

# THE MORRIS DANCER

No. ELEVEN\*\*\*\*\*NOVEMBER 1981

In thanking the men who have given much of this issue a Northern flavour, the Editor thinks that he should extend his thanks (perhaps belatedly) not only to all those who have contributed to The Morris Dancer issues but to those who have sent material not yet used - and, possibly, may not be used.

The Editor's pleasure (shared, he trusts, by readers of the Morris Dancer) is that much valuable information is now in print, which might have remained in a single copy; and a single copy can be lost, easily.

The Editor/Typist/Stapler/Despatcher sends his warm

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Write to

Ewart Russell, 50, Mile End Road, Colchester, C04 53X

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## THE MORRIS IN SCOTLAND

by

Bill Banbury

"Be divers wyis and operatiounes  
Men makis in court thair solistatiounes:

.....

Sum singis; sum dancis; sum tellis storeis;  
Sum lait at evin bringis in the moreis."

Of the forgotten life of pre-Reformation Scotland it is today overlooked that the northern kingdom, no less than the southern, participated readily in those aspects of late medieval folk life; the Robin Hood play, the May Games, and the morris dance. William Dunbar in commentary upon the court life of James IV at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reminds us, above, of the popularity of the morris. Two other of his poems are in the form of allegorical visions of the Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins and these are cast as males, whilst in 'The Dream' are portrayed the corresponding virtues in a processional dance: "Thane come the ladyis dancing in ane trace..." That we have here some description of forms of morris dance is clear from items in the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer for the years contemporaneous with Dunbar's poems. In 1503/4 for example occur items authorising the master of the king's wardrobe "to by beltis for the Moris dans" and "that samyn nycht" (Jan 6th, 1504) "to Colin Campbell and his marowis that brocht in the Moris dauns...£14" The following items describe the costume: "21 elne taffeti, rede and blew, quhilk wes sex daunsing cotis in Maister Johnis dans....5 elne blew taffeti to the womanis gown in the said dance....7 elne quhit to lyre the samyn....27 elne 3 quartaris taffeti, blew, rede, and variabl, deliverit to Franch Maister Johne for the said daunsaris hede gere..." Clearly the Scottish morris at this period comprised processional dances of men

and of women. A century later, in Aberdeen, this was still the case for the kirk session records for 1605 detail the nature of the custom: "the young men being cled in wemmenis

apparell...and the young wemen for dansing opinlie with thame throw the streittis with maskis on thair faces..." and prohibits such "abhominatiounes" "in a reformed citie".

Nevertheless the following festive season required a further prohibition that "na man nor woman in this burght about the superstitious tyme of Yuill or Newyeris day, or ony vether superstitious tyme, sail presume to mask or disagyse thame selffis in ony sort, the men in wemmenis claythis, nor the wemen in mennis claythis, nor vtherwayes, be dansing with bellis, ather on the streittis of this burght or in privat houss, in ony tyme cummin..."

Prior to the Reformation Scotland was indeed as "merry" and as given to the public celebration of traditional custom as her southern neighbour - and the recording of public admonition, fines and penance upon the cutty stool in the kirk session records of Scottish parishes and burghs bears witness to this. Aberdeen was in fact one of the leading centres of public merrymaking and the town council saw to it that there was elected annually two chief officers of "Bonaccord" to ensure that public rejoicing was sustained as was customary "of ye auld louabile honor consuetud and rit of ye said burgh" "as the ald wis hes bene." These were the Abbot and the Prior of Bonaccord, which latter term seems to describe the city of Aberdeen in its festive spirit, the community in its recreational aspect, or its by-name for purposes of jollification. There might at times be some reluctance to take on such duties for a year, since they would be undoubtedly onerous, subject to public criticism and comparison - and expensive. The town council had on occasion to threaten fines and loss of privileges for the non-responding to election as Lords of Bonaccord. There were similar penalties for burgesses for "non-riding" on St. Nicholas's Day, when the whole population turned out on horseback to parade the town. As the popularity of the May Games at Beltane and the first Sundays of May came to feature plays of Robin Hood and Little John, we find these titles used in place of the Abbot, Prior and Lords of Bonaccord in the sixteenth century.

Elsewhere in Scotland the morris was celebrated with enthusiasm. The burgh of Stirling supported a municipal morris side and in Elgin public performance of the morris was practised at the grammar school, and as befitted that northern city on the borders of the Highlands, to the accompaniment of the Highland great pipe. In 1600 the master of the school

Thomas Mauld was repeatedly arraigned before the kirk session on successive days for staging an Abbot play, acting in the kirkyard, and "for conducing a piper to play on the grypt Hype with his disciples" and for procuring "the bellis and dancing claythis" for his scholars. Some idea of contemporary Scottish morris costume may be gleaned from the treasurer's accounts quoted and from the descriptions of the "Triumphe and Play" staged in Edinburgh for the marriage of the Queen to the Dauphin of France in 1558. There was a morris dance side with three dancers in red taffeta and three in white and a fool with a buckram coat of "syndrie hewis" and an application of some thirty-one dozen bells. The bells of course might themselves provide interesting musical effects, as at Perth where there was preserved in Glovers Hall (and now in the City Museum) the costume, white leather shoes, gloves and rapier of a seventeenth century morris dancer of the Glovers Guild. (Together with headgear of a fringe of cords terminating with nuts of an unidentifiable species.) Information supplied to Sir Walter Scott for his "Fair Maid of Perth" describes the garment as "made of fawn coloured silk, in the form of a tunic with trappings of green and red satin. There accompany it two hundred and fifty-two small circular bells, formed into twenty-one sets of twelve bells each, upon pieces of leather, made to fasten to various parts of the body. What is most remarkable about these bells is the perfect intonation of each set..." The account of the performance of the dance itself as recorded in the minute of the Glovers Book describing the visit of Charles I in 1633 is interesting: "...for his mayesties welkome and entrie Threttein of our brethereine of this our calling of glovers with greine cappis silver strings rid ribbons Whyte schoes and bellis about thair leggis scheiring raperis in thair handis and all wther abulyement Dauncit our sword daunce with mony difficult knottis And allapallyesse fyve being wnder and fyve aboue wpone thair schowlderis Thrie of them dauncen throcht thair feit and about them drinking wyne and breking glass - Quhilk(god be praisit) was acted and done without hurt or skaith till any." (The more remarkable since the whole entertainment was performed on a floating stage in the middle of the River Tay!)

This remarkable dance seems to partake of some elements both of the Papa Stour longsword dance (which has survived the centuries and is still extant today in the Shetlands) and of the acrobatics of northeastern English rapper. Indeed Scottish records attest the presence of virtually all the elements known in English morris traditions, including at Edinburgh in 1590 a side of twelve sword dancers with bells, white shoes and "hattis of flouris", and in 1617 the musical accompaniment of the morris by a "tabourner and quhistler", and a "hobby horss" brought over for the occasion from Berwick.

Another folk custom of the City of Perth, namely that of the pastimes of St. Obert's Day (Dec.10th) seemed to involve such activities as the processing of young men and women to the cave of the Dragon's Hole on Kinnoull Hill after parading the town to the pipe and drum, and accompanied by others "rydand vpone are hors gangand in mumschance" i.e., mumming - perhaps some sort of hobby horse or pantomime horse involving two riders or persons inside, to wit in 1577 "Jhone m<sup>c</sup>baith and William Jak".) The custom was suppressed only after some ten years of prohibitions and punishments by the kirk session against "ye blasphemus and ethnick playes off sane tobertis pastyme." In Lanark as late as 1625 is an instance of apprentices indicted by the presbytery together with "Ro<sup>t</sup> Wat, piper, prophaners of the Sabbothe in fetching home a maypole, and dancing about the same upone pasche sonday.." especially reprehensible since Easter Sunday was one of the few feast days adjudged scriptural by the reformed religion and observed as a religious rite.

As in eastern England where Puritanism extinguished the morris in the seventeenth century, so in Scotland the supremacy of Calvinistic Presbyterianism has placed the morris tradition beyond recovery, except insofar as the court music of Renaissance Scotland might give some indication. Over three centuries elapse before a morris revival side makes its appearance. The Edinburgh morris side was one of the earlier morris revival sides, being admitted to the Morris Ring - of England - in 1935 (at the Stow-on-the-Wold Ring meeting held in the place where the morris contests were traditionally held to adjudge the best side to "dance upon the hill" at that mecca of the morris, Dover's Games on Dover's Hill.)

But despite the early re-appearance of the morris in the pre-war revival there is only a tiny handful of sides in Scotland at the present day: Lothian Morris who hosted the meeting of the Morris Ring - of England - in 1980 (its first venture beyond the border!), Banchory Ternan, Lothian's offshoot on Deeside, Gallus Morris of Glasgow, Beltane Rapper in the capital and the ad hoc Caledonian Morris formed for an Arts Council assisted tour of the Highlands a few years ago (Scotland's own "Travelling Morrice"?) and more recently a university side at Aberdeen. One wonders to what extent there is any great awareness of Scotland's own morris tradition, whether there is any use made of the traditional days which the various towns kept for their processions, folk plays and morris dancings. In the recovery of tradition, might at least Scottish sides use the Scottish terms for their principal functionaries? It would be appropriate for a squire of an Edinburgh side to hold the title of Abbot of Narent - and an Aberdeen side might elect as Squire and Bagman the Lords of Bonaccord: the Abbot and Prior of the Moreis of Bonaccord. The Guisards with their Mumschaunce might appoint a Robin Huid and Littil Jhone. Peebles had an Abbot of Unrest - elsewhere the Abbot and Prior of Unreason held sway. (Even as far north as Inverness.)

Are there any danceable tunes for morrismen in what we know of Scotland's court music? Could anyone have a go at working out what the Glovers' Guild of Perth must have done in 1633? It's a challenge because without some such attempts the charge can be made - and sustained justly - that the morris is an alien import into Scotland - and as we have seen it is in fact as indigenous as it is to England. If a revival side in Essex or East Anglia can dance the morris as a real piece of their own ethnic tradition - so indeed may a Scottish side - for as we have seen it was Puritan extremism in each case which suppressed the traditional customs of the people as "blasphemus and ethnick playes...and pastymes" - and remember the Presbyterian divines fulminated as much against the participation of women in these activities as they did against their supposed Papistical and superstitious nature. Scottish morris included women on occasion - especially when it was at one extreme a general public merrymaking - or at the other - a court processional. We shall end as we began with Dunbar on the occasion of

the Queen's visit to Aberdeen on the 4th of May, 1511, when the town council voted £200 for a "propin" or present to the Queen in the form of a town pageant with a procession from the port, finishing up with

"Syne come thair four and twentie madnis ying,  
All clad in greine of mervelous bewtie,  
With hair detressit, as threidis of gold did hing,  
With quhyt hattis all browderit rycht bravelie,  
Playand on timberallis and syngand rycht sweitlie;  
That semlie sort, in ordour weill besein,  
Did meit the Quein, hir saluand reverentlie: Be  
blyth and blissfull, burgh of Aberdein."

And against a similar situation in the near future, perhaps a women's morris side in similar mien?

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#### GLOSSARY

|                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| solistatiounes | occupations, pastimes         |
| trace          | file, line                    |
| elne           | ells, approx.1 1/4 yards.     |
| bunt, burgh    | borough                       |
| consuetud      | custom, tradition             |
| scheiring      | displaying, holding up        |
| raperis        | rapiers, rappers              |
| abulyement     | habiliment, apparel, clothing |

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|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| skaith                | injury  |
| gangand in mumschance | going about in mumming disguise   |
| Pasche Sunday         | Easter Sunday   |
| Narent                | not a place-name, but a pun on the expression "nae (no) rent"- thus un beholden to any overlord |
| detressit             | braided   |
| broderit              | embroidered   |
| saluand               | saluting  |

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ISSUE TEN, August, 1981, carried Keith Chandler's "The Papa Stour Dance". Trevor Stone wrote, 3rd September, 1981, with comment upon that article: he enclosed a copy to be sent to Keith, so it is possible to print both Trevor's comment and Keith's response in this Issue.

TREVOR STONE Keith Chandler's item in the August issue of the Morris Dancer presents an excellent summary of the recent developments surrounding the Papa Stour Longsword dance. I would, however, like to raise the following relevant points:

1. My understanding is that the adult team is currently active whereas Keith claims that the "senior side has largely languished but the tradition is actively maintained by successive sets of boys".

In 1979 I wrote to George Peterson and invited the team to a special Longsword weekend which was subsequently held in May, 1981. The final outcome was that the team was unable to join the 15 others at this event, largely due to the seasonal nature of their work and the cost of travel.

I am planning a further Longsword weekend to be held in 1983. I would welcome any offers of sponsorship (or other assistance) that would enable a Papa Stour team to attend.

2. In his reference to correspondence from George Peterson, the major motivator for all the Papa Stour teams, Keith omits to mention a letter which asks English Morris teams to refrain from performing this dance. The full letter can be seen in the 1978 copy of the Folk Music Journal but the gist is that the Shetland based team is anxious to re-

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establish this as a local tradition.

I think this is a particularly important request as an initial survey indicates that seven teams dance the Papa Stour dance (not all perform in public) plus an as yet unspecified number of Scottish dance troops.

3. At the last Longsword weekend, a performance was given by a traditional Flemish team, Dans Groep Lange Wapper. A number of people were struck by the similarity between this traditional dance from Antwerp and some elements of the Papa Stour dance.

Incidentally the lange wapper men have invited the Grenoside team to Antwerp for their traditional day (March 21 at Antwerp carnival).

4. The Longsword weekend turned up a considerable number of leads, photographs etc., and by coincidence one of these has a connection with the Papa Stour dance.

A member of the audience, Mr. R. Wishart, who now lives in Edinburgh, volunteered the information that he danced with the Papa Stour team 50 years ago when he was aged 18. I understand that it was not a schoolboys' side but I am following up this lead for further information.

I find this a particularly fascinating attempt to resurrect local tradition. The revival of local interest appears to be rather tenuous and relies heavily on the work of George Peterson. I take the view that an interest in active involvement by folklorists may have an adverse influence on the situation. We can only wait, and watch, and hope that the same team gets onto a firmer footing in the near future.

KEITH CHANDLER replies:

As I tried to point out in the article, the remoteness of the Shetlands precludes a great deal of collecting by non-islanders and is a hindrance in keeping abreast with the latest developments within the tradition. The adult Papa Stour side were certainly active during 1979, when Trevor Stone obviously invited them to the longsword weekend, but the older men have not shown much interest of late. George Peterson wrote on 9.9.1981

with the encouraging news that interest was again in evidence amongst the adults locally.

"Regarding the men's team which you correctly describe as having 'languished', I have to tell you that I have been approached inside the last week or so by several young men (in the early twenty age group who wish to keep the Sword Dance alive. This is exactly what I have always wanted: viz - the request to come from the men. As I have told you, I feel it is not properly traditional if the organisation comes from one person. Some of these fellows are students, so we are planning a meeting in December."

I decided to omit the request that other teams not dance Papa Stour solely because it causes so much acrimony, not because I was unaware of the facts. Indeed, I was present at the germination of the idea and did everything to encourage George to state his views. Beyond this I did nothing more and the process was carried through admirably by Neil Thompson in Edinburgh, another sympathetic soul to whom the Papa tradition should remain a purely local affair. I have mentioned my disgust that other teams should so blatantly disregard George's request in letters to "Ewart Russell when the article was being generated. It was implicit when I stated that, "the Papa Stour Sword Dance is a living tradition and should be regarded as such." The fact remains that these teams which perform the dance have chosen to ignore the fact (just as some revival morris sides perform dances from Abingdon and Campden, following similar requests from those traditional teams), and no amount of written material is going to alter the situation one whit. (Incidentally, I cannot find the letter from George Peterson in my copy of the 1978 Folk Music Journal.) It did need to be aired, though.

I disagree with Trevor Stone's terminology when he says, "the gist is that the Shetland based team is anxious to re-establish this as a local tradition." I was at pains to point out that there was no disruption in the continuity of the dance, although some purists might argue that a schoolboys' side could not be called traditional. I think I have stated clearly my own

feelings about this point. In many ways the school is incidental to the continuation of **the** dance: it merely provides a focal point for the practices and is convenient because George is a teacher there. Any team of boys below the age of fifteen is almost always going to be a 'schoolboy' side. All four of the surviving traditional teams in the south midlands (Campden, Quarry, Bampton, Abingdon) would probably have foundered long ago if they hadn't have absorbed numbers of boys at various stages of their existence.

Again, Trevor uses the terms "resurrect local tradition" and "revival of local interest appears to be rather tenuous." In some respects this belittles the work that George is doing, by implying that the only good team is an adult team. George has no trouble generating sufficient interest amongst the boys at the school. When I visited him in early 1978 there was a slight problem with a class teaching karate which fell on practice nights, but there appears at any rate to be no shortage of interest in joining the sword dance side. Perhaps one of the inducements is that it is a social event, for Brae is very remote by mainland standards and has little to offer its inhabitants in the way of communal recreation outside of the social clubs and activities of the oil companies and the school. As I pointed out, until 1964 the performing team was an adult one, and Mr. Wishart would have presumably danced with it: George Peterson joined the side when he was seventeen. Finally, I agree that outside involvement in the organisation of the team should be avoided, but it does little harm if there is interest and encouragement from the non-islanders, provided it remains subtle.

Minster Lovell. 23.10.1981

TREVOR STONE sent the results of his Longsword Dance Teams Survey: the material was gathered by survey cards sent with Morris Ring circulars in 1980, by letters and personal contacts, and from the Longsword Weekend of May, 1981.

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|--|----|
| Total number of teams dancing Longsword, | 68 |
| Performing Longsword exclusively         | 10 |
| " " regularly                            | 18 |
| " " occasionally                         | 40 |

Many teams perform more than one dance.

DANCES PERFORMED

|                 |    |                 |   |
|-----------------|----|-----------------|---|
| North Skelton   | 20 | Sleights        | 3 |
| Flamborough     | 14 | Boosebeck       | 2 |
| Ampleforth      | 10 | Poppleton       | 2 |
| Kirkby Malzeard | 10 | Goathland       | 2 |
| Papa Stour      | 7  | Kirkby Moorside | 1 |
| Escrick         | 6  | Loftus          | 1 |
| Helmsley        | 4  | Handsworth      | 1 |
| Grenoside       | 4  | Haxby           | 1 |
| Greatham        | 3  | Own composition | 2 |

Relevant, here, is the figure of seven teams dancing the Papa Stour dance. In his letter of 3/9/1981, Trevor writes:-

"...about the seven teams dancing Papastour; I enclose a full copy of the interim report which lists the teams involved. You will see that the majority of them do not perform the dance in public, no doubt in response to George Peterson's letter to the Morris Ring and EFDSS, in which he asks that teams avoid performing it.

Apparently, the dance is also performed by a number of Scottish dance societies and at least one Morris team learnt the dance in this way."

The results of the first Longsword Survey occupy six A4 pages; a second survey is in progress; the information is placed with the archive files housed by Past Squire of The Ring Ivor Allsop.  
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The Morris Dancer No.9, March 1981, carried an article on Bonny Green Garters, at Headington and Bampton, by Philip Heath-Coleman; No.10, August 1981, had comment upon that article by Bob Grant and Roy Dommett; Philip wrote, 26th September, to ask that Issue 11 should carry his thanks to Bob and Roy "for the light they have thrown on the Headington Bonny Green Garters following my item in issue 9."

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Richard Wheeler, in his letter enclosing his subscription, says, "One of my hobbies is collecting postcards, particularly of English customs and traditions, including Morris dancing."

He would like to hear from anyone with a similar interest.

314, Bramhall Lane South, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 3DL

Derek Schofield, in enclosing his subscription, writes that the papers presented at the Traditional Dance conference, Crewe, in March, 1981, are now available as "Traditional Dance" Vol.1: (English Folk Dance Scholarship: A Review - Theresa Buckland; Trad. Dancing in Scotland - Joan Flett: Solo Step Dancing Within Living Memory in North Norfolk - Peter Clifton, Ann-Marie Hulme; The Cotswold Morris in the 20th Century - Roy Dommett; Winster Morris Dance: The Sources of an Oikotype - Georgina Smith).

and that "Traditional Dance, 1982" will be held at Crewe and Alsager Coll. of H. Education (Alsager site) on Saturday 13th of March, 1982, with Julian Pilling, "What is Morris?": Roy Judge, "Tradition and The Plaited Maypole Dance": Keith Chandler "Morris Dancing in the South Midlands: The Sociocultural Background to 1914": Theresa Buckland, "Hollo! Here we are again! Godley Hill Morris Dancers": A Study in Longevity.

Conference details, and order form for the report on the 1981 Conference, from

Theresa Buckland, 10, Addison Close, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8BY Tel.Crewe (0270)663041. SAE when writing, please.

Attention is drawn once more to TRANSMISSION, the quarterly information exchange for "folklorists and others working in the field of cultural traditions in the British Isles." The August Issue has details of some thirty conferences; book news; and, among Notes and Queries, a piece by Ivor Allsop on the material in The Morris Ring's Archives.

TRANSMISSION is free at all folklore centres in the British Isles; personal copies can be sent for £1 per annum (£2 overseas.) Paul Smith, Cultural Tradition Research Press, 2a, Westfield Road, Bramley, Rotherham, Yorkshire.

and, also, to

"ROOMER", designed to provide an informal forum for researchers into Traditional Drama - to give opportunity for comparing

notes and airing views. It is produced six times a year: subscription is £2.50 p.a. (£3.50 overseas): Stephen Roud, 22, Adelaide Road, Andover, Hants., England.

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ISSUE Ten of this magazine stated that Jim Bartlett, of Ravensbourne M.M., had completed the LONG DANCE for which sponsorship forms had been provided in ISSUE Nine. Here is Jim's own account of that journey.

#### SOLO MORRIS JIG: ORPINGTON TO WORCESTER

At 3.04 p.m. on Friday 24th April, 1981, the longest ever morris jig ended with the galley and final capers of Princess Royal (Fieldtown) outside the Guildhall, Worcester. My dance had begun six days, six hours and thirty-four minutes previously, 202.2 miles away, outside my own front door in Orpington, Kent, with the same Fieldtown jig.

For the first three days the route had taken my Ravensbourne back-up team of musicians, cooks and drivers, plus myself, over a sweeping curve round South West London and North West to Oxford. The next two days saw us winding our way through Cotswold villages with names straight out of the Morris Book; Eynsham, Stanton Harcourt, Ducklington, Bampton, Minster Lovell, Leafield (or Fieldtown, as it is better known to morris men), Ascott-under-Wychwood, Bledington, Oddington, Longborough, Chipping Campden and Ilmington; while the final two days took us through Bidford on Avon and westward towards villages associated with border traditions - Upton Snodsbury and White Ladies Aston, where we turned South skirting the Western limits of Pershore and crossing the River Severn at Upton on Severn before the final run up the river to Worcester and finish.

Apart from the final day the weather was reasonably kind, especially when one considers what it had in store the following Sunday, when an extremely heavy fall of snow cut off many Cotswold and Border villages for several days. Had this snow arrived earlier I would no doubt have had a different tale to tell, and Will Kemp's record would still be intact.

I received magnificent support from the public and morris sides throughout the route. The psychological boost of being 'danced through the parish' by local sides was tremendous, and

I shall remember those times with much pleasure as long as I live. There were of course the hard times, when legs and feet ached and my body cried 'enough'; but the thought of all the goodwill I had received along the way, and the knowledge of what success could mean to the Multiple sclerosis Society, who would benefit from the sponsorship, kept me going. On a more practical note I must mention Ted Williams, my physiotherapist, whose ministrations kept the aches and pains to a minimum and prevented any serious problems developing.

There is not space here to mention and thank everyone by name who assisted me both before and during the dance. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you who danced, played, or simply came to watch.

Peter Franklin and Paul Burgess of the Ravensbourne M.M. must have set an unofficial record for paired melodeon playing over the week. Theirs was a magnificent effort and no dancer, I am sure, has ever been better supported by his musicians, who between them were responsible for something like 76 hours of music over the week.

Finally I must mention The Faithful City Morris Men who organised my reception at Worcester and the weekend of dance that followed it; and who paid me the great compliment of creating me an honorary member of their side.

I hope to get the book I am writing about the dance and my preparation for it published before too long, and there will hopefully be room in that volume to give every side and everyone who helped the mention and thanks they deserve. I have always enjoyed my dancing, but that week made me proud to be part of the brotherhood of the morris.

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At 31/10/1981 the money raised by the jig was approximately £9,000; over £7,000 of that going to the Bromley branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society; which, Jim says, with justifiable triumph in his voice, has proceeded with the purchase of the holiday chalet.

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The Secretary to the LEYLAND MORRIS MEN, Pete Ansbro, has sent this notice about Jimmy Grant, a Leyland dancer:

James Morton Grant was a Scot by birth. His family moved to Leyland in 1910, when he was six years old. His father worked at the L & B Rubber Co., and Jimmy retired from the same firm in 1969 after 43 years service, having been fore-man joiner of the Maintenance Section.

As a boy, his first role in the Leyland May Festival was dancing the Sailor's Hornpipe; later he was a footman on one of the carriages, and a member of the Scottish Dance Troupe, before being taken into the Morris Dancers - after a wait of about four years! He became Leader of the team in 1924 or 1925, and held the post until 1936 when the May Festivals ceased. The Morris Dances had become a part of his life, and Jimmy was actively involved each time an attempt was made to revive the dances: first, with 'Gus' Harris at St. James' Youth Club, Moss Side, then with the Leyland team of the mid-1950's, and finally with the Leyland Folk Dance Club - which led to the present revival.

It isn't easy to make a short summary of Jimmy's contribution to the success of the present team: it has been an on-going thing for fifteen years now. He was always most patient and hardworking when teaching the dances to newcomers and it's a sobering thought that he had each one of us weighed up within a matter of a few minutes! Very astute he was, a real canny Scot - but certainly not mean or dour. He had a marvelous sense of fun; a fund of amusing stories, and he gave everything to seeing that we kept his beloved dances alive.

He was delighted to see our revival maintain its momentum, even through some difficult times, and he was very proud to see us turn out each Leyland Festival. Come to that he was proud to see us turn out anytime.

As regards dances, Jimmy certainly wasn't narrow-minded: he thought the world of the Leyland dances, but he was always interested to see other dances we did, and to see how visiting teams presented their dances. He believed that if you were going to the trouble of learning any dance, then you might as well do it right; he wasn't too impressed

by shoddy and half-hearted lancing, or by repetitious dances ("papering over the cracks").

He held up an example to us all: honesty, dignity and proficiency in the dancing. "Enjoy the dancing by all means (or you might as well go home!), but don't forget that you represent Leyland Morris Men, Leyland itself, and generations of dancers before you."

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Jimmy Grant died on Saturday, 10th October, 1981. Pete says, Jim was "a morris dancer of the old tradition, and one of Leyland's finest."

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EDDIE DUNMORE, of the Ravensbourne M.M., writing from Bampton Road, London, S.E., of the following contribution to the magazine, has, the enclosed has been hanging about in manuscript for some years now, having been put into some sort of shape and order by Bert Simons when he retired."

#### St. Mary Cray: A Lost Morris Tradition?

Some years ago, while searching in the Orpington Reference Library for any information on local customs in Kent, Eddie Dunmore came across a collection of photographic slides showing May Day festivities in St. Mary Cray in 1890. Among these slides were some of "Morris Dancing". In one slide the "morris dancers" are all women, fourteen in number, dressed in shepherdess style and carrying garlanded crooks. Another slide shows men and women in a double ring formation, men outside and women facing them inside. Another shows men and women separated, the men carrying sticks or swords and dressed in some sort of period costume with broad-brimmed hats, thigh-length jerkins, sashes and baggy breeches (pantaloon, in fact.) No bells, ribbons, nor any of the traditional morris characters were apparent and no documentation was available.

A description of the slides was sent to the late Alex Helm as of possible interest in connection with his work on local customs. In his reply he said that the St. Mary Cray event was fairly well known, but that he did not know enough about it to decide whether it was a "genuine thing" or a revival in the tradition of "Merrie England". He raised the question, however,

of what dances were being performed in 1890, pointing out that Cecil Sharp had not then begun his work; also, that although D'Arcy Ferris had revived the Bidford Morris four years previously, no-one else was known to have done similar work. He mentioned several national publications in which contemporary accounts of the St. Mary Cray festivities appeared, suggesting a search in the files of the local newspaper of the time for clues as to their origin and any preceding customs.

Subsequently Eddie Dunmore traced and obtained copies of reports from the "District Times" (now part of the Kentish Times Group) dated 3rd May 1889, 2nd May 1890, 8th May 1891, and 10th May 1892, from which the following have been extracted:

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE ST. MARY CRAY CARNIVAL

On 1st May, 1889 a holiday and fete was given by Mr. E. H. Joynson (an important patentee in the development of machine water-marking) to his employees at the local papermill, in the form of a revival of the May Day celebrations of "Merrie England". Its success led to its repetition as a general holiday and carnival for the village in May 1890, 1891 and 1892, after which it apparently ceased.

#### DETAILS OF THE CARNIVAL

The Carnival each year started with a procession from the paper mill (now shut) through St. Mary Cray and Orpington, followed by games and dancing in the Recreation Ground at Derry Downs, finishing with a lantern procession back to the mill in the evening. The 1889 and 1890 processions included the various Friendly Societies and Unions in costume, with bands and banners; the May Queen and retinue; Jack-in-the-Green, Lord of Misrule, chimney-sweeps, milkmaids (with cow and garlands), clowns and maskers, tilters, etc. The games included maypole dancing (the plaiting type) tilting (with quintain), quarterstaff play and glee singing. Dancing included Sir Roger de Coverley, but the reports for these two years make no mention of morris dancing or morris dancers.

In 1891 some characters were omitted from the procession and new characters included, such as Robin Hood's men, the hobby horse, hand-bell ringers and (to quote the account): "the picturesque Morris Dance, the dancers of which, 32 in number, had been instructed by Mr. Paul Valentine of Drury Lane. The

picturesque effect of the tinted costumes and the quaint uniforms against the background of fresh green grass, as the dancers tripped around the morris rings, was indescribably charming..." The "morris dance" music, played by a local brass band, was taken from Lieut. Dan Godfrey's Ploughboy Quadrille. The dancers are not named, but were presumably male and female in view of the reference to "costumes" and "uniforms".

In the report for 1892 sixteen "morris men" and sixteen "morris girls" are named, together with twelve shepherds, sixteen shepherdesses and other groups of dancers. Mr. Valentine of Drury Lane is again credited with the training of the dancers and it is mentioned that the dance of shepherds and shepherdesses was arranged by Mr. Joynson himself.

It is worth noting at this point that preparation for the event was not without hazard. Luring the searching through the newspaper files an accident report was found. The practices were held at the papermill and one participant, cycling home after an evening practice, was involved in a fatal accident with a four-horse dray.

#### WERE THERE ANY LOCAL ANTECEDENTS?

The 1890 report contains a dissertation (well-informed and apparently accurate and based, we would guess, on Chamber's "Book of Days") concerning the origin and history of May Day customs. It mentions some customs which were still extant at the time in other parts of the country and some which were already defunct. Nothing of a local nature is mentioned, the only reference being:- "For many years the May Carnival has been little more than a pleasant recollection in this part of Kent. One hears of a great celebration of the Summer festival long ago from the oldest of old inhabitants, but any precise description of the festivities or its time-honoured characters, with their dress or their doings in time past, from local sources is lost." It is not clear how much local research, if any, led to the above conclusion, but it is obvious that the writer had no information about any local morris tradition or about any recent May Day observance of any kind.

#### CONCLUSION.;

To sum up, the St. Mary Cray event was obviously a well-organised and lavishly produced Spring Carnival on "Merrie England"

which succeeded in involving the whole community and attracted fairly wide attention; in 1891 it was reported in the Illustrated London News, the Graphic, The Queen and The Gentle woman, and in 1392 an attendance of 25,000 was estimated. It was also referred to in Ditchfield's "Old English Customs" (1896).

A good deal of trouble seems to have been taken over costumes and the various characters and customs represented, but the dancing was less authentic - apart from Sir Roger de Coverley (which could have been still generally remembered in 1890). The maypole dances were imported Continental ribbon-plaiting type. As for the "morris dancing", we cannot escape the conclusion that it **was** not based on any local traditional survival (or revival but was something invented for the occasion by a theatrical dance instructor. It is, of course, just possible that he had some knowledge of traditional morris (it is not entirely impossible that he could have seen Bidford as revived by D'Arcy Ferris). Our own conclusion is that, given the scanty description of his efforts, the results bore little or no resemblance to traditional Cotswold morris as we know it.

A. Simons and E. Dunmore (sent 28/8/1981)

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HARRY DE CAUX, of Thaxted, sent an extract from; "Holst", by Imogen Holst; The Great Composers Series, Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1974: it refers to the 1916 Music Festival at Thaxted: P.43

"Whit Monday made no pretences, but rained steadily all day. On both afternoons Mrs. von Holst entertained the musicians at Monk Street Cottage for tea; driven indoors by the rain they resorted at once to music - Elizabethan love songs, rounds and part-songs. On Monday evening we were invited by Mr. Noel to a Garden Party at the Vicarage; owing to the downpour it was held in the dining-room - a varied and festive evening, beginning with folk songs and morris dances by the Thaxted singers, which they vainly tried to teach us till the house shook to its foundations - then a melodrama in the barn; and finally more dancing."

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The next great "Dancing England" is to be on 16th January, 1982, at the Assembly Rooms, Derby. Details, of performers and prices, from John Shaw, 51, Toton Lane, Stapleford, Notts.