Cambridge Morris Men and the establishment of the Morris Ring had an important influence on the way morris clubs were set up. The meeting in October 1924 which established what became the Cambridge Morris Men elected a president and secretary, soon changed to 'squire' and 'bagman'.<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, the term 'squire' was an alternative title for the fool, and although the fool was often the leader of the dancers, the revival practice of separating the two roles and then making the squire the leader did not follow traditional precedent.<sup>6</sup> The term 'bagman' appears to have been invented by Cambridge Morris Men.<sup>7</sup>

Further searches of the records of the very early morris clubs would, I am sure, reveal that they adopted the terms squire and bagman based on Cambridge's usage. When the Morris Ring was founded

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Roy Judge, 'Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, 5.5 (1989), 545-591; and Derek Schofield, booklet enclosed with the CD *Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber*, (London: EFDSS, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Cecil J Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, (George Butterworth), *The Morris Book*, 2nd ed., 5 parts (London: Novello, 1912-24); Cecil J. Sharp, *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, 3 parts (London: Novello, 1911-13).

<sup>5</sup> Jenner, p. 11.

<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), pp. 4, 68-71.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Michael Higgins who suggested that the term may be derived from the Bible; Judas 'had the bag' for the disciples (John, 12:6).

with its squire and bagman, it set the clear precedent for other teams to follow. John Jenner has written that Cambridge Morris Men's first 'feast' was held in April 1925, and the first use of the term 'ale' (as an event) was in December 1926.<sup>8</sup>

Morris dancing was not confined to Cambridge academics, but Cambridge Morris Men, followed by the Morris Ring, did establish a prototype of what a morris club could be – something to aspire to.

The morris dancing style common to Lancashire and Cheshire was ignored by Cecil Sharp, with the industrial setting of the dances and their context not fitting into Sharp's theories. It was down to his amanuensis, Maud Karpeles, to collect the dance generally known as Royton in 1928, published as *The Lancashire Morris Dance* in 1930.<sup>9</sup> In the preface, she thanks Lees Kershaw, who was the concertina player, James Coleman (the conductor) and dancers Bob McDermott and his brother.

These individuals danced, before 1912, in two separate, but related, groups of dancers, one led by Jimmy Coleman and the other by the McDermott family. Michael Higgins has shown that in about 1909 to 1911 there were four related groups of dancers in the area: Mick Coleman's Failsworth Morris Dancers, Jimmy Coleman's team with Kershaw on concertina, McDermott's team (with 6 brothers: Bob, Frank, Peter, William, John and Jim McDermott and a nephew Frank, Jim's son), and Jimmy Cheetham's team. By 1912, and occasionally after the war, there was one team, Royton Central Morris Dancers with Colemans, Kershaw and McDermotts and a great deal of internal rivalry, distrust and disagreement.<sup>10</sup>

Bob McDermott, born in 1891, was one of six brothers, all of whom danced at one time or another. Bob maintained that he had been a centre dancer as a seven-year-old in 1898, and was dancing at the front of the set at 16, in 1907. Whether he became the conductor of

<sup>8</sup> Jenner, p. 11; Personal correspondence from John Jenner, 17 February 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Maud Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance, containing a description of the Royton Morris Dance* (London: Novello for the English Folk Dance Society, [1930]).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Higgins, "'A Properly Conducted Morris Dance': The Role of Jimmy Cheetham Before the Great War in Oldham and Royton, Lancashire", *Traditional Dance*, 4 (1986), 73-103.

the McDermott team is disputed, but he was the main teacher of the team.

The newly-revived Royton Morris Dancers appeared at the EFDS Royal Albert Hall festival in January 1930, with Coleman, Kershaw and McDermott and all the old rivalries. On a single occasion, the three men came to London to teach EFDS dancers.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, country dancing had been taking place at the village hall in Manley, Cheshire, since January 1929, taught by Dorothea Haworth who became interested in folk dancing while at Oxford University. The Haworth family had moved to the village after the First World War when Dorothea's father, Alfred, a yarn agent in the cotton industry, had a change in career and went into farming. Certainly not a gentleman farmer, he was very hands-on, and similarly became an enthusiastic folk dancer. Dorothea would receive invitations for her dancers to give displays, but she had a very different and enlightened approach compared with the folk-dance revival of the time. First, she believed that the country dances were for pleasure, not for display. Second, she decided that teaching her dancers morris or sword dances from the south Midlands, Yorkshire and the North-east made little geographical sense in Cheshire. Looking around for a more local alternative, she was put in touch with Bob McDermott.<sup>12</sup>

Bob McDermott was invited to travel to Manley to teach the dance. The Haworth family were, it has to be said, wealthy, and no doubt made it worth his while to travel by train from Oldham to Manchester and then to Mouldsworth, the next village to Manley, and then by car to the Haworth family home for dinner before going to Manley

<sup>11</sup> See Maud Karpeles, letters to and from Lees Kershaw and Robert McDermott, London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, MK/5/96-101 <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/96>>, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/97>>, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/98>>, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/99>>, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/100>>, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/5/101>> [accessed 13 November 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Published accounts covering the history of the Manley Morris Dancers include Leslie Haworth, 'Notes on Some Recent Morris Dance History', *English Dance and Song*, 20.5 (1956), 158-59; Leslie Howarth [sc. Haworth], 'The Manley Morris Dancers', *Ethnic*, 1.4 (1959), 16-19; Dorothea Haworth, 'The Manley Morris', *English Dance and Song*, 34.4 (1972), 129-30; Derek Schofield, 'Concertina Caleb', *English Dance and Song*, 46.2 (1984), 2-6; Derek Schofield, 'Manley Morris Dancers, Founded 1934, The Story So Far...', *The Morris Ring Autumn Circular* (September 1984), [12]; Derek Schofield, 'Golden Jubilee of the Manley Morris Dancers', *Buzz* [folk magazine of the Manchester and Cheshire Districts of the EFDSS], 9 (1984), 7-8. A more detailed history of the dance team is currently being prepared.



Village Hall to teach the assembled young men of the village. This working-class cotton operative was not given dinner in the kitchen with the staff, but dined with the family. When Bob brought a concertina player, George Shannon, to Manley, George found the experience of dining with the family and being waited on by maids somewhat unnerving.<sup>13</sup> By way of contrast, Nibs Matthews recalled that when William Kimber was invited by folk dancer Beryl Frere to teach Nibs and his fellow Bishop's Stortford Morris Men in 1939, he was given lodgings with the Frere family chauffeur.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to what happened elsewhere, Bob McDermott did not teach until the basic dance was known, and then was no longer needed. Neither was he an additional source to learning the dance from the book, which has never featured as a reference for the dancing in Manley. He continued his regular visits until his death in 1962, and this appears to have been a unique experience in the English folk-dance revival. Bob was the leader, or conductor of the dance at Manley; his role was critical to the success of the performance.

There are two reasons why his role was critical. First, as Karpeles noted in 1930, 'The number and selection of the figures would depend upon the conductor'.<sup>15</sup> The dance at Royton comprised a variety of figures and steps which could then be 'called' by the conductor in a variety of orders. In a procession, for example, the dance could be advanced at a fair pace, or slowed down if the procession itself slowed, or stationary figures could be called if the procession stopped, or if there was a large crowd to be entertained. This practice continued when Bob led the Manley team, whether they were dancing in a procession or in a static display.<sup>16</sup>

Second, with a great variety of figures, Bob taught – as might be expected – the easiest figures first, and then progressed to the more difficult ones. Looking at the figures in the book now, all the figures

<sup>13</sup> [Alan Ward], 'Fred Kilroy: Lancashire Concertina Player: Part 2', *Traditional Music*, 3 (1976), 5–10.

<sup>14</sup> Derek Schofield, 'Nibs Matthews – 50 Years a Dancer', *English Dance & Song*, 47.3 (1985), 2–6.

<sup>15</sup> Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> The Manley Morris Dancers are featured in a YouTube film, *Manley Morris* (1989) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBi2LN0LnNQ>> (accessed 30 October 2017). The conductor, Graham Rathbone, can be heard 'calling' the figures.

published were taught by Bob at Manley, although one of them was done differently, and with a different title. However, additional figures not in the book were also taught by Bob in the 1930s. In my conversations with Dorothea Haworth in the 1980s, it was not clear to her whether these additional figures had been danced in Royton, at least by the McDermott team, or whether Bob made them up himself. Certainly, new figures were made up during Bob's time as conductor and teacher, and after his death.

Aged only 42 in 1934, Bob was willing and able, and was delighted to have his own outlet with the Manley team rather than compromise and argument with the Royton team. He was also canny in having new figures to introduce, thus making his continuing presence vital.

In the first year of practices, Alfred Haworth overheard one of his employees, Caleb Walker, playing his grandfather's anglo concertina, and Caleb was quickly pressed into service. Bob played the concertina himself, and George Shannon played for the first few public displays, and they were able to teach Caleb the tunes and style.<sup>17</sup> There was therefore no need to consider using alternative instruments. When asked for his opinion of a piano accordion for accompaniment, Bob replied, 'I wouldn't put one on my shoulder, they are not as sweet has [*sic*] a concertina.'<sup>18</sup> Concertinas continued to be used as musical accompaniment throughout the life of the team, following the practice at Royton.

Alfred Haworth, Dorothea's father, danced with the team in the 1930s, as did her brother Leslie, and Leslie and Dorothea took on much of the team's administration through until the mid 1960s, when Leslie retired, and his son Colin became involved. Before the war, the team's kit was confined to clogs, long white socks, breeches, white shirts, red and blue sashes and yellow cummerbunds. After the war, the team completed the kit, with the addition of hats, beads, arm ribbons and ribbon on the breeches (Figure 1). In those early days, all the dancers lived in Manley and some of them were employed on the Haworth farm; after the war, with changing farming practices

<sup>17</sup> Schofield, 'Concertina Caleb'.

<sup>18</sup> Bob McDermott, letter from to Dorothea Haworth, 17 October 1938, Manley Morris Dancers Archive.

and employment opportunities, recruits were found in neighbouring villages, especially Kelsall. It was not until the 1970s that any of the recruits outside the Haworth family had any separate or previous involvement in the folk-dance or -song revival.



Figure 1: Manley Morris Dancers, Royal Albert Hall, London, 1953. Far left: Caleb Walker. Two front dancers: Leslie Haworth (left) and Arthur Webb (right) with Bob McDermott in between. (Manley Morris Dancers Archives).

As previously mentioned, revival morris teams danced a variety of dances from different Cotswold village traditions. Manchester Morris Men were the second team, after Manley, to dance North-west dances, but Manchester included them alongside their Cotswold and sword repertoire. Their first dance was Godley Hill, but then they treated the North-west dances like the Cotswold dances, and added different 'village traditions' to their repertoire – such as Mossley, Oldham and Colne. This practice was adopted by other teams in the 1960s: Leyland, Garstang, Colne Royal, Preston Royal, Gorton, Saddleworth and all the rest.<sup>19</sup> This would appear to have been different

<sup>19</sup> Schofield 2010; Derek Schofield, 'Which Past? The Influences of Tradition and Revival on the North-west Morris' in *Morris: The Legacy of the Past: Proceedings of a One-day Conference on Morris Dancing Held on Saturday April 20th 1996* (London : The Morris Federation, The Morris Ring & Open Morris, 1996), 94-109.

from traditional practice, where dance groups would dance just their own dance, perhaps changing or altering this every few years. Of course, the revival teams were different from the traditional ones: they probably danced more frequently, with teams and individual dancers performing for a longer number of years than the old teams. They needed variety, to keep the interest of spectators and dancers alike. Manley only ever did the one dance, with variety coming from an increasing number of figures, and the calling of the figures in a different order on each occasion.

Leslie and Dorothea Haworth must have been aware of the Morris Ring in the 1930s, but there was no contact until after the war, and even then, the influence was minimal. There was no squire or bagman at Manley – the roles were conductor, secretary and treasurer. There were no feasts in Manley and no ales. Manley was reactive rather than proactive when it came to dance opportunities, generally waiting for invitations to dance. There were no weekly evening tours of pubs, and they only started to invite other teams for dance weekends in the late 1970s, to reciprocate invitations from other teams. There was closer contact with the English Folk Dance and Song Society and both Douglas Kennedy and Maud Karpeles visited Manley in the 1930s to see the team dance.

In summary, in the Manley Morris Dancers I believe there was a different approach to the morris revival from that that derived from the standard Cambridge/Morris Ring style.

First, there was a rejection of the established way of doing things in terms of repertoire – no Cotswold morris or sword dances. Second, there was a rejection of teaching from the book.

Third, the ‘authentic’ dancer was the source of knowledge, teaching and leadership, not just for a brief period of training, but for 28 years until his death. Direct experience rather than mediated through the work of a collector. Fourth, the organizational trappings of the morris revival – squire, bagman, feast, ale, midweek tours of pubs in the summer – were never adopted at Manley. Fifth, Manley danced one dance, with more and more figures. Whilst seen as following traditional practice, this had its disadvantages, with new dancers having to learn a large number of figures before they could dance out, although the conductor would always select figures that reflected the

experience and ability of the dancers. Sixth, calling the figures in any order, as determined by the conductor, followed traditional practice. How widespread this was within traditional teams in Lancashire and Cheshire is not clear.

All these features no doubt contributed to Leslie Haworth's assertion, at the Manchester Morris Ring Meeting in 1955, that, like Bampton, Abingdon and Headington Quarry, Manley Morris should have an asterisk next to their name in the list of morris clubs in the new Morris Ring publication, denoting traditional, as opposed to revival teams. In a letter from the Squire of the Morris Ring, Donald Cassels, to Leslie Haworth, Cassels wrote, 'I am afraid your manner of expressing, at the Manchester Feast, your claim to tradition rather hurt some people's feelings (on behalf of the Ring). I do not refer to myself, for I am not the type that takes offence, but I thought I should mention the matter because you will probably be as sorry about it as I am myself'.<sup>20</sup> Cassels also wrote in the same letter, 'We are having a reprint of the brochure, from which all asterisks are being omitted, and after a good look at the Constitution I feel that it is no function of the Ring's to define the word "traditional" or settle claims to that distinction. In the long run it must be a matter for general opinion, gradually sorted out in the bar and other conversational sites.'<sup>21</sup>

In an earlier letter to Donald Cassels, Leslie Haworth had expressed his surprise that Cassels had described Manley as performing 'the same dance' as Royton in his report of the Manchester Ring Meeting in *English Dance and Song* magazine.<sup>22</sup> Leslie's letter included a description of the origins of the dance back in Royton, as well as the circumstances of how the team started in Manley. Cassels encouraged Leslie to turn the contents of the letter into an article in the Morris Ring section of *English Dance and Song*, for which Leslie con-

<sup>20</sup> Donald Cassels letter to Leslie Haworth, 21 December 1955. Original letter in the Manley Morris Dancers' Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Peck, *The Morris Dances of England: The Coming-of-Age of the Morris Ring 1934-1955* (n.pl.: The Morris Ring, [1955]). This publication went through various editions, but this appears to have been the first. The copy in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library has asterisks next to the three teams mentioned. A copy of the first edition in the author's personal collection does not.

<sup>22</sup> Leslie Haworth, letter to Donald Cassels, 9 November 1955. The original letter is in the Manley Morris Dancers' Archives because Cassels returned it to Leslie to aid writing the subsequent article. D.K.C. [Donald Cassels], 'The Morris Ring', *English Dance and Song*, 20.2 (1955), 48-49.

sulted Mr A.D. Ogden, the town clerk for Royton, and Jimmy Coleman.<sup>23</sup> Here Leslie emphasised the Manley team's pedigree in terms of the dance's origins, Bob McDermott's long involvement and the features of the Manley team. These aspects were covered again in Leslie's article about the team in *Ethnic* magazine, in Dorothea Haworth's 1972 article in *English Dance and Song*, in team publicity and, indeed, in my own writings about the team, especially at the time of the fiftieth anniversary in 1984.

Some of us in the team in the 1980s liked to think that we were 'traditional' rather than 'revival', but this was a mixture of tongue-in-cheek with a dash of arrogance. But it has to be seen alongside the morris scene at the time, especially in the general clamour to establish traditional credentials. For example, dance teams in Winster and Eynsham started up again, each one producing booklets which emphasised their links with the past and the encouragement and endorsement of former members of the traditional team.<sup>24</sup> Other teams meticulously reconstructed dances from Sharp's field notes to restart village traditions. In the North-west, new teams emerged having apparently collected dances in their communities, though there was a good degree of invention involved. With the re-introduction of the rushcart processions in Saddleworth, Gorton, Rochdale and so on, there was a determined attempt to put a northern stamp on their dancing and to establish a link to the traditions of the past.<sup>25</sup> Alongside all of this, the Manley team was also keen to emphasise *its* traditional credentials.

Amongst the morris and sword teams with whom Manley enjoyed reciprocal dance weekends in the 1980s were several which had traditional credentials, including Bampton Traditional Morris Dancers, Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers, Winster Morris Dancers, Eynsham Morris, Loftus Sword Dancers and High Spen Blue Diamonds rapper team. The affinity between these groups and Manley

<sup>23</sup> Haworth, 'Notes on Some Recent Morris Dance History.'

<sup>24</sup> Ian Russell, *Winster Morris Dancers* (Winster: Winster Morris Dancers, 1979); *Eynsham Morris* (Eynsham: Eynsham Morris, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> See Schofield, 'Which Past?.'

was based on the teams' 'own dance' repertoire, longevity, community base, social background and friendship networks.

## Can the Manley Morris Dancers be Regarded as Traditional or Revival?

'How can a team started in 1934 be traditional?' I was once asked. The Britannia Coconut Dancers from Bacup started in the early 1920s, and the rapper team High Spen Blue Diamonds started in 1926, both based on earlier teams, and both are regarded as 'traditional'. In the 1980s, there was some debate about what constituted 'traditional' and 'revival' in morris dancing, with Cindy Sughrue, John Forrest, Tony Barrand and others examining such matters as aesthetics, motivation and continuity, as well as infrastructure, the learning process, context and change.<sup>26</sup> The absence of a continuing debate on the subject perhaps illustrates the changing focus of the morris-dance scene.

The involvement of Bob McDermott, even in a new geographical location, would have been sufficient for Manley to have met the criteria for inclusion in the 1960 index of traditional ceremonial dance, compiled by E.C. Cawte, Alex Helm and others, but the fact that the team was instigated through 'antiquarian interest or the folk dance revival' kept Manley out of the listing.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, though, Headington Quarry Morris Dancers would not have been dancing on Box-

<sup>26</sup> Cynthia M. Sughrue, 'Some Thoughts on the "Tradition" versus "Revival" Debate', in *Traditional Dance*, 5/6 (1988), 184-90; John Forrest, 'Here We Come A-Fossiling', *Dance Research Journal*, 17.1 (1985), 27-34; Anthony G. Barrand, 'Comments on John Forrest's "Here We Come A-Fossiling"', *Dance Research Journal*, 17.1 (1985), 34-39. For a more recent commentary on the debate see Theresa Jill Buckland, 'Being Traditional: Authentic Selves and Others in Researching Late-Twentieth-Century Northwest English Morris Dancing', in *Dancing from Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities*, ed. Theresa Jill Buckland (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 199-227. As an ethnochoreologist with a knowledge of anthropological theory, Buckland writes (p. 218), 'I could no longer justify, as in my previous research, valorizing one group of dancers over another as traditional.'

<sup>27</sup> E.C. Cawte, Alex Helm, R.J. Marriott and N. Peacock, 'A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 9.1 (1960), 1-41 (p.3). See also E.C. Cawte, Alex Helm and N. Peacock, *English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index* (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1967), pp. 15-16.

ing Day 1899 had it not been for the 'antiquarian interest' of Percy Manning in restarting the team.

Sadly, the Manley Morris Dancers stopped performing in the early twenty-first century. Whether they were a traditional or revival team is perhaps no longer relevant. But they were certainly different.

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Sean Goddard and Ed Bassford†<sup>1</sup>

# **Consequences of Bringing North-west Morris to South-east England: The Chanctonbury Ring Effect**

## **Purpose of this paper**

In 1975 Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men learned and started dancing the North-west morris dance style on the South coast of England. We will investigate the reasons why the side based on the South Downs in Sussex decided to learn this style of dance that at that time was relatively unknown outside of the North-west of England, and had its origins in the industrial North. We will also look at how the dance helped to define and develop the side, which continued to dance the more well-known Cotswold style.

## **Morris Dancing in Sussex**

There are no surviving set Morris dances from Sussex such as those that survive in the Cotswolds, North East and North West areas of England. However, there are remnants of similar dances including 'Over the Sticks' which is described by Mary Neal,<sup>2</sup> and other solo dances including step and broom dances that have been described by Scan Tester and others.

All morris-dance sides within the county are the product of the folk-dance revival. Formed in 1953, the Chichester-based Martlet Morris and Sword Dance Club has its origins in the Arundel Sword Dance Club which met in West Sussex during the 1930s,<sup>3</sup> while Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men was formed by members of the Shoreham Country Dance Club in 1953.<sup>4</sup> In Sussex today there are a number of morris-dance sides representing all forms; many will trace their membership and origin back to one of these two sides.

<sup>1</sup> Ed Bassford died on 28 July 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book*, Part 2 (London: Curwen, 1911), pp. 11-12, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Martlet Sword and Morris Men, *About Martlet Sword and Morris Men* <<http://www.martletmorrismen.org.uk/about.html>> [accessed 12 October 2016], para. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, *Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men: A History* (Woodmancote: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, 1978), p. 5.

## Who are the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men?

The Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men are a men's morris side from Sussex. It owes its origins to the post-World War II folk-dance revival supported by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). The Shoreham Country Dance Club was formed by Paul Plumb in 1949 and by 1951 it had developed into a dynamic club and began to branch out to discover other types of English folk dance. In June 1952 (Whitsun) a number of men made the trip up to Bampton to see the morris, and soon after the club developed its Morris Group. Feeling constrained by being part of a Country Dance Club, in September 1953, the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men were formed. The original members were all members of the Shoreham Country Dance Club Morris Group, with first Squire and Captain being Geoff Biggs and the Bagman Ian Scott-Walker. On their first day touring in May 1954, a photograph was taken at Fulking, which subsequently appeared in *The Times* the following Monday.<sup>5</sup> What a start!

By invitation, the first non-Shoreham-club members joined for the practice season 1954/55. Dilution continued and by the early 1960s almost all the original members had ceased to be active (Geoff Biggs and Paul Morris both died tragically early, while others such as Ian Scott-Walker had moved away) and its members now came from many different backgrounds.

In 1967, Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men started a morris side at the University of Sussex, in response to a Morris Ring directive to try and get young people involved in morris dancing. Ed Bassford was an original University member while Sean Goddard joined later, in 1980. The side operated in parallel with Chanctonbury Ring, dancing at the same stands with many men (including Ed Bassford) moving across to join Chanctonbury Ring as they completed their studies. In 1987 that side changed its name to Brighton Morris Men as fewer members from the University were involved.

<sup>5</sup> *Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men*, p. 6; Sean Goddard, 'Following in the Footsteps', *Morris Ring Circular*, 62 (2010), 14-16.



Figure 1: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, Alfriston 1967 © Sean Goddard.

The connection with the Shoreham Club was not fully severed. In 1953 Paul Plumb had manufactured a May Morning celebration (bringing together a number of celebrations from traditional English festivals) and Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men supported this event from the start to 1982, the event ceasing in 2003 (Figure 1).<sup>6</sup>

Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men regularly dance on Wednesday evenings throughout Sussex and at other high-profile local events such as Alciston Skipping on Good Friday, Lewes Bonfire Celebrations (5 November) and during the Christmas and New Year period on Boxing Day and Apple Howling in January. They have also appeared at festivals and other events further afield, featuring several times on the BBC's 'Noel's Edmond's House Party' including the 1994 'Gotcha' for Barbara Windsor's 'Around Basingstoke' tour and later in 2008 appearing in one of John Lydon's advertisements for Country Life butter.<sup>7</sup>

Chanctonbury Ring's North-west side was formed in 1975, the first men's side performing this type of dance south of a line drawn through

<sup>6</sup> Shoreham Country Dance Club Scrapbook (1949 ongoing), currently (November 2017) in the possession of John Portlock, Shoreham.

<sup>7</sup> 'John Lydon Butter Advert', *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvR2Qij8wno>> [accessed 8 November 2017].

Lowestoft, Coventry and Aberystwyth. Currently the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men have approximately 20 members and supports both a Cotswold and North-west side.

## The North-west Morris

As suggested by the Morris Ring, the North-west Morris has its origins in the nineteenth-century industrial towns of Cheshire and Lancashire and it often accompanied rushcarts, Rose Queen carnivals and wakes weeks.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the Cotswold dance which is formed generally in sets of six or eight dancers, the North-west morris probably developed as a processional dance and can contain a large number of dancers, generally divisible by four.

Although we use the term North-west morris, or clog morris, in this paper, the term is fairly modern. The first use of a similar term is by Joseph Needham in 1936, where he uses the term ‘North-western’ to describe dances found in Cheshire and Lancashire.<sup>9</sup> Previous researchers, including John Graham, described the dances as coming from the counties of Cheshire and Lancashire whereas Maud Karpeles’ describes it as the Lancashire morris dance.<sup>10</sup> Traditional practitioners of this form of dance generally refer to it as morris dancing: North-west or clog morris is a modern term to distinguish it from the Cotswold and other styles. It is suggested both terms should be avoided: we will use them only for convenience.

The exact origin of the North-west style of dance is unknown. A painting of the Lymm rushbearing dated about 1860 clearly shows morris dancing<sup>11</sup> although dancers seem to be waving handkerchiefs which are not generally associated with North-west dancing. Haslett

<sup>8</sup> Morris Ring, *North West Morris – Lancashire and Cheshire*, <<http://themorrisring.org/about-morris/north-west-morris-lancashire-and-cheshire>> [accessed 6 October 2016], para 1.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Needham, ‘The Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions’ *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 3.1 (1936), 1-45 (pp. 3, 14-17).

<sup>10</sup> John Graham, *Lancashire and Cheshire Morris Dances* (London: Curwen, 1911); Maud Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance: Containing a Description of the Royton Morris Dance* (London: Novello, 1930).

<sup>11</sup> Geoff Bibby, ‘Morris Dancing in Lymm: Revival of the Old Dance and Development of the New’, *The Morris Dancer* 4.2 (2010), 40-54 (p. 42); Lymm Heritage Centre, ‘Rushbearing’, <<https://www.lymmhc.co.uk/rushbearing>> [accessed 16 November 2017].

records that newspaper reports of morris dancing in West Lancashire start as early as 1880,<sup>12</sup> while Roy Dommett says:<sup>13</sup>

*Then there is the north western morris, mostly in Lancashire and Cheshire but extending into Yorkshire and the Lake District, once a processional dance and at first associated with the annual taking of rushes on carts to church for floor covering. Festivities which grew from the middle of the 19th century like Rose Festivals and Knutsford May day provide[d] many new performance opportunities. The dance form grew in popularity during the second half of the 19th century. [However] It suffered great losses of dancers during the first World War and was restarted often with teenagers or children.*

The Manchester Morris Men's website lists over 130 distinct dances.<sup>14</sup> This is likely to be a conservative estimate as individual teams regularly compose new ones.

The team from Royton (in Oldham) came under the influence of the EFDSS in the late 1920s, when Maud Karpeles undertook folk-dance research in the area.<sup>15</sup> Higgins suggests that the Royton team was started by Michael and James Coleman in 1891 and based at the Hope and Anchor Inn. The side would dance to Manchester, Blackpool and others places on Saturdays during the summer and in wakes week.<sup>16</sup> Michael Higgins has fully investigated the origin and development of the morris dance in Royton and Oldham and the in-

<sup>12</sup> Johnny Haslett, *Morris Dancers and Rose Queen: An Anthology of Reported Carnivals and Galas in West Lancashire to 1900*. (Leyland: Fairhaven Press 2007), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Roy Dommett, *What You Didn't Know about the Morris: [Section: Other Forms of the Morris]* <<http://www.opread.force9.co.uk/RoyDommet/Others/Whatno.htm#Form>> [accessed 8 October 2016].

<sup>14</sup> Manchester Morris Men, *Index of Towns in the Archives of the Manchester Morris Men* <<http://www.manchestermorrismen.org.uk/archives/townlist.php>> [accessed 28 December 2016].

<sup>15</sup> Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, p. 9

<sup>16</sup> Michael Higgins. *Interesting Roytonians: James (Jimmy) Coleman 1885-1970* <[http://www.rlhs.co.uk/new\\_page\\_22.htm](http://www.rlhs.co.uk/new_page_22.htm)> [accessed 8 October 2016].

fluences of the Coleman and McDermott brothers, and John Cheetham.<sup>17</sup>

The Royton Men danced at the Manchester Branch of the English Folk Dance Society's (EFDS) Christmas Party in December 1929, and on 4 January 1930 they performed at the EFDS's annual Folk Dance Festival at the Royal Albert Hall, London.<sup>18</sup> The report in *The Times* on 7 January said this about Royton's performance:<sup>19</sup>

*Bampton had a style quite its own, rather suggestive of convivial exuberance, while the neat and exact vigour of the Royton team more clearly showed the ceremonial origin of this type of dance. Their dress rivalled even that of the Basque team for effect.*

During their visit to London, Maud Karpeles reports that the Royton team also danced at the Great Hall of London University and at Friends' House.<sup>20</sup>

Later that year Maud Karpeles published her book *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, which detailed the figures she had collected of the Royton dance in the late 1920s.<sup>21</sup> It is this book and team that influenced North-west sides within the EFDS, later the EFDSS, Morris Ring and many other sides. As Roy Dommett suggests, Maud Karpeles's Royton combined the two elements of polkaed figures and stepping sequences and appeared at the time as a pinnacle of the North-west tradition.<sup>22</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men consider the Royton dance to be the most difficult and involved dance.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Michael Higgins 'A Properly Conducted Morris Dance': The Role of Jimmy Cheetham before the Great War in Oldham and Royton, Lancashire', *Traditional Dance* 4 (1986), 73-104.

<sup>18</sup> Manchester Morris Men, *Manchester Morris Men: The Early Years* <<http://www.manchestermorrismen.org.uk/history/earlyyears.pdf>> [accessed 7 October 2016], p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> 'Folk Dancing: The All-England Festival', *The Times*, 7 January 1930, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Karpeles *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Roy Dommett, *The Sources of Our Dances* <<http://www.great-western.org.uk/dommett/sources.pdf>> [accessed 10 December 2016], para 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ed Bassford, interview with Sean Goddard, at The Swan, Falmer. 25 August 2016.



Manchester Morris Men presented the Godley Hill Morris Dance at the Tideswell Ring Meeting in 1937.<sup>24</sup> The first North-west side to perform at a Morris Ring meeting was Manley Morris Men at the Tideswell Meeting in September 1952,<sup>25</sup> while also in 1952 the Manchester Morris Men danced the Godley Hill dance at Cecil Sharp House, London.<sup>26</sup> Manley Morris Men performed at the EFDSS's Albert Hall Festival in 1953 and 1956.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1969, when the Manchester Morris Men attended the Sidmouth Folk Festival, England's foremost folk festival, that North-west dancing was seen there.<sup>28</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men were early adopters of this style of dance outside of the North-west and have performed this style of dance since 1975.

Derek Schofield gives an excellent overview of the development of North-west morris at a previous morris-dance conference in 1996.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Playford, country, Cotswold, long- and rapper-sword styles of dance, which through the endeavours of Cecil Sharp and the EFDSS are known throughout England, the North-west style of dance is less well known. Although relatively well known in the North-west of England, and known to the wider folk world since the 1930s, its performance outside of the North-west up to the 1970s was infrequent. As Theresa Buckland suggests, in the 1970s there was concern in the North-west of England that the North-west style of dance would undergo a similar transformation to that which Cotswold morris underwent earlier in the twentieth century: dances would be per-

<sup>24</sup> Manchester Morris Men, *How the MMM Kit has Evolved, Section 2* <<http://www.manchestermorrismen.org.uk/history/kitchanges.php>> [accessed 29 December 2016].

<sup>25</sup> Morris Ring, *An Index to The Morris Ring's Previous Meetings, Table B* <<http://themorrisring.org/about-mr/history/previous-meetings>> [accessed 7 October 2016].

<sup>26</sup> Manchester Morris Men, *Notable Dates in the History of MMM* <[http://www.manchestermorrismen.org.uk/history/brief\\_history.php](http://www.manchestermorrismen.org.uk/history/brief_history.php)> [accessed 7 October 2016].

<sup>27</sup> During the 1950s, Manley Morris Men performed twice at the EFDSS's yearly Albert Hall Festivals, in 1953 and 1956. In other years, guests included Headington Quarry Morris Dancers, the Britannia Bacup Coconut Dancers, Padstow 'Obby 'Oss and the Helston Furry Dancers: 'Albert Hall. Folk Dance Festival', *The Times*, 10 January 1953; p. 8; 'Albert Hall. Folk Dance Festival', *The Times*, 7 January 1956, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Schofield, *The First week in August: Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival* (Matlock: Sidmouth International Festival, 2003), p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> Derek Schofield, 'Which Past? The Influences of Tradition and Revival on the North-west Morris', in *Morris: The Legacy of the Past: Proceedings of a One Day Conference on Morris Dancing, Birmingham, 20th April, 1996*. (London: Morris Ring; Morris Federation; Open Morris, 1996), pp. 94-109.

formed by Morris sides without any connection with its region of origin.<sup>30</sup>

Even 40 years or so later, teams performing this style of dance outside of the North-west are still outnumbered by the Cotswold and Border styles. A morris survey of 594 sides undertaken by Jack Worth in 2014 suggests that 16% of the sides nationwide performed North-west morris as their main dancing style; this compares with 41% Cotswold, 18% Border, 6% Rapper and 4% Longsword (Figure 2).<sup>31</sup>

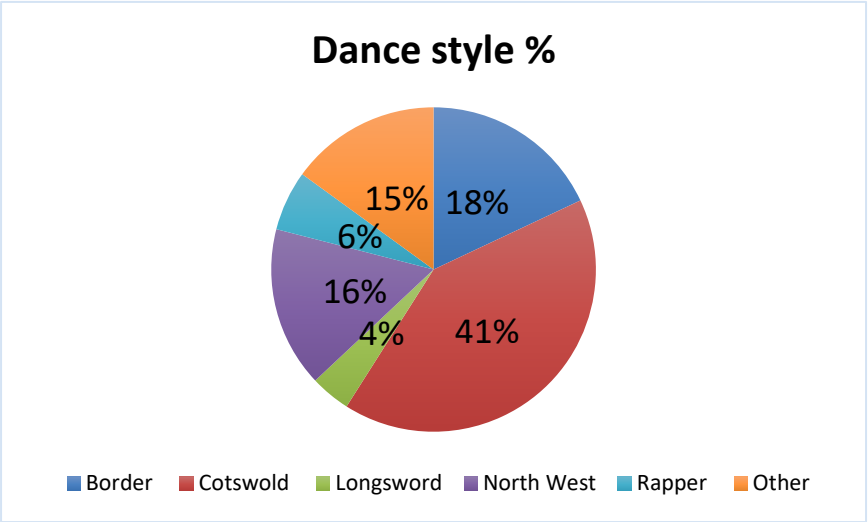


Figure 2: Dance style (from Worth, Morris Census).

There is a modern misconception by some that all North-west morris was danced in clogs. As Chas Marshall shows, 37% of all traditional teams (which could be male or female) performing between 1880 and 1939 wore clogs, while the others wore shoes or other footwear. Most clog-dancing teams were located on the Pennine foothills. However, if men-only teams are considered it rises to 50%.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Theresa Buckland, 'Being Traditional: Authentic Selves and Others in Researching Late-twentieth-century Northwest English Morris Dancing', in *Dancing from Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities*, ed. by Theresa Buckland (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 199-222.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Worth, *Morris Census: Insights on Morris Dancing in the 21st century from the Morris Census* <<http://www.morrisconsensus.uk/p/sides.html>> [accessed 7 October 2017].

<sup>32</sup> Chas Marshall, 'Clog Morris : There's no Such Thing!', *Morris Matters* 11.1 (1982) pp. 19-25 (p. 23).



Pruw Boswell's research suggests that 35% of teams wore clogs between 1890 and 1939. However, if the Horwich area only is sampled (seven sides have footwear description), 57% have clogs, but in a sample of 13 sides in the Preston area she finds a return of 83% in favour of non-clogs (shoes and plimsolls). Boswell further notes that in the Preston area some leaders wore clogs while the dancers wore shoes.<sup>33</sup> When performing, Chanctonbury Ring dance all North-west dances in clogs with irons.

Theresa Buckland further describes changes in costume. Considering the Godley Hill Morris Dancers in the nineteenth century, Theresa Buckland establishes that they are recorded as generally wearing low shoes but in 1901 they are recorded as wearing clogs. Likewise, at the end of the 1870s they wore long black trousers but in 1881 they are recorded as wearing 'old fashioned knee breeches'.<sup>34</sup>

## Morris in the 1970s: A Turning Point

In 1974 the Morris Ring published Lionel Bacon's *Handbook of Morris Dances*.<sup>35</sup> This book concentrated on the Cotswold-style dance, but also a few Border-style dances. The book brought together in a usable form (or at least for captains/foremen of sides) the published versions of dances collected by Cecil Sharp, as well as manuscript notes from Sharp, Janet Blunt, Russell Wortley and Roy Dommett and others. Bacon added personal notes indicating current usage of material by revival clubs. This book was not intended to present 'this is the way to do it', but rather an *aide-memoire*. A long-term effect of the book was that clubs no longer had to rely upon the often difficult to obtain published versions of dances, or to attend Morris Ring workshops (although that was encouraged), but could look at Bacon's book and interpret dances themselves. Dommett suggests that the innovation of clubs using a manuscript or the adaptation of dances dates from 1956 and followed comments by Geoffrey

<sup>33</sup> Pruw Boswell, *Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain: The Preston Tradition* (Preston: The Morris Ring, 1981) pp. 19-20; Pruw Boswell, *Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain: The Horwich Inquiry* (Preston: The Morris Ring, 1984), pp. 24-40.

<sup>34</sup> Theresa Buckland, 'Hello! "Here we are again!" Godley Hill Morris Dancers: A study in longevity', *Traditional Dance*, 2 (1982), 37-58 (p. 47).

<sup>35</sup> Lionel Bacon, *A Handbook of Morris Dances*. (Henlow: The Morris Ring, 1974).

Metcalf to ensure clubs distinguished themselves from others.<sup>36</sup>

As Roy Dommett records, at the Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1970 workshops on morris dancing were limited to male participants. In 1972 Bill Rutter (Sidmouth's Director) introduced a 'Women's Ritual' session, designed to allow women to take part in a form of morris dance without offending the Morris Ring, the EFDSS and others. Following this women went home and started to form clubs.<sup>37</sup>

Ashley Hutchings was instrumental in producing four tradition-based dance records. Hutchings, previously a founder member of Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span, was well known and respected, not only in the folk-rock world, but in the rock world too. Anything that Hutchings was involved in would be noticed over a wide musical spectrum.

The record *Morris On*, a collection of morris-dance tunes and songs played at danceable speed (but in medley form) on traditional Morris instruments backed by bass and drums, was issued in 1972 and put Cotswold morris music in the modern-sounding world. *Rattlebone and Ploughjack*, issued in 1976, while not quite popular or academic, brought the knowledge of the traditional dances, tunes and songs from the Welsh border and East Anglia (molly dance) to a wider audience, using archive and contemporary material. As Patricia Bater suggests, a consequence of this record was to stimulate the revival in molly and Welsh border dance.<sup>38</sup>

As Tony Forster indicates, the Seven Champions Molly Dancers formed in 1977 'from the treacle mines of Kent' were the first revival Molly side and based their original dances on the collected dances from the Cambridgeshire villages of Comberton and Girton, as well as 'Bacca Pipes' from the Cotswold repertoire. Almost all their dances are now composed.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Roy Dommett, 'The Cotswold Morris in the Twentieth Century', *Traditional Dance*, 1 (1981), 59-92 (pp. 78-80).

<sup>37</sup> Dommett, *The Sources of our Dances*.

<sup>38</sup> Patricia Bater, "'Blacking up': English Folk Traditions and Changing Perceptions about Black People in England' (master's thesis, University of Sheffield, 2013)

<[http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4181/1/MPhil\\_upload.pdf](http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4181/1/MPhil_upload.pdf)> [accessed 29 July 2017], (p. 177).

<sup>39</sup> Tony Forster, *Molly Dancing into the Twenty-first Century*. (London: The Morris Federation, 2002) pp. 15-17.

Meanwhile, John Kirkpatrick had formed the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish in 1975, and subsequently developed this form of neglected Morris dance style.<sup>40</sup> In 1979, they performed at the first Dancing England event at Derby representing Border Dance, and as Derek Schofield suggests they were flamboyant.<sup>41</sup>

Ashley Hutchings's other two records influenced traditional dance in other directions. *The Complete Dancing Master*, issued in 1973, reviewed English traditional dance music interspersed with readings, while *Kickin' up the Sawdust* is a collection of barn-dance/ceilidh tunes played by a mixture of traditional and revival musicians, issued in 1977.

In 1970, Chanctonbury Ring was one of three morris sides in Sussex. The Martlet Men covered the Western part of the county and Chanctonbury Ring the Eastern part. The other side was the University of Sussex Morris Men, started by Chanctonbury Ring in 1967. The University side were in reality a Chanctonbury Ring sub-side: they danced a similar repertoire and were taught by the same teachers. In 1972 Harry Mousdell left Chanctonbury Ring and formed a new side in Horsham, the Broadwood Morris Men, while in the East Grinstead area at the same time, the Ashdown Forest Morris Men were formed.<sup>42</sup> These two new sides were located firmly in Chanctonbury Ring's catchment area.

<sup>40</sup> John Kirkpatrick, *The Shropshire Bedlams* <[http://www.johnkirkpatrick.co.uk/mo\\_ShropshireBedlams.asp](http://www.johnkirkpatrick.co.uk/mo_ShropshireBedlams.asp)> [accessed 29 September 2017].

<sup>41</sup> Derek Schofield, 'Dancing England', *English Dance and Song* 43.2 (1981), 12-13.

<sup>42</sup> Broadwood Morris Men. *Horsham's Favourite Morris Side since 1972!* <<http://www.broadwoodmorris.info>> [accessed 17 January 2017]; Ashdown Forest Morris Men, *Welcome to the Ashdown Forest Morris Men's Home Page* <<http://www.afmm.org.uk>> [accessed 17 January 2017].

## North-west Morris at Chanctonbury Ring, 1950s



Figure 3: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men dancing Royton, 1956. Front to back Geoff Biggs, Bill Horton, John Portlock and Mike Nash. © Sean Goddard.

A North-west morris dance (Royton) was danced by Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men on 6 May 1956 at the Shoreham Country Dance Club annual May Dance held at St. Mary's Hall, Shoreham,<sup>43</sup> then at a limited number of summer performances later that year (Figure 3). The Royton dance was taught by Geoff Biggs, with music supplied by Jim Hoare on the fiddle. As John Portlock, who took part in this dance, suggests, this was part of Chanctonbury Ring's drive to experiment with other English dances beyond the normal Cotswold repertoire (later Chanctonbury Ring tried longsword (Grenoside) and rapper), but the dance was dropped the following year. Portlock confirms that North-west was tried because some members of the side had seen it performed at the EFDSS's annual Royal Albert Hall Festival in January that year by the Manley Morris Men, and also by the availability of Maud Karpeles's book. John Portlock confirms the dance was performed in standard Chanctonbury Ring

<sup>43</sup> Shoreham Folk Dance Club Scrapbook, 1956, in the possession of John Portlock.

kit without baldrics, bells and hats, but the shoes had bells tied to them with silver ribbons.<sup>44</sup>

## North-west Morris at Chanctonbury Ring, 1970s: Getting Started

On 11-13 April 1975, four members of the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men (Ed Bassford, Dave Hood, Eric Moquet and Ed Lyons, now collectively known as the 'Persnore Four') attended a weekend North-west morris dance workshop at Persnore, Worcestershire,<sup>45</sup> organized by the Morris Ring and led by Derek Froome from the Manchester Morris Men with Roy Dommett as musician (piano-accordion). Ed Bassford recalls:<sup>46</sup>

*The dances learnt were Milnrow, Colne and Ashton and using tunes such as Brighton Camp, Cock o' the North and Rushcart Lads. We took copious notes and felt that with a bit of effort we could to teach these dances to other members of the side quickly and perhaps dance them out later that summer.*

As Dave Hood describes, he was a new member of the side at that time, having joined in the autumn of 1973. He shared a flat with Ed Lyons and assumes that's how he became a member of the 'Persnore Four':<sup>47</sup>

*I was totally enjoying Cotswold dancing at the time and I suppose that North West clog just seemed a great idea - something new, different and exciting to try. I hadn't even seen a North West side in action.*

Mike Stevens, who joined the side as an apprentice in 1974, suggests:<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> 'Albert Hall: Folk Dance Festival', *The Times*, 7 January 1956, p. 8; details about the Shoreham performances are from John Portlock, interview with Sean Goddard, 7 October 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Dave Hood, diary entry, 11-13 April 1975. Details included in email to Sean Goddard, 5 September 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Ed Bassford interview.

<sup>47</sup> Dave Hood, email to Sean Goddard, 5 September 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Mike Stevens, email to Sean Goddard. 18 August 2016.

*One of the reasons that North West was considered as an addition to the side was that there was dissatisfaction with the standard and a perceived lack of ambition in the Cotswold teaching. Paul Setford was Captain at the time. During my novice year there were 12 of us new men – taken in hand by Eddie Upton. Possibly 6 or 8 of us were considered capable enough to be elected members at the end of our first season [1975]. The desire for North West was for a dance style in which precision, energy and spectacle could be achieved.*

The 1974 membership list comprised thirty-five active members, and the Chanctonbury Ring minute book records that eleven men were elected to full membership of the side in 1975. In the years between 1971 and 1976, thirty-six men were elected, but this does not take into account those men who only attended for a short time or who did not meet the criteria for election to full membership.<sup>49</sup> With the addition of the eleven elected men, the 1975/76 practice season could have had six Cotswold sides up for practice or performance, allowing for absences, musicians and watchers. During the 1970s, Chanctonbury Ring became a large side.

The North-west side first danced out on Monday 25 August (Bank Holiday Monday) at the Green Man, Horsted Keynes as part of a Chanctonbury Ring day tour (Figure 4). Three dances were performed, the same dances that had been learned earlier in the year. As can be seen in the photograph, the costume was simple in form, but significantly different from the Cotswold side. At this time, the men who danced North-west were also members of the Cotswold side and as the two styles were sometimes performed during the same show, a ‘quick change’ was often necessary. Hats off, baldrics to sash, white to red socks, and shoes for clogs. There were no embellishments such as beads or hats generally associated with other North West sides.

<sup>49</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, AGM Minute Book, 1971-76.





Figure 4: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men at The Green Man, Horsted Keynes, 1975. ©Dave Hood.

In 1978, the North-west side processed for the first time at the Lewes Bonfire Celebrations as guests of the Borough Bonfire Society.<sup>50</sup> This is an annual event on 5 November when the town of Lewes is closed to traffic while upwards of 50,000 spectators watch the various Bonfire Societies and their guests parade through Lewes. Although the celebrations celebrate the 17 Protestant martyrs who were burnt at the stake in Lewes between 1555 and 1557 and the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, Bonfire Societies traditionally parade as Zulus, Vikings and Smugglers and regularly introduce other styles including the St Trinian's Girls complete with battered hockey sticks in 1979,<sup>51</sup> and more recently Samba Bands. From personal experience the authors suggest that parading through Lewes on 5 November is exhilarating and a nightmare: having bangers and crow

<sup>50</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, *A History*, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Brian Pugh, *Bonfire Night in Lewes*, (London: MX Publishing, 2011), pp. 126, 160. St. Trinian's Girls were introduced in 1979: 'Burning Spirit is Still Alive', *Evening Argus*, 6 November 1979, p. 3.

scarers thrown at you, trying to navigate around the manhole covers with irons on in the dark, the smoke and noise!



Figure 5: Chanctonbury Ring Morris men, Lewes, 2013. ©Clive Funnell.

Although well accepted at Lewes, dancing the morris at Lewes Bonfire caused controversy. As Ed Bassford and Mike Stevens explained, there was debate between the various Bonfire Societies that the inclusion of morris dancers would bring an undesirable element of carnival into the proceedings.<sup>52</sup> An article in the *Sussex Express* on 10 November 1978 says ‘The Borough Bonfire Society introduced the controversial Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men’, and included a photograph of the team processing.<sup>53</sup> No mention was made of Chanctonbury Ring’s appearance in 1979 or 1980, so whatever the controversy was, it had disappeared! The side has appeared regularly ever since (Figure 5).

<sup>52</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, *A History*, p, 14’ and Mike Stevens, email to Sean Goddard, 15 August 2016.

<sup>53</sup> ‘White Rabbit Leads in a Record Crowd’, *Sussex Express*, 10 November 1978, pp. 17, 40. I can find no additional reports of the controversy in the Lewes-based *Sussex Express* or the Brighton-based *Evening Argus* in October or November 1978.



In December 1979, to celebrate the end of the International Year of the Child, the Bonfire Societies were asked to parade from Horse Guards Parade in London along The Mall and through the gates of Buckingham Palace in torchlight procession, where the Queen listened to the carols from the balcony of the Palace. Chanctonbury Ring were there as guests of Borough Bonfire Society who led the procession. As Mike Stevens records, after the procession, Chanctonbury Ring formed up at Victoria's statue and then processed all the way back again to Victoria Station, on our own, but to some popular appreciation.<sup>54</sup> During the afternoon, the side had danced outside Westminster Abbey.<sup>55</sup>

In 1980 the side was invited to dance at the Whitby Folk Festival, and in 1982 it danced at the Sidmouth International Folklore Festival. Cathy Lesurf was the Arena Producer; while Eddie Upton, who was also a member of Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, was the Dance Director (booking bands and callers) and also a member of the Albion Dance Band said:<sup>56</sup>

*My memory is that I started taking a back seat from Chanctonbury about the same time as the North West team was starting. The two things are not connected as I was stepping back because of increasing commitments to Etchingham Steam Band and, more significantly, Albion Dance Band. I'm hopeless on dates I'm afraid, but The Albion Dance Band held a big day at the Riverside Studios in London and each member of the band invited another artist to take part in the day – my invitation was to the North West team and they did it and did very well. I also invited the North West team to dance on the Arena at Sidmouth – another success. I didn't invite the Cotswold side to either event because I didn't think they were good enough!*

<sup>54</sup> Brian Pugh, p. 156 and Mike Stevens email to Sean Goddard, 16 August 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Ed Bassford, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Eddie Upton, email to Sean Goddard. 30 August 2016.

## Practices, Teaching and Standards

When the North West side started, they practised on Tuesdays in the Red Cross Centre in Brighton. The Cotswold side practised on Wednesdays in Shoreham so men were able to take part in both styles.

As recorded by Dave Hood in his diary for Tuesday 22 April 1975, ‘Clog practice’ practices started directly after the Pershore workshop, and on subsequent Tuesdays.<sup>57</sup> Practices were held at the Red Cross Centre (training room) in Montpelier Road, Brighton: Hood’s mother was president of the local Red Cross so that was helpful. As Dave Hood further recalls:<sup>58</sup>

*Although a good location for us, the Red Cross building was in between residential houses and the neighbours used to get really pissed off with the noise of the clogs - quite rightly so if you think about it! At one point they must have complained to the local authorities as my diary entry for 27th April 1976 states 'Clog practice - health inspector'.*

Dave Williams joined Chanctonbury Ring in the autumn of 1975 while part of the team that built the Lewes bypass. Dave had previously been a member of the Winchester Morris Men and when the by-pass had been completed in 1980 he returned to live in Hampshire and re-joined them; he also danced with King John’s Morris Men based in Southampton. Dave Williams comments:<sup>59</sup>

*My first real experience of North West was at a Ring Meeting, I think in Liverpool, which I attended with Winchester. At the massed display on the Saturday evening after a tour with only other Cotswold sides, a side I had not heard of before was introduced over the PA. They were not in position to start but then the drums started in the distance followed by the Concertina Band which was the music for the Manley Morris who started dancing and processed on to the dance area. Before*

<sup>57</sup> Dave Hood, email 5 September 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Dave Hood, email 5 September 2016.

<sup>59</sup> Dave Williams, email to Sean Goddard, 16 October 2016.

*the side had even entered the arena I was sold on North West which I considered to be one of the best things I had seen or heard relating to Morris Dancing. I was very pleased to hear that the side was dancing North West as well as Cotswold as by this time I was keen to get involved in North West after my early experience referred to above.*

*I was not present at the start of the Chanctonbury's North West side but practices were on a separate day to the normal Wednesday night practices, I think on a Sunday, and this was because there were some in the side who did not wish to dance North West. It was almost considered as a separate thing to the main activities of the side. For most of my time at Chanctonbury this was the way things were done with some men not getting involved with the North West side but I did not consider this to be fractious but the choice of some men.*

*I first danced out North West with the side at a EFDSS Dance again at Hove Town Hall just before Christmas 1975 after a couple of practices.*

This arrangement lasted until 1980, when the Red Cross Centre became unavailable and the practice evenings were then shared with the Cotswold side: a ratio of 1:3 in favour of Cotswold on Wednesdays, with the addition of some Sunday practices. As Paul Setford (Cotswold Captain) expressed at the 1982 AGM and recorded in the minutes:<sup>60</sup>

*One Wednesday per month to be given over to practicing North West Morris. This would introduce some new men to the clog whilst also helping to reunite two factions. Those wishing to dance out would still have to attend special Sunday practices as well. Some Cotswold practices could continue in the corridor. 3rd Nov would be first such practice as it precedes Lewes Bonfire on the 5th.*

It would appear from Setford's comments that the side had been drifting apart: had the sides ever been united? At the 1979 recon-

<sup>60</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Book, 1982, AGM.

vened AGM there had been discussions about the sides splitting, while Dave Hood had raised questions that North-west novices and members need not be involved with the Cotswold side.<sup>61</sup>

Membership of the North-west side and its relationship with the Cotswold (and other Morris Ring sides) is an ongoing issue (see Membership section below).

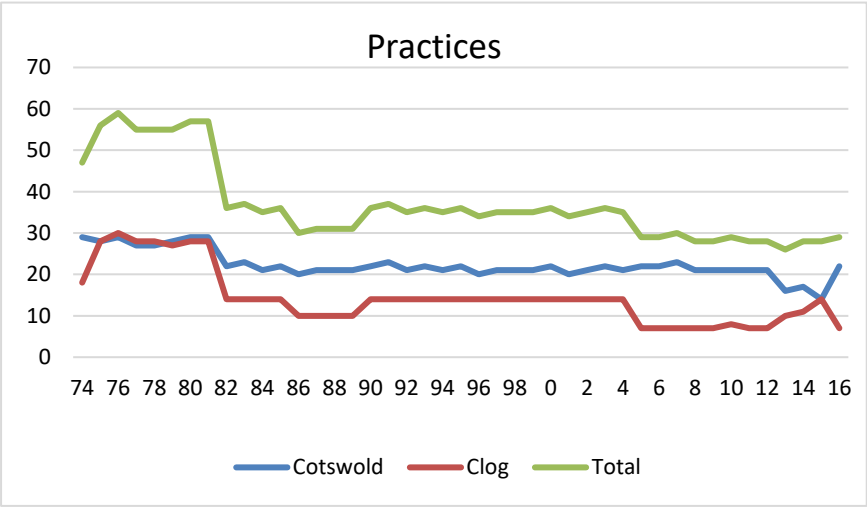


Figure 6: Number of practices each year, 1975-2016.

Between 1990 and 2004, the practice ratio was 2:3 in favour of Cotswold. North-west practices took place on the first Wednesday and Sunday of the month during the practice season, while Cotswold had all the remaining Wednesdays. This worked reasonably well, although Sunday practices were not always well attended and were finally dropped in 2004. The number of dances performed, although never very large in number, fell to five in 2012. Between 2012 and 2015 the ratio of North-west to Cotswold practices increased to 1:3 in 2012, 1:2 in 2013 and 2014 and finally to 1:1 in 2015 (Figure 6).<sup>62</sup>

The number of dances performed remained low at five, and at the 2016 AGM the side decided that the standard of Cotswold dancing

<sup>61</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Book, 1979, AGM.

<sup>62</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Books, 1990-2015, AGM.

had reduced significantly that the ratio would be increased in favour for Cotswold to 1:4.<sup>63</sup>

However, the reason for the decline in the Cotswold standard of dance in part can be placed on the shoulders of the Cotswold Captain (Sean Goddard), as he has for some years followed a policy of inclusion in the hope of retaining new members, with dancing standards taking a secondary role.<sup>64</sup>

Until the untimely death of Ed Lyons in 2016, the North-west side has benefited from having only three Captains (teachers): Ed Bassford and Ed Lyons were members of the Pershore Four, while Paul Setford joined the Tuesday practices and danced at the first performance at Horsted Keynes. Sean Goddard took over in November 2017 as an interregnum following the death of Ed Lyons. This has allowed for a consistent approach in content and style.

## Dances and Music

There were three dances learnt at Pershore: Milnrow, Colne and Ashton. While Milnrow and Colne have remained in the side's repertoire, Aston was dropped in 2005. Piper's Ash, learned from Chester Morris Men, was an early taught dance, while Holme-in-the-Dale was learnt in 2005 and was danced until 2008.

The side has performed other collected dances including Millbrook, Godley Hill and Royton. Godley Hill is based on the dance collected by Maud Karpeles from Mr Broadbent and Robert Brookes and others of Hyde, Cheshire in 1929.<sup>65</sup>

The side regularly danced Royton from 1976 until 2012. From 2000 the side struggled to perform this dance well and it has not been performed in public since 2012.

The side has composed two dances, 'Uncle Bernard's Polka' and 'Guernsey Roundabout'.

<sup>63</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Book, 2016, AGM.

<sup>64</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Books, 2009- 2016, AGM.

<sup>65</sup> 'Godley Hill Morris', London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Maud Karpeles Manuscript Collection, MK/1/1/4594 <<https://www.vwml.org/record/MK/1/1/4594B>> [accessed 6 August 2017].

Currently the side performs regularly five dances: Milnrow, Marston, Piper's Ash, Godley Hill and Colne. Milnrow and Colne still exist from the original workshop, while Piper's Ash was learned shortly after (Table 1).

Table 1: North-west dances in Chanctonbury Ring's repertoire.

	First danced	Last danced in performance
Ashton	1975	2005
Colne	1975	Current
Godley Hill	1978	Current
Guernsey Roundabout	1983	1988
Holme-in-the-Dale	2005	2008
Marston	1978	Current
Millbrook	1998	2003
Milnrow	1975	Current
Piper's Ash	1977	Current
Royton	1976	2012
Uncle Bernard's Polka	1982	2010

It is interesting to observe that that dances learnt early in the development of the side (Milnrow, Colne, Piper's Ash Reel Marston and Godley Hill) form the repertoire of the side today. Other dances have been introduced but have fallen out of favour.

There may be many reasons for this, but the main one is familiarity. If a new member joins Chanctonbury Ring, the first dance they generally learn is Colne (as it contains no polka steps!), followed generally by Milnrow (has polka steps, but easy figures!). If a new member joins every year or two, the whole team relearns the dance and becomes well versed with these dances. Other dances such as Marston and Piper's Ash have more difficult figures or awkward timing. Chanctonbury Ring's Cotswold side has followed a similar pattern: some dances performed today were included in their initial years: Adderbury, Bampton and Fieldtown. The side's constitution does not allow for any man to leave, they become a 'Country Member' and a historical repertoire is useful as they are entitled to just turn up and dance, if they can remember how! In this case you fall back on dances that are generally taught to beginners.

At the beginning of the North-west side, music was mainly supplied by Dave Hood (melodeon), Pete Rogan (trombone), Keith Phillips (fiddle), Joan Drumbrell (piano accordion) and Tony Pepler (side drum) supplemented by others such as Vic Gammon.

Since 1985 Brian Cooper has been the lead musician, and has developed the tune base. When the side first learnt Marston it was performed to the tune of 'A Hundred Pipers', however in 2010, the tune was changed to the 'Regimental March of the Sussex Regiment'. Likewise, when Colne was learnt at Pershore it was performed to the tune of 'Cock o' the North'. With the publication of Vic Gammon and Anne Loughran's, *A Sussex Tune Book* in 1982, local tunes became readily available and two tunes, 'The Ball' and 'Wentworth House' have been used for this dance since 1989.<sup>66</sup> The two tunes have different time signatures, which gives a distinctive feel to the two halves of the dance. Tunes from the same book have also been used for Chanctonbury Ring's set of Cotswold style dances.

The Milnrow dance has traditionally been danced to polkas, including 'Brighton Camp' and 'British Grenadiers'. Since 2012, Cooper has during the last figure (four-hand reel) and the last fast polka introduced a jig (6/8) version of 'Brighton Camp'. Again, this gives a different feel to the dance.

Tunes noted by Maud Karpeles for the Royton dance included 'O Sussanna', 'Yankee Doodle', 'Brighton Camp' and 'Cock o' the North'. Chanctonbury Ring follows this trend and use tunes such as 'The White Cockade', 'In and Out the Windows' and 'Golden Slippers'.

Chanctonbury Ring have danced to the Petworth Town Band, the Beddingham Silver Band and the Steenderen Town Band when attending the Steenderen Folk Festival in Holland, and on many occasions the tunes used had to be modified to ensure a good fit. As Dave Williams explains:<sup>67</sup>

*While dancing with King John's Morris, on one occasion when we were performing in Bournemouth and while walking through a Public Park to get to our next spot we came across*

<sup>66</sup> Anne Loughran and Vic Gammon, *The Sussex Tune Book* (London: EFDSS, 1982).

<sup>67</sup> Dave Williams, email, 16 October 2016.

*the Band of the Royal Signals playing in a Band Stand. With a little help from the Band Sergeant I was able convince the Band Master that if they were able to play the Radetzky March we would dance to it. It was necessary to adapt the sequence of figures a little and required some intense concentration from the dancers and the Captain but what a performance and memory. We had the entire band on their feet at the end applauding our performance. I don't think that would have had the same affect if we had been dancing Cotswold.*

Although Williams's comment refers to a King John's Morris experience, something similar did occur when Chanctonbury Ring danced at the Steenderen Folk Festival in the Netherlands in 1995. The Town Band were playing a march, Chanctonbury Ring formed up and danced Milnrow until the band finished. Applause all round!

## Membership

To gain membership of the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, a dancer must be able to dance to an acceptable standard and current practice is that each dancer must have a year as an apprentice, even if transferring in from another side. Once elected they are then entitled to wear a Chanctonbury Ring badge, have voting rights, stand for office and pay subs. This was not always the case: in the early years joining the side was by invitation only. It is not recorded when this changed, but likely to be during the 1960s. As described earlier, the side's constitution does not allow for any man to leave, they become Country Members.

As seen in Figure 7, the number of active dancers within the side has gradually decreased. This is a trend that other morris dance sides, especially those who are members of the Morris Ring, have followed. The average age of Chanctonbury Ring dancers has increased, but this is not recorded (lack of new men!). As Worth reports, the average age of a Morris Ring side was 53 in 2010 and this had increased to 56 in 2014. Sides who are members of the Morris Federation tend to be younger.<sup>68</sup> The authors consider the average age of Chancton-

<sup>68</sup> Worth, Section, Age.



bury Ring members is slightly older than the Morris Ring average age.

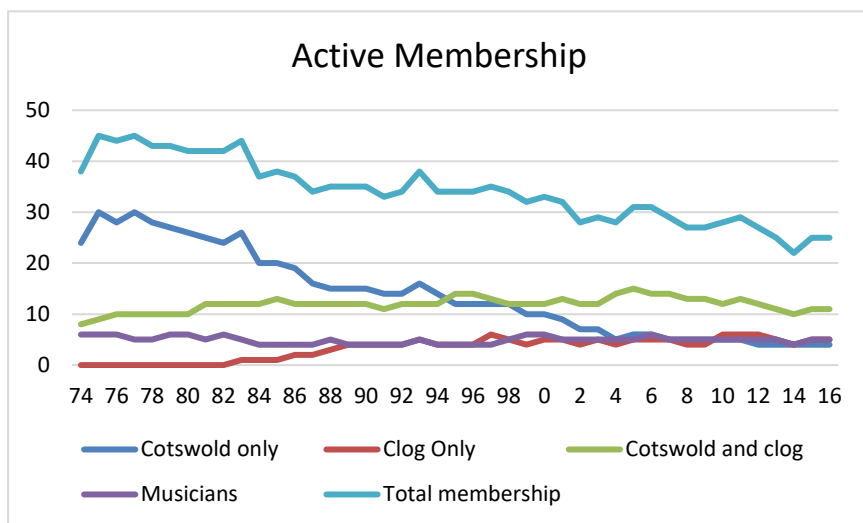


Figure 7: Number of active members 1975-2016.

At the 1982 AGM a motion was passed (almost unanimously) that all future members of the North-west side had to gain elected membership by dancing Cotswold.<sup>69</sup> This was reversed at the 1990 AGM, when this motion was passed:<sup>70</sup>

*After discussion it was agreed by a majority that, whilst all men would be encouraged to take part in Cotswold dancing they could be elected a member of the team without an involvement in Cotswold dancing, providing their standard was of the same level that would earn them membership if they had been dancing Cotswold.*

At the previous three AGMs, Ed Bassford had reported that the North-west side had begun to struggle for numbers. This reversal of policy was to encourage new members, especially from other local morris sides whose members had expressed an interested in joining

<sup>69</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Book, 1982, AGM.

<sup>70</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Book, 1990, AGM.

just the North-west side, while remaining dancing Cotswold with their original teams. It didn't work!<sup>71</sup>

The number of the side's musicians has remained fairly constant. The actual musicians have changed during the years. The North-west side, unlike the Cotswold side, welcomes female musicians. There have been two of note, Joan Drumbell who played accordion in the 1970s and 80s, while Milly Murphy has played clarinet since 1985. This has caused 'problems' at times with other Morris Ring sides. Previously, women may not have been made welcome at formal Morris Ring events, and on several occasions invitations have been refused due to this policy.<sup>72</sup>

Chanctonbury Ring's constitution does not allow female members, female musicians are welcome to play for the North-west side, but they do not have any formal membership, voting or other rights. In effect, they hold an honorary position.

Recruitment to the team is an ongoing concern. New men are recruited; however, they tend to reflect the current average age of the membership of the side. There many factors that influence this: firstly, the practice hall is in the countryside away from any centre of population, meaning that new members must drive; secondly, in the past Chanctonbury Ring have the reputation of being unfriendly and not welcoming new men (this is a hangover from the side's policy in the 1970s when Chanctonbury Ring were a very large side and for a few years did not recruit any new members); and lastly, Chanctonbury Ring are considered by some to be an inward-looking side as they rarely dance at festivals or days of dance.

## Performance

It has not possible to ascertain every performance of the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men. Performances generally take place outside and can be affected by the weather and cancelled at short notice. The availability of men can cause cancellations, and private and addition-

<sup>71</sup> Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men Minute Books, 1987, 88 and 89, AGM. Also Ed Bassford, 2016, interview.

<sup>72</sup> Ed Bassford, interview. In the 1980s, invitations to take part in day tours organized by Yateley Morris Men and Hartley Morris Men were withdrawn or refused due to this policy.

al performances are not always recorded. Using yearly programmes, Bagman’s notes and AGM minutes, Figure 8 shows the probable number of yearly performance days, or at least to within 10%. Visits to festivals and similar events are counted as one performance day.

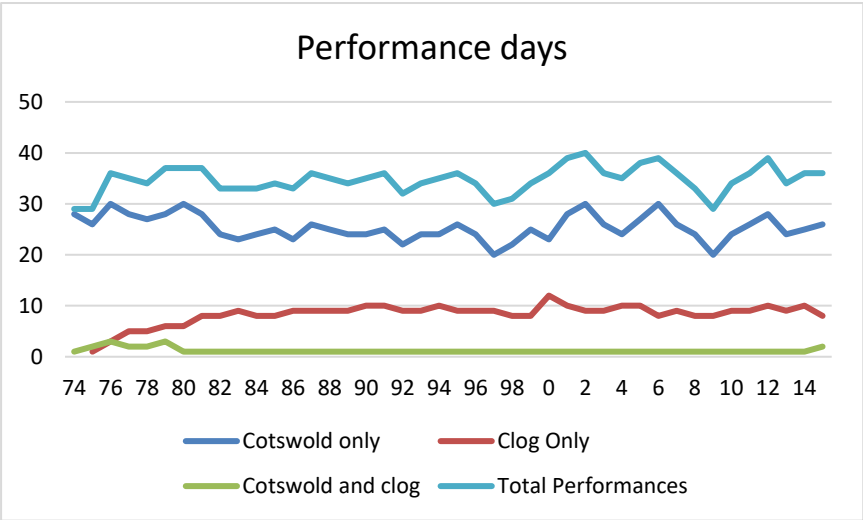


Figure 8: Estimated number of performances yearly.

It can clearly be seen that once the North-west side got established the number of performance days remained fairly static, with an average of nine performance days each year, compared with Cotswold with 25 performance days. There is a peak of more performance days in 2000: this was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the North-west side, and a special effort was made to dance with other long-dancing Sussex sides. There is a corresponding dip in Cotswold dancing the same year as many performances took place on Wednesdays.

The North-west side performs once a month during the summer dancing season; generally this means four or five times. It also performs two other events, Good Friday Skipping at the Rose Cottage, Alciston (with the Knots of May team) and the Lewes Bonfire Celebrations as guests of Borough Bonfire Society. Until recently they danced at Lewes Garland Day on the first Bank Holiday in May (again with the Knots of May), however, recently they have exchanged this day for the Broadwood Day of Dance in Horsham (organized by the

Broadwood Morris Men). They are regularly invited (as opposed to the Cotswold side) to dance at other events, especially local Folk Festivals, but these are often refused due to various factors.

## Costume/Kit

From the beginning of the North-west side, the kit has been kept fairly simple. Unlike many North-west sides, beads and flower-pots in hats have not been worn.

When the North-west side started, the Cotswold side wore black shoes, white socks, black breeches, white shirt, Panama hat and baldricks: as seen in the photograph above. Initially the North-west side was made up of members of the Cotswold side and occasionally both types of dance were performed at the same performance. It was essential then to have a kit that could be interchangeable: both for cost and ease of change.

The 1975 kit can be seen in the photographs of the time (Figures 4 and 9): red socks, black breeches, white shirt and red sash with a rosette. Red and white sticks were also used and red slings. As Dave Hood describes, each man had two pairs of clogs, one pair with irons for outdoor dancing, and a pair with rubbers for indoor dancing. Originally the clogs were purchased from Jack Crawshaw's clog shop in Waterfoot, Rawtenstall; later Mike Stevens, a member of the side, started making clogs.<sup>73</sup>

As Hood also describes, Vic Gammon was an occasional musician for the North-west side, and often wore a red waistcoat.<sup>74</sup> Jenn Price elaborates, she made it, and it was pillar-box red made from the same material as the sashes and fully lined with the same colour. She then made more waistcoats for the Knots of May<sup>75</sup> and they took Chanctonbury Ring's red and white (although the initial other colour was brown) for the main colours for their musicians' uniform. As Dave Hood elaborates:<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Dave Hood, email 5 September 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Dave Hood, email 5 September 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Jenn Price, email to Sean Goddard. 15 October 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Dave Hood, email to Sean Goddard, 16 October 2016.

*In 1977 we were invited to the Fylde Folk Festival - quite a big thing for the Knots of May at the time, and it was 'suggested' by the dancers that the band should have a kit for such a big event. After some discussion we went for brown trousers, white shirts, red waistcoats and flower-decorated bowlers. I remember that the brown trousers we bought faded very quickly with washing and it wasn't long before the band sported a variety of shades of brown. Mine retained the most colour - basically because I was a dirty bugger and washed mine less than everybody else! I think it was this that triggered the change of kit to white trousers.*

An early change happened in 1979 with the addition of a green sash. Major changes came in the 1990s. In 1990 sashes were removed and replaced with a red cummerbund, and followed swiftly in 1994 by the addition of green (leprechaun-style) waistcoats. The 1990s change was the innovation of Bob Kilby (who had danced North-west with Earlsdon Morris Men in Coventry) and Cliff Marchant who felt that the North-west kit needed brightening up!

When Chanctonbury Ring was formed in 1953, the side's colours were green and white. To celebrate the beginning of the 1970s, a red strip was added to the Cotswold baldric. The North-west side began with just red and white, but added a green sash in 1979. When the North-west sided updated the sticks to red and green barber-pole style in 1990, red or green ribbons were added to each end. To celebrate 60 years from the formation of the side, in 2013 the Cotswold side started dancing with red and green handkerchiefs, and in 2017 new red and green slings were purchased. Whether dancing North-west or Cotswold, red for port is always held in the left, while green for starboard, in the right! The kit transitions are illustrated in Figures 9-12 and Table 2.

Table 2: Changes in North-west kit.

Date	Kit
1975	Black clogs, red socks, black breeches, red sash, white shirt
1977	Bowler hats added with flowers. Horizontal green and red hat band
1979	Green sash added
1990	Sashes removed replaced with red cummerbund. Original white and red sticks replaced with green and red. Vertical green and red hat band with simple/few flowers
1994	Green waistcoat added. Flowers removed from hats
2017	New red and green slings were purchased following a bequest from the family of Paul Plumb, a founder member

The sticks and slings are based on the dimensions described by Maud Karpeles. Slings are approximately 40 cm (14 inches) in length, while the short sticks based on her description of those used at Godley Hill.<sup>77</sup> It is likely that the Pershore Four's experience at the Manchester workshop in 1975 may have influenced the design.

## Wider Influence: Other Sides

Bringing North-west to the South coast has had an influence on local sides.

King John's Morris Men, based in Southampton, were formed in 1975 as a Cotswold side. However, similarly to Chanctonbury Ring, they started a North-west side in 1980, with the dance form introduced by Dave Williams, a Chanctonbury Ring man. Dave Williams explains how this happened:<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance*, pp. 6, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Dave Williams, email, 16 October 2016.



Figure 9: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men at The Green Man, Horsted Keynes, showing the original kit, 1975 © Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men.



Figure 10: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, unknown location and date, showing the addition of the green sash. © Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men.





Figure 11: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men at The Rose Cottage, Alciston. 1992  
© Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men.



Figure 12: Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, 2013 © Clive Funnell.

*I moved back to Hampshire in June 1980 and returned to dance with Winchester Morris Men. I was by now heavily involved with the folk dance scene as a Caller and got involved with the local EFDSS committee.*

*One of the things they organised was all day Sunday Workshops during the winter and I offered, and they accepted, to*



*do one for North West Morris in 1981. At this time there were no sides in the area dancing North West.*

*I think one Winchester man came but quite a few from King John's Men who were formed in 1975 and a good number of others including some from mid Hampshire (eventually forming as Knock Hundred Shuttle Morris). A great day with a good effort by all. My best memory was the teaching of some basic figures from Milnrow in the morning which we then used to dance to the Pub half a mile away at the other end of the village for lunch. King John's Morris men then asked me to come down to Southampton to teach them North West.*

*They like Chanctonbury had some men that did not wish to get involved with North West so we practiced on a Sunday evening. Things got going pretty quickly and after a few months' practice and getting some kit together the side danced at a EFDSS Christmas Ceilidh. We danced into the hall with 16 men up for Milnrow followed by Colne and another session of Milnrow which by now had a few extra figures in it when compared with the Chanctonbury version. Since then the numbers dancing North West grew to the stage when all of the side were either involved as dancers or musicians.*

King John's Morris Men dance in a similar style to Chanctonbury Ring, and both sides have joined together and danced jointly as one side, most recently in 2015 at the Saddleworth Rushcart when neither team could raise a full side.

The Broadwood Morris Men, based in Horsham, had a North-west Morris side in the 1980s. The side started after seeing Chanctonbury Ring dance at the Crawley Folk Festival. I have been unable to confirm the actual dates of the North-west side.

Knock Hundred Shuttles are a mixed North-west side based in Midhurst, West Sussex and are a 'once removed' side of Chanctonbury Ring influence. Founder members attended a workshop taken by Dave Williams in Hampshire in 1981. As Sue Beveridge says, practices started in September 1982, with the first dance out taking place in

spring 1983.<sup>79</sup> They have since developed into a colourful side with an excellent reputation.

In 2014, Ed Lyons and Brian Cooper ran a North-west workshop at Washington, and again in 2015. A number of dancers from other sides attended the workshop and in the winter season 2015 a female side was formed, Temporary Measured. This side was tutored by Ed Lyons and their first dance out was at Lewes Folk Day, 2016.

## Wider Influence: Audience

The North-west morris presents a wider opportunity to impress audiences and to keep them attentive. It is different in form from Cotswold and can be danced to popular tunes and marches without modification. Chanctonbury Ring has in the past danced to the Petworth Town Band and the Beddingham Silver Band. It is probably one of the two spectacular forms of the dance, the rapper dance being the other: double somersaults may eclipse it. As Dave Williams indicates:<sup>80</sup>

*The main thing that I think North West brought to the side was variety and introduced what I consider to be a more spectacular form of the Morris. I remember some great occasions where we danced North West and received a great response from the audience. Lewes Bonfire and the procession down The Mall to Buckingham Palace come to mind, not sure that they would have been so memorable as a Cotswold event.*

## Conclusion

The introduction of a North-west repertoire to Chanctonbury Ring has had positive effects. Firstly, it brought the North-west style of dance to a new audience in Sussex. Branching out from Chanctonbury Ring, two local sides developed North-west style in the 1980s (given that the Knots of May were already in existence) and this did not start an avalanche of sides dancing the North-west style as antic-

<sup>79</sup> Sue Beveridge, email to Sean Goddard. 3 November 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Dave Williams email, 16 October 2016.

ipated by some in the 1970s. The North-west style is now more widely known, but as Worth observes, only 16% of UK dance sides cite North-west as their main style.

Secondly, it has allowed Chanctonbury Ring to perform at events where Cotswold would not have been appropriate. Dancing at Lewes Bonfire is the best example. There was concern from Bonfire Societies and others that the introduction of morris dancers into processions would bring a sense of carnival into the proceedings. It may be the case that Cotswold would have, but as North-west has its origins in processions, with more control and uniformity, it was accepted more readily.

Lastly, Chanctonbury Ring is predominantly a Cotswold side. The side had been dancing the Cotswold style for twenty years before the introduction of North-west, and it was viewed by some that it was 'newish men' who wished to introduce the new form. The introduction of the North-west upset the balance: stands in the early years of the North-west were shared, then the North-west had its own stands, reducing the number of Cotswold, although this was never large, with an average of about 1:3 in favour of Cotswold. Invitations were shared, sometimes with heated discussions about which dance form would be best and accusations that one form always got preference.

Despite the internal politics, the introduction of North-west Morris has enhanced the reputation of Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men. The current age profile of the side is such that both the Cotswold and North-west styles are in danger of folding: they have not capitalized fully on their position as one of Sussex's premier sides.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to record my appreciation of and the debt owed to Ed Bassford who died on 28 July 2017 after a long illness. Ed was too ill to co-present at the Histories of Morris conference, though his contribution to the research and content of this paper had been significant. I would like to record my thanks to members of the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men and others who are named for their contributions and memories.



Robert Dunlop

## Morris Dancing at Kirtlington Lamb Ale: Heyday, Decline and Revival

Morris dancing at Kirtlington Lamb Ale was an established tradition in the late seventeenth century. The earliest written reference to the 'ancient' Kirtlington Lamb Ale, by Thomas Blount (1679), cites a Lamb Ale (at 'Kidlington' – probably an error) with Lord and Lady of the Lamb accompanied by 'a moresco of men and another of women', and describes a contest between maids of the village, with hands tied behind them, to catch a fat lamb. Support by the gentry was essential to its continuation, and changing social values are reflected in the patterns of both decline and revival (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Maids with thumbs tied chase the lamb – 1679, as imagined in 1822 (Engraving from John Platts, *The Book of Curiosities; Or, Wonders of the Great World* (London: Caxton Press, [1822])).

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Blount, *Ancient Tenures of Land and Popular Customs of Manors*, (1679) ed. by W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874), p. 181, cited in Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900* (Musical Traditions Records CD Rom MTCD 250, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2002) Chapter 4: Contexts and Performance: 1 Whitsun Ales, A Case Study – Kirtlington Lamb Ale (no page numbering)

## Heyday

Kirtlington Lamb Ale flourished as an annual event lasting a week or more during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An area of land was allocated to fund Lamb Ale, providing for pies, cakes and ale. The sum of £2 12s contributed by the Dashwood family in 1859 can only represent a small proportion of the total costs.

Several writers describe the Lamb Ale in its heyday of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Key features are the Lord and Lady (Figure 2), processions, dancing and feasting accompanied by attendants with weapons. A decorated bower was created on the village green or using a nearby barn. Lamb Ale also featured drinking, and suggestions of sexual licence and an inverted social order – it was a disorderly boisterous affair, including popular sports and pastimes such as fighting, shin-kicking and backswords.



Figure 2: Lady of the Lamb and morris dancer (*Oxford Times* 17 February 1912).

The Lady of the Lamb was treated with reverence. Morris dancers led the processions, stopping to perform three morris dances; hand-clapping, with hankies and with sticks. Festivities generally started on Trinity Monday, on Wednesday the lamb was killed and baked, making several pies. Collections by morris tours at major local houses and towns would have been challenging. In the mid nineteenth century 25 rival teams were based within a ten-mile radius. Probably most of these groups would have danced, and collected money at Whitsun – a week before Kirtlington Lamb Ale.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 3: Bucknell Morris c.1875: Bucknell Morris were regular visitors at Lamb Ale. Eli Rolfe (left) told Cecil Sharp and George Butterworth about dancing at Kirtlington, including 'Bonny Green' (see Figure 10) (Kirtlington Morris Archives).

<sup>2</sup> Percy Manning, 'Some Oxfordshire Seasonal Festivals: With Notes on Morris-Dancing in Oxfordshire', *Folk-lore* 8.4 (1897), 307-24; G. A. Rowell, "Notes on Some Old-fashioned English Customs: The Mummers; The Morris-dancers; Whitsun-ales; Lamb-ales", *The Folk-lore Journal* 4.2 (1886): 97-109; Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, See also for costs of Morris performances Michael Heaney, 'With Scarfes and Garters as you Please', *Folk Music Journal*, 6.4 (1993), 491-505.

## Morris Dance Competition

A morris dance competition at Lamb Ale attracted up to twenty sides. Visiting sides included Headington, Bampton and Bucknell (Figure 3). Headington's foreman said the competition dance was to a variant of the Saturday Night tune, with sticks or hankies. Headington claimed they always won.<sup>3</sup>

## Decline

Lamb Ale required the sponsorship of the gentry. The *Gentleman's Magazine* 1830 found morris dancing worthy of financial support and 'pleasing when executed with precision' but tastes and fashions changed.<sup>4</sup> The exuberant, licentious, drunken excess of Lamb Ale lost favour with the respectable classes, though still popular with the lower orders. Special constables were needed. The Dashwood family helped to establish a club feast – run by friendly societies – replacing the old Lamb Ale between 1858 and 1862.<sup>5</sup>

## Lamb Ale Club Feast

The club feast had a brass band, procession, children in costume, fairground games and stalls and a game of cricket. Morris dancing seems to have been frozen out – no longer welcome among the organized festivities (Figure 4).

Fifty years after the event Thomas Tindall Wildridge described the effect of the change to a club feast in a lecture in 1912:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Thomas J. Carter's notes on Headington Quarry, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries MS Top. Oxon d.200, fol. 97; transcribed by Cecil Sharp, Cambridge, Archive of Clare College, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, ACC1987/25, Folk Tunes, no. 2755, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2755B>> [accessed 7 November 2017]; Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, Chapter 5, Contexts of Performance.

<sup>4</sup> J.W., 'Scraps from a Notebook', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 100.2 (1830), 23-25 (p. 24).

<sup>5</sup> Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> 'Kirtlington Lamb Ale: Report of a Lecture', *Oxford Times* 17 February 1912. I am grateful to Michael Heaney for providing me with a copy of this report.





Figure 4: Lamb Ale Club Feast – Bicester Town Band at the Oxford Arms, 1882. The earliest known photograph of Lamb Ale (Kirtlington Morris Archive).



Figure 5: Lamb Ale Club Feast 1912 – Fairground, Stalls and Brass Band, but no morris dancers (Kirtlington Morris Archive).

*At about 1850 the new note in the nation affected all the simple pleasures. A holiday and a feast ceased once a year to loom so large and all-important as they had done. Therefore, when the village Friendly Society began to expand under the fostering care of Major Dashwood, the "Lamb Ale" ... was*

*made a secondary consideration. Finally, its initial date (Trinity Monday) was usurped by the Club, and the Club-day diners complained of the noise outside!*



Figure 6: Lamb Ale Club Feast – Shepherd Girls in costume (possibly circa 1905) (Kirtlington Morris Archive).

Morris dancing at Kirtlington declined. George James Dew was a Relieving Officer for the Guardians of the Poor who visited Kirtlington regularly in the later nineteenth century. In 1877 his visit coincided with Kirtlington Lamb Ale where he:<sup>7</sup>

*...saw ... a morris dance (now almost extinct in these parts) - a number of men dancing to the tune of a whistle and tambourine. Formerly they were dressed in light or white trousers or rather breeches, spotlessly white shirts nicely made for the occasion, a tall box hat on and jingling bells on the legs and wrists, but these at Kirtlington today lacked all such insignia.*

The costume described by Dew may be compared with that at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford (Figure 7).

<sup>7</sup> George James Dew, *Oxfordshire village life : the diaries of George James Dew (1846-1928)*, relieving officer, ed. by Pamela Horn (Abingdon: Beacon, 1983), p. 70.



Figure 7: Morris costume (mostly from Kirtlington) sold to Pitt Rivers Museum by Thomas Carter in 1895, PRM 1895.46.1. Reproduced by permission of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

## Revival

Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal's revival brought respectability to morris dancing, but opportunities to record the Kirtlington tradition were missed. They sought to establish a standardized national folk-dance culture. When Tindall Wildridge lectured on Kirtlington Lamb Ale in 1912 he was aware of older people in the village who knew the Kirtlington dances, but he voiced justified concerns that an external teacher would teach only this standard repertoire.<sup>8</sup> In 1922, when William Pearman danced the Kirtlington jig 'Jockey to the Fair' for Cecil Sharp he noted the tune, but there is no surviving description of the dance.<sup>9</sup> In 1925 there was morris dancing by the Oxford City Police team and a country dance by the recently formed Kirtlington folk-dance group.<sup>10</sup>

The 1928 diary of Francis Tabor of Oxford University Morris Men gives this account of their visit to Kirtlington:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 'Kirtlington Lamb Ale: Report of a Lecture'.

<sup>9</sup> Sharp, *Folk Tunes*, no. 4925, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/4925>> [accessed on 7 November 2017].

<sup>10</sup> Roy Judge, 'The Ancient Men: OUMM and its Background', revised and produced in chronological form by Ian Hall and Gerard Robinson (1993) <<https://oxforduniversitymorris.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/oummhist.pdf>> [accessed 11 October 2017], pp. 5-6; unidentified press cutting 30 July 1925 in Kirtlington Morris Archive.

<sup>11</sup> Judge, 'The Ancient Men', p. 25.

*10 May. Dem[onstration] at Kirtlington of Flamborough, to encourage the local team for the Blenheim festival. We stopped on the way and walked it through in a field, quite well. But the actual dem. was less good; in fact the Kirtlington men who did theirs afterwards were very little worse.*

Photographs (and film of massed dancing by 1,500 dancers at Blenheim<sup>12</sup>) suggest the Kirtlington group around 1930 performed dances from Adderbury and Headington (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Kirtlington revival morris group circa 1930 – possibly dancing an Adderbury hey (Kirtlington Morris Archive).

Oxford University Morris men continued to dance at Kirtlington Lamb Ale into the 1970s (Figure 9). I have not found records of the Kirtlington group after the 1930s.

The Travelling Morrice visited Kirtlington in 1951 and 1956, and several times in the 1960s, though these visits did not coincide with Lamb Ale. They danced Kirtlington ‘Trunkles’ in the village in 1951, and a former Kirtlington dancer demonstrated handclapping and steps for ‘Bonnet So Blue’. In 1956 they met scoutmaster Len Berry

<sup>12</sup> *Merrie England Once Again* (British Pathe, 1929), <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/merrie-england-once-again-1>> [accessed 11 October 2017].



who 23 years later became Squire of the revived Kirtlington side (Figure 10).<sup>13</sup>



Figure 9: Oxford University Morris Men were regular visitors to Lamb Ale – performing Bledington ‘Glorishears’ 1974 (With thanks to Sam Doolin of OUMM).



Figure 10: Kirtlington Morris dance ‘Bonny Green’ around Bella Timms, Lady of the Lamb 2016 (Kirtlington Morris, with permission of Bella Timms and family).

<sup>13</sup> Travelling Morrice, Copies of logbook entries for 1951, and 1956. I am grateful to John Jenner for providing this information.

## Appendix: Kirtlington Dances and their Sources

Tindall Wildridge said that the Kirtlington dance sets had fourteen forms. In 1912 he refers to older dancers who knew and could recognise the old Kirtlington dance steps, and was aware of the difference between these and the standard repertoire taught by the *Espérance* Guild.<sup>14</sup>

Percy Manning said that the Lamb Ale procession stopped to perform three dances, one hanky, one stick and one handclapping. Living dance informants in the first twenty years of the twentieth century include James Hawtin, Alfred Cato and several members of the Pearman family.<sup>15</sup>

As late as the 1950s the Travelling Morrice met Bob Rolfe, Bob Simmonds, and Mr Nicholson, all of whom had some information on Kirtlington dances. Their log in 1951 suggests that local people would recognise their own tradition.<sup>16</sup>

There are no surviving details of the dances that William Pearman and James Hawtin taught to Neal and Carey for the *Espérance* club. Sharp made notes on 'Trunkles', with a brief summary of 'Old Woman Tossed Up'. He describes characteristics of the tradition, steps and figures.<sup>17</sup>

George Butterworth was sceptical about information from Alfred Cato, as he gave the 'Shepherds Hey' tune for the dance 'Princess Royal'.<sup>18</sup>

Further reconstructions use the fact that Kirtlington and Bucknell shared dancers and musicians and may have had some common repertoire, and the report that the list of dances was similar to that from

<sup>14</sup> 'Kirtlington Lamb Ale: Report of a Lecture'.

<sup>15</sup> Manning, 'Some Oxfordshire Seasonal Festivals'; Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, A Chronological Gazetteer: Oxfordshire, Kirtlington*

<sup>16</sup> Travelling Morrice, Copies of logbook entries for 1951, and 1956

<sup>17</sup> Mary Neal, 'Miss Neal's Notes and Experiences [on Morris Dancing]'. London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Clive Carey Collection, CC/2/235

<<https://www.vwml.org/record/CC/2/325>> [accessed 13 November 2017]; Sharp, *Folk Tunes*, no. 4926, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/4926>> and no. 4931, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/4931>> [accessed 7 November 2017].

<sup>18</sup> George Butterworth, 'George Butterworth's Diary of Morris Dance Hunting', ed by Russell Wortley and Michael Dawney, *Folk Music Journal*, 3.3 (1977), 193-207 (pp. 195-96).

Bampton.<sup>19</sup> Table 1 lists named dances which have been suggested as performed by the Kirtlington side in the nineteenth century. It lists the provenance of dances with, where available, the names of sources, and of those recording them, a brief description and other dance information.

Table 1: Dances of the Kirtlington morris

Dance	Informant	Recorded by	Dance description	Notes
Trunkles	Danced by William Pearman	Cecil Sharp	Corner dance with notes on steps and figures	Reconstructed by George Felton, Lionel Bacon (Travelling Morrice) and Roy Dommett
Old Woman Tossed up	Possibly James Hawtin, or William Pearman	Cecil Sharp, Mary Neal	Sidestep and half hey	Reconstructed by Paul Davenport
Maid of the Mill		Percy Manning	Linked handkerchief dance	Not named by Manning, reconstructed by Paul Davenport
Bonny Green	Eli Rolfe of Bucknell	Cecil Sharp	Dance around Lady of the Lamb	Reconstructed by Paul Davenport
Glorishears	James Hawtin 1910	Mary Neal & Clive Carey	Handclapping dance (like Bampton)	Reconstructed by Paul Davenport using Bucknell tune Room for the Cuckolds
Glorishears	James Hawtin 1910	Neal and Carey, Manning	Stick Dance	Reconstructed by Paul Davenport
Cuckoo's Nest		Roy Dommett Morris notes 1978	Sidestep and half-hey column dance	From Green Oak Morris Men (Paul Davenport)
Glorishears		Roy Dommett Morris notes 1978	Leapfrog dance	Described by Dommett - similar to Field Town

<sup>19</sup> Paul Davenport, *Archaeology of a Tradition: The Revival of the Kirtlington Morris* (Morbrough: South Riding Network Publishing, 1998), p. 10.

Dance	Informant	Recorded by	Dance description	Notes
Lumps of Plum Pudding		Neal and Carey	Double sidestep in column then half hey	Reconstructed by Paul Davenport, drawing on Bucknell Willow Tree
Jockey to the Fair	J. Hawtin and William Pearman	Neal and Carey, George Butterworth, Cecil Sharp	Solo jig – may also have been a set dance	No dance description Tune notated by Sharp danced and played by William Pearman 1922
Princess Royal	Alfred Cato	George Butterworth	Handclapping jig possible set dance	No dance description
Shepherds Hey	Alfred Cato	George Butterworth	Handclapping	Tune given by Cato to Butterworth for Princess Royal
Saturday Night	Joseph Trafford of Headington	Noted by Carter for Percy Manning	Competition dance by all sides at Kirtlington with sticks and hankies	Tune variant of Saturday night. No dance description
Greensleeves	Mr Hawkes	Thomas Tindall Wildridge	No dance – old morris tune	Old Morris tune recognised by “old survivors 1912”
Bonnets So Blue	Robert Rolfe, Robert Simmonds	Travelling Morrice logbook 1951 (Rollo Woods)	Handclapping dance – jig/possible set dance	No dance description, different tune to Bucknell

## Further Sources not cited in text

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John Forrest, *A History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1999).

Cecil J Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, (George Butterworth), *The Morris Book*, 2nd ed., 5 parts (London: Novello, 1912-24).



Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *Annals of Early Morris* (Sheffield: The Morris Ring and Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, 1991).

Mike Heaney, "Morris dancer's costume", England: The Other Within, Pitt Rivers Museum, 2008

<<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/england/englishness-morris-dancers-costume.html>> accessed 8 November 2017.

Kirtlington Morris Archive (a private collection of documents, photographs, and objects started by Len Berry (circa 1978-1990), collated and copied into digital format by Michael Wright (circa 2008-2012), kept at Kirtlington Village Hall, Kirtlington, Oxfordshire)

Mary Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book, Part 2* (London: Curwen, 1910) <<http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/esperance-morris-1/esperance-morris-1.html>> [accessed 11 October 2017].

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# **Women in Morris**



Sally Wearing

# **What to Dance? What to Wear? The Repertoire and Costume of Morris Women in the 1970s**

## **Introduction**

Like the contribution in this volume by Val Parker on the Women's Morris Federation (WMF), this paper was triggered by writing the history of the first 25 years of the Morris Federation. Between us we are trying to cover all relevant issues, and this paper examines two important closely linked aspects of the women's morris teams that started in the 1970s. Female teams started to flourish then; this paper considers the challenges they had when choosing repertoire and costume.

## **What to dance?**

Finding enough dancers and musicians was only the first step for women in the early 1970s. The biggest challenge was finding dances; this was even more pressing than what to wear (although that was very close behind).

There were three main issues affecting what dances we women did: availability of notation, precedents and perceived suitability for women.

## **Availability of Notation**

In the early 1970s, it was difficult to find notation. There were Cecil Sharp's morris books,<sup>1</sup> but these were not readily available or easy to learn from. There was also *The Espérance Morris Book*,<sup>2</sup> but that provided little useful information. Bath City Morris Women found the dances in it rather disappointing, as most of the interesting parts had

<sup>1</sup> Cecil J Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, (George Butterworth), *The Morris Book*, 2nd ed., 5 parts (London: Novello, 1912-24).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book : A Manual of Morris Dances, Folk-Songs and Singing Games*, 2 parts (London: Curwen, 1910-12).

been removed and replaced by monotonous figures such as dancing on the spot.

In 1974, Lionel Bacon's *Handbook of Morris Dances* (the black book) was published by the Morris Ring.<sup>3</sup> It included both Cotswold and border dances, and should have been a valuable resource. But it was not clear to women dancing at the time whether we were able to buy it. There were certainly plenty of rumours that it would not be sold to women. Val Parker managed to get a copy by asking one of Bath City morris men to buy a copy for her. But we have never found any instances of any woman actually asking to buy one and being refused.

Although many morris men were opposed to women dancing, there were some who were willing to teach women. This was the commonest way that women learnt the morris in the early 1970s. At least 12 of the 22 teams who joined the WMF when it started were initially taught by local morris men.<sup>4</sup> They taught what they knew, which was mostly the 'traditional' Cotswold repertoire of the Morris Ring teams they danced with.

Some of the men prominent in the morris world were also willing to help. The most notable was Roy Dommett, who was initially Bath City Morris Women's main source of dances. As well as providing notations to Betty Reynolds, he taught workshops organized by the team, including one in 1973, where he taught dances from Wheatley and Ilmington, plus some garland dances, to women from Bath, Cardiff, Cheltenham and Oxford. This gave them a small stock of dances to work on, as well as a boost in confidence and morale.

Workshops at folk festivals were another potential source of dance notation, but this was not always an easy answer for women in the early 1970s. For instance, at Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1971, Griff Jones, the leader of the beginners' morris workshop, barred women even from watching. Roy was more welcoming and taught a couple of dances that year at an unofficial workshop for women. The following year, he suggested and ran two 'Ladies Ritual Dance Workshops',

<sup>3</sup> Lionel Bacon, *A Handbook of Morris Dances*. (Henlow: The Morris Ring, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> 'Side History Records', Morris Federation archive.

then 'Women's Ritual' workshops were programmed in 1974, 1975 and 1976, but the need for separate workshops then disappeared as the men teaching the starters' and advanced morris workshops at Sidmouth were ready to welcome women to them.<sup>5</sup>

## Precedent

Almost everything written about repertoire in the early days of WMF included something about whether the dances had been performed in the past by women. Precedent was very important to many of the women who started dancing in the early 1970s. We felt that historical precedents would add weight to our right to dance the morris.

There was also a general assumption that women's morris may have been a different entity to men's morris; many women assumed that women who had danced the morris in the past had had different dances from the men. This was supported by the name of the organization started in 1975: the Women's Morris Federation. Many of the women were keen to learn 'women's morris', but could not find any evidence that this had ever existed.

In 1972, Bath City found out about Sam Bennett's girls' team which he formed in Ilmington in 1912. He'd failed to get enough men interested in establishing a team so he taught women instead. Women's teams fell on this information with glee – we were delighted to have a Cotswold morris tradition that women had performed in public in the past. 'Maid of the Mill' and other Ilmington dances became popular 'women's' dances. In 1995, Windsor Morris recorded that they danced Ilmington because it was 'deemed politically correct at the time for a women's side'.<sup>6</sup>

Many teams started by dancing North-west morris, because they were aware that women and girls had danced there in the past. North-west dances were considered to be more acceptable for women than Cotswold morris, at least by the men who danced Cotswold.

<sup>5</sup> Derek Schofield, *The First Week in August: Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival* (Matlock: Sidmouth International Festival, 2004), pp. 71, 81, 88, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Beth Neill, *Windsor Morris: The History So Far...*, (Windsor: Windsor Morris, 1995), p.2.

But precedent wasn't enough by itself. For instance, William Kimber had taught Headington to Mary Neal's *Espérance Club*, but there was an existing team in Headington so many women felt that they should avoid dancing their dances.

## Suitability for women

Perceived suitability was the third major factor that affected the repertoire of the first women's teams.

WMF had an 'official' view on this issue, which was discussed at the inaugural general meeting in 1975. The minutes record that 'It was agreed that sides should be able to dance as they wish, but also that they should avoid dancing those traditions accepted to be traditionally for men and which have never been danced by women, e.g. Bampton, Abingdon etc.'<sup>7</sup>

In February 1976, a WMF meeting at an instructional in Cardiff decided which dances were most suitable for a new side: Ilmington, Wheatley, Knutsford, Lancaster and Basque Garland, Pershore stick dance and 'Mona's Delight', because they were 'fairly straight forward in themselves and give a reasonable selection of the type of dances done by women'.<sup>8</sup> Garland dances were not generally danced by men and were seen as being quite feminine, so they were therefore suitable (even those that were not English!). 'Mona's Delight', from the Isle of Man, was not a morris dance, but it was traditionally danced by women.

This list of 'suitable' dances illustrates how the majority of women's teams in the 1970s danced a variety of morris styles, i.e. Cotswold, North-west, garland and border.

Some traditions, such as Longborough, were thought to be unsuitable as they were too strenuous. And at least one specific step was avoided by women in the 1970s: galleys. WMF's newsletter in March 1977 included an invitation to an instructional organized by Windsor Morris, which was going to focus on presentation and stepping. It

<sup>7</sup> Women's Morris Federation (WMF), 'Minutes of The Annual General Meeting, Sunday, October 12th 1975', p. 2, Morris Federation archive.

<sup>8</sup> WMF, 'Minutes of Meeting 29th Feb 76', p. 3, Morris Federation archive.



was based on Fieldtown, but only the sidestep and stick dances 'as these don't include the galley'.<sup>9</sup>

One of the other influences on what was 'suitable' for women was kit. The first women's teams in the 1970s often did not consider the practicalities of morris dancing and were far more influenced by current fashions. Many teams either avoided dances that did not work with their kit or altered the dances to make them possible.

## **What did Women Dance in the Mid 1970s?**

Wherever possible, we are basing the history of the Morris Federation on its archives. Soon after WMF started, it gathered information (including repertoire) about its members by asking them to complete Side History Records. We have records from 18 of the 22 teams who joined WMF during its first year, 1975.<sup>10</sup> These show that what they danced initially was dictated by the availability of teachers, notation and instructionals. Then some teams changed their repertoires to dances considered more suitable for women, especially those that had been danced by women in the past.

The most popular tradition danced by women in the 1970s was clearly Ilmington, performed by 17 of the 18 teams, demonstrating just how important precedent was. The next most popular Cotswold tradition was Wheatley (10). Eleven sides danced North-west and seven garland, often in addition to several Cotswold traditions.

Two-thirds of the 18 teams were first taught by local morris men. Of these, five initially learned traditions that WMF said women shouldn't do, such as Bampton and Headington. Four of them soon stopped and changed to dances then considered suitable for women such as Ilmington, Wheatley, North-west and garland. Only Teign Ladies continued: when they added Ilmington in 1978 they kept their existing repertoire of Bampton, Adderbury, Headington and Fieldtown.

<sup>9</sup> Windsor Morris, 'WMF Instructional at Windsor – May '77', enclosure accompanying *WMF Newsletter* (March 1977), Morris Federation archive,

<sup>10</sup> 'Side History Records.'

## Quick Progress

The workshops and instructionals organized by the first women's teams and WMF concentrated on learning new dances, which increased the notations available.

The initial scarcity of notation also led WMF to be proactive in recording and publishing notation. By 1979, the Federation's Notation Group started. One of its aims was to provide dance notation for sides with no access to an instructor.

So although the first women's teams struggled for notation, the problem was short-lived. Notation, workshops and instructors all soon became available. Precedent and suitability also became less important, and by 1977, WMF had stopped advising its members about what they should or shouldn't dance.

## What to Wear?

The next big question was kit. What to wear was often a subject of great debate in the early days of the WMF. In the 1970s, there were no obvious models available that the teams could copy.



Figure 1: Espérance Girls' Club (from Mary Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book*, 2nd ed. (London: Curwen, 1910), p. xiv).

The only historical model available was the Espérance Girls' Club (Figure 1). When responding to an enquiry from a student in 1976, Val Parker said 'The past, apart from Mary Neal, tells us nothing, so most sides have adopted a kit which "fits" the image, or what they like and what "suits" the style of dancing'.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, the photographs in WMF's Side History Records and scrap-books<sup>12</sup> show that many sides chose an old-fashioned look, which they felt 'fitted' their image of the morris. These frequently included long skirts, influenced by the fashions of the time (especially early Laura Ashley). Other old-fashioned touches included mobcaps or bonnets and aprons, frequently together in the same kit.

Teams who opted for patterned fabrics were frequently caught out, being unable to kit out new members as fashions changed and fabrics became unavailable. Some changed their old-fashioned costumes quite quickly, having found them to be impractical, especially for Cotswold morris, as long skirts made all leg movements invisible and some difficult. But what we looked like and what was acceptable for women in the 1970s mostly took precedence over what fitted the dances. And shorter skirts could cause problems; a few male dancers would lie down on the floor in order to get a 'good' view.

Women's sides that were closely associated with a men's team (i.e., joint teams) often tried to find kit that matched what the men wore. For instance, Bath City Women's first kit in 1972 was intended to echo their male counterparts, with white blouses and black short skirts to match the men's white shirts and black breeches. But this didn't last long, as we moved onto long skirts with *broderie anglaise* aprons in 1973, which were devised after Val Parker found pictures of the Espérance Girls in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (Figure 2).

<sup>11</sup> Valerie Parker, Letter in response to enquiry from a student, 28 July 1976,, Morris Federation archive.

<sup>12</sup> WMF, 'Events Scrapbook 1976–1981' and 'General Scrapbook 1', Morris Federation archive.



Figure 2: Bath City Morris at Bampton, 1973 (Copyright Val Parker).

In the 1970s, women usually wore skirts, especially when 'dressed up'. Only about ten women's teams who began in the 1970s chose from the start to wear trousers or breeches. The first was probably Royal Borough, who wore yellow trousers from 1974 to 1976, but then chose to change to long blue pinafore dresses. The others were Updown Hill in 1976, then Hamwih, Jackstraws, Norfolk Biffin and Oyster Morris in 1977, followed by Belas Knapp, Immingham School, Knighton and Ring O'Belles in 1978. Bucknell also started in trousers in 1978, but they based their kit on a photograph of the Bucknell team in 1870s, who were, of course, all men. Some of the sides who wore trousers hedged their bets by wearing smocks, both for their traditional appearance and because they hid their figures.

A few sides that started in skirts realized quite quickly how poorly they suited Cotswold morris, and changed to trousers. Windsor (1975) and Phoenix (1976) both started in knee-length skirts but soon changed to trousers: Windsor in 1978 followed by Phoenix in 1979. Holdens Goldens had the fastest change, from long skirts in 1976 to short skirts in 1977 and finally to trousers in 1978 (Figures 3-5).



Figure 3 (left): Holdens Goldens in 1976; Figure 4 (centre): Holdens Goldens in 1977; Figure 5 (right) Holdens Goldens in 1978.

But they were in the minority. In the 1970s women were only just starting to escape the pressure to be 'ladylike' and attractive in a docile way, and some were reluctant to reveal their shape. Sides were often aware that wearing trousers or breeches risked condemnation and accusations of 'trying to be like men'. So most sides wore skirts, whatever type of morris they danced. A couple of sides, Queen of Herts (1977) and Glorishears of Brummagem (1978), chose culottes as a compromise.

WMF tried to make it clear that it was not there to decide what its members should wear, unlike its approach to repertoire. Val Parker, Secretary, said in the Newsletter in 1980 that WMF had always avoided setting itself up as a judge of others, including whether its members 'must or must not dance in trousers'.<sup>13</sup>

Footwear was important, since it affected the style of dancing. Men's Cotswold sides wore everyday leather shoes in the 1970s but there

<sup>13</sup> Valerie Parker, letter to Women's Morris Federation members, January 1980, p. 2. Morris Federation archive.



was no female equivalent. Sides in skirts often wore shoes with heels, but even the smallest heel restricted their calf muscles and made it impossible to avoid putting weight on the heel – inappropriate for springy Cotswold stepping. Some teams tried plimsolls, but they did not provide enough support for strenuous dancing. When trainers designed for vigorous sports became available at the end of the 1970s, Cotswold morris sides who wanted to improve their dancing adopted them enthusiastically. Better footwear led to the evolution of ‘white shoe’ morris teams, who danced higher and slower. Although most of these were male, the notable female example was Windsor Morris.

Most North-west sides opted to wear clogs from the start, seeing them as ‘traditional’ footwear, often not aware that many teams in the Northwest had worn shoes.

Women in skirts or culottes usually wore their bells on their footwear or around their ankles; some teams chose to wear bells around their wrists instead or as well; and some to have none at all. The women who opted for trousers or breeches usually wore their bells around their shins, as did some women in shorter skirts.

Most of the early teams wore something on their heads. Many chose straw hats, while others wore bonnets, scarfs or decorated Alice bands. A few were more unconventional, such as Cardiff Ladies who wore bowler hats.

There were only a few mixed teams in the 1970s, but they had their own challenges. Some mixed Cotswold sides chose to put their men in trousers or breeches and their women in skirts, risking giving more of the impression of a social or country dance side. But there were sides who decided to all wear trousers or breeches, such as Fenstanton in 1978, one of the first mixed teams to join WMF when it started to open up. The few mixed North-west teams chose skirts for women and trousers or breeches for men.

A few teams managed to find kits that have stood the test of time. When they started in 1977, Betty Lupton’s Ladle Laikers chose blue dresses with white pinafores and red tights. In 2017, this kit is still going strong.

Over time, the controversy about what female morris dancers wore decreased. Although the Morris Federation's members still display a wide variety of kit, most sides have settled into something in keeping with the public's image of morris dancers, with a few still reminiscent of the early days of WMF.





Val Parker

## **The Women's Morris Federation – from Start to Finish**

### **Introduction**

Most readers will no doubt know that the Morris Federation is one of three support organizations for UK morris sides, and was founded in the 1970s as the Women's Morris Federation.

I was in the thick of it during the formation and development of the Federation and, because of that, I have been engaged more recently, together with Sally Wearing, Sue Swift and Shirley Dixon, in writing its history. When the Histories of Morris conference was announced, it seemed an obvious thing for us to take the opportunity to offer some of what we have been writing. What follows is therefore an insider's view of WMF's formative years.

### **The Influence of Tubby and Betty Reynolds at the University of Bath**

Any history of the Women's Morris Federation must begin with the University of Bath, as that was where it all began. Although I vaguely knew there was a thing called morris dancing, it wasn't until I arrived at the University as an undergraduate in 1971 that I truly and literally discovered it. On my first Saturday in Bath, I stopped to watch Chipping Camden Morris, who happened to be dancing in Kingston Parade, next to the Abbey. I did not know at that point that they were there at the invitation of the Bath University Folk Dance Society, which was led by Tubby and Betty Reynolds (Figures 1 and 2). I had no idea about morris history, its politics or its controversies, or that I was seeing something which, at least since the First World War, had been strongly promoted as a male-only pursuit, with the consequent stifling of any active involvement by women. I just thought it was magical!



Figure 1 (left): Tubby Reynolds on the Apley Morris tour, Bath 1973; Figure 2 (right): Betty Reynolds, Letterkenny International Folk Festival, 1973 (Photos: Val Parker).

A month or two later, I began to go regularly to the University's Folk Dance Society myself. I found that, although it was a mixed club, only the men were organized into a 'proper' morris side and routinely taught morris dances, by Tubby, each week. The timing was all, as it was at the Sidmouth Folk Festival in the summer of that very year (1971) that Roy Dommett (Figure 3) had run an impromptu 'ritual dance' workshop for women, after some had protested at being barred from the official morris workshops. Betty Reynolds had been at that impromptu workshop, and she returned to the Folk Dance So-

ciety the following October armed with two dances that she then taught to the women. These were Whiteladies Aston and Runcorn, both, the women were told, known to have been performed by female dancers in the past. The dances were subsequently performed at the monthly University ceilidhs during that 1971 autumn term.



Figure 3: Roy Dommett, Black Horse, Crookham, 22 May 1976 (Photo: Stephen Earwicker).

If I remember rightly, I joined the Society in November, learned the two dances and joined in the next ceilidh performance. We were

wearing just the ordinary clothes we would normally wear to a ceilidh, and I found the whole experience quite embarrassing. To cut a long story short, I refused to join in with any more such performances unless and until we organized ourselves properly, complete with kit and a decent repertoire. As it happened, the others had already considered the idea of having a kit before I joined them, so they didn't take much persuasion. The result was that Bath City Women's Morris was formed fairly quickly after that, first dancing in kit as a side at a University event in June 1972.

## **The Circle Widens**

At that time the Bath City Morris Men were in fairly regular contact with other men's sides, mainly from that part of the country, such as Cardiff Morris, Bristol Morris and Gloucester Old Spot, but also from further afield, such as Hammersmith. When those teams were invited to events run by Bath City, they were usually accompanied by their wives and girlfriends.

One such occasion was in 1973, at a festival run by Tubby and Betty at the University each February. When the female visitors showed a keen interest in what the Bath City Morris Women were doing, another impromptu workshop for women was slotted into the festival programme. This one was led by Tubby and Betty's son, Jim Reynolds, then dancing with Hammersmith. He introduced the women to the Wheatley tradition – I assume because no men were dancing it at the time.

Unfortunately, in the quest to increase our repertoire, there was a perceived problem, in that there was a lack of what might then have been considered 'suitable' dance material for these newly emerging female sides. There was an idea that there might be 'women's dances' we could do or, like Wheatley, some traditions the men weren't doing, and which we could take up, without treading on too many toes, so to speak.

Recognising this, Betty called once more upon Roy Dommett, who agreed to run an instructional just for the women. This happened in March 1973, again at the University, and about forty women came, hailing from Bath, Cardiff, Cheltenham and Oxford (University). Roy

taught more dances from Wheatley, some from Ilmington, as well as garland dances and a variety of others.



Figure 4: Bath City Morris Women, Bath Abbey courtyard 1973 (Photo: Val Parker).

By this time, the Bath City Women were dancing out (Figure 4) with their male counterparts, touring with many other male sides, such as Apley, Cardiff, Hammersmith, Bristol, Colne Royal and even Arnold Woodley's Bampton team.

So enthusiasm and acceptance were definitely growing, and a further women's instructional was organized by the Cheltenham women, who had by then formed the side England's Glory. The instructional was run as part of what was billed as 'A Day of Traditional Festivity' to take place the following November at the Cheltenham Art College (Figure 5). This turned out to be a landmark occasion. During a break between sessions, the women found themselves discussing the fact that they had no formal way of what we would now call networking. They couldn't join the exclusively male Morris Ring, which was the only UK organization for morris dancers at the time, so they decided there ought to be some kind of association for female morris sides, to provide mutual support and to facilitate the exchange of information. The idea had been aired before, but it was not until the fledgling teams were all together at Cheltenham that it was seriously considered and subsequently taken forward, with Betty Reynolds and the



Bath City Women initially taking on the setting up of the new association.

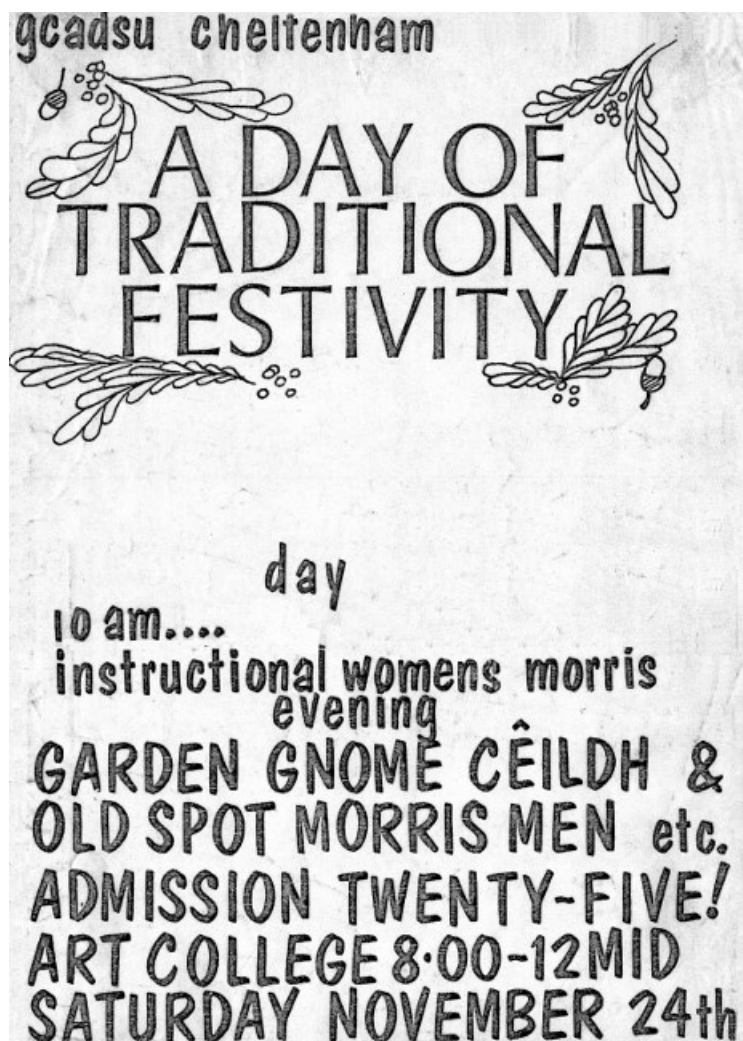


Figure 5: Poster for Cheltenham Day of Traditional Festivity, 1973.

## WMF is Born

The first thing of note was in the Spring 1974 edition of *Bristol Folk News*, which contained a report of that Cheltenham Day, headed 'The

Cheltenham Ladies Morris Instructional – a male view'.<sup>1</sup> It was uncredited, but it contained quotes from Tubby Reynolds, who had done some of the teaching. Roy Dommett had been due to teach but had been called away on business at the last minute, so hadn't been able to be there. The article also had a final paragraph headed 'The Women's Morris Federation "WoMF"', saying that more information about the organization was available from Betty Reynolds.

Next, a small box advertisement was placed in the Summer 1974 edition of the EFDSS magazine, *English Dance & Song* (Figure 6). The advertisement announced that the 'Women's Morris Federation of Teams, whose dances derive from traditional sources, will try to help existing or potential groups in obtaining suitable dances and instruction'.

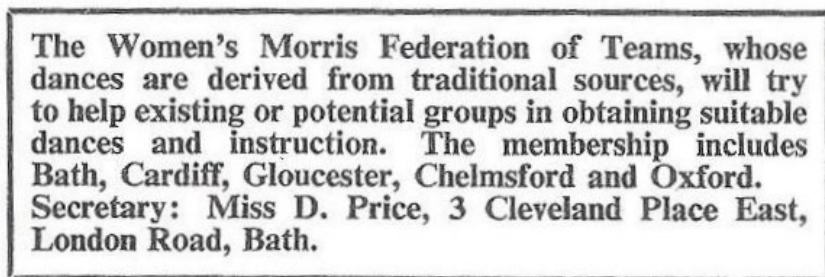


Figure 6: WMF box advertisement, *English Dance & Song*, 36.2 (1974), 56.

Responses to this advert exceeded all expectation. They came from newly formed and potential women's teams based all around the country. Contacts were made, although progress towards a formal association remained slow, mainly because Bath City was a university side, with vacations and industrial placements tending to get in the way. However, letters were eventually sent to all the female sides we knew about, inviting them to come to the Inaugural Meeting of the Women's Morris Federation in October 1975, at the University. As most of the original Bath City Morris Women had by then graduated, the weekend was organized by Somerset Maids, a new Bath-based side started by Barbara Butler, who had been one of the Bath City dancers.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Cheltenham Ladies Morris Instructional – a Male View', *Bristol Folk News*, 14 (1974), 6.

The weekend was attended by thirteen sides. As well as Bath City, England's Glory and Somerset Maids, there were Cardiff Ladies, Bourne Bumpers, Earley Ladies, Holdens Goldens, Jacquard, Magog, Maids of Barum, New Esperance, Oxford (University) and Windsor.

It was during the dancing tour on the Saturday afternoon, that Roy Dommett was overheard to say to another male observer: 'I don't know what you think about all this, but I know one thing – you'll never stop it!'

## The Opposition

Well, of course, there were people who wanted to stop it. When we morris women started dancing in the early 1970s, there was considerable opposition, the majority, not surprisingly, from male morris dancers, although by no means all. The objections were, broadly, of the following types:

1. Firstly, those founded on assumptions concerning the roots of the dance, such as those expressed in a 1978 Morris Ring pamphlet, which asserted that 'all varieties of "morris" ritual are by tradition wholly masculine.'<sup>2</sup> A letter published in *Folk News* in 1978 started off in a similar vein by saying, 'Cotswold Morris is a men's fertility ritual'.<sup>3</sup> This writer added a statement that was outrageous even in the 70s, 'The woman's place in it is horizontal, after the dancing has been done'.
2. Secondly, there were those based on how women looked. Some examples of this were quoted in newspaper articles: 'The steps are not elegant. There's no reason why women should not dance morris in private, but they should leave public dancing to the men.'<sup>4</sup> 'Women just don't look right doing the Lancashire Morris dance [...] It's just essentially a

<sup>2</sup> Russell Wortley, *The XYZ of Morris* (London: The Morris Ring, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Harrington, 'On Your Backs!', *Folk News* 19 (1978), 5.

<sup>4</sup> 'Morris Men follow in Cecil's footsteps', *St Albans & Hatfield Review & Express*, 11 August 1977, p. 2



masculine dance'.<sup>5</sup> 'Women doing the morris at best look vaguely foolish, at worst grotesque.'<sup>6</sup>

3. Thirdly, there were those that came from male dancers who clearly saw female dancers as a threat which could undermine their own positions, especially with regard to their masculinity. One such appeared in a *Daily Mirror* article, although I accept that this may have been a journalistic paraphrase:<sup>7</sup>

*The Morris movement has spent forty years trying to convince people they are not a load of raving poofers. We're just getting accepted as normal, healthy blokes, when a load of women come on making Morris dancing look a bit sappy.*

4. And finally, there was the accusation that the women had a hidden agenda, and were just belligerent women's libbers trying to prove a point. For example, from a report on a 1978 Morris Ring discussion: 'What is the motive behind "Women's Morris"; are the girls really trying to maintain tradition or are they trying to show that they are just as good as the men?'<sup>8</sup> Or, from the 1978 letter to *Folk News* already quoted: '...the use by the women of the word "Morris" to describe their dancing is needlessly provocative. Moreover, the sight of women dressed up as men and copying the more vigorous male traditions, just to prove that they are as good as the boys is stupidly so.'<sup>9</sup>

Of course, these sentiments were not shared by all morris men, and there was, in truth, a lot of co-operation. There were many men who gave WMF and its members much needed support. Not just the well-known people already mentioned, like Roy Dommett, Tubby Reynolds and Arnold Woodley, but also many others who taught women's teams, or who joined them as musicians.

<sup>5</sup> 'Morris Men Only: Cloggies Refuse to Let Girls Step out in Bells, Flowers and Velvet Breeches', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 29 August 1977, p. 6

<sup>6</sup> 'Morris Dancing is for Men Only', *Beckenham Journal*, 12 February 1981, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> 'Dolly Dancers Tame the Cloggies', *Daily Mirror*, 13 June 1977, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> John Wilson, 'Women's Morris!!!: An Informal Discussion', *Rocking Chair* 7 (1978), 21-23 (p. 22).

<sup>9</sup> Harrington, 'On Your Backs!'

## How WMF Organized Itself

Although the reasons for forming an organization for female morris dancers were relatively clear, little thought had been given as to how it would actually run. Therefore, discussion on an organizational structure was inevitably the main topic of that first General Meeting in October 1975. The meeting agreed a constitution which specified an executive made up of 'a President, a Secretary and a body of Representatives', and just one category of membership, that being for 'practising women's sides only'.<sup>10</sup> Individual membership was rejected as too complicated and expensive, although it was brought in the following year. The constitution also stated the aim of the society to be 'to maintain interest in women's morris and to provide a channel of communication between sides'. In retrospect, this was very simplistic, and perhaps naïve, but it was a start.

Unsurprisingly, the meeting went on to vote in Betty Reynolds as WMF's first President. Helen Parsons, of Cardiff Ladies, was returned as Secretary (Figure 7).

## WMF Services and Activities

As the first *formal* WMF Secretary, Helen hit the ground running, issuing the first of her regular Newsletters within a few weeks. In the very first issue, she asked sides to send in photos and press cuttings for a Federation scrapbook. She encouraged teams to run events, especially instructionals, which would be advertised through future newsletters. She requested information from sides about their dances, their kit and details of when and where they practised, which she went on to incorporate into address lists circulated later. She also asked for the notation of their dances, so she could begin to build up a notation library.

<sup>10</sup> 'Constitution of the Women's Morris Federation', 12 October 1975, Morris Federation archive.



Figure 7: Helen Parsons, WMF AGM Weekend, Cardiff 1977 (Photo: Val Parker).

Helen's later newsletters offered advice on practical topics such as organizing dance tours and instructionals, and how to collect money legally from the public. They contained articles on relevant topics, like the history of women in morris and detailed reports of instruc-

tionals, as well as letters airing members' views on the issues of the day, especially those concerning public image and standards.

All this effectively defined the role and purpose of the Federation from that time on, although things inevitably grew and evolved.

## **Executive Structure**

In fact, it was only about eighteen months into the life of WMF that it became clear its first constitutional arrangements were no longer adequate. Gill Smith, ex-Bath City and now of Strand on the Green Morris, wrote a letter to the newsletter suggesting that WMF needed to widen its aims and put more emphasis on events where sides could meet and dance together, in order to motivate them to improve their dancing.<sup>11</sup> Also, the Federation was starting to grow, from 22 member sides in its first year to 32 in its second. With every sign that this rise was going to continue, there was going to be an inevitable increase in workload, for the Secretary in particular, and the Federation needed to be ready.

As a consequence, a new, enlarged committee structure was agreed at the 1977 AGM. The job of Secretary was split into three, with the establishment of a Meetings (Events) Secretary, Bev Lane (ex-Cardiff Ladies), and a Technical Officer, Sarah Jarrett (ex-Bath City).

The two new office holdings were highly significant. Having a dedicated Meetings Secretary enabled WMF to begin a programme of instructionals and workshops which built up over time to address many issues, including providing dance material, giving tips on good presentation and helping teams to improve their performance. Having a dedicated Technical Officer led to, not only the formation of a useful library and archive that members could access, and the collection of data from those sides, but also the setting up of the Notation and Research Groups.

<sup>11</sup> Gill Smith [Letter ], *WMF Newsletter*, (September 1977)..

## WMF Opens Up

At that same 1977 AGM, Holdens Goldens surprised everyone by proposing that the word 'women's' be removed from the constitution. The word appeared in the membership eligibility section, in the stated aim of the organization and in the constitution's title, so the proposal would have had the effect of opening the Federation up to all dancers, regardless of gender, and, arguably, changing its name to the Morris Federation, at a stroke. However, as it hadn't been on the agenda, it was put to the wider membership through a subsequent postal referendum, and was defeated.

The experience of the 1977 AGM showed up several weaknesses in the original constitution. I was voted in as Secretary at that meeting, and so spent much of my first year overhauling it quite radically: introducing a set of standing orders to help meetings run more smoothly and devising a fairer, more sophisticated voting system.

Then, a couple of years after that, in 1980, a new organization came into being, which threw up a fresh challenge. This was Open Morris which was, as its name indicates, open to all morris teams, regardless of gender, although the majority of its early members were actually teams that danced in mixed sets. Such teams had no organization to go to, as the constitutions of neither the Morris Ring nor the Federation covered that option. Nor did they cover the situation where two single-sex teams operated as a joint club, attending bookings and events together.

And so, at the 1980 AGM, Windsor Morris put forward three new proposals addressing the membership and the name of the Federation.

After a long and very lively discussion, the first proposal, that WMF should admit mixed and joint sides, was passed, albeit by a very small margin. The second motion, to allow in men's sides, was put straight to the vote and narrowly defeated, also by a very small margin. It's worth stating here that a two-thirds majority was required for a constitutional change, and more people had, in fact, voted for the proposal than had voted against. The third motion, for the organization to be renamed the Morris Federation, was also defeated.

Another year passed, and the two failed proposals were put forward again and were, again, defeated.

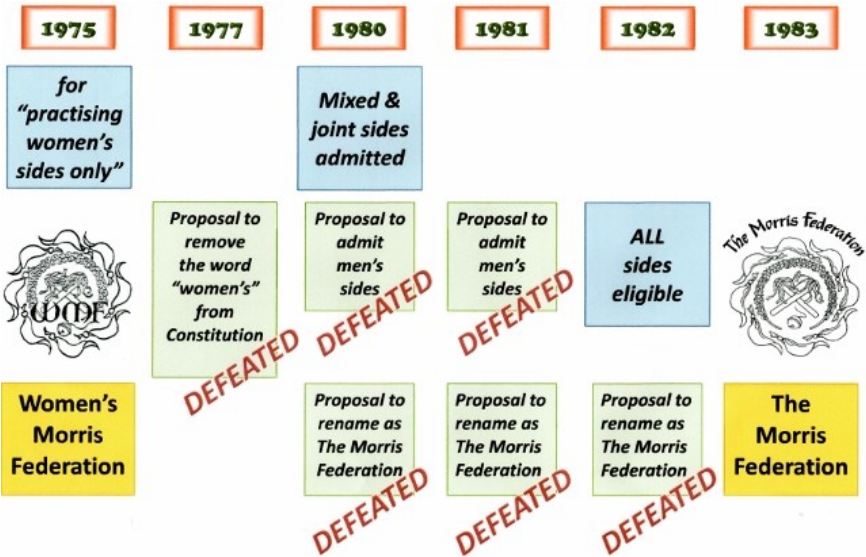


Figure 8: Constitutional changes, from Women's Morris Federation to Morris Federation.

All these repeated discussions at AGMs about membership and the organization's name were becoming tiresome (Figure 8). Time was always short and debates always left unfinished and unresolved. So the Federation, at Somerset Maids' suggestion, held a separate conference in May 1982 to consolidate all the arguments and thrash them out thoroughly over the course of a day. Only 11 sides were there, but they came to a consensus and put forward fresh proposals to the 1982 AGM. This time, the proposal to admit men's sides was passed with over 80% in favour. However, the proposal to change the name was still rejected, and it wasn't until a further year, and after a second conference, that it was finally passed, this time with no discussion and hardly a ripple. The Morris Federation had finally come into being.

### The Morris Federation

Thus, 1983 marked the end of an era. Although the first eight years of constitutional arguments and changes were at times frustrating and apparently never ending, the result was a solid framework which has since stood the test of time. The Morris Federation was



able to move on and to concentrate, ever since, on doing the job it was originally set up to do.

As Betty Reynolds put it (without actually mentioning gender at all!):<sup>12</sup>

*We started the Federation to give out information on material to be had and from where, to give friendship and help, and to have get-togethers to discuss problems and DANCE.*

<sup>12</sup> Beth Neill, Introduction to *Twenty One Years* ([Chalfont St Giles]: Morris Federation, 1996), p. 1.





Lucy Wright

## **This Girl Can Morris Dance: Girls' Carnival Morris Dancing and the Politics of Participa- tion**

I come to know them first while pouring over photographs in morris dancing archives: crinkle-cornered black-and-white film blushing into Kodachrome as I flick forwards through the contents of scrapbooks, travelling in time. Some snapshots reveal a performance in action: teams of girls in matching uniforms carrying crepe paper pom-poms, marching high-kneed in street parades and dancing in formation on crowded carnival grounds. Other photographs are more formally posed: troupes cluster around a glut of trophies or a hand-painted shield, wearing waistcoats heavy with medals and grinning proudly for the camera. Later on, I attend weekly competitions hosted in out-of-town sports halls and suburban community centres, and am almost overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of dancers, the wide mix of ages, the precision and vitality of this female-led tradition, conducted largely under the radar of the English folk movement in which I came of age. As time goes on I take new photographs of my own, attend troupe practices and events, and even occasionally join in. I have spent more than three years researching and making work about girls' morris dancing and I have barely scratched the surface.

Girls' morris dancing—sometimes called 'carnival' or 'fluffy' morris—is a highly competitive team formation dance, performed in the North-west of England and parts of North Wales. Its predominant participants are primary- and secondary-school-aged girls and young women, organized into 'lines' by age and ability, as part of troupes that compete weekly as members of dedicated local and cross-county organizations. Distinguished by short, embellished dresses with wide bell sleeves, white lace socks, pom-poms ('shakers'), and precise, synchronous footwork to recorded pop music, the performance might appear at first glance to be incongruous in relation to, if not wholly unconnected with, the morris performances of the English folk revival.

However, look again and you begin to see the similarities. For those of you who haven't seen it before—or perhaps not recently—there is a short excerpt of a video I took at the 2016 End of Season championships, for the English Town and Country Carnival Organisation, held at Pontin's in Southport (Figure 1). The dancers are members of Orcadia Morris Dancers from Skelmersdale in West Lancashire, who were named Troupe of the Year in 2017.



Figure 1: From a video recording of Orcadia Juniors' performing at ETACCO championships, Southport, 2016 (photograph by Lucy Wright, reproduced with permission of Orcadia Morris Dancers).

Girls' morris dancing holds a curious status in the canon of English morris-dancing history. On the one hand, it operates at a fundamental remove from the conventional spaces and narratives of the English folk revivals. More closely linked to the popular 'town carnival movement' of the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries, today girls' morris is performed almost exclusively indoors following a community-wide shift away from the street parade and the carnival field in the 1990s. It has, as Mike Heaney states, 'almost no literature' and its performers rarely self-identify, nor are straightforwardly

identified as ‘folk’ dancers.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, most performers don’t relate to the qualifier ‘carnival’ morris: instead, it is simply morris dancing, often the only form of morris dancing that many people in the girls’ morris heartlands of Wigan, Oldham and Prestatyn are really familiar with. I remember a group of secondary-school-aged dancers from a troupe near Liverpool dissolving into giggles at my ‘ridiculous’ suggestion that men engaged in morris dancing at all. ‘Do they wear lace socks like ours?’ they snorted, imitating men clumsily lifting their knees and pointing their feet. However, the lack of awareness perhaps runs in both directions, potentially reflecting something of the continued hermeneutic disconnect between scholarly and popular interpretations of ‘folk’. Girls’ morris is acknowledged by most contemporary scholars as coherent with any ‘defensible definition’ of folk dancing, and was described by Roy Dommett as ‘heir to the richest of the English dance traditions’<sup>2</sup> — why then has girls’ morris dancing become, to borrow Ruth Finnegan’s phrase, such a ‘hidden’ dance?<sup>3</sup>

There are, perhaps, three broad areas for interrogation. Firstly, and in relation to the history of the morris-dancing revival there is the question of whether girls’ carnival morris can or should be considered as part of the English morris tradition—or even as a ‘folk’ dance at all. This is not just about dealing with hierarchies of authenticity still at play within some areas of folkloric discourse, but also about considering whether or not the girls’ morris dancing community would welcome enfranchisement of this nature, because it is perhaps possible to suggest that girls’ morris dancing has evolved the way that it has precisely *because* it has avoided too much outside attention. Secondly, the participation of women and girls in morris dancing needs to be examined with reference to the changing role of women in social and public life—including changing attitudes toward women’s physical activity more broadly. We know now, as

<sup>1</sup> Mike Heaney, *An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing*, 3rd ed., Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Leaflet No. 19, (London: EFDSS, 2006), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Dommett, ‘Carnival Morris’, *Roy Dommett’s Morris Notes*, edited by Anthony G. Barrand, 2nd ed., 5 vols (n.pl.: CDSS, 1986), II, 3-7 (p.5).

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).

Georgina Boyes notes, that ‘as individuals and as a constituent part of the Revival, women are at best marginalized, at worst trivialized or ignored’<sup>4</sup> so it is perhaps unsurprising that a distinctly female dancing tradition might find itself overlooked and disregarded. Thirdly and finally, we might note the omission of carnival morris dancing from recent surveys of cultural participation, such as *Taking Part* from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport,<sup>5</sup> which suggests that even now, activities which take place quietly and under the radar of institutional frameworks may simply go unnoticed. This short paper can’t possibly hope to cover all the factors contributing to the insularity of girls’ morris, nor its development outside of a ‘folk dance’ narrative, however I do want to reflect on some of the ways in which its predominantly young, female participants have historically found themselves on the wrong end of public opinion, potentially contributing to their reduced status in morris-dancing history.



Figure 2: Greenfield Morris Dancers, date unknown (reproduced with permission from the Morris Ring Archive).

<sup>4</sup> Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Normanton: No Masters Cooperative, 1993), p. xii.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, ‘Guidance: Taking Part Survey’ (2016) <<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>> [accessed 28 November 2017].

## Girls' Morris History: What Do We Know?

The short answer is not an enormous amount. Further archival and oral testimonial research is required to develop a fully comprehensive history of the girls' morris community and to determine the boundaries, landmarks and protagonists of the town carnival movement. The overwhelming majority of knowledge about carnival morris dancing still remains in domestic collections and community memory, and my research is still under way to unpick the performance's entangled relationships with other North-west morris traditions. This is perhaps hampered by the fact that as an ethnomusicologist my focus has primarily tended towards documenting the contemporary performance; conducting ethnographic fieldwork with current girls' morris troupes. However, with a little help from morris historian Duncan Broomhead, I've gathered a handful of important things that we already know about girls' morris dancing, glimpsed through the cracks in extant scholarship.

Firstly—and no surprises here—we know that women took part in something termed 'morris dancing' long before the revival of women's morris in the mid 1970s (Figure 2), and that former notions of a male, priestly rite are fanciful in the extreme. We know that mentions of all-female morris troupes can be found as early as the 1860s, and by the 1890s such references were commonplace. See, for example, this description of morris dancing at Buxton Well Dressing, included in Robert Chambers's *Book of Days*, published in 1869:<sup>6</sup>

*Formerly they were little girls dressed in muslin; but as this was considered objectionable, they have been replaced by young men gaily decorated with ribbons, who come dancing down the hill.*

This, in itself, dispels one of the popular myths about girls' morris dancing—that it can be viewed as a straightforward borrowing from

<sup>6</sup> Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar, Including Anecdote, Biography, & History, Curiosities of Literature and Oddities of Human Life and Character* (Edinburgh and London: W.R Chambers, 1869), p. 819.



the men's dance, perhaps a result of the loss of male dancers during the two world wars. This rather convenient theory, laid out in Bernard Bentley's article in 1959, also repeated in his later works with Dan Howison, appears to have been borne from information supplied by a single informant: Mr E. Benson of Timperley, a member of a carnival acrobatic troupe during the mid to late 1920s —although there are similar recorded instances in the Oldham and Royton areas.

Bentley writes:<sup>7</sup>

*At that time there were two surviving Morris teams, a men's team at Mobberley and the Cranford team at Knutsford which consisted of both boys and girls. The acrobats decided that the Morris dance would fit into their repertoire and arranged for one of the Mobberley dancers to come over and teach them. By 1929 there were half a dozen teams in Altrincham, mostly girls, all dancing the Mobberley dance and all taught by members of the acrobatic group.*



Figure 3: St Anne's R.C. Morris Dancers, Ormskirk, 1905 (reproduced with permission from the Morris Ring Archive).

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Bentley, 'Collectors' Corner: The Lancashire and Cheshire Carnival "Morris"', *English Dance and Song*, 23.3 (1959), 65.

For Bentley, this anecdote alone was enough to explain the proliferation of girls' morris troupes across the North-west from the 1920s onwards. He continues: 'Deriving from the original 1925 acrobatic troupe and a small group of Altrincham teams in 1929, there must now be hundreds of troupes all over South Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales.'<sup>8</sup> While I don't doubt for a moment the veracity of Mr Benson's personal account, it's a big jump from half a dozen teams in Altrincham to the whole carnival morris dancing movement. And of course, the theory does not account for the existence of troupes of girls and young women in the region at least thirty years earlier, including a troupe from Ormskirk in West Lancashire (Figure 3).

Indeed, when Janet Chart and Lesley Edwards conducted their thorough investigation of women's morris dancing in Cheshire they found no evidence to support the view that girls' participation in morris dancing was a purely post-World War I phenomenon, also noting that competition had long been a feature of morris dancing in the North-west. They write, 'we cannot concur with the widespread view that competitive morris dancing is a modern invention of the "fluffy" carnival morris troupes of the post-Second World War period. As far as Cheshire was concerned, the competitions certainly existed at the turn of the century'.<sup>9</sup> Is it possible that at a time when it was regularly suggested that no 'essentially female' dances existed, scholars and commentators felt more comfortable with dismissing carnival morris dancing as a derivation, a second-rate pastiche of the superior male dance? As Stanley Gee argued in the letters page of *English Dance and Song* in 1979, 'it is inconceivable that no women's dances should exist within the British Isles...if this is fact, then we are a race that is completely different from every other race in the world'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Bentley, 'Collectors' Corner.'

<sup>9</sup> Leslie Edwards and Janet Chart. 'Aspects of Morris Dancing in Cheshire 1880-1914,' *English Dance and Song*, 43.1 (1981), 5-10 (p. 9).

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Gee, Letter to *English Dance and Song*, 41.3 (1979), 20.



Figure 4: Mobberley Morris Dancers, mid-1920s (reproduced with permission from the Morris Ring Archive).

At the same time, the use of pom-poms or 'shakers' by Mobberley Morris Men (Figure 4), also provides counter-evidence to the frequent suggestion that girls' morris dancing is an American import, more closely associated with cheerleading than the traditional dances of the English folk revival. In actuality, cheerleading with pom-poms developed several decades later, in the late 1940s and 1950s, generally attributed to Lawrence 'Herkie' Herkimer who passed away in 2015.<sup>11</sup> Prior to this, cheerleading had been a men only activity, involving clapping and rhythmic chants. If anything, we might be tempted to speculate that cheerleading developed out of carnival morris dancing—and not the other way round, but perhaps that's a subject for another day!

Returning to what we know. We know that Howison and Bentley identified two primary strands of North-west morris dancing; the Pennine and the Cheshire (Plain).<sup>12</sup> The Pennine tradition was pri-

<sup>11</sup> Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, *Cheerleader: An American Icon*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Howison and Bernard Bentley, 'The North-west Morris: A General Survey', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 9.1 (1960), 42–55.



marily associated with rushbearing celebrations, and can be traced in written records back to the 1790s. The Cheshire tradition reveals itself in the 1880s and 1890s, as part of May Day celebrations. While the Pennine tradition was predominantly associated with men and teenage boys, the Cheshire tradition was composed almost entirely of young boys and girls. In her study of the institutions and ideologies of morris-dance dissemination in the North-west, Theresa Buckland interrogates the process by which a 'dance form previously regarded as a vehicle to display the number and vigour of a community's menfolk...became increasingly viewed as an activity more appropriate for children and young women'.<sup>13</sup>

However, at different times, the translation process also appears to have taken place in the opposite direction. In her 1996 presentation at the Morris: Legacy of the Past conference at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Pruw Boswell noted how the ultra-masculine revival of North-west morris dancing from 1966 onwards began with dances previously performed by teams of children. She writes of John O'Gaunt Morris Men's decision to revive the old Lancaster Processional and Lancaster Garland dances: 'it is worth noting here that both the dances from Lancaster were originally danced by a team of children, boys and girls, and both had to be re-choreographed and re-named before they became suitable for performance by the men'.<sup>14</sup>

When thinking about the development of modern carnival morris dancing, my own speculation is that we may actually be dealing with three loose historical traditions, with Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria each having their own variations of carnival morris performance. It's unlikely that these represented three wholly distinct traditions – even in the early days, troupes travelled widely, intersecting in the context of the town carnival parade – but, as recent conversations with former members of the Lower Withington Junior Morris troupe highlight, at least two different models of carnival

<sup>13</sup> Theresa Buckland. 'Institutions and Ideology in the Dissemination of Morris Dances in the Northwest of England,' *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 23.1 (1991), 53–67 (p. 57).

<sup>14</sup> Pruw Boswell, 'The Lancashire Legacy', in *Morris: The Legacy of the Past: Proceedings of a One Day Conference on Morris Dancing, Birmingham, 20th April, 1996*. (London: Morris Ring; Morris Federation; Open Morris, 1996) pp. 111–15 (p. 111).

morris dancing appear to have been in action during the same historical period.



Figure 5. Lower Withington Juniors, mid-1960s (reproduced with thanks to Sheila Gregory).

Sheila Gregory and Angela Snelson performed with Lower Withington Juniors during the late 1950s and early to mid 1960s (Figure 5). During an interview last September the ex-dancers reported that while coach loads of Lancashire troupes attended the Lower Withington Rose Day to take part in competitions, the Lower Withington troupe performed in the parade only. They admitted to being a little afraid of the carnival morris dancers coming from the nearby towns: 'we were country girls and...they were more town people that were doing...what you're calling more the carnival morris dancing... they were so much more advanced'. The visiting Lancashire troupes wore different kinds of costume – 'I remember a lot of black, different colours,' said Angela – and different movements – 'I can remember the slapping of the legs...their thighs used to be red raw'. Sheila and Angela suggested that this tension between dancers of the more genteel *mores* of rural Cheshire villages and the working-class girls attending from the towns might have been a factor in the later decision to ban carnival troupes from attending the local Goostrey Rose Day...

‘somebody objected to the short skirts...it wasn’t the done thing in Goostrey’.<sup>15</sup>

Angela Snelson’s mention of the ‘slapping of thighs’ – a choreography more associated with entertaining troupes – emphasises that it is also worth remembering that girls’ morris dancing was not the only form of performance common within the town carnival movement, and that troupes of ‘entertainers,’ majorette baton-twirlers and ‘jazz’ (kazoo) marching bands continue to perform within their own parallel organizations in different parts of the UK. We know that following the success of Knutsford Royal May Day – beginning in 1864 and aided by the development of the rail network and the rise of leisure time for the English working classes – carnivals became a popular context for community performance. As Vanessa Toulmin writes in her study of Mitchell and Kenyon, the Victorian era saw a growing demand for entertainments ‘created by amateurs and performed largely within the context of the local parades. These “amateur” performers, including morris dancers and participants in fancy-dress carnival processions, drew on both the traditions of folk amusements and trends in popular entertainment.’<sup>16</sup> And there was a significant monetary incentive to putting in a successful performance on the carnival field. Duncan Broomhead recently calculated that when converted and adjusted for contemporary pricing, the prize money awarded for morris dancing at the 1897 Knutsford Royal May was anywhere between £1,300 and £1,800 in modern value.

However, beyond the carnival circuit, girls’ morris dancing was broadly derogated. In an article in *Traditional Music* magazine, published in 1975, the Lancashire concertina player Fred Kilroy, who accompanied Miss Taylor’s Dancers in Royton in the 1920s, recounted in an interview how girls’ morris was denigrated by folk-dance specialists, even going so far as to actively prevent them from performing at a high profile event:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sheila Gregory and Angela Snelson, interview with the author, September 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell and Kenyon Collection* (London: British Film Institute, 2006), p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Ward, ‘Fred Kilroy: Lancashire Concertina Player, (Part 1): The Career of a Master Musician Based on his own Reminiscences, *Traditional Music*, 1(1975), 15-19 (p. 17).

*The Westwood girls and we'd a gone to London. We were booked at Albert Hall, but when they found out they were girls they wouldn't accept them - they said it was only men. But strangely enough, before the wife's mother died...she showed me a photograph but she wouldn't give it to me...and I'm sure that on that - I wanted it for the reason there were men and women dancing and I could have broke this myth. It's natural for men and women to dance together and it's been done.*

Indeed, it is possible to discern a broadly dismissive tone in much scholarly reportage of girls' morris from the twentieth century. Howison and Bentley describe the girls' dance as 'stilted and very slow', in which dancers have 'a minimum of skills to master,' showing 'little trace of the older Morris'.<sup>18</sup> Maud Karpeles deemed its very popularity key to its 'undoing', opining that '[u]nlike the traditional morris of the midlands, the Lancashire morris dance has attracted the attention of a very wide public...they have in fact, little or no knowledge of the traditional dance'.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the colloquial term 'fluffy' morris, sometimes associated with girls' morris dancing, is thought to have begun as a 'semi-derogatory' attribution by male morris dancers. Ian McKinnon, current principal of the Silverdale Sapphires Morris troupe from Newcastle-under-Lyme and an adjudicator with the English Town and Country Carnival Organisation (ETACCO), suggests its etymology pertains to the shakers and 'frothy' skirts worn by the performers. It is notable that usage is rare in the girls' morris community.

In a similar way, perhaps, it seems that dancing in shoes rather than clogs, as carnival morris dancers do, became associated with a more feminized form of morris dancing, in spite of the fact that most of the traditional Lancashire teams from whom the dances had been collected wore soft shoes to perform. Returning to Pruw Boswell's paper again, it seems that during the 1960s, the only revival North-west morris side to dance in shoes was Leyland Morris Dancers, who

<sup>18</sup> Howison and Bentley, 'The North-west Morris', p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Maud Karpeles, *The Lancashire Morris Dance: Containing a Description of the Royton Morris Dance* (London: Novello, 1930), p.30.

'were not at that time held in very high esteem among the morris fraternity. The team had been taught by a woman, resulting in a rather feminine style of dance and they were not considered to be a role model by many of the other dance teams.'<sup>20</sup> As such, the newly revived North-west men's morris sides made the conscious decision to dance in clogs, perhaps to differentiate themselves from the carnival teams and from the perceivedly emasculated dancing of Leyland Morris.

As we also know, women's involvement in morris dancing more generally was a highly contested issue, even as late as the 1970s and 80s. My recent interview with Sue Allan, a founding member of the all-female Throstles Nest Morris from Wigton in Cumbria, highlighted for me some of the real antagonism and resistance experienced by some of the early women's dance groups at the hands of their male counterparts in the morris-dancing revival. Sue described how as a scholar, interested in researching carnival dances in Cumbria – an historically female-led tradition – certain resources and materials were withheld from her by their erstwhile gatekeepers in the men's morris community. She recalled in particular, a very curt reply from the founder of Colne Royal Morris, Julian Pilling, in response to her request for details of the Ulverston dance, formerly danced by children, both male and female, in South Cumbria.<sup>21</sup>

Pilling wrote, 'I have no knowledge that I am prepared to pass on to instigators of women's morris', before signing his name, on a small headed postcard.

Pilling was also a regular correspondent to *English Dance and Song* magazine, whose letters pages present a fascinating, if slightly perturbing, warts-and-all document of the social history of the women's morris revival. For example, in a single issue of the magazine from 1974, Frank Masters wrote that morris dancing is 'an intrinsically masculine activity', while Celia Smith described women's participation as 'cultural anarchy', suggesting that while women might 'join in at workshops' taking part in 'public spectacle is another matter'. At

<sup>20</sup> Boswell, 'The Lancashire Legacy', p. 110.

<sup>21</sup> See Sue Allan's contribution to this volume.

the same time, Eddie Dunsmore demonstrates a level of discomfort with women's physicality in relation to morris dancing: 'men have their weight distributed differently from women. In a dynamic situation, such as dancing, the kinetics must necessarily reflect this difference. [A woman] may start from the same instructions as I do...but you can't help dancing something that looks different from what I call Morris.'<sup>22</sup>

Similar attitudes do still persist. The organization 'This Girl Can' (from whom I borrowed the title of my recent travelling exhibition at Cecil Sharp House) (Figure 6) recently revealed that there are 2 million fewer women involved in regular physical activity than men, with barriers to women's participation in sport including poor body confidence, perceptions of physical exercise as 'unfeminine' and the gender gap in sports provision and media coverage.



Figure 6: Promotional materials for 'This Girl Can' Morris Dance exhibition by Lucy Wright, 2017.

However, this kind of gender gap is arguably less present in the contemporary morris-dancing world. A couple of months ago *The Telegraph* ran a news story highlighting the participation of women in

<sup>22</sup> 'Points from Readers' Letters', *English Dance and Song*, 36.4 (1974), 150.



morris dancing. Morris, the headline claimed, was ‘undergoing [a] radical change with [the] influx of women’.<sup>23</sup> ‘It has long been regarded as the preserve of elderly bearded men with bells on their ankles loudly banging sticks outside country pubs,’ the article continued, but ‘[s]tatistics from the latest census of Morris dancers have revealed that more than half of the 2,000 people who have joined dance troupes in the past two years have been women... Now Morris leaders predict that if the current trend continues, the hobby will become overwhelmingly female within the next two years.’ Leaving aside for a moment the arcane image of a ‘Morris leader’, what is most intriguing about this article, for me, is its suggestion that this is somehow new; something newsworthy.

Indeed Melanie Barber, of the Morris Federation gently refuted this presumption with the same article; ‘I think what we are now seeing is a balancing out of men and women dancing Morris,’ she says, ‘Women were frowned upon for dancing Morris in the 50s and 60s, despite their having been instrumental in popularising Morris in the early 20th century’. That part is important; women’s role in popularizing morris, often teaching it to the male dancers, remains pointedly overlooked in many accounts of the men’s tradition. At the same time, if more women are now getting involved, it is perhaps most notable because it demonstrates the resilience of female performers and scholars in the face of systemic prejudice and widespread resistance during the morris revival in the 1970s.

However, what is also telling is that we run the risk of continuing to overlook women’s role in popularising morris in the later twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Despite the article’s reference to morris ‘troupes’, a term generally resisted by most folk-revival morris dancers, the 2014 morris census upon which the article is based does not include data from or about girls’ morris dancing. In total, 12 styles of dancing are recorded, including the American import, Appalachian step dancing, and a zero percent response rate for ‘stave’

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Sawyer, ‘Morris Dancing Undergoing Radical Change with Influx of Women’, *The Telegraph*, 6 May 2016 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/06/morris-dancing-undergoing-radical-change-with-influx-of-women/>> [accessed 30 October 2017].

dancing; but information regarding participation in 'carnival' morris dancing was not solicited.

I don't say this to criticize the important research conducted by Jack Worth, and it is not my intention to undermine the wider corpus of scholarship on morris-dancing history which fails to acknowledge 'carnival' morris as part of the bigger picture. However, I do want to draw attention to the fact that the term 'morris dancing' was once broad and flexible enough to encompass a whole range of performances, demographics and geographies. In *Performing English*, Trish Winter and Simon Keegan-Phipps suggest that 'folk' is 'a cultural construct undergoing constant discursive renegotiation by participants of that culture, however, perhaps inevitably, it has become the institutions and participants associated with the English folk movement and not all of 'those who identify most closely with' morris dancing that have now become the arbiters of what 'morris' does and does not include.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting that had girls' morris dancing been surveyed, the morris census results would have looked very different. A rough calculation of the numbers involved in carnival organizations across Cheshire, Lancashire and parts of the Midlands and North Wales suggests that there are more than 8,000 current participants, more than doubling the morris census's estimated total number of morris dancers nationwide.

## Conclusion

So what can we conclude? While the folk scene represents, for many, a democratizing, egalitarian space, evidenced so strongly by the predominantly sensitive responses to recent community debates about gender-free calling, and the issue of 'black-face', it is not unfair to suggest that there may remain a handful of unresolved, grey areas. Those who feel that the gender question has been resolved may need to question why girls' morris dancing has until relatively recently been rarely considered, mentioned or addressed. This is why it was

<sup>24</sup> Trish Winter and Simon Keegan-Phipps, *Performing Englishness: Identity and Politics in a Contemporary Folk Resurgence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.8.



so great to see Platt Bridge Morris Dancers performing at Dancing England in Sheffield in February 2017— not least because the dancers were so delighted and proud to be included in the national showcase.<sup>25</sup>

Having said that, I am also acutely aware that describing girls' morris as a folk dance may in itself be problematic, not least because to date nobody I have encountered in the girls' morris dancing community has expressed any specific wish to be acknowledged in this way. As such, it could be argued that my persistent pushing for the re-evaluation of girls' morris dancing in the context of the English folk movement imposes upon girls' morris dancing an interpretation and even sense of enfranchisement that it *does not actively want*. However, it is not my intention to demand of the girls' morris dancing community any expression of kinship with the wider folk movement that it does not feel, nor is it my goal to promote the appropriation of girls' morris performance via programmes of folk education throughout the rest of the country. Perhaps this is one of the primary differences between contemporary scholars and collectors and those of the first two folk revivals – I trust wholeheartedly in the ability of girls' morris dancers to safeguard their own continuation processes. Instead, my goals are perhaps more selfish: it is not primarily for the benefit of girls' morris dancing that I seek to redress the neglect of girls' morris dancing in folk dance scholarship, but for my own, as a morris-dancing scholar and member of a revival morris-dancing side.

That girls' morris dancing has evolved outside of a 'folk revival' morris-dancing discourse is arguably constitutive of its most valuable contribution to contemporary morris dancing scholarship. Functioning without self-conscious attempts towards preservation and not subject to the perpetual cycles of decline and renewal common to many other 'folk dance' practices, it offers us a unique opportunity to observe a living morris tradition in action. Imagine if we had the opportunity to go back in time and speak to the grand old men of Headington Quarry and Bampton, to ask about their daily lives, their ex-

<sup>25</sup> Platt Bridge had first appeared at Dancing England in 1984.

periences and their understandings of the morris tradition. How would such knowledge effect how we dance today? Much of the history of girls' morris dancing is still out there, stored in living memory. Key figures in the community's recent history are still alive, or well remembered. Recording these stories is my current task. And I have barely scratched the surface.

# Material Culture



Chloe Metcalfe

## Why do Morris Dancers Wear White?

### Introduction

It is possible to suggest two valid and interrelated reasons for the initial adoption of white clothing by morris dancers in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> These reasons, which relate to fashion and seasonal association with Whitsuntide, are discussed in the first section of this essay. Within this article I offer a pragmatic analysis of the historical adoption of this clothing which seeks to consider the historical dancer as an agent of the world, making decisions which complemented his own contextual reality. This paper then, in line with the general attitude of folklorists of the early twenty-first century, seeks to discredit earlier theories which often discussed a 'universal' colour symbolism and/or analysed the colours' perceived ritualistic function. A clear example of this can be found in *English Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday* (1964) written by the then Director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Douglas Kennedy. Through the use of white clothing he links morris to cultural practices in Central and South America, writing:<sup>2</sup>

*[T]he old stock is easily recognisable in the white costumes, the fluttery ribbons, the tinkling bells, the waving white handkerchiefs and the clash of the wooden-staves. These white-clad men now form an escort to the Virgin and Child as they once did to the Man-Horse or Man-Goat, or other pagan God.*

And later:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is an expansion of the work started in my undergraduate thesis 'Rags, Bells and Baldrics: A study of Morris Dance Costumes Past Present and Future' (Central School of Speech and Drama 2012, copy at VWML). This was part published as 'In Clean White Shirt and Trousers' *Morris Federation Newsletter* (Summer 2012) 20-24.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Kennedy, *English Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday*, (London: Bell, 1964), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, *English Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday*, p.130.

*Whiteness is the symbol, or one of the chief symbols of this new life of sunlit dancing vibrating energy, which re-enters the world at Easter, at May-time and at Whitsuntide.*

The second section of this paper turns to revival practice, exploring the influence of Sharp's choice of white trousers for the display team of the English Folk Dance Society (from 1932, the English Folk Dance and Song Society) (EFD(S)S). Considerations of the preference for coloured, rather than white clothing by female teams from the 1970s is considered in relation to the association between white clothing and Cotswold morris and the twentieth century interpretation of Cotswold morris as an intrinsically, even ritualistically, masculine dance form.

## Nineteenth-century Practice

The use of white clothing for morris dancing dates to the middle of the nineteenth century. A painting known as *The Rush-Bearer, Lymm, Cheshire*, in the York Museums Trust which was probably painted in the 1860s is the earliest pictorial reference.<sup>4</sup> Its northern provenance would seem to indicate that white clothing was not specific to teams based in the Cotswold area. Earlier coloured paintings such as *The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palaces* (1600-1650),<sup>5</sup> and *Country Round Dixton Manor* (1730)<sup>6</sup> show dark leg-wear. This coincides with oral testimony gathered by Cecil Sharp. Sharp's interviews with old dancers imply that white breeches were worn at Chipping Campden (Gloucestershire) and at Ducklington (Oxfordshire) in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>7</sup> From Sharp's manuscripts, it would appear that

<sup>4</sup> *The Rush-bearer Lymm, Cheshire*, York Museums Trust, YORCM:DA76636 <<https://www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/collections/search/item/?id=45022387>> [accessed 17 November 2017]; also Lymm Heritage Centre, 'Rushbearing', <<https://www.lymmhc.co.uk/rushbearing>> [accessed 16 November 2017].

<sup>5</sup> *The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace*, Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum <<http://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/1388>> [accessed 17 November 2017] (see Figure 1 in the chapter by Anne Daye in this volume).

<sup>6</sup> *Country Round Dixton Manor*. The Wilson Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, reference 1957.22.

<sup>7</sup> 'Chipping Campden Morris', <<http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/1/137>> [accessed 20 November 2017]; 'Ducklington Morris', Cecil Sharp MSS, CJS2/11/1/144

<<http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/1/144>> [accessed on 20 November 2017]; Keith

after 1850, and whenever possible, teams would wear white trousers or breeches, often made of cord or moleskin. At Ducklington, former dancer Joseph Druce (1830-1917) told Sharp that the trousers, worn by the team were white and 'fluffy', similar to what sailors would use 'but thinner. What officers wear'.<sup>8</sup>

Morris dance historian Michael Heaney has estimated that in 1844 a costume would have cost the average agricultural labourer five weeks' wages.<sup>9</sup> Special trousers were complemented by shirts in fine material. In the nineteenth century cleanliness of appearance was prized in all classes of society, linked to the importance of being respectable.<sup>10</sup> This is notable in Sharp's fieldwork. Joseph Druce told Sharp: 'Neither Bampton nor Field Town so clean as we. We had clean shirts every morning.'<sup>11</sup> Likewise at Wheatley, Oxfordshire, Albert Edward Gomme (1854-1929) told Sharp 'flash as we were with clean white shirts'.<sup>12</sup> Gomme recalls that the team were once invited to London to perform, but declined because the younger members of the team could not afford the correct clothing which included white moleskin trousers. The emphasis on cleanliness is made more prescient by the fact that on tour, morris dancers often engaged in fights and slept rough, practices which would have given considerable complication to the problem of keeping clean.<sup>13</sup>

Occasionally teams substituted dark clothing, but it would appear that white trousers were preferable. A photograph taken of the Abingdon (Oxfordshire) morris dancers in 1912 shows James Hemmings (1854-1935), and his son Tom Hemmings (1887-1960), in the leading positions at the top of the set, in white trousers. The rest of

Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660-1900: Aspects of Social and Cultural History* CD-ROM (Musical Traditions MTCD250, 2002), Chapter 7 'The Learning Process'.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ducklington Morris'.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Heaney, 'With Scarves and Garters as you Please: An Exploratory Essay in the Economics of the Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, 6.4 (1993), 491-505.

<sup>10</sup> Victoria Kelley, *Soap and Water*, (New York: Tauris, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> 'Ducklington Morris.'

<sup>12</sup> 'Horton-cum-Studley, Oxon, Morris Tradition', Cecil Sharp MSS. CJS2/11/4/80 <<http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/4/80>> [accessed 20 November 2017].

<sup>13</sup> Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, Chapters 1,4,5.

the dancers wear dark trousers.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that the two Hemmingses, who were the gatekeepers of the tradition at Abingdon, were wearing trousers which dated to 1901, when the custom of annual dancing had lapsed. As Chandler notes, the other dancers' costumes appear to be 'anything they could get which would be suitable for performance'.<sup>15</sup> Given time and financial resources, perhaps all members of the newly re-formed team would be attired like the Hemmingses.

Similarly, at Ascott-under-Wychwood (Oxfordshire) white breeches were the preferred option but some, 'hadn't legs big enough, so wore trousers'.<sup>16</sup> In the 1850s there were two teams active, an older and a younger one, which could explain the reference to breeches which were too big for the dancers.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, at Longborough (Gloucestershire) the team wore "Trousers, but breeches and blue stocking were the "right things".<sup>18</sup> The use of breeches for morris dancing in the 1880s and 1890s, when they had declined in popularity for day wear over fifty years previously, is paralleled by the continued popularity of breeches in other dance forms. Traditional dance historians Phil Heaton and Chris Metherell, commenting on breeches worn for rapper sword dancing from Tyneside, have suggested that the choice of breeches was a means of emphasising the specialness of the dance.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that breeches may have been a deliberate attempt at historicalization. Dance historian Theresa Buckland notes that the Godley Hill (Manchester) dancers adopted breeches in 1881, after wearing trousers in the 1870s. She postulates that 'the dancers' own consciousness of their longevity as a tradition' could have been an impetus for this change.<sup>20</sup> However, conservatism is also im-

<sup>14</sup> Keith Chandler, 'Ock Street Morris Dancers, Abingdon, Berkshire 1912', *English Dance and Song*, 14.2 (1984), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Leach, *Morris Dancing in Abingdon to 1914* (Oxford: Chandler, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> 'Ascott under Wychwood Morris', Cecil Sharp MSS. CJS2/11/2/41  
<<http://vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/2/41>> [accessed 20 November 2017].

<sup>17</sup> 'Ascott under Wychwood Morris.'

<sup>18</sup> 'Longborough Morris', Cecil Sharp, MSS. CJS2/11/1/138  
<<http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/1/138>> [accessed 20 November 2017].

<sup>19</sup> Phil Heaton and Chris Metherell, *Rapper: History of the Miners' Sword Dance of North-east England*, DVD (Garland Films, 2012) 'Costume'.

<sup>20</sup> Theresa Buckland, 'Hollo: "Here we are again:" Godley Hill Morris Dancers: A Study in Longevity.' *Traditional Dance*, 2 (1982) 37-58 (p. 47).



portant: formal dressing, especially for high ceremonial occasions continued to favour breeches long past when they were worn for normal attire. Breeches were included in some forms of servant's livery into the 1920s.<sup>21</sup>

White, cream or buff leg-wear was common in men's wear from the Regency era until the 1880s. This was initially complemented by the white Grecian-style dress common in women's wear from the 1790s until the 1830s. The use of white trousers extended into military uniforms throughout the nineteenth century, with a number of regiments wearing them.<sup>22</sup> The trend for light-coloured trousers was not limited to the upper and middle classes. In her history of working class fashion, dress historian Avril Lansdell notes that light-coloured trousers were the everyday wear for working-class men throughout the Victorian period until the 1880s.<sup>23</sup> At this point dark-coloured sombre trousers became common and have remained normal for men's attire ever since.<sup>24</sup>

In the nineteenth century outer garments were washed with much less frequency, and brushing to remove dirt was more common than immersion in water and detergent.<sup>25</sup> Light-coloured trousers were treated with cleaning aids such as stale bread, Fuller's earth, magnesia, or expensive chloroform.<sup>26</sup> If the cloth was submersed in water then often a commercially produced, branded blueing agent was added to increase the vividness of the white.<sup>27</sup> Before the stronger chemical aniline dye treatment in the 1860s colours were much more difficult to treat; some dyes even changed colour when a hot iron was applied. To avoid disappointment, buyers of cloth were advised to take a sample and launder it to check for colour fastness and

<sup>21</sup> Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, *Occupational Costume in England: From the Eleventh Century to 1914* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968) p. 189.

<sup>22</sup> Robin and Christopher Wilkinson-Latham, *Infantry Uniforms Including Artillery and Other Supporting Troops of Britain and the Commonwealth, 1742-1855* (London: Blandford, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> Avril Lansdell, *Wedding Fashions 1860-1980* (Aylesbury: Shire, 1986), pp. 28-30.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Buck, *Victorian Costume* (Bedfordshire, Ruth Bean, 1984), pp. 185-87.

<sup>25</sup> Christina Walkley and Vanda Foster, *Crinolines and Crimping Irons: Victorian Clothes, How they were Cleaned and Cared For* (London: Peter Owen, 1986), p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Walkley and Forster, *Crinolines and Crimping Irons*, p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Walkley and Forster, *Crinolines and Crimping Irons*, p. 32.

heat reaction.<sup>28</sup> In this context, white clothes, which could be fully submersed in water were much easier to launder than coloured or black garments. This explains the persistent use of white for undergarments, household linen and children's clothing from the medieval period until the mid twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

In the nineteenth century the traditional time for teams to dance in public was Whitsun, the British colloquial term for Pentecost, and probably an abbreviation of White Sunday; the week after Whitsun was referred to as Whitsuntide.<sup>30</sup> Pentecost was the third most important festival in the Christian calendar. Celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter, it is a non-fixed holiday, and falls in spring time between 10 of May and 20 June. Whit Monday was a bank holiday from 1871 until 1972 when the holiday date was secularized and transferred to a fixed date, the last Monday in May. The derivation of Whitsun is unclear, first mentioned in 1067; the most plausible explanation is that the name referred to the white chrisom cloth used at Baptism.<sup>31</sup> The ceremony of baptism was considered particularly appropriate at Whitsuntide, when worshippers remember the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early disciples of Jesus. Whitsun became the focus for a diverse range of customs including well-dressing, decorating churches with boughs of trees, factory wakes, fetes, parades and pageants.<sup>32</sup>

The use of white within the Christian church has historically been considered to be symbolically important, and has been linked to the concept of purity.<sup>33</sup> Biblical references such as 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy'<sup>34</sup> are seen as the foundation for this Christian interpretation of white as an auspi-

<sup>28</sup> Walkley and Forster, *Crinolines and Crimping Irons*, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> Michel Pastoreau, *The Colour of Our Memories* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> Steve Roud, *The English Year: A Month-by-month Guide to The Nation's Customs and Festivals, from May Day to Mischief Night* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 260.

<sup>32</sup> Roud, *The English Year*, pp. 260-61.

<sup>33</sup> Edwina Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashion*, (London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2011), pp. 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Revelations 3.4 (King James Version).

cious colour. In the middle ages, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) decreed that white garments should be worn by priests at all festivals.<sup>35</sup> There is evidence to support that the wearing of white clothing at Whitsuntide was common throughout the nineteenth century. Well known are the Whit Walks or Processions of Witness, which developed from Robert Raikes's (1735-1811) Sunday-school movement, 1801 marking the year of the first walk in Manchester.<sup>36</sup> Although Whit Walks retained their popularity for longer in Lancashire and Cheshire, with thousands of participants wearing their best, preferably white clothes, in the 1800s they were popular throughout England.<sup>37</sup> From the same region the aforementioned painting *The Rush-Bearer, Lymm, Cheshire*, shows a group of morris dancers wearing either white trousers or breeches.<sup>38</sup> Rushbearing, the custom of taking new rushes to carpet the church floor, was undertaken from the spring to the autumn period but throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Whitsuntide remained associated with rushbearing in many areas.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to Processions of Witness there are other secular sources to support a deliberate use of white clothing at Whitsuntide. Published in 1872 and set in a Dorset village, the novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) includes this speech from an older member of the village:<sup>40</sup>

*'twas on a White Tuesday when I committed it. Mellstock Club walk the same day, and we new-married folk went a-gaying round the parish behind 'em. Everybody used to wear something white at Whitsuntide in them days. My sonnies, I've got the very white trousers that I wore, at home in a box now.*

<sup>35</sup> Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development* (New York, Dover, 2003), p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Roud, *The English Year*, p. 266; Steve Fielding, 'The Catholic Whit-Walk in Manchester and Salford 1890-1939', *Manchester Region History Review* 1.1 (1987), 3-10 (p. 3).

<sup>37</sup> Steve Roud and Jacqueline Simpson, *A Dictionary of Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 388.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Rush-bearer Lymm.'

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Burton, *Rush-bearing: An Account Of the Old Custom of Strewing Rushes*, (Manchester: Brook & Chrystal, 1891).

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree* [1872] (London, Penguin, 1994), p. 211.

Club walking, processions of local Friendly Society clubs, often happened at Whitsun.<sup>41</sup> The clothes of the women's club or Friendly Society in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are also white.<sup>42</sup> Hardy was, of course, writing from a literary rather than a documentary perspective and literary scholars have been keen to explain the use of white clothes as a symbolic trope to emphasise Tess's virginal condition. Hardy himself refers not to Whitsun but to 'Cerealia', a Roman festival held in April, and 'The May-Day Dance'.<sup>43</sup> This begs the question of why the white of morris dancers relates to Whitsun and not to the first of May.

This relates to changed perceptions of May Day since the 1970s. This has been encouraged by an increased awareness of the festive possibilities of May Day and an increase of teams dancing in the dawn on the first of May, an event which is often reported in papers as an ancient tradition.<sup>44</sup> Along with general cultural secularization, there is also a decreased awareness of Whitsun and its historical significance. Nonetheless, as Hardy's description in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* demonstrates, the delineation between May Day and Whitsuntide has not been clear for many years. Hardy continues that the white gowns were 'a gay survival from Old Style days, when cheerfulness and May-time were synonyms'.<sup>45</sup>

The Victorian re-introduction of May Queens often featured white clothing. The choice could have been symbolic, white flowers, particularly hawthorn were often referred to as 'may' and were used to decorate buildings, transport and may garlands in the eighteenth

<sup>41</sup> C. W. Shickle, *Bath Friendly Societies* [pamphlet repr. from *Keene's Bath Journal*, 21 October and 11 November 1911].

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* [1891] (Suffolk: Guild, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> For using Hardy as a historical source see Anne Buck, 'Clothes in Fact and Fiction 1825-1865' *Costume* 17 (1983), 89-104, and literary criticism such as Alka Saxena and Sudhir Dixit, *Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (Delhi: Atlantic, 2001), pp. 60, 167.

<sup>44</sup> Norman Stanfield, 'Rough Music, Rough Dance, Rough Play: Misrule and Morris Dance' (doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2008) <<https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/1056>> [accessed 20 November 2017], pp. 71, 144; see also John Forrest 'How to Read *The History of Morris Dancing*' in this volume. Forrest, like Stanfield, links May-Day dancing to the twentieth-century practice of Oxford University Morris Men to dance after the annual May morning singing of the seventeenth-century *Hymnus Eucharisticus* from the Great Tower in Magdalen College.

<sup>45</sup> Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, pp. 10-11.

and nineteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> With Whitsun falling any time between early May and mid June it is possible that, at least by the end of the nineteenth century, there was some overlap in association between May Day and Whitsuntide. An example of this conflation is demonstrated in Joseph Druce's comment to Sharp that they started each morning of Whitsun week by dancing Bonny Green Garters around the maypole<sup>47</sup>. However, for a large number of Victorian women, there could also have been a number of pragmatic reasons for the adoption of white clothing. Roy Judge notes that a May Queen from 1854 had put on 'her very best, and has put on that white frock for the first time since last summer',<sup>48</sup> In addition to wearing white at May Day, white was also worn by females for many other mass gatherings. These included the suffrage marches of the Women's Social and Political Union, and performances of morris dancing in Lancashire and Cheshire.<sup>49</sup> White was a common summer dress colour, which arguably made it easier to match than coloured or patterned garments.

## Twentieth-century Practice

Cecil Sharp's work with the EFDS implicitly or explicitly affected the choice of clothing selected by morris dancers during the twentieth century. Sharp's choice of white shirt and white flannel trousers became the standard to which, in the words of morris commentator Antony Barrand 'many teams automatically conform or from which they strive to deviate'.<sup>50</sup>

Sharp's male demonstration team of dancers dressed in costumes based on the clothes worn by the Headington Quarry (Oxfordshire) team in the 1880s, the first morris dancers that Cecil Sharp ever

<sup>46</sup> Roud, *The English Year*, p. 208.

<sup>47</sup> 'Ducklington Morris.'

<sup>48</sup> Roy Judge, 'Tradition and the Plaited Maypole Dance', *Traditional Dance*, 2 (1983), 1-21 (p. 10).

<sup>49</sup> For examples see the Morris Ring Archives images of the 'Fleetwood Girls', 1920s (NW78) and 'Spencer's Juveniles' c. 1905 (NW100).

<sup>50</sup> Tony Barrand, *Six Fools and a Dancer: The Timeless Way of the Morris* (Washington: Northern Harmony Publishing, 1991), p. 177.

saw.<sup>51</sup> Headington Quarry had one of the simplest Cotswold costumes, which appears to have appealed to Sharp and his followers in the EFDS: 'A revival cannot live if it is to be merely a revival. "Merrie Englande" may have existed in the past; it does not and it cannot exist now.'<sup>52</sup>

For the EFDS team there would have been great practical benefit to such trousers, which could be brought from the ready-to-wear sports market which was well established by the 1900s. White trousers were also markedly different from the more sombre colours of men's fashions in the early twentieth century. Certainly the sartorial association with sport seems to have appealed to Sharp's dancers. In their history of the EFDSS, Helen and Douglas Kennedy write approvingly that: 'The dress of the men was equally athletic being that of the cricket pitch and tennis court, the bells and crossed baldrics being the only traces of traditional practice.'<sup>53</sup>

This choice inadvertently led to the false impression that perhaps nineteenth-century morris dancers wore white trousers because they could get a cheap source in second-hand cricket whites. By the late nineteenth century, traditional dancers did adopt elements of sports wear: sporting caps were worn by teams from Headington Quarry and Ilmington (Warwickshire), as well as teams from Lancashire and Cheshire.<sup>54</sup> But white clothing for cricket was not standard until the 1870s, at which point mass-produced trousers rather than tailor-made ones also became available.<sup>55</sup> Thus while traditional teams might have worn cricket whites by the end of the century, availability and economies of scale were probably not the reason for their initial adoption.

The choice of white trousers for both morris and social dancing (normally with the bells removed) can be seen in EFDS/S groups

<sup>51</sup> Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (London, Faber and Faber, 2008) p. 25.

<sup>52</sup> 'An English Ballet' *EFDS News*, 3 (1922), 56.

<sup>53</sup> Helen and Douglas Kennedy, *A Jubilee History: Folk Dance and Song 1911*, (London: EFDSS, [1961]), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Lesley Edwards and Janet Chart, 'Aspects of Morris Dancing in Cheshire 1880-1914', *English Dance and Song*, 43.1 (1981), 5-9.

<sup>55</sup> D. Rait-Kerr, 'The costume of the Cricketer' *Costume*, 7 (1973), 50-54.



from the 1920s until the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Until the late 1940s, English folk dancing was certified, demonstration teams were formed from selected dancers and the period is criticized for promoting homogenization of style, including costume.<sup>57</sup> At the formation of the Morris Ring in 1934, an organization established to encourage and support male morris teams, all of the six founder members – Cambridge (est. 1924), Oxford City (est.1934), Letchworth (1922-1950s), Thaxted; Essex (est. 1911), East Surrey (est. 1926) and Greensleeves (London, est. 1926) initially danced in white, normally flannel trousers (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Thaxted Morris Men (Photo: Chloe Metcalfe).

Throughout the twentieth century it was common for dancers to be part of a team or group who performed different styles of folk dance. Until the 1960s many men did social and sword dancing in their morris whites. In 1930 the EFDS adopted black sword-dance breeches for performances of morris dances by the male members of their

<sup>56</sup> See images in Derek Schofield, *The First Week in August: Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival* (Matlock: Sidmouth International Festival, 2004); Derek Schofield, *Towersey Festival: 50 Years in the Making* (Matlock: Mrs Casey, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey Metcalf, 'Change and the Morris', *English Dance & Song*, 26 (1961), 45-46.

demonstration team. This change was 'prompted by the very urgent problem of "laundry" presented by the use of white flannels'.<sup>58</sup> It was considered that audiences preferred the knee breeches and they were 'particularly suited to a stage presentation of the dances. The costumes was [sic] considered to be as suited to the Morris and Country dance as it is to the rapper dance.'<sup>59</sup> In the same paper the Society announced that at all formal demonstrations the male members of the EFDS team would be in knee breeches. Certainly the 1950 EFDS promotional film *Wake Up and Dance* shows the demonstration team in black breeches; however, the switch was by no means universal.<sup>60</sup>

In an interview discussing the formation of the Liverpool Morris Men in 1960, dancer Jim Jones (1923-2010) recounted the reason for the teams' switch to black breeches in 1964:<sup>61</sup>

*The thing with the whites was that they were never all the same white and they had difficulty keeping the bells up. Somebody said we looked like a load of out-of-work painters. Liverpool of course had danced in breeches and the Liverpool men that had come through to join Mersey were used to them. We thought they looked smarter and were easier to dance in. Also, we thought that the footwork was shown off better; so we got breeches in time for the ring meeting down at Stratford... I still think they look smarter. I know that there's a case for the whites but I have to say for dancing, I prefer to dance in breeches; for one thing, as I say, you never had the feeling that the bells were coming off.*

The gender of the dancers appears to affect the adoption or otherwise of white clothing. Black trousers are more common in mixed

<sup>58</sup> 'Knee Breeches', *EFDS News*, 22 (1930), 257-58.

<sup>59</sup> 'Knee Breeches.'

<sup>60</sup> Pauline Hinchcliffe wrote in 1964 that 'In our area the men are half for and half against breeches, but I have noticed that the more they wear them, the more they are for them.' 'Festival Dress', *English Dance and Song*, 37.1 (1964), 16-17 (p.17).

<sup>61</sup> Jim Jones, *80 Years of Morris in the Liverpool Area as told through the Personal Recollections of Jim Jones – Morris Dancer*, in interview with Richard Stapleton in 2000 (2008) <<http://www.merseymorrismen.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/JimJonesbook.pdf>> [accessed 20 November 2017], pp. 15-16.



gender or female-only teams than all-male teams. Very few twentieth-century women's teams adopted white leg-wear at all, exceptions being Oyster Morris from Canterbury (est. 1976), Stroud Ladies (est. 1978), Windsor Morris (est. 1975), and Acorn Morris from York (est. 1977).<sup>62</sup> While in the early days of the revival the participation of female teachers was key to the success of the folk-dance movement, by the 1920s morris dancing was being re-imagined as an exclusively male, ritual dance:<sup>63</sup>

*The women's morris was beautifully done, accurate and full of life. But it was totally different from the men's Morris, and the difference lay not in the style of the dances chosen for the men and women respectively, but in the fact that Morris dancers were invented by men and for men, and that women's Morris dancing must be and always will be, however charming in itself, a new thing, quite different from the traditional Morris.*

When, some fifty years later women started to establish teams with a similar structure of public dance outs and weekly practices to the all-male Morris Ring, their decision to participate was not always actively supported by male dancers.<sup>64</sup> Shirley Dixon of Windsor Morris associated their change of kit from green to stone-coloured skirts in the late 1970s to their desire for enhanced performance, 'power team work and eye-catching dances'.<sup>65</sup> Windsor's switch to white skirts anticipated their eventual bold move into white trousers in 1977 (Figure 2): 'those who cared strongly about the dance knew that Cotswold Morris as it had developed since the late 19th century cannot be shown off properly if the legs are not free of restriction

<sup>62</sup> A twenty-first-century female team wearing white leggings is The Belles of London City (est. 2008).

<sup>63</sup> W.S.S., 'On Festivals', *EFDS News*, Special Festival Number, 2 (1921), 22.

<sup>64</sup> Sally Wearing, 'What to Dance? What to Wear? The Repertoire and Costume of Morris Women in the 1970s' in this volume; Shirley Dixon, 'Women in Trousers', *Dancing On* (2007), 4-7, available at <[https://web.archive.org/web/20110727151615/http://www.open-morris.org/DO\\_Dec07.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20110727151615/http://www.open-morris.org/DO_Dec07.pdf)> [accessed 20 November 2017].

<sup>65</sup> Shirley Dixon, e-mail to Chloe Metcalfe, 7 October 2011, digital copy on CD held at Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Chloe Metcalfe *Rags Belles and Baldrics* – Supporting Research File,, VVWL Barcode: 18269.

and cannot be seen'.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps their move from coloured to white garments was also significant in showing a move away from an acceptably different *women's* morris.



Figure 2: Windsor Morris, Windsor 2014 (Photo: Chloe Metcalfe).

## Conclusion

White clothing is, for many, intrinsically associated with morris dancing. Twentieth-century British comedy, when it includes morris dancing, usually selects white-trousered, (male) dancers.<sup>67</sup> Indeed the sociologist Pauline Greenhill, writing in a Canadian context, draws attention to the whiteness of dress as supporting the ideologi-

<sup>66</sup> Dixon, 'Women in Trousers', p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> 'The Godiva Affair', *Dad's Army*, BBC1 Television, series 7 episode 4, first broadcast on 6 December 1974; 'St Boltoph's Country Dance Team' (sketch), *The Two Ronnies*, BBC1 Television, series 5 episode 4, first broadcast on 25 September 1976; 'Bhangraman Fights the Evil Morris Dancers' (sketch), *Goodness Gracious Me*, BBC2 Television, series 3 episode 6, first broadcast on 31 January 2000: 'Morris Dancer', Bhangraman's nemesis, wears white trousers.

cal associations between this dance form and white English ethnicity.<sup>68</sup>

This article has shown that associations between this clothing and the dance have changed. White trousers are no longer the fashionable option, not substantially harder to launder than dyed clothes. Instead, with our washing-machine culture, white trousers need extra care when wearing to avoid staining; they demand separation and a special wash with other white clothes, perhaps with a special whitening detergent.

Rather than selecting second-hand cricket whites or naval attire as has been previously suggested, the evidence from Sharp's manuscripts demonstrates that considerable care was taken over items of clothing and that the choice of white was deliberate, not accidental. The selection was probably linked to the seasonal association between morris dance and initially Whitsuntide, which has declined in general consciousness during the twentieth century, and later perhaps also to May-Day celebrations, which has seen a strengthening late twentieth-century association.

The non-use of white clothing by women's teams in the latter half of the twentieth century emphasises their attempt to create a form of the dance which was acceptable and therefore different to men's morris. White clothing represented the normative masculine form which was not welcoming to their efforts and so other colours were adopted instead. White trousers are still the most popular choice in all-male teams, although the increasing trend towards mixed-gender Cotswold teams in the twenty-first century has seen a corresponding rise in the use of black trousers for performance.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Pauline Greenhill, *Ethnicity in the Mainstream: Three Studies of English Canadian Culture in Ontario* (Montreal: Mc-Gill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 114.

<sup>69</sup> Metcalfe, *Rags Belles and Baldrics* – Supporting Research File, analysis of file containing correspondence with 136 teams and 75 teams who performed Cotswold morris. Eight of these danced other styles of morris (Border and North West). In accordance with wider trends all-male Cotswold teams made up the majority of respondents with 35 replies, this was followed by 23 mixed teams, three of which had different costumes for male and female members, 15 women's teams and two children's teams. Counting only Cotswold costumes worn at the time of correspondence, the majority of my correspondents (35) wore white trousers or breeches, 26 black and 14 coloured leg-wear. While many male teams wear white trousers, only one male Cotswold team wore black trousers. All other respondents who wore black trousers were mixed gender or women-only teams.



David Petts

## **Materializing Morris Dancing: Tangible Aspects of an Intangible Heritage**

### **Introduction**

Morris dance, and other traditional dances, are a classic example of ‘intangible’ heritage, as opposed to other aspects of cultural heritage that take a more physical or tangible form, such as historic buildings, ancient monuments or archaeological artefacts. Indeed, the recognition of the very notion of ‘intangible heritage’ by UNESCO in 2003 was a welcome move to recognise that heritage or historic value was not just something that could be ascribed to monuments, landscapes or objects. Instead, expressions of cultural identity, often passed on through performance, social practice or habituated skills were also deemed of significant cultural value and deserved to be protected. It has been argued that a key aspect of the move to embrace intangible heritage was recognition that heritage could be understood not just as bounded, and often decontextualized, physical objects or locations, but also as cultural processes,<sup>1</sup> a perspective that emphasised the value and innate significance of traditional ‘folk’ practices, such as morris dance.

UNESCO have identified four distinct elements of ‘intangible heritage’ – all of which are reflected in the traditional dance practices of the British Isles:

- it is both traditional and contemporary – having its roots in the past, but expressed in contemporary society;
- it is inclusive to some degree and helps maintain and create certain senses of identity;

<sup>1</sup> Chiara Bortolotto, ‘From Objects to Processes: UNESCO’s “Intangible Cultural Heritage”’, *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 19 (2007), 21-33; Marilena Vecco, ‘A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible’ *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 11.3 (2010), 321-24.

- it is representative and thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community;
- it is community-based: intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognised as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.<sup>2</sup>

All these dimensions of intangible cultural heritage, particularly the links between past and present and the importance of community in maintaining and passing on the tradition, are of clear relevance to a range of folk-dance traditions across the world. UNESCO have realized that many of these international dance traditions (although significantly not morris dance) reflect these aspects of heritage; many are inscribed on the Representative Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage; ranging from the Breton *fest noz* tradition (inscribed 2012), the *Saman* dance of Indonesia (inscribed 2011), Spanish *flamenco* (inscribed 2010), *Huacónada* ritual dancing from Peru (inscribed 2010) and the ritual hopping processing of Echternach in Luxembourg (inscribed in 2010). Disappointingly, Britain has yet to accede to the 2003 Convention on Intangible Heritage and is thus not represented on the UNESCO List.

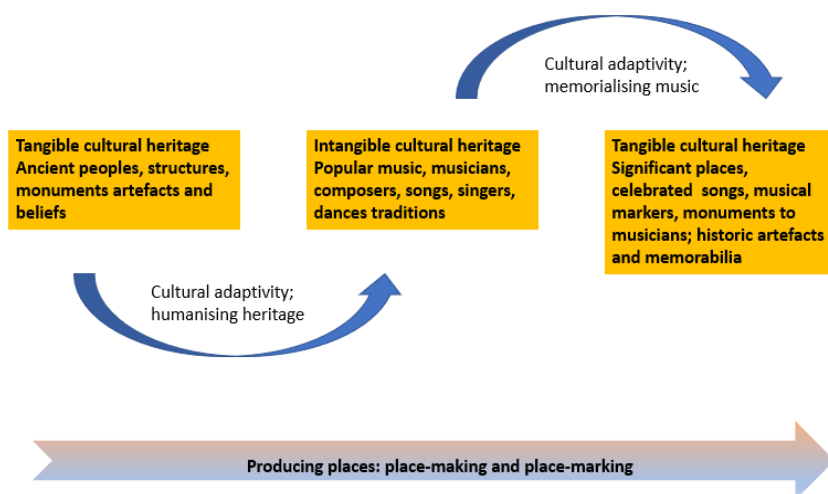
However, of course, whilst the ultimate expression of these traditions is in the transient and passing moment of performance itself, unless captured photographically on film, not all aspects of many such traditions are purely intangible. They all have important physical dimensions; most, if not all, have specific costumes, regalia and are regularly associated with specific physical spaces or landscapes. This tangible dimension to intangible cultural heritage is indeed recognised by the official UNESCO definition of intangible cultural heritage:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. "What is intangible cultural heritage?" <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>> [accessed 20 October 2017], I, Article 2.

*Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage.*

The relationship between music and its physical expression is one that has become increasingly a topic of scholarly engagement, public debate and wider popular writing.<sup>4</sup> There is a recognition that the process of creating heritage out of music can be a formal process (structured, top-down and institutional) or an informal (unstructured, bottom-up) one.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Amanda Brandellero and Susanne Janssen, 'Popular Music as Cultural Heritage: Scoping out the Field of Practice', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20.3 (2013), 224-40; Amanda Brandellero, Susanne Janssen, Sara Cohen and Les Roberts, 'Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20.3 (2013), 219-23; Timothy Darvill, 'Rock and Soul: Humanising Heritage, Memorialising Music and Producing Places', *World Archaeology*, 46.3 (2104), 462-76; Paul Graves-Brown and John Schofield, 'The Filth and the Fury: 6 Denmark Street (London) and the Sex Pistols', *Antiquity*, 85(330), 1385-401; Paul Graves-Brown and John Schofield, '"The Most Awkward Building in England"? The "Rotten" Heritage of "Tin Pan Alley" Revisited', *Antiquity*, 90(354), 1629-42; Les Roberts and Sara Cohen, 'Unauthorising Popular Music Cultural Heritage: Outline of a Critical Framework' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20.3 (2013), 241-61.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory J. Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge, 'Whose Tourist-historic City? Localising the Global and Globalising the Local', in *A Companion to Tourism*, ed. by A.A. Lew, C.M. Hall and A.M. Williams (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 210-22 (p. 216); Brandellero and Janssen, 'Popular Music as Cultural Heritage', p. 225; Darvill, 'Rock and Soul', p. 463.

Figure 1. Diagram showing transformation of tangible and intangible heritage during place-production in relation to music (based on Darvill, 'Rock and Soul', Figure 1, Redrawn by David Petts).

Most scholarship has focused on the relationship between music and places rather than music and objects, often placing this relationship within a wider framework of formal or informal 'place-making' and 'place-marking'.<sup>6</sup> Tim Darvill has attempted to explore in schematic form the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in relation to place-making in popular music<sup>7</sup> and it is not a stretch to expand the scope of this model to include the collection and cataloguing of artefacts and objects, as museum objects and memorabilia (Figure 1).

## The Tangible Heritage of Morris Dancing

This new emerging approach to musical heritage has largely been limited to certain genres. In particular, there has been an engagement with the heritage of popular music (as broadly defined), and to a lesser extent blues, jazz and country and western, but little with folk-music and -dance traditions.<sup>8</sup>

This paper is a first attempt to explore how these tangible, materialized aspects of morris dance traditions in Britain have been recorded, collected and commemorated. It makes no claim to be a comprehensive survey, but instead hopes to point the way towards how both the morris dancing community itself as well as institutions engaging with social history, particularly museums have dealt with this material, as well as consciously and unconsciously developed new ways of commemorating and memorializing the tradition.

The material aspects of morris dancing embrace a range of objects, including costumes, bell pads, sticks and handkerchiefs, as well as the wider set of regalia associated with some sides, such as cake stands, swords and ritual animals of various forms. Much of this is used regularly by sides in their performances. However, I want to fo-

<sup>6</sup> Brandellero and Janssen, 'Popular Music as Cultural Heritage', p. 225; Les Roberts, *Mapping Cultures: Place, Practice, Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Darvill, 'Rock and Soul'.

<sup>7</sup> Darvill, 'Rock and Soul', Figure 1.

<sup>8</sup> Brandellero and Janssen, 'Popular Music as Cultural Heritage', p. 225.



cus on how these material items have been turned into heritage through museum collection and commemoration practices. There are many, many different definitions of the slippery term 'heritage'.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this paper I want to follow John Carman's notion of heritage being created through a process of bracketing or of categorization, distinguishing them from other, perhaps more mundane sites or objects, through the process of collecting and documentation, with a specific emphasis on preserving time depth and reflecting not just performance but institutional history and social context.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years I have been trying to pull together a list of morris and traditional dance material held in museums in England; whilst far from comprehensive, this process has allowed us to glimpse the ways in which morris-dance-related objects have ended up entering formal museum collections. The most extensive collection of morris material is held in the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) in Oxford. This is primarily an ethnographic and anthropological museum, and was established in 1884 by General Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, a key figure in the development of archaeological fieldwork as well as the collection and categorization of material culture from a typological perspective.<sup>11</sup> Although the bulk of the collection was derived from outside Europe, there was also a small, but important collection of material derived more locally. Amongst the morris-related material – the collection comprises:

- A morris-dance 'costume' acquired in 1895<sup>12</sup> – in fact, an assemblage of disparate elements including a shirt and baldrick,<sup>13</sup> trousers with bell-pads,<sup>14</sup> waistcoat,<sup>15</sup> top hat,<sup>16</sup> col-

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, John Carman, 2002. *Archaeology and Heritage: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2002); David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Laurajane Smith (ed.), *Cultural Heritage: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Carman *Archaeology and Heritage*, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> William Ryan Chapman, 'Arranging Ethnology: A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition', in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. by George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 15-48.

<sup>12</sup> Mike Heaney, 'Morris dancer's costume', *England: The Other Within Analysing the English Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* (2008) <<http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-morris-dancers-costume.html>> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>13</sup> Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM), Accession No 1895.46.1.1.

lecting box,<sup>17</sup> handkerchiefs<sup>18</sup> and sticks.<sup>19</sup> The baldrick and top hat were probably from Kirtlington, the box and sticks from Headington, but the others are of unknown provenance;

- A further collection of bell-pads<sup>20</sup> – from Finstock<sup>21</sup> (Figure 2), Ramsden,<sup>22</sup> a 1902 set from an Oxford revival performance (Figure 3),<sup>23</sup> and a 1986 set from Headington;<sup>24</sup>



Figure 2 (left): Bell-pad collected from Finstock in 1895, Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford (1895.45.10.1); Figure 3 (right): Bell-pad made for the revival of Morris dances arranged for the Coronation festivities in Oxford 1902, Pitt Rivers Museum (1903.57.1). (Photographs by David Petts, reproduced by permission of the Pitt Rivers Museum.)

<sup>14</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.2.

<sup>15</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.3.

<sup>16</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.4.

<sup>17</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.7.

<sup>18</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.8.

<sup>19</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.46.1.5-6.

<sup>20</sup> Mike Heaney, 'Morris dancers' bells', *England: The Other Within Analysing the English Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* (2008) <<http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-morris-dancers-bells.html>> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>21</sup> PRM, Accession No 1895.45.10.

<sup>22</sup> PRM, Accession No 1938.34.6.

<sup>23</sup> PRM, Accession Nos 1903.57.1; 1917.53.468; 1945.11.65; 2008.59.1.

<sup>24</sup> PRM, Accession No 1986.17.2.

- There is also a collection of whittle-and-dubs:<sup>25</sup> four pipes, one drum and two beaters – not all with provenance but some from Leafield.<sup>26</sup>

This material has been well studied, primarily by Mike Heaney, Alice Little and the Pitt Rivers 'The Other Within' project 2006-2008, and the recent Percy Manning centenary events have ensured that they are well known.<sup>27</sup> The key point to note is that most of this material was donated to the museum (founded in 1884) in its first 25 years. The collectors themselves included key figures such as Percy Manning, who collected widely in the spheres of social history, folklore and archaeology donating material to the Pitt-Rivers and the Ashmolean. Much of Manning's folklore collection, including morris-related material, such as probably a morris dancer's costume from Bampton, was sold to the English Folk Dance Society at Cecil Sharp House in 1929, where they were later destroyed in the Blitz.<sup>28</sup> Another key collector was Henry Balfour, the first curator of the Pitt Rivers, who donated overall around 15,000 items to the museum from all over the world.<sup>29</sup> The Pitt Rivers was ideally located to be a centre for the collection of early morris material, as it combined both physical proximity to the heartland of the tradition, with the presence of a

<sup>25</sup> Alice Little, 'The Whittle-and-dub', *England: The Other Within: Analysing the English Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum* (2008) <<http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-whittle-and-dub.html>> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>26</sup> PRM, Accession Nos: 1903.129.21 (pipe), 1903.129.22.1 (drum), 1903.129.22.2 (beater); 1938.34.21, 1938.34.220 (pipes), 1938.34.548 (tabor stick), and 1962.7.75 (pipe).

<sup>27</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Percy Manning, Thomas Carter and the Revival of Morris Dancing' in *Percy Manning: The Man who Collected Oxfordshire*, ed. by Michael Heaney (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017), pp. 145-72; Alice Little, 'Percy Manning, Henry Balfour, Thomas Carter and the Collecting of Traditional English Musical Instruments', *Folk Music Journal* 11.1 (2016), 25-41; Alice Little, '"Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen": Songs, Music and Musical Instruments in the Percy Manning Collection', in *Percy Manning: The Man who Collected Oxfordshire*, ed. by Michael Heaney, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017), pp. 221-56.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Heaney (ed.), *Percy Manning: The Man who Collected Oxfordshire* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017); Faye Belsey and Madeleine Ding, 'Percy Manning Contextualized: How Manning's Collection of Lighting in the Pitt Rivers Museum Tells Us More about the Man, his Collection and its Context' in *Percy Manning: The Man who Collected Oxfordshire*, ed. by Michael Heaney (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017), pp. 257-89 (p. 262).

<sup>29</sup> Hélène La Rue, H. 2004 'Balfour, Henry (1863-1939)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30557>> [accessed 22 november 2017].

museum and wider body of academics and researchers who were actively collecting. In practice this meant that the material collected was very much from the immediate proximity to Oxford, with most material from an area with 10-15 miles of the Museum.

However, the Pitt-Rivers collection, whilst very important, is perhaps unrepresentative, its collections being acquired through some element of structured and targeted collection by investigators or their proxies. In most other cases, the collection of traditional dance-related material by museums has been far more *ad hoc*. Outside the Pitt Rivers Museum, the most extensive collection of material can be found, perhaps not surprisingly, in the collections of the Oxfordshire Museum Service (OMS), which holds a number of morris-related artefacts.

The earliest documented object in the OMS collection is a top hat belonging to Tom Hemmings from Abingdon and was probably worn by him in the 1930s, which entered the collection in 1980 (Figure 4).<sup>30</sup> Apart from this, most of the collection is far more recent. It includes two hats<sup>31</sup> and a waistcoat<sup>32</sup> accessioned in 2006 and belonging to Joe Marns, a member of Icknield Way Morris Men, who died eight years earlier.<sup>33</sup> There are also two articles of mumming regalia: a tatters coat worn by Bold Slasher in Abingdon in the 1970s<sup>34</sup> and a decorated top hat used in the Sunningwell mummers' play in the mid twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> A final intriguing and unique piece is a red cotton embroidered banner belonging to the English Folk Dance Society (Oxford Branch).<sup>36</sup> This must date to between 1911 when the Society was founded and 1932 when it merged with the Folk Song Society. It is decorated with embroidered images of Will Kemp and a pipe-and-tabor player. It was held privately, having being given by Mrs Chaundy to the donor, Peter Lund, who passed it onto the Oxford

<sup>30</sup> Oxfordshire Museums Service (OMS) Accession No: OXCMS : 1980.96.138.

<sup>31</sup> OMS, Accession Nos OXCMS : 2006.19.5; OXCMS : 2006.19.7.

<sup>32</sup> OMS, Accession No: OXCMS : 2006.19.3.

<sup>33</sup> Sem Seaborne, 'Joe Marns: Obituary' (1998)

<<http://www.icknieldwaymorrismen.org.uk/about-us/morris-dancing/joe-marns/>> [accessed 22 November 2017].

<sup>34</sup> OMS, Accession No: OXCMS : 1979.187.5.

<sup>35</sup> OMS, Accession No: OXCMS : 1980.167.2.

<sup>36</sup> OMS, Accession No: OXCMS : 1995.6.1.

Museums Service in 1995. Mrs Chaundy was presumably the wife of Theodore Chaundy (1889-1966), an Oxford University Fellow who also had an interest in morris dance and its history, and a key early figure in the EFDS in Oxford.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 4: Black silk plush top hat worn by Tom Hemmings, Abingdon c.1920 9© By kind permission of Abingdon County Hall Museum).

<sup>37</sup> T.W. Chaundy, 'William Kimber (1872–1961)', *Journal of the English Folk Song and Dance Society*, 9.3 (1962), 115-18; Roy Judge, 'The Ancient Men: OUMM and its Background', revised and produced in chronological form by Ian Hall and Gerard Robinson (1993) <<https://oxforduniversitymorris.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/oummhist.pdf>> [accessed 11 October 2017],

It is useful to compare the collections of material in the Pitt Rivers Museum with that in the Oxfordshire Museum Service. Whereas the Pitt Rivers collection is primarily related to pre-revival teams, and seems to have been mainly entered the collection via working scholars with active interests in folklore, the material in the Oxfordshire Museum Service seems instead to have entered the collections by donation. These donations have primarily come through individuals directly associated with morris dancing or through close associates or family members. Geographically, the Oxfordshire Museum Service collection is very biased towards southern Oxfordshire – Wantage, Abingdon, Sunningwell – in contrast to the Pitt Rivers Museum collection which is more derived from West Oxfordshire – on the Cotswold fringe, indicating where the early collectors were most active.

Outside these two collections, the acquisition of morris-related material by museums is very thin and appears to have been largely fortuitous.<sup>38</sup> This has meant it has not been easy to track down examples, with local museums often not cataloguing their material in a way that makes for easy identification of dance-related material. A set of bell-pads and baldric made for William Kimber by Harvey in 1913 and a further pair of bell-pads are held at Halsway Manor, although it is not certain when these entered the collection there. The manor was instituted as a centre for folk arts in the mid 1960s, whilst Kimber died in 1961, but the biography of the baldric is unclear.

Another isolated item is the triangle, seemingly a nineteenth-century military one, held in the National Trust property at Snowhill Manor in Gloucestershire,<sup>39</sup> which was allegedly used by a local morris side to accompany their dance, although there is very little further information about it. More up-to-date is a Westminster Morris costume held in the Museum of London, accessioned in 2000.<sup>40</sup> Northampton Museums holds the hobby horse<sup>41</sup> used by the Yardley Gobion side

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, E.D. Mackerness, 'The Yardley Gobion Morris', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 7.4 (1955), 216-17.

<sup>39</sup> National Trust Object ID NT 1335370.

<sup>40</sup> Museum of London, Accession No: 2000.104d.

<sup>41</sup> Northampton Museums, ID29.1954-55,



between 1880 and 1920; it seems to have been donated to the museum in the early 1950s, possibly following the death in 1947 of Thomas Cadd, the leading figure in the Yardley Gobion morris. A more modern costume is the rag jacket, hat and bell-pads worn by Harry Mousdell, who danced with Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men and Broadwood Morris Men, which is held by Horsham Museum, who also hold a 1980s costume worn by a member of Magog Ladies.<sup>42</sup>

Lack of context can be a problem when identifying material associated with traditional dance. Slightly outside the central concern of this paper with Cotswold morris is the case of some interesting material held in York Castle Museum which includes a set of six dance swords<sup>43</sup> with ribbons at one end and a set of bones allegedly used by a local 'plough stots'.<sup>44</sup> Neither of these acquisitions has any contextual information about their source of origin, and they have limited information even about who collected them.

This issue of provenance is particularly acute when it comes to examining collections of musical instruments that may or may not be related to morris dance. The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments at Oxford University holds a pipe, tabor and beater, which arrived in the museum in 1947 and seem to have originally been collected by the musicologist Canon Francis Galpin.<sup>45</sup> It also holds a pipe originally from the Overy collection.<sup>46</sup> All this material was accessioned as being 'morris dancers' but it is not clear whether this is note is contemporaneous with acquisition or based on a later assumption. A tabor also allegedly associated with morris dancing is held by the Horniman Museum,<sup>47</sup> although its provenance is unclear, and a tabor pipe in the same museum actually appears to be French and was collected by Arnold Dolmetsch.<sup>48</sup> A pipe-and-tabor set is also held by the

<sup>42</sup> Teresa LeFevre, pers.comm. to the author, 30 October 2014.

<sup>43</sup> York Museums Trust (YMT), Accession No YORCM DA7604.

<sup>44</sup> YMT, Accession No YORCM: 187.

<sup>45</sup> Oxford University Faculty of Music, Bate Collection, Accession No: x01.

<sup>46</sup> Oxford University Faculty of Music, Bate Collection, Accession No: x02.

<sup>47</sup> Horniman Museum, Accession No: 211.312-92.

<sup>48</sup> Horniman Museum, Accession No: M69c-1983.

Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>49</sup> Probably early nineteenth century in date, it was professionally made by Falkner and Christmas and donated by the Royal Academician John Seymour Lucas. Were these ever used in anger or simply acquired as an artist's props? Lucas was a painter of genre images of British historical scenes, so it is possible that a pipe-and-tabor might have been used in his art, although an initial rapid survey of his known artwork has failed to identify a depiction of the items in question.

## Morris Materials in Context

In summary, there is a corpus of morris-dancing-related material in local museums, which can be divided into two categories: early material (primarily in the Pitt Rivers Museum) seemingly related to pre-revival sides and acquired through active collection; and a second group of material related to revival sides, mainly post-war and primarily acquired through donation. The relative lack of early material is interesting but perhaps not surprising. The living tradition was largely ebbing away just before the active collecting antiquarians and folklorists started to become interested in this material.

A key issue is that the concerted collection of rural artefacts and folklore material only really developed in the early to mid twentieth century, and post-dated the disappearance of the pre-revival tradition. For example, in the geographic areas associated with morris, it was not until the 1930s that there was a sudden increase in the collection and display of rural and folkloric material in what Laura Carter has recently called the 'first wave' of folk museology.<sup>50</sup> Swinford Museum (Filkins), which holds a set of bellpads from Filkins, was founded in 1930s by George Swinford. Lavinia Smith's collection in East Hendred opened in 1932,<sup>51</sup> the collection acquired by rural writer H.J. Massingham commenced in 1935, in Gloucester the museum in

<sup>49</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession No: 1563-1902.

<sup>50</sup> Laura Carter, 'Rethinking Folk Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* (2017), hwx038 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwx038>> [accessed on 22 November 2017] (pp. 8-14).

<sup>51</sup> Bridget Elizabeth Yates, 'Volunteer-run Museums in English Market Towns and Villages' (doctoral dissertation, University of Gloucestershire, 2010) <<http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/2496>> [accessed 22 November 2017], pp. 262-70.



Bishop Hooper's Lodging which was dedicated to the 'display of folk culture and historical relics of the county of Gloucestershire' opened in 1935.<sup>52</sup> This pattern is found more widely across England: the Cambridge and County Folk Museum opened in 1935<sup>53</sup> and the Kirk Collection in York opened in 1938.<sup>54</sup> These collections and collectors were still able to acquire relatively easily material related to agricultural practices, which, despite the on-going process of mechanization, had not changed massively since the later nineteenth century. However, the original morris tradition had largely dwindled away by the end of the nineteenth century and had been subsequently revived, but largely without the original regalia and costumes; the objects and items related to the revival was not however at this stage seen as something worth collecting by the 1930s collectors. Significantly, the earliest collected material related to morris found its way into a major ethnographic collection (Pitt Rivers Museum) rather than a social history museum. It has been argued that this kind of anthropological collection of what later became deemed 'folk' material slotted it into a cultural scheme that saw them as 'survivals' from earlier cultures rather than as active parts of living culture.<sup>55</sup> Indeed Edward Burnett Tylor, Oxford University's first Professor of Anthropology, is credited as being the first person to develop this position theoretically.<sup>56</sup> Tylor himself collected English folk-related material, including a set of morris bell-pads that were donated to the Pitt Rivers on his death in 1917.<sup>57</sup> It has been argued that this position was also one broadly adopted by Percy Manning.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> M.M. Banks, 'Folk Museums and Collections in England', *Folklore*, 56.1 (1945), 218–22.

<sup>53</sup> Carter, 'Rethinking Folk Culture', p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> P.C.D. Brears, 'Kirk of the Castle' *Museums Journal* 80 (1980), 90–92.

<sup>55</sup> Chris Wingfield and Chris Gosden, 'An Imperialist Folklore? Establishing the Folk-Lore Society in London', in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 255–74; Oliver Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals and the Neo-Archaic', *Museum History Journal* 4.2 (2011), 223–44.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals and the Neo-Archaic.'

<sup>57</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Percy Manning – A life' in *Percy Manning: The Man who Collected Oxfordshire*, ed. by Michael Heaney (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017), pp. 1–48; Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals and the Neo-Archaic'; see also Chris Wingfield, 'A Case Re-opened: The Science and Folklore of a "witch's ladder"', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15.3 (2010), 302–32.

<sup>58</sup> Little, "'Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen'", p. 226.

Moving beyond this early phase of collection, with one or two exceptions such as the Yardley Gobion hobby horse, most material seems to have entered museums in the 1980s and after, although this is an admittedly small sample. This maybe because from this point we are reaching the end of the dancing careers of those who became involved in the revival in the 1950s, and there is an increased sense of both a passing of generations and of the need to record and remember the histories and traditions of revival sides. This may also perhaps reflect and recognise an increased sense of self-confidence in the legitimacy of revival sides in their own right as bearers of distinct local traditions. Not surprisingly, in an activity where the sense of preserving and maintaining a living tradition is acute, there appears to have been a clear sense of the importance of the histories of individual sides, as well as the wider tradition. This is something we see in the widespread keeping and curation of more or less official paper archives belonging to morris sides, as well as formal and informal histories (which in itself is an important and under-studied phenomenon).<sup>59</sup> One way in which such material sometimes ‘bubbles to the surface’ is through temporary exhibitions held at local museums or other venues brought together by particular sides to celebrate key events such as anniversaries. These might be curated by the side themselves, such as the recent exhibition by Grimsby Morris Men at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, or develop as more structured outputs from research projects such as the ‘This Girl Can’ exhibition of carnival morris material held at Cecil Sharp House in 2017. curated by Lucy Wright and ultimately arising out her doctoral research.<sup>60</sup>

However, as well as paper archives, some sides still curate older artefacts and elements of costumes which have not entered museum collections. For example, the Abingdon ox horns; although a replica is used to dance out with on most occasions, other original regalia

<sup>59</sup> e.g. Judge, ‘The Ancient Men.’

<sup>60</sup> Lucy J. Wright, blog entries on the Cecil Sharp House website <<https://www.cecilsharphouse.org/floor-spot/diaries/lucy-wright-s-this-girl-can-morris-dance>> [accessed 5 November 2017]; Lucy Wright, ‘Girls’ Carnival Morris Dancing and Contemporary Folk Dance Scholarship’, *Folklore*, 128.2 (2017), 157–74; Lucy Wright, ‘This Girl Can Morris Dance’ in this volume.

(the sword and mazer) are taken out, whilst the original horns are curated, but not in a museum context (Figure 5).<sup>61</sup>



Figure 5: Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers, replica ox horns and original rose-wood mazer; New Year's dance-out, Steventon 2014 (photograph © David Petts).

The Traditional Bampton Morris Dancers still use their original sword and cake tin, and elsewhere, Ilmington still dance out with a hobby horse constructed in 1899 for Sam Bennett; and of course, the Abbot's Bromley dancers continue to use what are presumably the original sets of horns held in the church. As well as objects used in dancing out, other items are in the possession of members of sides, even though not used in performance. For example, the nineteenth-century Brackley baldric,<sup>62</sup> and Cecil Sharp's three-hole pipe made by

<sup>61</sup> Keith Chandler, 'The Abingdon Morris and the Election of the Mayor of Ock Street', in *Aspects of British Calendar Customs*, ed. by Tess Buckland Juliette Wood (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 119-36; Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers, 'The Horns' <<http://atmd.org.uk/the-horns/>> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>62</sup> Brackley Morris Men, 'The Story of the Brackley Morris Men, a Traditional Northamptonshire Morris Side, No. 13: The Kit: 'Napkins, Scarfs & Garters' <<http://www.thebrackleymorrismen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/13.-The-Kit-Napkins-Scarves-and-Garters.pdf>> [accessed 11 December 2017].

Carl Dolmetsch in the early 1920s and held by Foresters Morris Men.<sup>63</sup>

The importance of such curation of morris costume and regalia is one that could itself be found in pre-revival sides. Henry Radband, a dancer for the Bampton side, claimed that the bells he used had belonged to his father and grandfather – presumably implying they were at least fifty years old.<sup>64</sup> Some of the bells collected from dancers by Percy Manning in the late 1890s reputedly dated to c.1830 and 1840 – meaning they were believed to be 60-70 years old when acquired.<sup>65</sup> Bells could also be passed between sides: a set of bells seen by Cecil Sharp at Ilmington (Warwickshire) had been bought by one of the dancers from a man named Hartwell, who was one of the dancers from nearby Blackwell – and were said to be 100 years old in 1912. There are also cases of bells on bell-pads being inscribed with the date of a particular event. For example, the bell pads worn by Arthur Dixey of Bampton, who died in 1966, were inscribed with the date 1898.<sup>66</sup> Whilst the simple re-use of bell-pads might have simply been a practical response to the cost of making new ones, the fact that the history of individual items was recorded and passed on suggests that they were important in making and maintaining links between different generations of dances; this is a phenomenon that seems to have been important for past and current sides.

## Memorializing Morris: Creating a Morris Place

There is another important aspect to the materializing of morris dance as heritage: the memorialization and monumentalization of place. Obviously, some dance traditions have a very close connection with particular landscapes and locations, such as Abingdon's Ock Street, the gardens of Bampton, the route taken by the Abbot's Brom-

<sup>63</sup> Foresters Morris Men, 'Cecil Sharp's 3-hole pipe' (2015)

<<http://www.chezfred.org.uk/for/CecilSharpPipe/Images.htm>> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>64</sup> 21, 1938.34.220 (pipes), 1938.34.548 (tabor stick), and 1962.7.75 (pipe).

<sup>64</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Percy Manning, Thomas Carter and the Revival of Morris Dancing', p.148.

<sup>65</sup> Percy Manning, 'Some Oxfordshire Seasonal Festivals: With Notes on Morris-dancing in Oxfordshire', *Folklore*, 8.4 (1897), 307-24.

<sup>66</sup> Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660-1900: A Chronological Gazetteer* (London: Folklore Society, 1993), p. 134.

ley Horn Dancers. However, places can be important for other reasons, such as the homes or birthplaces of key figures in the tradition, or even memorials erected to commemorate the foundation of particular dance sides.

Despite the important of transient performance at these sites, there is an increasing number of cases of the creation of formal patterns of commemoration of morris within both urban and rural landscapes. Perhaps the finest example of this is Headington, on the North-east edge of Oxford, where there is quite a landscape of commemoration associated with Cecil Sharp and William Kimber.<sup>67</sup> The location where Cecil Sharp first encountered morris dancing on Boxing Day 1899 had a plaque placed there on the sixtieth anniversary of the event in 1959 (also the centenary year of Sharp's birth). This was originally the site of Sandfield Cottage, where the encounter occurred, but with its demolition and replacement with flats in the 1960s the plaque was kept and now sits incongruously just below a satellite dish on the side of 1960s building (Figures 6-7). A short distance from there is William Kimber Crescent, constructed in 1958 (the year before the erection of the plaque). William Kimber was himself present at both the opening of the road and the erection of the plaque (Figure 8).

<sup>67</sup> Bob Grant, 'When Punch Met Merry', *Folk Music Journal*, 7.5 (1999), 644-55.





Figure 6: William Kimber unveiling the plaque on Sandford Cottage at Headington Quarry on 26 December 1959, 60 years after his meeting with Cecil Sharp. The morris Fool with William Kimber is Arthur Kimber. (photograph © The Morris Ring Archive. Reproduced with permission).



Figure 7: The 1959 plaque at site of former Sandfield Cottage relocated onto the wall of residential block (photograph © David Petts).

Interestingly, the Headington plaque is not the only plaque to one of Sharp's encounters with the tradition. There is another at the vicarage at Hambridge in Somerset, recording where he first heard John England singing 'The Seeds of Love' in 1903. Elsewhere in Headington, 42 St Anne's Road, Kimber's last home, has been provided with a blue plaque,<sup>68</sup> whilst in the nearby churchyard of Holy Trinity is Kimber's wonderful morris-inspired gravestone (Figure 9). There are also other sites that, although unmarked, are closely associated with Kimber and the Headington side, for example the other Kimber family homes and places such as the Chequers Inn, where a series of significant early photographs of the side were taken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the important Thames Valley photographer Henry Taunt.



Figure 8: Dancing at the inauguration of William Kimber Crescent, Headington Quarry on 19th October 1958 (photograph © The Morris Ring Archive, reproduced with permission).

<sup>68</sup> 'Blue Plaque Honours Morris Legend', *Oxford Mail*, 1 June 2011

<[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/9057822.Blue\\_plaque\\_honours\\_morris\\_dance\\_legend/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/9057822.Blue_plaque_honours_morris_dance_legend/)> [accessed 20 October 2017].





Figure 9: William Kimber's gravestone, Church of the Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry (photograph © David Petts).

Together this creates a rather interesting and well marked commemorative landscape relating to Kimber.<sup>69</sup> This is perhaps not surprising close to Oxford, where key moments and figures in morris history coincide with the presence of an engaged (official and amateur) scholarly community with an active interest in recording and commemorating them. The only remotely comparable morris-related memorial landscape is in Norwich, where there is a series of places tied in with Will Kemp – which seem to have put in place around 2000 on the four-hundredth anniversary of his ‘nine days’ wonder’. Here there is a plaque near the Maddermarket Theatre in St John's Alley, marking the place Kemp completed his journey and leapt over the church wall of St John Maddermarket. A nearby passageway has been named Will Kemp Way and a sculpture by the art-

<sup>69</sup> ‘Headington map’, *Merryville* <<http://backtothequarry.net/397-kimber-map>> [accessed 12 December 2017]; David Petts, D. ‘In Search of William Kimber’, *Outlandish Knight Blog* (2014) <<http://outlandish-knight.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/in-search-of-william-kimber-morris.html>> [accessed 14 December 2017].

ist Mark Goldsworthy depicting Kemp was erected in nearby Chapelfield Garden. In addition to the naming of roads after Will Kemp and William Kimber, there was also an attempt to name a road in King's Cross *Esperance Street* in remembrance of Mary Neal; although the name was shortlisted it was ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to this kind of commemorative practice, the 'cult of ancestors' is strong within the folk revival, a series of key figures associated with collection of material and the first revival being marked by blue plaques. Not surprisingly, these are most widely spread in Oxfordshire, where the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques scheme has been proactive in commemorating such figures. In addition to the plaque commemorating Kimber in Headington, there is a plaque for Reginald Tiddy, the collector of folk plays and morris dance, on the side of Tiddy Hall (the village hall) in Ascot-under-Wychwood (unveiled in 2011) (Figure 10),<sup>71</sup> one for the collector Janet Blunt at her former home Le Hall Place in Adderbury (Figure 11)<sup>72</sup> and one for Percy Manning, antiquary and collector at 300 Banbury Road, Summertown (Figure 12).<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Lucy Neal, 'Mary Neal's Move to St Flora Road', *Mary Neal: An Undertold Story* <<http://www.maryneal.org/object/6180/chapter/1006/>> [accessed 22 November 2017]; Roy Judge, 2006, 'Neal, Mary Clara Sophia (1860–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40485>> [accessed 2 November 2017].

<sup>71</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Tiddy, Reginald John Elliott (1880–1916)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/57228>> [accessed 2 November 2017]; 'Plaque Tribute to Folk Dance Expert', *Oxford Mail*, 11 September 2012 <[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/witney/9920732.Plaque\\_tribute\\_to\\_folk\\_dance\\_expert/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/witney/9920732.Plaque_tribute_to_folk_dance_expert/)> [accessed 22 November 2017]; 'Reginald Tiddy (1880–1916): Collector of Folk Plays, Local Benefactor' *Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme* <<http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/tiddy.html>> [accessed 12 December 2017].

<sup>72</sup> 'Janet Heatley Blunt (1859–1950): Folk Song and Morris Dance Collector', *Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme* <<http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/blunt.html>> [accessed 22 November 2017].

<sup>73</sup> Michael Heaney, 'Manning, Percy (1870–1917)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/57230>> [accessed 2 November 2017]; 'New Blue Plaque Unveiled in Banbury Road to Remember Man who Collected Oxfordshire', *Oxford Mail*, 12 April 2017 <[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15219340.New\\_blue\\_plaque\\_unveiled\\_to\\_remember\\_collector\\_and\\_Morris\\_Dancing\\_pioneer/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15219340.New_blue_plaque_unveiled_to_remember_collector_and_Morris_Dancing_pioneer/)> [accessed 22 November 2017]; 'Percy Manning (1870–1917) Antiquary and Folklorist', *Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme* <<http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/manning.html>> [accessed 12 December 2017].



Figure 10 (left): Oxfordshire Blue Plaque to Reginald Tiddy, Ascott-under-Wychwood village hall (photograph © David Petts); Figure 11 (centre): Oxfordshire Blue Plaque to Janet Blunt, Adderbury (photograph © David Petts); Figure 12 (right) Oxfordshire Blue Plaque to Percy Manning, 300 Banbury Road, Oxford (photograph © Michael Heaney).

Outside Oxfordshire, there are also plaques to Enid Porter,<sup>74</sup> an important figure in collecting folk traditions, including material relating to molly dancing in Cambridgeshire; the composer, collector and morris dancer George Butterworth<sup>75</sup> in York (does not mention his dance involvement), and now also at Radley College and one to Mary Neal in Littlehampton.<sup>76</sup>

Not surprisingly, commemoration of revival sides rather than collectors is less common; perhaps the exception is the rapper side the Newcastle Kingsmen, who achieve the distinction of having not one, but three memorial plaques in the quad at Newcastle University, celebrating the thirtieth, fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of their foundation.<sup>77</sup> The practice of commemorative plaques has also recently been taken up with Lucy Wright's 'Pink Plaques' project marking key figures in the North-west carnival morris tradition,<sup>78</sup> which in

<sup>74</sup> Carmen Blacker, 'Enid Porter 1909-1984', in *Women and Tradition: A Neglected Group of Folklorists*, ed. by Carmen Blacker and Hilda Ellis Davidson (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2000), pp. 233-44; Cambridge City Council, 'Blue Plaque Scheme' <<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/blue-plaque-scheme>> [accessed 5 November 2017]; Carter, 'Rethinking Folk Culture ...', pp. 9, 17-18.

<sup>75</sup> 'George Butterworth 1885-1916' York Civic Trust <<http://yorkcivictrust.co.uk/heritage/civic-trust-plaques/george-butterworth-1885-1916/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>76</sup> Lucy Neal, 'Esperance Street named for the A-Z?' *Mary Neal: An Untold Story* (2015) <<http://www.maryneal.org/news/#esperance-street-named-for-the-a-z>> [accessed 7 November 2017].

<sup>77</sup> 'Sharp dance moves – the Newcastle Kingsmen', *The Arches: Newcastle University Alumni Magazine*, 13 (2010), 20.

<sup>78</sup> 'What is a Pink Shield', <<http://www.pinkplaques.com/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

a break with other 'blue plaque' traditions has marked the houses of key figures who are still alive (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Elsie Maddock and the Pink Plaque recording her involvement in North-west carnival morris dancing in Cheshire (photograph © Lucy Wright).

A final place that needs to be considered as key site associated with the morris (and folk) revival is of course Cecil Sharp House itself, the ultimate manifestation of an engagement with folk dance and song made physical. The building is protected as a Grade II Listed Building. Its very name, of course, serves to memorialize the key role of Sharp in the revival. Designed by Godfrey Pinkerton (1858-1937) and H.M. Fletcher (1870-1953), a former president of the Architectural Association, and opened in 1930, it was subsequently damaged during the Blitz and refurbished in the late 1940s by the architects John Eastwick-Field and Hugh Pite. Its construction and reconstruction are recorded in a series of memorial slabs. There is also another plaque recording William Kimber, who had helped lay the initial foundation stone and then used his skills as a bricklayer to lay a course of the building. Other key individuals were memorialized through the structure: the Trefusis Room and the Kennedy Hall named after past Presidents of the Society, the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library named after the composer, whilst Winifred Shuldham-Shaw, an important donor, is recorded on a sign on the bookcases in the Library. The opportunity to refurbish the building



after the war also saw new design features added, as well as major structural extensions. Shallow incised images with folkloric connections (a jester, a hobby horse, a player of the pipe-and-tabor), based on iconography from the well-known stained-glass window panel from Betley (Staffordshire) were added to the main porch in the early 1950s (Figure 14).<sup>79</sup> The major feature of the Kennedy Hall, the huge Ivon Hitchens murals, were commissioned by Duncan Kennedy to replace a musicians' gallery destroyed by the bombing. The scheme depicted in a relatively abstract form a series of folk dances: a ring dance, a morris dance, the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance and the Padstow 'oss'.<sup>80</sup>

## Places and Things in Morris History: A Prospect for the Future?



Figure 14: Carvings on the porch, Cecil Sharp House (photograph © David Petts).

It has been shown that traditional dance, particularly morris, is being recorded, collected, commemorated and embedded within landscapes in a variety of ways: key individuals are being remembered, important moments in morris history, and in the history of sides are being marked, with a range of place-making strategies being deployed, including blue plaques, street names, memorial tablets and public art. Crucially, some of this commemorative infrastructure is itself now of some considerable age; for example, the

<sup>79</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession No C.248-1976; E.J. Nicol, 'Some Notes on the History of the Betley Window'. *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 7.2 (1953), 59-67.

<sup>80</sup> Ivon Hitchens, *Some Notes by Ivon Hitchens, Describing his Mural Painting in the Main Hall at Cecil Sharp House* (London: EFDSS, 1954).

tablets referring to Cecil Sharp's encounters with the folk tradition at Headington and Hambridge are themselves over 50 years old and have become heritage in their own right; and in the case of the Headington plaque, it has been curated and maintained despite the demolition of its original location. In addition to the case studies put forward in this paper there are myriad other ways in which traditional dance is materialized, presented and repackaged, ranging from tea-towels and biscuit tins to pub signs (e.g., the Morris Clown, Bampton), public art (e.g., the wall mural marking the Green Man Festival in Hastings) and village signs (e.g., Thaxted).

There is also a huge output of dance costumes, regalia and ephemera (badges; programmes etc.) related to revival sides and events which are being produced and of which just a fraction are being actively collected and curated. Obviously there are some individuals, such as Chloe Middleton (English Folk Costume Archive<sup>81</sup>) and Doc Rowe,<sup>82</sup> who are archiving material; and organizations such as the Morris Ring,<sup>83</sup> Morris Federation<sup>84</sup> and the Museum of British Folklore<sup>85</sup> who are also engaged in similar activity; but there is also a problem that little is known about what is already held in existing museums, where lack of specialist knowledge often means that extant collections are not always well recorded or catalogued. The Traditional Drama Research Group did produce a very useful annotated list of folk play artefacts;<sup>86</sup> this obviously focuses on traditional drama rather than dance, though there is obviously an overlap. However, it is out of date in some places (museums have shut or been amalgamated) and does not include some key information, such as museum accession numbers.

To turn toward the future, it is useful to think about strategies for recording what historic material is held in existing hands as well as

<sup>81</sup> <<http://www.englishfolkcostumes.co.uk/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>82</sup> <<http://www.docrowe.org.uk/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>83</sup> <<http://themorrisring.org/about-mr/morris-ring-archives>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>84</sup> <<http://www.morrisfed.org.uk/resources/archive-and-library/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>85</sup> <<http://www.museumofbritishfolklore.com/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>86</sup> C. Little, 'Annotated List of Folk Play Artefacts' Traditional Drama Research Group (2010) <<http://www.folkplay.info/Artefacts.htm>> [accessed 5 November 2017].

thinking about other ways in which we might engage with the material and built dimensions of traditional-dance history. Starting with the level of basic resource assessment, there is a need to carry out a basic audit of what relevant material relating to pre-revival and revival traditional dance is in public and private collections, noting core metadata including accession numbers, dates, origins and condition, with a view to further targeted study of particular important or vulnerable material. This is perhaps more easily said than done: there are over 2,500 museums in the UK, of which around 1,800 are formally accredited, with many other smaller, unregistered public collections. Despite the move to digitize collections, registers and accession lists, many are not online, and any such audit would require direct contact with curators. In addition, key information that would allow a particular piece of clothing or regalia to be identified as relating to folk dance is not always recorded in a format searchable with keywords. Any such audit also needs to include a proactive engagement with material potentially in private hands – the appearance of a horse skull connected with mumming from Hooton Pagnell (South Yorkshire) as part of a house sale auction at Bonhams in 2015 is a reminder of the potential of other material to be still surviving in private hands.<sup>87</sup>

Identifying material held in private hands is an even bigger challenge. Whilst some collections are relatively well known (Doc Rowe Archive; Museum of British Folklore) and are effectively archived and catalogued, in many cases there is less formal recording. For example, it is only recently I have been able to identify a small collection of folkloric material, including costumes from revival sides and mumming regalia, in the private Fred Mead Theatrical Memorabilia Performing Arts Collection. This material includes the recently purchased Hooton Pagnell mummers horse skull, a Derby Tup and horse from the Comberbach mummers and costumes from Danegeld Morris, Kits Coty Morris and Boston Morris Stumpers.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Bonhams, 'Lot 506W: A 19th Century Horse's Skull:' Auction 23248: Hooton Pagnell Hall <<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23248/lot/506/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>88</sup> <<http://theatrical-memorabilia-collection.com/>> [accessed 23 November 2017].



One useful starting point would be a formal survey of existing Morris sides via the various umbrella organizations, simply to ascertain the state of the existing resource in terms of paper, photographic and material archives. Informally developed and curated archives themselves often face serious issues concerning sustainability, access and conservation.<sup>89</sup> The first stage in addressing these issues, is by necessity trying to understand the extent of the problem. Yet if achieving a benchmark assessment of what is already held in collections forms a challenge; so does the next step, the proactive rather than reactive acquisition of traditional dance related material, particularly from active dance sides. Most museums have carefully targeted collection policies, as well as limited budgets. Pressingly, many also face constraints on storage space and financial limitations on all the associated on-costs of acquiring new material.<sup>90</sup>

Moving from the engagement with objects to places, there has obviously been a wider attempt to address what might be termed the 'built heritage' of the popular music scene,<sup>91</sup> by formally and informally spatially mapping the intersection of popular music and urban landscapes in certain cities, such as Liverpool and London.<sup>92</sup> As well as these more discursive explorations, curatorial bodies have also taken a more formal approach by enhancing key datasets, such as English Heritage's National Monuments Record (NMR) (now Historic

<sup>89</sup> Shaunna Moore and Susan Pell, 'Autonomous Archives', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16.4/5 (2010), 255-68.; Sarah Baker and Jez Collins, 'Sustaining Popular Music's Material Culture in Community Archives and Museums', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21.10 (2015), 983-96.

<sup>90</sup> Museums Association, *Museums in the UK: 2017 Report* (London: Museums Association, 2017) <<http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1221931>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>91</sup> Robin Page, 'Where the Action Was: Recording Music Clubs and Venues', *Conservation Bulletin* 56 (2007), 36-37; Brett Lashua, Sara Cohen and John Schofield, 'Popular Music, Characterisation and the Urban Environment', *Conservation Bulletin* 56 (2007), 35-36., both at <<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-bulletin-56/cb-56.pdf>> [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>92</sup> John Schofield, Sara Cohen and Brett Lashua, 'Dig the Beat', *British Archaeology*, 110 (2010), 22-27; Paul Graves-Brown, 'Where the Streets Have No Name: A Guided Tour of Pop Heritage Sites in London's West End', in *The Good, the Bad and the Unbuilt: Handling the Heritage of the Recent Past*, ed. by Sarah May, Hilary Orange and Sefryn Penrose (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012), pp. 63-76; Brett Lashua, 'An Atlas of Musical Memories: Popular Music, Leisure and Urban Change in Liverpool', *Leisure/Loisir*, 35.2 (2011), 133-52; Sara Cohen and Brett Lashua, 'A Fanzine of Record': Merseysound and Mapping Liverpool's Post Punk Popular Muscscapes', *Punk & Post Punk*, 1.1 (2011), 87-104.

England's Pastscape)<sup>93</sup> with entries relating to clubs and venues for popular music from the 1950s and 60s, as well as earlier jazz clubs.<sup>94</sup> However, there has been no attempt to bring in sites related to folk music.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, with one or two notable exceptions, there have been no attempts to map folk heritage in this way, although there are some key locations (e.g. Abingdon Ock Street; Bampton; Adderbury; Padstow; Abbot's Bromley) that might prove interesting case studies to explore how methodologies used for mapping cultural landscapes related to popular music might be developed to map the landscapes of traditional music and dance. Recent work within the growing field of contemporary archaeology might also present ways in which transient sites of performance such as folk festivals might also be interrogated spatially and mapped.<sup>96</sup>

There are also other strategies for lining local knowledge, expertise and memories of morris, folk dance and folk traditions into specific sites and locations. Engagement with local 'blue plaque' schemes is clearly one approach that has a successful track record. However, one noticeable aspect of this approach is that the individuals commemorated tend to be the collectors and those responsible for the early revival (Blunt; Butterworth; Manning; Neal, Sharp, Tiddy) rather than actual dancers themselves. This is partly because the plaque schemes often have formal requirements of regional or national importance that those commemorated have to meet. More generally, these plaques tend to focus on sites where key figures lived, rather than where dance took place. The notable exception to both these tendencies is William Kimber, who was both an original

<sup>93</sup> Historic England, 'Pastscape' <<https://www.pastscape.org.uk/>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>94</sup> Page, 'Where the action was.'

<sup>95</sup> Yvette J.E. Staelens, 2009. 'The Singing Landscape Project', in *Sharing Cultures 2009*, ed. by Sérgio Lira et al. (Barcelos: Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development, 2009), pp. 523-30; Yvette Staelens, 'Mapping the singing landscape', *CHOMBEC News* 10(2010-11), 5-7.

<sup>96</sup> Carolyn L. White, 'The Burning Man Festival and Archaeology of Ephemeral and Temporary Gatherings', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, ed. by Paul Graves-Brown, Roger Harrison and Angela Piccini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 595-609; Tiina Äikäs, Wesa Perttola and Tiina Kuokkanen "'The Sole You Found was the Soul of the Festival": Archaeological Study of a Rock Festival in Seinäjoki, Finland', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 3.1 (2016), 77-101.

dancer and a figure in the revival and is the only pre-revival dancer to have his house marked with a plaque. Lucy Wright's Pink Plaques scheme partially addresses this by exploring and marking homes related to living members of an existing tradition, rather than those who have died.<sup>97</sup>

Another practical way in which this issue might be addressed is through concerted attempts to get information relating key places with connections to folk dance and related tradition embedded into formal public records. A current scheme with a lot of potential is Historic England's 'Enriching the List' project, which is crowdsourcing public knowledge about Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments to enhance and extend the existing information held by Historic England, with the public encouraged to 'share images, insights and secrets of England's special places, and capture them for future generations'.<sup>98</sup> It allows people to submit images and supply supplementary information to the curated information sources managed by Historic England. Concerted engagement with this scheme by the folk dance community would be a golden opportunity to place accrued knowledge about key places in tradition into the wider public domain.

There are also lurking here bigger issues about how morris and other forms of traditional dance have been received in wider public culture. They have often been taken as an index of Englishness *par excellence*, but have also been embedded within alternative discourses and counter-narratives.<sup>99</sup> For example, morris has a long tradition of intersecting with 'New Age' and pagan revivalism, which goes back to the earliest days of the revival, but can be seen emerging in popular culture, particularly in television from the 1970s, such as in 'The Daemons' episode of Doctor Who (1971; Series 8; Episode 5) or in 'Children of the Stones', the classic 1977 uncanny children's drama set around a fictional version of the Avebury stone circle. The way in

<sup>97</sup> 'What is a Pink Shield.'

<sup>98</sup> Historic England, 'Share Your Knowledge to Enrich the List', <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>99</sup> Trish Winter and Simon Keegan-Phipps, *Performing Englishness: Identity and Politics in a Contemporary Folk Resurgence* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013).

which artists have responded to folk dance has also often centred on reworking the material dimensions of the tradition, particularly costume, rather than the dance itself. This can be seen in the photographs of Faye Claridge<sup>100</sup> and the 'Conversation Hats' created by Lucy Wright.<sup>101</sup>

To conclude, morris and other forms of traditional dance, despite being vibrant and popular practices with an extensive body of contemporary practitioners, were embedded within a narrative of heritage, survival and recovery from the earliest years of the revival in the late nineteenth century. The collecting of artefacts, costume and regalia took place alongside the recording and recovery of dance tradition themselves, although this collection initially took the form of a quasi-ethnographic practice. The move towards creating sites, rather than objects, of memory emerged with the construction of Cecil Sharp House in the interwar years, partly reflecting the fact that this was a period of consolidation of key institutions such as the EFD(S)S, and a period when the first generation of collectors and revivalists was dying, providing a sense of generational shift and perhaps provoking a period of self-reflection. Collection of material from the second post-war revival has been more *ad hoc*, but still widespread; and the expansion of place-making and marking activities has gone alongside this. The last hundred years have seen traditional dance emerge as a reflective movement aware of its pre- and post-revival history and aware of the need to mark it. Hopefully this paper has laid out the broad landscape of how this has happened and offered some possible ways in which the folk-dance world might continue to engage with its material heritage in the future.

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<sup>100</sup> <<http://www.fayeclaridge.co.uk/>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

<sup>101</sup> 'Creating the Countryside Exhibition at Compton Verney' <<http://www.artistic-researcher.co.uk/7918450/creating-the-countryside>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

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