

THE MORRIS DANCER

No. NINETEEN*****AUGUST 1984

The subscription for The Morris Dancer No.20 (November), and Nos.21 & 22 (March and August, 1985) is the same as for the past two years: i.e., £1, in all, for those three issues, one copy of each, including the postage. £2 buys two copies of each issue, £3 three copies of each issue, and so on. Member clubs will receive one free copy of each issue. Please make cheques payable to The Morris Ring. This information will be carried in the Morris Ring's first Autumn circular, of course.

The Editor asks that all orders will be sent by mid-October, at latest, so that he knows how many copies to order for the November printing.

Write to Ewart Russell, 50, Mile End Road,
Colchester,
C04 5BX

Where he will welcome contributions to the future issues of
THE MORRIS DANCER

2.

Issue No.18, March 1984, carried most of an article by Philip Heath-Coleman, on "Lads a Bunchum": and a note that the two final paragraphs, and Notes, would be in No.19. NOTE 3 (see p.19, Issue 18) was a statement of where his article on Ascot could be found; and that he expected to write about the Dearest Dickie tune, later. The NOTE 3, below, is fuller. (If any subscriber to this Issue did not receive No.18, please tell the Editor.)

LADS A BUNCHUM (cont.)

The one real objection to my thesis arising from the evidence is the fact that more or less the same dance as was performed by the Sherborne dancers to the 'Dearest Dickie' tune, but under the name of 'Lads a Bunchum', was also performed by them to a version of the very tune I have sought to establish was the "true" 'Lads a Bunchum', namely 'The Orange In Bloom'. The problem is not insurmountable. It may be that the title 'The Orange In Bloom' displaced the title 'Lads a Bunchum', which, however, remained sufficiently associated with the dance to survive in use for the version performed to the 'Dearest Dickie' tune (which may have been adopted into the Sherborne repertoire nameless).

It is significant in this respect that the title 'The Orange In Bloom' is not otherwise recorded. It may perhaps be a corruption (or a mishearing on the part of Sharp?) of the well-known 'Orange and Blue', and therefore another 'stray' name (4). If so, it would help explain the association of the title 'Bonnetts o' Blue' with the tune at Bledington.

NOTES 1. Versions of the tunes named can be found in the Bacon 'Handbook': 'Boys of the Bunch' p.22 (where it is used for Ascot); 'Laudnum Bunches' pp.179 & 182; 'The Orange In Bloom' p.282; 'Bonnetts o' Blue' (Bledington) p.85; 'Lads a Bunchum' Hinton p.203, Adderbury p.7, Sherborne p.282; the Sulgrave tune which Sharp noted as 'Lads a Bunchum' is included in Bacon in the Brackley section under the title 'Balancey Straw' (p.104).

2. Cecil Sharp noted the corner dance 'Lads a Bunchum' from an old Ducklington dancer, Joe Druce, who told him: "Boys of the Bunch. Lads a Bunchum we used to call it". This was on the same

3.

day as he noted the tune 'Boys of the Bunch' from Fred Gardner, an old North Leigh dancer. Ducklington and North Leigh shared a musician, John Lanksbury, in their latter days, and it seems reasonable to assume that both dancers were referring to the same tune (and dance?).

3. 'Morris Dancing at Ascot under Wychwood'. Morris Matters vol.5, no.4, 1983. The appearance of this article in two parts, however, allows me the luxury of refuting myself here. Sharp's brief description of the Ascot dance - "Double dance i.e. crossover etc." sets it apart from those he describes in the same list as 'cross corner dances'. I now guess that the chorus was done with partners across the set - as 'The Gallant Hussar' elsewhere.

I deal with the 'Dearest Dickie' family of tunes in 'Dearest Dickey - the Happy Clown'. English Dance and Song vol.6, no.1, Spring 1984.

PHILIP HEATH-COLEMAN,

October, 1983, and April, 1984

WALTER ABSON writes:-

Some confusion seems to have arisen concerning the origin of the name "The Morris Ring", and it may be useful to set out the facts of the matter.

The possibility of some kind of federation of morris and sword dance clubs was discussed within the Cambridge Morris Men during 1933 ⁽¹⁾, and the idea took clearer shape at a meeting of the club on 2 November of that year when, amongst other things, various suggestions for the name of such a federation were put forward and discussed ⁽²⁾. The one which found favour was "The Morris Ring", proposed by Conway Waddington ⁽³⁾ and after the meeting this was suggested to the five other clubs who later joined with the Cambridge club in founding the Ring. All of them liked the proposed name, and as no other possibilities were suggested it was used from then onwards.

The confusion which has occurred has been with the name of the Springhead Ring, an organisation founded by Rolf Gardiner, who farmed at Springhead in the village of Fontmell Magna, Dorset. He was a man of wide interests, ranging from

music and folk dance to the preservation of the countryside and the promotion of international friendships, and in the early 1930s he and a number of friends who were sympathetic to his ideas set up an association called the Wessex Centre Group. This changed its name to the Springhead Ring in the summer of 1934⁽⁴⁾. Although Rolf was an old member of the Cambridge Morris Men he was out of touch with the club during the period when the Morris Ring was being considered, and he took no part in those discussions. It seems probable that he first heard of the Morris Ring when he attended the annual meeting of the Cambridge Morris Men on 14 April 1934, after which the rather cumbersome title of the Wessex Centre Group was soon changed to something simpler and more attractive.

It is quite definite that the Morris Ring did not derive its name as an extension from that of the Springhead Ring; the reverse seems very likely to have been the case.

References

- (1) An account of the formation of the Morris Ring is given in my article in No.4 of "The Morris Dancer", August 1979.
- (2) Minute Book of the Cambridge Morris Men.
- (3) C.H.Waddington, later to become Professor of Animal Genetics at Edinburgh University.
- (4) 1934 Spring and Harvest issues of "North Sea and Baltic", a form of newsletter produced for his organisation by Rolf Gardiner.

WALTER ARSON 23/11/1983

ANTONY HEYWOOD, of Rietstraat 15, 5662 RA GELDROP, The Netherlands, wrote in November last,

"Enclosed you will find a brief history of the Helmond Morris Dance Group (Morrisdansgroep Helmond) which may be useful background for clubs contemplating attending our Ring Meeting in 1985".

MORRIS DANCING IN HELMOND (HOLLAND)

The Morris Dance Group Helmond has been in existence since 1934. The founder was the well known teacher and cultural promoter, Theo Driessen. He did a great deal for youth development especially in the liturgical and musical field. He adopted

English Morris Dancing rather than scouting as an ideal means of keeping the members of his boys' choir together whilst their voices were breaking until they could resume singing in the men's choir.

The group has had an unbroken existence until the present day. During the war, dancing continued in secret. Afterwards it got going again gradually although a number of instructors were still serving in Indonesia. Until 1972, the group revolved round a decreasing but more dedicated group which in the end had dropped to eight. Since then the numbers have increased and the membership is currently about 25. Practices are held on two evenings a week from September to June, and in the Spring and Summer regular shows are given.

Contacts with England were rather summary until 1975. In 1948 two members of the group went to a course in England. Further courses were impossible because the interest in the Morris in England waned temporarily. Through contacts with a Cambridge choir, a visit to Helmond by the Cambridge Morris Men was arranged in April 1975. The same summer Helmond returned the visit to Cambridge. Since then the contacts with the motherland of the Morris have been closer. Helmond was accepted as member of the Morris Ring in 1976. They attend a Ring Meeting approximately every two years. With about the same frequency English instructors visit Helmond to teach new dances or to polish up the repertoire.

The repertoire of the Helmond Morris Dance Group originally consisted of dances from the villages of Headington, Brackley and Adderbury. Since 1975, the Bampton, Field Town and Lichfield traditions have been added. In addition, sword dances from Sleights, Flamborough and Kirkby Malzeard are included in the programmes. Right from the start, the dances have been accompanied on the recorder, although currently a violinist and an accordionist are also playing for the group.

When the group acquired new costumes after the war, they chose baldricks and handkerchiefs of three different colours; the first pair had red, the middle pair white, and the last pair blue. This presented problems however when more than six dancers were present, or when dancers had to change position. Therefore it was later decided to adopt a uniform costume, and

the choice fell on green baldricks and red handkerchiefs, which results in their being instantly recognisable at Ring Meetings.

J.A.HEYWOOD 10th November, 1983

KEITH CHANDLER writes:-

The Editorial of the eighteenth Issue asked for more material on Border Morris. Is the following newspaper account known to researchers in this area? It does not appear in the book of references issued by the Morris Ring, nor is it noted in E. C. Cawte's survey. There may well be sons or daughters of the named dancers still living in Bengeworth or the surrounding area.

Evesham Standard and West Midland Observer, 4 May 1940

OLD EVESHAM MORRIS DANCER

Funeral of Mr. R. Johns

One of the few remaining mummers and morris dancers in Evesham, Mr. Richard ("Dick") Johns, of 61, Port-street, Bengeworth, died on Saturday, aged 76...

He used to tour the district in the winter with a dancing troupe some 40 years ago... (page 1)

Old Bengeworth Character

Many Bengeworth residents will miss old "Dick" Johns and his friendly smile with which he greeted everyone. He would tell many a tale of his experiences as a mummer and Morris dancer over 50 years ago.

Mr. Johns was a member of the Bengeworth Mummers, a troupe of local young men who toured the villages at Christmas bringing joy to the country folk with their witty verses and strenuous dances...

At the age of 76 years, "Dick" Johns was one of the three remaining members of the troupe in Bengeworth. The others are George Collins and Jim Thould. Some local residents, no doubt, still remember the activities of these "young" men, who were last seen giving their programme 45 years ago.

Mr. Johns would say "whenever we went to Bidford we would always ask the policeman's consent before we began, and

were always 'started off' with a silver coin by the policeman's wife. But the journey to Sedgeberrow and Hinton was never worth the price of a pair of boot laces!"

He was often to be heard expressing the opinion to members of the younger generation that the present-day folk dancing was but a slight imitation of Morris dancing. (page 4) On page four of the issue there is the text of the Bengeworth mummers play and also a photograph of Johns as an old man.

KEITH CHANDLER, Minster Lovell,

21 March, 1984

Dr. CHRISTOPHER CAWTE, writing on the 31st of March, 1984, from Leicester,

"It is an odd thought, that when I first learned to play, and followed Kenworthy (Schofield) for a day tour at a Ring Meeting, just getting the hang of how he did it, there were about six people in the country who could play the whistle and drum, none like him, and a generation of present day morris men had not been born!"

MORE ON THREE-HOLE PIPES

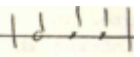
I bought my galoubet in 1956 from the maker, M. Farbre, who was then one of the musicians of Lei Tambourinaires de Saint Sumian, from Brignoles (Var, France). It is turned from one piece of wood (plus the plug) and has a cylindrical bore of 7.5 by 285 mm. The lowest useful note is just above C=512. The three holes are tuned to give four tones, and it is usual to

use the second note (about D) as the lowest keynote. In this way one can easily play a normal major scale, pinching the bottom hole for a C sharp below D. I can only play a single octave on it, but I think it is a poor example; the pipe quickly loses its voice with damp, and I could get a longer range out of the one which M. Farbre played. He thought my conventional Generation pipe, with the keynote at the bottom, a very poor article, barely to be considered a musical instrument. The volume from my galoubet is also poor, but this is related to the volume of air in the pipe, and Provençal tambourinaires usually play in groups, or at least, not alone.

A Basque once showed me how to play his txistu. I forget the fingering now, though I remember a normal scale required a lot of cross-fingering, and that one could easily get well beyond one octave without the sharpening of pitch which is inevitable if the pipe has a cylindrical bore. Kenworthy Schofield told me that good performers could play two pure octaves, and that he had heard them play Bach sonatas.

Turning to the Generation type pipes, I think there will be no objection to pipes with mouthpieces of brass, but Generation stopped using lead in about 1954, and I bought several at sale price because I found them much better than plastic. I made a number of wooden ones, and there are two problems. As the volume of the pipe increases so does the volume of sound, but if it is of lower pitch it is not heard so well in performance. Also, as the bore of the pipe decreases relative to the length, it becomes easier to obtain the higher overtones. Because overtones are required one must reduce the bore, and therefore the volume, and if one increases the length the pipe tends to lose on the penetrating factor, which allows it to be heard above dancing feet, bells, wind, ice-cream vans, and the other gifts of fate well-known to pipers.

F. E. Fryer (JEFDSS, 1937, 152) said that J. Pole (i.e., Powell) of Bucknell was used to the galoubet fingering. Russell Wortley used Powell's drum as a model for the ones which he had made. He was sure that the deep drums used by Basques and Provençals were neither traditional nor historical in England. Kenworthy Schofield bought his drum in Barcelona, and told me that Powell 'rattled' his drum, in contrast to the simpler

 rhythm which was common at one time, and which I suspect had been copied from Thoinot Arbeau, Orchesographie, 1589, (Dover edition 1967, 60-4). Arbeau, by the way, clearly describes 'Generation' fingering for the three-hole pipe. (pp48-9)

Old illustrations of the whistle and drum show the drum played on the snare side, which is not otherwise usual. James Blades (once professor of Percussion at the Royal College of Music) suggested that these small drums were made with relatively thick skins, and playing on the snare side prolonged the sound of the drum, or, as he put it, made the drum more

'snarey'. He said military drummers reverse their drums if they get damp, for the same reason.

E. C. CAWTE

The Morris Dancer has received a copy of
MORRIS AND MATACHIN

by John Forrest. It is a joint publication by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language. It is CECTAL Publications No.4. It is 5¼ x 8¼ inches in size, has 64 pages, and is splendidly printed. The work is in five main sections:- 1. History of Scholarship: 2. Historical Survey of the Morris: 3. Matachin in Europe and England: 4. The Matachin(es) in the New World: 5. Conclusion. There is a Biography and a detailed Index.

A quotation from the ordering form is

"Precisely reasoned and closely documented, this study presents the case that Cotswold morris and certain North American Indian dances had a common origin in the sixteenth-century courtly dancing fad known as 'matachin'. John Forrest makes his case plain with the use of a model for comparing dances on a point by point basis. In content and method the work is a signal contribution to dance scholarship. It is written in a lively style that is eminently readable with an important selection of illustrations."

The Editor endorses that.

This book must be read (owned) by any dancer with some interest in the Morris before his own time: and it costs under three pounds. From, The Publications Secretary, The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN: or, The English Folk Dance and Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2, Regent's Park Road, London, NW1 7AY. Price is £2.50, plus 40p postage and packing (EFDSS Members, £2, + 40p)

On the _____ suggestion of Past Squire of The Morris Ring Morris Sunderland, CHRIS CLARKE, 38a The Broadway, Stoneleigh, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 2HU, of the Spring Grove M.M., has begun to

assemble an archive on Fooling: please will readers write to Chris about anything to do with fooling, historical or otherwise, and however slight. This specialist archive will be complementary to the main Morris Ring archive in the charge of Ivor Allsop. (See Morris Dancer No.17, November, 1983, pp14-15)

Issue 18, March, 1984, gave advance notice of POLKA ROUND, Folk Dances of Cambridgeshire, by Cyril Papworth, 25, Ferry Path, Cambridge. This 28pp finely produced book, with notation and music for seven Feast dances ("danced in the village pub rooms around Cambridge at the end of last century and the first fifteen years of this") and the Comberton Broom Dance, can be obtained from Cyril, price £1.20 (£1.40 by post): he said, early July this year, that he hoped to produce a tape to match the contents of the book - those writing to him should enquire about that.

Two-day Conference at
Cecil Sharp House
CALENDAR CUSTOMS

on Saturday the 22nd of September (10 am - 6.30 pm) and Sunday the 23rd of September (10 am - 4 pm); there will be 15 speakers; and discussion both on the papers presented and more generally, at this conference organized by the Folklore Society and the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The fee is £12 (£7 for students and the unwaged) to include tea and coffee each day. Please write to the Society, (Cecil Sharp House, 2, Regent's Park Road, NW1 7AY, tel.01 485 2206) or to Theresa Buckland, (10, Addison Close, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8BY tel. Crewe - 0270 - 663041) for full information about the conference.

CECTAL, University of Sheffield, S10 2TN, tel,0742 78555, ext.6296 sent three leaflets: Events 1984; Research Guide No.3, Ballad and Folksong order form, for a book costing £1, 20p p and p; and the order form for the catalogue of the Ballads in the Charles Harding Firth Collection, costing £3 plus £1 p and p. Please make enquiries to CECTAL.

The Morris Dancer continues its exchange with ROOMER, the Newsletter of the Traditional Drama Research Group - interested

people write to Steve Roud, 22, Adelaide Road, Andover, Hants., or to Paul Smith, 2a, Westfield Road, Bramley, Rotherham, Yorks. ROOMER "...includes notes and queries, details of publications, out of the way texts, information on work in progress".. "anything that may be of interest to those working in the field of Traditional Drama."

Leyland Morris Men sent their 17th club report - seventeen closely typed pages. The club has good reason to be proud of such a fine annual production; (storage would be a problem if there had been such reports for every year since 1889, the date for the side proclaimed on the cover.)

Kennet Morris Men sent their usual finely printed programme - 52 timed shows, each with its O.S.Map Reference.

Issue 15, p.20, and Issue 17, p9; had mention of the extensive dancing programmes of the Kennet and Datchet clubs. Cyril Smith, of the Thames Valley M.M., wrote on the 27th of November, 1983,

"Keith Le Page writes truly when he says 'Perhaps there is something in the water of the Thames which keeps sides along its banks so busy.' Thames Valley Morris Men have a complete record of their activities since their first public appearance at Claygate Flower Show on 19th July, 1952. The Log of the first 25 years is in a bound volume: the next six years are in a loose leaf file waiting to be bound in 2002."

MORRIS EXTRA

At the end of the last century and during the first part of this there was a great revival of interest in morris dancing in the North West of England and many morris dance teams were formed as a result. Almost all of the dancers took part in a procession or gave demonstrations as part of a festival and many local newspapers included detailed descriptions of the teams and their performances in reports of these festivals.

These reports almost always contained florid and verbose phrases such as 'the very feast of the procession' and 'the golden laurels that clustered around them [the dancers] will be sustained', while the movements of the dance were described, for example, as 'peculiar saltatory movements', 'attractive

gyrations' or 'terpsichorean directions'. There was nothing extraordinary in those days about this type of journalism and it would have been accepted as being quite normal, although today's reader may find it excessive and even slightly amusing.

However, it is still possible to find the occasional report which must have seemed sycophantic even to readers who were used to such reporting. One of these was a description of a children's team in 1905: 'Another pleasing feature was the young lady Morris Dancers. Watching how cleverly these little maidens footed it through the gaily decorated streets to the inspiring music of the bands, one realised how Milton's reference to the "light fantastic toe" had been so often sadly misapplied to the step of the ballroom, while here was the genuine thing. They went forward, as it were, on a spring that sent the pulse of the onlooker beating to an unwonted measure suggesting to others some dim notion of what revelry might have meant in Old England before the Roundhead hummed his surly tune. It really was an exhilarating sight to watch the band crossing and intercrossing, or, in two single files, step "fair heel and toe" in regular time'. (1)

This kind of journalism was not necessarily confined to the Victorian and Edwardian newspapers for the following report appears in 1922: 'Although [the dancers] had but ten lessons, so eager had they been to learn, the joyous spirit of the dancing appealing to them, that they had proved apt pupils and gave an excellent entertainment. While a wholesome exercise there was a brightness, a gaiety and sprightliness, evoked by the dancing which was conveyed to the spectators, so that many of them felt like trying to join in. The dancers exhibited a spirit which seems to be absent from those engaged in much of the modern dancing who appear to be anxious over their steps, afraid that they may make a mistake. Nothing of that anxiety found expression in the look or bearing of these exponents of the dances, who looked rather as if they were finding an outlet for a vigorous and healthy vitality and for sheer joy in living...the movements were strong and vigorous, yet executed quietly and gracefully. It was the natural artistry of the dancing which appealed so much to the onlooker, as it was "poetry in motion", the dominant characteristic being its "gay simplicity" as an early nineteenth century writer described it'. (2)

The prize for inventive journalism must, however, be given to the writer of the following passage, found in a report of a festival in 1905 and headed 'The Morris Dance': 'That quaint but pretty dance, invented by a Lancashire man of the honoured name of Morris, found able exponents in the Bolton Industrial Morris Dancers, who were accompanied by their own band. The Morris Dance is not by now any means confined within the borders of the County Palatine, but it seems to appeal to the native taste with irresistible force'. (3)

In order to collate all written references to morris dancing over a period of years it becomes necessary to spend many hours searching through column after column of unrelated reports. Reading through old newspapers can be a monotonous occupation at the best of times, but finding passages like those illustrated above can go a long way to making an otherwise arduous task into an amusing and rewarding experience.

References: (1) Fleetwood Chronicle, 14 June 1905
 (2) Chorlev Guardian, 27 May 1922
 (3) Southport Visiter, 22 August 1905

PRUW BOSWELL, 1983

 MIKE HEANEY, in April, 1983, mentioned in a letter that the British Library had just published its Bibliography of British Newspapers, Durham and Northumberland: County Editor, F.W.D. Manders (London 1982): for "anyone interested in rapper" wrote Mike "...this bibliography will be a great help"... in making a start."

He sent two extracts from Jackson's Oxford Journal:
 28/VII/1849 p3 col. 4

ENSHAM Disturbing the congregation in a church. On Tuesday (24th) four young men, named Frederick Gardner, James Harris, William Partlett and John Oliver, all of Northleigh, were brought before the same magistrate (Rev. W. S. Bricknell) under a warrant, granted the previous day, charging them with having, on the previous Sunday, gone into the parish church of Northleigh, and disturbed the congregation there assembled. Mr. George Compton, the churchwarden of the parish, appeared to prosecute the

defendants, and represented that the conduct of some young men of that parish had been so bad of late that many respectable people had been obliged to leave the church. The Rev. Mr. Gillam, the Vicar, also stated that it had become quite necessary that something should be done to put a stop to it, as it was weekly growing worse. The evidence was then gone into, and from the testimony of four witnesses, named Henry Bushnell, George Moore, George Goodey (clerk of the parish) and Mary Cox, it was clearly proved that the conduct of the defendants, from the time they entered the church, and throughout the whole of the afternoon service, was most disgraceful, by laughing and talking loudly, and beating the pew they were sitting in with a stick. One of them, named Oliver, was pinching a dog he had in his pocket so as to make it scream out; and the defendant Gardner was guilty of conduct so indecent that we abstain from mentioning it. They were called upon to find sureties in the sum of 50 1. and, in default, they were fully committed to the Quarter Sessions for trial. They were committed under the Act of William & Mary, c.18, and passed in the year 1688.

20/X/1849, p3 col. 4

MICHAELMAS COUNTY SESSIONS. Frederick Gardner and John Oliver were charged with maliciously disturbing the congregation in the parish church at Northleigh, on the 22nd July last. Mr. Cripps conducted the prosecution. - From the evidence it appeared that the prisoners were at Northleigh church on Sunday the 22nd of July last, and misconducted themselves by laughing, talking, and punching a dog, which the prisoner Oliver had in his pocket. The principal witnesses were two boys, whose testimony did not agree, and the parish clerk, who was at some distance from the pew where the prisoners sat. - The Chairman, in summing up, adverted to the nature of the evidence adduced, and the Jury, considering that it was not sufficient to justify a conviction, acquitted both the prisoners.

In the letter enclosing these extracts, Mike has, "As for the North Leigh references, Partlett and Gardner are of course the two names we have for the North Leigh Morris (they were dancing two years later at the 1851 Woodstock Ale) so it seems a good bet that their two cronies named here may well have been dancers too.

He sent, too, extracts from the Gloucester Journal, extracted from the years 1722-1759: Week before and after May 1, week before and 3 weeks after Whitsun, 2 weeks after Christmas.

10/V/1725, (p4)

At Dover's Meeting on Campden Hill, on Whitson Thursday and Friday will be Play'd for as follows:

The First Day, One Gold Ring and Six Belts to be wrestled for; One Lac'd Hat and Six pair of Gloves to be play'd at Back-Sword for; One pair of Mens Shoes and one pair of Womens Lac'd Shoes to be danc'd Jiggs for.

The Second Day. One Gold Ring and six pair of Gloves to be play'd at Back-Sword for, One Lac'd Hat and Six Belts to be wrestled for, One pair of Mens Shoes and one pair of Womens Lac'd Shoes to be danc'd Jiggs for. All given GRATIS.

22/V/1733 (p3)

Gloucester, May 19. Last Tuesday (15/V) a poor Woman of the City, being disorder'd in her Senses, hang'd herself.

The same Day in the Evening, some Men of Barton-street went to take away a May-Pole from Wooton near this City, and the People of the latter Place having Notice thereof, arm'd themselves with dangerous Weapons, so that a desperate Fray ensu'd, wherein one of the Barton-street Men had his Arm almost cut off, and several others were very much wounded.

About the same time, two children were burnt in a terrible Manner, at Hempstead near this City, one of which is since dead, and the other lies dangerously ill: It is observable, that the affectionate Father was then attending upon a Company of Morrice-Dancers with his Tabor and Pipe, and when the News of this melancholy Accident was brought to him, he refus'd to return Home, saying, He would not Lose his Whitson-tide.--It is greatly wish'd, that not only this, but the aforesaid Kind of Whitson Sports, the Consequences of which often prove fatal, were suppressed.

1/V/1744 (p4)

NOTICE is hereby given

That on Whitsun-Monday next, at the Sign of the Swan, In Cown-Allins, near Fairford, Gloucestershire, will be given a HAT of a Guinea Price, to be play'd for at Backsword, by five or seven Men of a Side, and that Side that can break the most Heads shall

be entitled to the Hat, each Side to appear on the Stage by One o'Clock.

Likewise, on the Morrow, there will be six exceeding good KNOTS to be Morrice-danc'd for, Free Gift, and Six Pair of Gloves to be Bowl'd for at Nine-Pins.

[Original spellings retained]

M.HEANEY, April, 1983

GEOFF RYE, of Weston-Super-Mare, sent some extracts from Shoemaker's Window: Recollections of Banbury in Oxfordshire Before the Railway Age: George Herbert, (1814 - 1902)

Permission to use the extracts has been given by the publishers of the 1971 Edition, Phillimore & Co., Ltd., of Shopwyke Hall, Chichester, P020 6BQ.

(Geoff wrote that the book had been put into print by B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., in 1948: Basil Blackwell, Publisher, when written to, referred the Editor to Phillimore & Co., Ltd.)

The Banbury Guardian of June, 1841, has the following obituary notice:

June 2nd, died William Castle, aged about 50. This person was better known by the name of "Old Mettle" than that which by right belonged to him. We need scarcely say he was well known, that, most of our readers know. His death was very sudden. On the preceding evening he had, in the vocation of fool, accompanied a party of Morris Dancers round Banbury, and seemed, and no doubt felt, in as high glee as he had ever been. The following morning, while mending his patchwork dress, with the intention of going to Adderbury Club, he fell from his seat, and expired instantly. We believe he was a native of Adderbury, at which place, until recently, his mother lived.

I must mention one of the old customs of the times. On the first of May the boys of the town were allowed to give all old maids and bachelors a band of rough music with horns tin kettles etc and these old ladies had special attention....

The horse-bells remind me of the morris-dancers. The countrymen used to practise their dancing at most of the villages, and at certain seasons of the year used to come into the town and go through their various dances, and then make a collection from the onlookers, and some of them were very clever at it. The men were dressed in their best, and wore white shirts with plaited sleeves and ribbons tied round their arms, and upon their legs were rows of small bells sewn upon strips of coloured leather. These bells were made in the same form as the horse-bells, that is to say they were of a round form with a slot in them, and a round shot to make them jingle as they danced. In size they were about as large as a marble, but the bells upon the horses were as large as a man's fist. In some of the morris-dances, each man carried a white stick about an inch in thickness and about eighteen in length, and this stick was used in their dances, sometimes tapping each other's stick together, and at other times one was held over the other's head, one dancer tapped his fellow-dancer with his stick, and at other times they would each have a white handkerchief and flourish in similar form. Their music was of a rude kind and known as the tabor and pipe. Their pipe was a one-handed flute with about four holes - three on the upper side for the fingers, and one underneath for the thumb. This was played with the left hand, and upon the little finger was held the tabor which was tapped by the right hand. The tabor was a small drum something like a tambourine. There was also a clown fantastically dressed who carried a long stick with a bladder at one end and calf's tail at the other for keeping off the boys, and sometimes he would have a handful of flour in his pocket, and if he found a boy very troublesome he used his flour with a handful in his face. This generally caused a laugh, and quieted him.

BERNARD OAKLEY, of the Coventry Morris Men, and the Coventry Mummings, wrote, 5th December, 1983,

"I have been looking at the Coventry Records to see if the Coventry Giants (there were three!) had any attendant dancers. There seems to be one entry only from the accounts of the City Guilds: Dyer's Account 1555: 'p'd to the dawners for daunsyng xij^d.' This was in connection with the Midsummer's Eve Watch when the Guilds had a procession including the Giants."

CROTALS

In The Morris Dancer No.10 (August, 1981) Jonathan Hooton wrote about the old bells known as 'crotals'. He told of a large bell (diameter 7 1/4 ins., weight 74 oz.) which he'd seen, and illustrated another, marked "R W", from a photograph in an antique collectors' magazine, where, however, no indication of size had been given.

I have come across a number of similar bells at antique fairs. They vary in size, most being about 1 1/4 ins. in diameter and weighing a little under one ounce. I have one of this size (the largest size I have seen) which is almost identical to the one marked "R W" illustrated by Jonathan. Another two are marked with the letter 'T' in a shield - presumably another makers' mark. The bells all seem to be bronze. The usual alloy of bronze is 9 parts copper to one part tin. So-called 'bell-metal' is also copper and tin, but in the ratio 3 or 4 to 1.

The old dancers usually described their bells as 'latten' bells to Sharp and other collectors. According to the OED, latten is either an alloy 'resembling brass' (i.e., copper and zinc) or 'iron tinned over'. The examples given however reveal that it was also used of an alloy of copper and tin - like bronze. (The word brass in fact used to be applied to alloys of both copper and zinc and copper and tin, the word bronze only coming into the language to distinguish the latter in the late 18th century - but enough of metallurgy and back to morris dancing!)

It seems likely, in view of the frequency with which 'crotals' are dug up, and their size, that they are the type of bell used by the old dancers. The people I got my bells from did not know much about them. They claimed they were attached to animals, and ascribed them to the 17th/18th centuries. They told me that a number of collectors specialize in them. The OED has hardly any instances of the word 'crotal', and I suspect it has been revived and applied to these interesting bells recently within the antique trade.

PHILIP HEATH-COLEMAN, 9th April,

1984

Longsword in the Hilton

On 7th January, 1983, Findus Ltd. held their National Conference at the Stratford upon Avon Hilton Hotel, culminating in a Medieval Banquet. During the banquet each Sales Region performed a "Folk" event, on a competitive basis, to entertain the others. The winning performance was a very short showing of Kirkby Malzeard Long Sword. The six dancers danced a combination of clash, single under, over your neighbours, double under and lock. The performance lasted five minutes to taped music played by Steve Cheek of the Colchester Morris Men; and the swords were kindly loaned by that club.

Five members of the team had no previous folk dancing experience, but were taught by the sixth member, Clive Gare, previously a member of the South West Essex Morris Men, a club disbanded some fifteen years ago. The team uniform was as that used by the S.W.E.M.M. for the sword dance: black tee-shirt, and white trousers rolled up to just below the knee; feet were bare, as always in the longsword performances of that club.

CLIVE GARE April, 1983

WALTER ABSON writes

Amongst the various difficulties which beset a morris show, there are two where we may take a little comfort from knowing that they have been familiar to morris men for about the last four hundred years. One is the less experienced musician who speeds up the tempo as the dance proceeds, and the other is the audience which persists in encroaching on the dancing space.

Thomas Morley complained about both of these in one of his "Madrigalls to Foure Voyces", published in 1594:-

Ho, who comes here all along with bagpiping and drumming?
O 'tis the Morris dance I see a-coming.

Come ladies, come quickly,

And see about how trim they dance and trickly.

Hey there again, how the bells they shake it

Hey ho, now for our town and take it.

Soft awhile not away so fast, they melt them.

Piper! be hanged knave, see'st thou not the dancers how
they swelt them?

Out there awhile, stand out, you come too far. I say in,
There give the hobby-horse more room to play in.

WALTER ABSON 1st February, 1984

From the First Log Book of the Morris Ring:-

Thaxted. 22nd-23rd May, 1948.

Humphrey Morton gave an outline of the weekend programme suggested for the St. Albans Meeting. This included attendance at the Parish Eucharist in the Abbey and participation in the procession. This would, he said, be an historic occasion as the first time that Morris Men as such had taken part in the procession in a Cathedral. This claim was later rejected by Nicol who put it on record that Morris Men took part in the procession in Chichester Cathedral during Gustav Holst's Whitsuntide Festival in 1932.

From the Fourth Log Book,

London Meeting. 5th-7th July, 1963.

Tours 3 and 4 had been cancelled because of police objections (referred to by Rowland Howls in correspondence as "the abandoned Soho tours.")

From the Fifth Log Book,

St. Albans, 23rd-25th September, 1966.

The traffic lights by the Town Hall were not working properly, and one constable leaned on the control box, and gave it a kick periodically to change the lights.
