

The Morris Dancer

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Editorial

This edition suffers from a surfeit of material for which I am very grateful to the contributors for their permissions to publish the various articles.

There is by comparison very little North West Morris in Sharp's collections; what there is as a result of the work of his collaborator Maud Karpeles. The majority of the other dances in the tradition come from the efforts of members of Manchester Morris Men who were responsible for collecting in the cotton towns of Lancashire and Cheshire.

The Manchester Morris Men are celebrating eighty years this year, sharing their beginnings with the English Folk Dance Society's Manchester morris classes. Most of the articles give an indication of how Manchester Morris Men have been connected to the North-West dances over the decades.

The first is an excerpt from a booklet originally produced by John Tallis in 1972 recording the reminiscences of Manchester English Folk Dance Society's members in the 1920s and '30s. One of the chapters entitled, "Lancashire Morris before the War", draws on the memories of Maud Karpeles, Gladys Ledger, Edith Emmett & Bernard Bentley.

Manchester Morris Men were especially active in the 1950s and 60's collecting information from old dancers, before they were no longer available to interview and pass on the knowledge of their dances. Bernard Bentley, Dan Howison and Julian Pilling were especially active in this collecting. The next article, from their North West Archive, gives an indication of what was collected in Millbrook, near Stalybridge.

Presented with some dance fragments where there was insufficient detail to recreate the whole dance, they took these authentic figures and put them together to create a dance. The dance the Medlock was the result, first performed in public in 1975, and its creator Peter McLoughlin taught this dance at festivals over many years.

More recently research by Roger Bryant in New Mills found evidence of a Morris dance tradition in the town where he lives.

I was contacted by Roy Smith of Leyland Morris Men who offered an article on the Mawdesley Morris dancers.

I have included an article by Lisa Austen Strange based on material collected by Manchester Morris Men which tells of the Glossop rush-bearing tradition and the dance associated with it.

I am grateful to all these contributors for their help in producing this edition of the Morris Dancer.

For the future it seems appropriate that in the year that Thaxted Morris Men celebrate the centenary of their founding that the theme for the 2011 edition

should be Cotswold Morris, especially looking at vestiges of dances that are in the tradition.

Space does not permit a section “Notes on our Contributors” but here are some brief notes.

Keith Ashman is both Bagman and Archivist of Manchester Morris Men and it is he who has pulled together the first four pieces. What is not generally known is that from their birth from the Manchester Branch of EFDSS they were a Cotswold side. It was not until members came across the North West dances and people associated with them that they started to collect and dance these dances.

Roy Smith is well known in the Lancashire folk scene as he edits “Lancashire Wakes” for the Lancashire Folk Committee. He is better known in morris circles for being a stalwart of Leyland Morris Dancers.

Lisa Austen Strange MBE is Director of Fosbrook Folk Education Trust that exists to train young people in traditional dance, music and song. In her original article she expresses thanks to various people. “My thanks are due to Anne Cohen for encouragement and advice, Jim Mainland - for encouragement and access to his own manuscripts and photographs, also to Bernard Bentley, George Bowden, Alderman Doyle, Tom Eyre, R. Hamnett, The Glossop Chronicle and Advertiser, John Stafford, Evelyn Collier and the Staff of Glossop Library.”

There has been a delay in putting this edition together because of shall we say technical difficulties but it is an ill wind that blows no-one any good. I was contacted just a few days ago by the Bagman of Thelwall Morris Men about an article that he had sent for inclusion in an abortive attempt to publish the Morris Dancer by a previous editor. Publishing this article was just too good an opportunity to miss so there is now a bumper edition of the Morris Dancer on the subject of North West Morris.

Geoff Bibby is someone whom I first met in the late 70’s when I was working in Liverpool and went to a practice of the newly formed Thelwall Morris Men who in those days had their headquarters at a pub on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal under the Thelwall Viaduct.

The Lancashire Morris Before The War¹

EFDS Men's classes in morris and sword were first established in Manchester in 1921, and a Men's Morris Team competed regularly at the Alderley Edge Musical Festivals, gaining first class certificates every year from 1931 to 1939. This team, at its best, was reckoned to be as good as the EFDS Headquarters Demonstration Team, The Men's Team at this stage danced only the Cotswold Morris, as the North-West Morris was still largely unknown.

One of the best known local teams in the nineteenth century was the Godley Hill Team, but by the 1930's this was no longer in existence. Memories and photographs, however, survived, and in 1937 a version of the dance was noted down by Mr Crompton of Hyde. This version was learned by the Manchester Men's Team, and first performed in public² at the 1938 Alderley Edge Festival as an entry in the 'Traditional Dances' section, in an attempt to break the supremacy of the Irish teams - it was adjudged of equal merit. Cotswold costume was retained on this occasion, but rudimentary flowered hats were worn.

Miss Maud Karpeles had earlier noted down a version of the Godley Hill Dance in 1929, but this was not collated with the Crompton version until after the War. At about the same time she also noted down versions of the Royton Dance and the Bacup Garland Dance. Miss Karpeles obtained information about the Royton Dance by writing to the local paper and receiving an anonymous reply advising her to contact Mr Lees Kershaw, the musician of the team. This she did, and on a subsequent visit Miss Emmett and Miss Ledger accompanied her. At the time of Miss Karpeles' visits there were only four dancers, but shortly afterwards a full team was revived under Jimmy Coleman, and danced twice in Manchester in 1929, though not in costume. A 'Royton Fund' was opened to raise money to kit out the Team and send it up to the Albert Hall Festival, and all Branch members were urged to contribute 6d. The Royton Men danced at the Manchester EFDS Branch Christmas Party in 1929 in full costume, and subsequently at the Royal Albert Hall Festival in London in January 1930, and were a great success. Soon afterwards, two Royton teams emerged, doing slightly different versions of the dance, one under Jimmy Coleman and one under Bob McDermott, and the competition between these teams resulted in very high standards of performance. Later they amalgamated again. Bob McDermott taught his version to the Advanced Class in Manchester in 1933 - 34, and was then invited to teach the Royton Dance to the Manley village dancers. This he did, though the dance was not shown in public by the Manley Men until after the War.

The Britannia (Bacup) Coconut Dancers performed at a carnival in Rochdale in 1929 where Miss Ledger and Mr Palmer were adjudicating, and

¹ Based on information supplied by Maud Karpeles, Gladys Ledger, Edith Emmett and Bernard Bentley

² This paragraph is written from an EFDSS viewpoint

also at a festival in Clitheroe where the Branch Team was demonstrating. Miss Ledger and Mr Palmer subsequently spent several Saturday afternoons with the Men at a pub in Britannia and arranged for Maud Karpeles to witness the Garland Dance. The Bacup Men were very averse to their dances being published, since they were afraid of other teams learning the dances and then competing with them. Eventually it was agreed that the Society would never teach the dances. Like the Royton Men, the Bacup Men gave a public performance in Manchester at a Branch Party prior to their appearance at the Royal Albert Hall in January 1931³⁴.

The Millbrook (Stalybridge) Morris Dance

The MILLBROOK (Stalybridge) Morris Dance⁵ is also known as the Staley Wood Rushcart Dance, and is said to have originated in Mill Brow (pronounced 'Brew'), which is believed to be the same place as Millbrook.

There are 4 sets of notes in Manchester Morris archives, which are:-

1. Noted in 1957 by Dan Howison from J.A. Sykes and A. Allen ; both born in 1887, both danced with team as early as 1911, coronation George V .
2. Noted in 1957 by Bernard Bentley from Frank Buckley, who was scoutmaster in Stalybridge who revived the dance with his scouts in 1956.
3. Noted in 1978 by Denis Cleary, from a school project by Elaine Allen of Dukinfield, who said her information was from 'an old dancer'.
4. Notes by D. Cleary from conversations with Frank Buckley (see 2), and also G. Rawson, E. Jackson and G. Bowker, members of the 1956 scout team and Grace Kemp, daughter of F. Buckley and cub leader at Stalybridge Scout Group. Also from personal papers passed to Denis Cleary by Mrs. Kemp on the death of her father, age 93 in 1986.⁶

Costume

Long trousers with blue or red braid on them, white shirt, tie. Round straw hat trimmed with artificial flowers. The left hand file wore a red diagonal sash, the right hand file a blue one. They spoke of the 'red side' and the 'blue side'. They danced in shoes, not clogs, with bells on the laces. Sykes says that his father also danced in shoes when he was young. Of the braid on the trousers, he said "it was blue or red caddis, about half an inch broad, like they used for decorating horses."The diagonal sash, which was tied on the outside, was

³ from the booklet "The English Folk Dance Revival in Manchester 1912-1939" ; published in 1972 by John Tallis.

⁴ The Godley Hill dance was actually performed in public 11 months earlier than stated, in June 1937 at the Tideswell Ring Meeting, by the Men's Team dancing as the Manchester Morris Men: The First Morris Ring Log Book.

⁵ Compiled by Denis Cleary from material in the archives of the Manchester Morris Men

⁶ It would seem that Dan Howison's notes (1) taken from original team members must be most accurate and authentic, though B. Bentley suggests the possibility of two dances - Millbrook and Stalybridge

provided out of the funds, but "if you'd one round your waist you found it yourself." In each hand the dancer held a short stick covered with white cloth, and then wound with ribbons, a loop being made at one end for the wrist, and ribbons being left loose at the other. They called them "tittle-eara's"



Millbrook MM at Stalybridge Town Hall on Coronation Day 1902⁷

Besom Bet

A character dressed as "a gypsy woman" who carried a broom or mop, danced at the front of the procession, and cleared a way for the dancers. During the dance the Besom Bet kept out of the way and "probably took a hat round." She did not act as a leader in any way. There was no conductor, and any necessary commands were given by one of the older dancers who would be walking with the band. The Besom Bet in the 1902 photograph is Sykes' father.

Music

Three concertinas, some of which were played by fathers of the dancers. Other tunes than those given would be used when marching. The first and second

⁷ from the MR photo archives NW20; this photo features in an article in the Ashton Reporter dated 19/10/1956, after a tour by Manchester MM in the area

figures were done "at about 100 to the minute, while the Tittle-eara was done slower, about 80 to the minute."



These tunes were copied out by Mr. Sykes, who for many years has been choirmaster at the local Sunday School. He said that the music for the third figure, Tittle-eara, "was played slightly dotted".

The Dance

The dance is of the usual Lancashire pattern, the dancers forming up in two files, and dancing in sets of four. Mr. Sykes said that the files should not be too far apart, about two yards. Between towns they would march, and while they were marching the hands were waved alternately at waist level in front of the body, moving in circles, right hand counter clock-wise left hand clockwise, one wave, to each step.

When the dance was performed in one spot, it was danced straight through, finishing with the Tittle Eara. When, as was apparently more usual, it was done on the move as a processional, they would start with the first figure in the normal way, go on to the second figure, and then continue to dance these two figures alternately, only that after the first time, instead of doing four steps backward and four forward in Fig. 1 they would do 8 forward. Finally, when they got to a place where there were no houses, the whistle would be blown, they would dance the Tittle Eara, and drop into a walk. If they were to stop dancing, they would finish by "throwing up", i.e. all facing up, throwing their hands in the air, and cocking their right leg up in front. Both files do the same footing throughout.

Figure 1

All start with right foot.

Four walking steps backwards (4 beats)

Three walking steps forward; on the third, spring into the air off the right foot and land on the left foot, cocking the right leg up in front. (4 beats)

Repeat turning to face partner on last beat.

Arms: The arms make alternate circles in front of the body (right arm with right foot) as when marching, and on the last beat are thrown up above the head.

Then, facing partner, the following movement is performed.



	FEET		ARMS
A	Hop left & swing right foot across, about 6" above left, toe pointed out		Swing in with an underarm movement, to cross in front at waist level to cross in front at waist level
B	Hop left (right still across)		Swing out again (waist level)
C	Change to right, & swing left across		Cross as above
D	Hop right (left still across)		Out
E	Turning	Hop right	Hands held in front of forehead, tittle-earas erect and waved in small circles
F	single to	Left	
G	right	Right	
H		Left	
I		Hop left, kicking right foot up behind	
J			Behind back
K		Right, kicking left foot up behind	Throw up

Repeat this, doing it with opposite feet, and turning to the right instead of to the left. All end facing up, with the right leg kicked up forward instead of backward. (Note - this means that the left-hand file do $\frac{3}{4}$ turn, while the right hand do $1\frac{1}{4}$ turns)

Figure 2.

This consists of an introduction, then a 'cross-partners' and 'cross corners' movement following straight on one after the other.

Introduction: four paces backwards and four forward, as in Figure 1

Repeat. At end of this, turn to face partner, but do not 'throw up' or kick leg up.

Crossing: (this is done to a smooth skipping step; the feet are raised only just enough to clear the ground)

Cross with partner, passing left shoulder (4 steps)

On the fourth step pivot sharply on ball of foot, and cross back, left shoulders again (4 steps)

First corners (i.e. 1st man in right file, 2nd in left) cross, left shoulders (2 beats)

Second corners cross (2 beats)

First corners cross back (2 beats)

Second corners cross back (2 beats)

(in fact, it will be found that with the exception of the second couple's return journey there are four steps for each crossing)

Arms - for the introduction, as in Figure 1.

- for the crossing, the arms are swung across in front of the body, where they cross at waist level and then swung out. The inward swing is made while the right foot moves, the outward while the left foot moves, the hands dip down in a shallow arc in moving from one position to the other. Throw up at the end.

Figure 3. "Tittle Eara"

This is done to the same step as Figure 2, but slower.

Cross with partner, as in figure 2. (4 beats)

Cross back, as in figure 2, but when you get home turn left, to face partner

(4 beats)

Arms cross in, and out as in figure 2

The rest is done to a slow walking step, the heel of the free foot being kicked up behind.

BEAT	FEET		ARMS
1	Right	Mark time	Swung up together (hands about 9" apart) towards the left at about shoulder level
2	Left		Both swung across to a similar position on the right
3	Right		Swung back to left
4	Left		Swung back to right again, & above head
5	Right	Turn in small circles to left	Hands moved in small inward circles above the head.
6	Left		
7	Right		
8	Left		

Beats 9 - 16, Repeat 1 - 8, but turning to right instead of left.

The whole of the figure is then repeated, and the dancers end facing up, with the right leg raised. On the last note but one of the tune the arms are put behind the back, and on the very last note are thrown into the air.



Millbrook (Stalybridge) Morris Men at Stalybridge 1902⁸

⁸ from the Morris Ring photographic archive NW147
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A Lancashire Morris Dance – Street Processional – The Medlock

Source Snippets of Lancashire dance notations given to me by Dan Howison, one time Squire of Manchester Morris Men. The Manchester Men wanted another clog processional dance to add to their repertoire and so, with the help of Ron Mathews to dance the steps and figure patterns with me and Jim Reilly to arrange the music, I devised the dance ‘The Medlock’.

Music Bog Cotton (ABB twice)
Julia Clifford’s Polka (ABB twice)
Wild Irishman (AB)

Formation

T		2	4	6	8
O	L				* extra man
P		1	3	5	7

Step Polka step throughout, except in the ‘step up’ and final figure ‘Jig It’

Hands Rope in hands – the hands are waved in inward circles, head high in the figures – waist high in the chorus or step up and ‘Jig It’

The Dance

Step-up Walking forward L,R,L and swing right leg forwards bending left leg slightly. Body slightly crouched forward on forward movement.
Walking backward 4 steps with body upright. REPEAT.
This movement is done to open the dance, and between each figure. Call it a chorus.

Stars Right hand star – the hands held up about 45°, rope hanging down – do not hold hands.
Steps are as in first half of cross-partners. Left star back and steps as in second half of cross partners. Free arm held straight – Left in R star – Right arm in L star.

Cross-partners Done in pairs only, not in fours. It is a swing partner without holding hands.

2 bars all turn to make a line.

4 bars to complete the turn and meet

2 bars to fall back into line – all polka steps.

Cross Caper

Nos 1 & 4, 5 & 8 Diagonals step to meet and pass right facing (4 bars) and dance on spot (2 bars)

Nos 2 & 3, 6 & 7 Diagonals dance 2 bars on spot and then 4 bars to pass, right facing to form a ring (not too close) – all fall out into opposite place with the fall back walking step.

Cross back with same movement except no walking fall back, but 2 bars of polka step.

Hey on Side Square hey for four starting on the SIDES i.e. tops turn down, seconds up, pass right shoulder. 3 steps to pass R and 1 bar in each corner. Pass R L R L to place.

Outsides Ordinary outsides, making an ARCH with inside hands as you come up the middle.

6 bars for dancers 1&2 to meet and ARCH

8 “ “ “ “ 3&4 “ “ “ “

10 “ “ “ “ 5&6 “ “ “ “

12 “ “ “ “ 7&8 “ “ “ “

16 bars to end the movement

(On bars 15 & 16 dance from arch position to line)

Final Figure – JIG IT

Cross with partner clockwise right round the place – facing partner –

Beginning on the left foot you dance a lilted springy walk step, L R L R L R L R (bring the right foot to left foot in your own dance place – foot together step)

In your own place-----

Point R toe backwards & slightly outwards & tap ground.

“ “ “ forwards & tap ground.

R foot back to place.

Point L toe backwards & tap ground.

Take a step with L foot, swing it over across R foot thereby beginning a turn to the right.

R foot still turning R

L foot still turning R

Bring R foot up to the L foot (feet together)

REPEAT but on last movement '8' all face up and at the same time SALUTE

MEDLOCK MORRIS DANCE

BOG COTTON

PLAY
A' INTRO
8' BARS
A' B2
TWICE
48 BARS



PLAY
C' D1
C' D2
40 BARS



PLAY
A' B2
TWICE
48 BARS



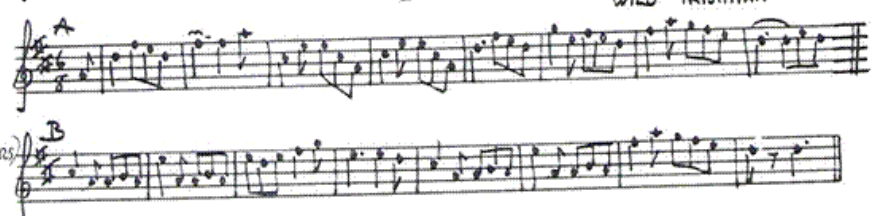
JANA CLIFFORDS POLKA

PLAY
A' 8' BARS



BOG COTTON

PLAY
A' B1
(6 BARS)



WILD IRISHMAN



Manchester Morris Men Knutsford Royal May Day Procession 2009⁹

New Mills Morris Dancing

⁹ Warren Pilkington

There were teams of young men morris dancers in New Mills, Derbyshire, from 1690 upwards until the first World War They performed during the annual wakes week and on other occasions such as the galas of the friendly societies. Photograph and newspaper reports provided details of costumes, but the information that I have been able to obtain about the dancing is limited and unreliable. Probably there were similarities with the Morris dances from the Hyde-Staleybridge area, and for a while there was also a team of coconut dancers.

During the nineteen twenties and thirties some of the former dancers taught teams of children in and around New Mills and many of these children can still recall fragments of the dance they performed. The most complete information I have been able to collect concerns dancing by teams of boys and girls at the annual Thornsett Rose Queen Festival from about 1925 to 1933. On the basis of this information a dance was compiled and the Manchester Morris men performed it in New Mills on the 19th May 1983. The comments from the former dancers were gratifying: "I think that they did the New Mills dance the best of all the dances and it was just like we used to do it - it was very accurate". Such comments must of course be treated sceptically but presumably they do indicate that the basic level of accuracy was achieved. A description of the reconstructed Thornsett dance is given below. It will perhaps be of interest to someone looking for a very simple dance suitable for adults or children but I must emphasize that what is described is an interpretation of rather fragmentary and imprecise information and some guess work and artistic license has been used in order to compile a dance suitable for performance. Some informants mentioned additional figures which have not been included. the terms such as "capers", "corners cross", etc., which are used in the description are in most cases not the terms used by the former dancers.

Most of the characteristics of the dance are reminiscent of dances from other places particularly nearby Hayfield. The tunes were "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and a version of "Long Morris". The boys wore clogs with bells on and straw "cadies". The girls were dressed differently, ready for maypole dancing. Each dancer carried two "tassels" i.e. short sticks wound round with the ribbons hanging free at each end, which were held at one end. Each dance as described below this is for eight dancers but often there were more.

All movements start with the right foot. Unless otherwise stated the skip step is used in each bar of music, the dancers take a step then a hop on the right foot followed up by the same on the left, with the knees raised only a little; meanwhile except in the "stars" the forearms are swung across the body, each hand ending close to the opposite elbow, and then unswung. The caper is a spring from the right foot to the left ending with the right leg kicked forward and the arms thrown up.

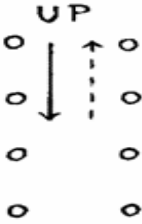
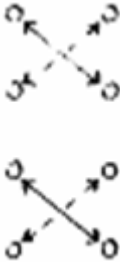
The step and turn, as follows, is a four bar movement with the dancer staying on one spot.


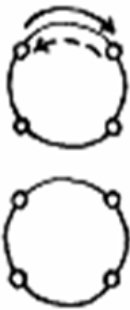
Bar1, Beat 1 step onto the right foot while crossing it in front of the left foot. Beat 2: with foot still crossed step onto the left foot. Beat 3: step onto the right while putting it into its ordinary position beside the left foot. Beat 4: a very slight hop on the right foot. Meanwhile, during Bar 1 the forearms are swung across the body and then unswung.

Bar 2. The same as Bar 1 but with opposite feet.

Bar 3 and 4. Make one complete turn to the right with three steps and a caper. The arms start by making a small twist of the tassels are either side of the head, they are lowered and thrown up on the caper.

The Dance

Figures, no of bars and illustrative diagram	Description
<p>Chorus, 16 bars</p> 	<p>Facing up, all march 4 steps back then 3 steps and a caper forward.</p> <p>On the marching steps while the right foot moves, the left hand describes a small circle diagonally towards the body in a vertical plane, similarly for the left foot and right hand. (4 bars.) Repeat this, ending to face partner. (4 bars.)</p> <p>All step in turn, twice, facing partner. (8 bars.)</p>
<p>Chorus, 16 bars</p>	
<p>Corners Cross, 16 bars</p> 	<p>In groups of 4, simultaneously. First corners dance across to change places, passing right shoulders, then turning right to face, and ending with a caper; meanwhile second corners face each other and step and turn. (4 bars.) The same again, but with movements done by the other corners. (4 bars.) All that again back to original places. (8 bars.)</p>
<p>Chorus 16 bars</p>	

<p>Weaving 32 bars</p> 	<p>Top dancer in each a file makes a quarter-turn to face down and dances to the button position weaving in and out of the other dancers as shown: meanwhile the other dancers dance slowly forward so that the set does not change its overall position. (4 bars.) . Facing partners, all step and turn. (4 bars.).* All this is repeated with a new first couple until all the dancers are in the original places (24 bars)</p>
<p>Chorus, 16 bars</p>	
<p>Stars 16 bars</p> 	<p>In groups of 4, simultaneously, First corners dance across to change places passing right shoulders, then turning right to face ending with a caper; meanwhile, second corners face each other and step and turn, (4 bars.) The same again but with the movements done by the other corners. (4 bars.) All that again back to the original places. (8bars.)</p>
<p>Chorus, 16 bars</p>	<p>End the chorus with a caper facing up</p>

* this (4 bars.) movement has been inserted without historical justification.

Mawdesley's Morris Dancers Remembered¹⁰

In the Autumn 2005? Issue of 'Lancashire Wakes' there was mention of the current Newburgh Ladies' team having attended the annual walking day, or Tea Party, at Mawdesley, and having performed the village's own morris dance during their visit.

In 1967 I had been asked by the editor of the EFDSS's magazine 'English Dance & Song' to provide an article on the revival of morris dancing at Leyland. Following interviews with a number of past dancers and local historians, the piece was written - based on what I'd been able to discover at the time. However, it soon became obvious that there was much more to the story - and that I'd been fed some pretty wild inaccuracies too, particularly by the acknowledged local historians! Accordingly I made an enquiry at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library: this threw up a cross-reference to Mawdesley, and also to Keswick morris - which intrigued me more than ever.

It became clear that a number of teams had grown up in the area during the late nineteenth century - sometimes as a direct result of the activities of the Leyland Morris Dancers. Among these was a team at Mawdesley: a small village on the West Lancashire Plain, some seven or eight miles - as the crow flies - to the south west of Leyland. Cecil Sharp recorded that they had "....learned their dance from Clayton who came from Leyland. (He) was then a young man in the police force." As this was written in 1911, and it was claimed that Clayton had moved to the village "....16 or 17 years ago...", that would indicate his arrival in the village as being around 1894.

In fact a report from 1893 mentions that the Leyland dancers that year "were trained by Mr Rose, assisted by Mr Richard Clayton" and a report from 1894 of the Mawdesley Annual Church School Procession and Field Day - held on Saturday, 2nd June - tells us that "....led by the Leyland Prize Band....a company of Morris dancers, all lads of the village, who had been trained by Mr R. Clayton of Leyland..." had taken part.

A fortnight later they danced at neighbouring Eccleston's Annual School Treat accompanied by the Eccleston Brass Band. They were at another neighbouring village, Wrightington, for the Church Scholars' Field Day on Saturday, 14th July, accompanied by the Wrightington Brass Band, and at Ormskirk for the Trades Procession and Gala Day, held on Monday 6th August, with music provided by the 3rd V.B.K.L.R. band (Volunteer Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment?). Mr R. Clayton is specifically mentioned as being the team Leader on this occasion. In the following summer, of 1895, "Some disappointment was felt that the Mawdesley Morris Dancers could not, for some cause or other, see their way to give an exhibition...." at their local event on Saturday, 22nd June. However, "....owing to this misunderstanding the service of some junior Morris Dancers from Leyland was requisitioned", dancing to music provided by the Leyland Subscription Brass Band.

¹⁰ I am greatly indebted to Johnny Haslett for allowing me access to his treasure trove of newspaper references

Although this boys' team had only recently been formed, "...judging from the plaudits of the large numbers who witnessed their performance they proved immensely popular. The eldest of the dancers was only seven years old, and all performed with surprising gracefulness and precision." Further investigations show that the Mawdesley team had actually been booked to dance at Wroughtington that same day: perhaps it had been a case of the Tea Party organisers simply *assuming* that the local team would be available for their event without checking first!



Jack Hargreaves of Leyland's Junior Morris Dancers¹¹

In 1896 the team had an earlier start to the dancing season when Easter Monday fell on 6th April and they were invited to appear again at Ormskirk, this time for the Annual Police Gala and Sports. A report mentions that they "....skipped lightly hither and thither about the dusty streets." (in this day and age Easter isn't often dry and dusty, nor are we treated to reporting quite like that!) On Saturday, 13th June they were back on their own patch, obviously forgiven for the previous year's misunderstanding, and "....conducted by Mr B.Rowley....in the procession....they formed one of the most attractive parts of it, their dancing all along the route being greatly admired." On 6th July they performed at Southport at an RNLI fund-raising event, but being referred to in a report as the Bispham Green Morris Dancers.

I wonder if there was then a break in the continuity of the team, for there follows a 'black hole' as regards newspaper reports referring to the Mawdesley/Bispham Green team? It isn't until 1901, five years later, that they're mentioned again. Once more it's in connection with their home village's annual

¹¹ From the archives of Leyland Morris Dancers

event: the Mawdesley with Bispham National Day and Sunday Schools Annual Tea Party on Saturday, 8th June. The Leyland Subscription Prize Band was there again (at last, someone giving it its full and correct title !!) to accompany Mawdesley's Band of Hope Morris Dancers. This was a new title for them, and in the following year they were also referred to as the Church of England Temperance Society Morris Dancers. "The Morris Dancers looked very smart in their uniform, and added greatly to the picturesqueness of the procession, and to the entertainment of the onlookers both on the road and in the field, their dancing being very good and was much admired."

Their 1902 commitments began as early as New Year's Day, with their inclusion in the programme of entertainment for "the annual tea party in connection with the congregation and school of the Parish Church" - their contribution being "very heartily received". This parish tea and concert should not be confused with the annual Tea Party held on Saturday, 14th June, when "The Leyland Subscription Prize Band (would) be in attendance (and) Mawdesley C.E.T.S. Morris Dancers (would) dance in the Procession and on the Field".

That particular year also saw the coronation of Edward VII which, as things turned out, had to be postponed for some weeks owing to the King's illness. The village of Croston (another near neighbour) had planned to celebrate the event in some style and had invited the Mawdesley team along to add to the entertainment. On 27th June (the date they'd originally planned for) their celebration still went ahead when "The proceedings began as early as 9-45 (and) a procession was formed, headed by the Mawdesley Morris Dancers...the music being provided by the Clayton-le-Woods Band.....In the afternoon the procession was re-formed and proceeded to Croston Hall Park (where) the Morris Dancers gyrated",



Mawdesley's Morris Dancers in the leafy lanes of Croston¹²

¹² From the Johnny Haslet Collection. The original was contained in a scrapbook which had belonged to Martin Kevill of Croston, until it was lodged in the County Record Office. Sadly it is now missing from the scrapbook.

In August yet another visit was made to Ormskirk - for more Coronation Festivities - and the team was led this time by Mr T. Southworth. The Skelmersdale Temperance Prize Band provided the music for their dancing and a report claimed that "they were distinctly good, the old English dance being very skilfully performed".

Mawdesley's next Annual Tea Party was held on 13th June, 1903, with the village's C.E.T.S. Morris Dancers accompanied by the Ormskirk 3rd V.B.N.L.R. band (Volunteer Battalion North Lancashire Regiment?). The weather was described as "on the whole favourable, though occasional showers and a biting north-east wind rendered it necessary to take precautions against catching cold."

The final reference to the Mawdesley team comes in a report on 1904's Tea Party when, "The procession suffered somewhat in its attractive appearance from the absence of the Morris Dancers."

At a later date it was recorded that, "The dance is still done annually at Leyland but it has much changed. The Mawdesley men claim that theirs is the original Leyland dance before the latter got corrupted." Many a Leylander's response would be, "Well, they would say that, wouldn't they!" However, it would be best not to be too cocksure, as there may well be much truth in that statement. The earliest photographs we have of the Leyland team, taken probably in 1890, show them with sixteen dancers, plus Leader, and a later newspaper reference also mentions the number in the team as being sixteen. The 'Set Dance' at Mawdesley required sixteen dancers too, and we also know that, later, the Leyland Stage Dance came to require twenty four.

I set about discovering what I could of the long-defunct Mawdesley Morris Dancers during the latter part of 1969 and the first half 1970, and I was very fortunate to have excellent assistance. If you could think of someone who regularly went into peoples homes, was on close personal terms with them, and travelled about all the highways and byways of a parish, it had to be the Vicar, the Minister or the Priest, or the District Nurse. It just so happened that Nurse Monica Flynn was a close friend of my parents. As she went about her daily work she was able to make initial enquiries on my behalf, and I am absolutely certain, obtained far more information on families and individuals then ever I could have done.

There were false starts, of course, such as the tale of someone still having a pair of very old morris sticks hanging in an outhouse. However, it turned out that the local woodworm had seen them off long ago! There was also a vague thought that one of the old dancers, who had moved to neighbouring Eccleston, might still be alive, but this too proved to be unfounded. We also went through a lot of, "Well, ... might know something." In the end everything pointed to Hugh Barron being the last surviving Mawdesley Morris Dancer. He was 88 years of age when I interviewed him at his home, 'The Hillocks', on Bluestone Lane, and he had first danced in the team at the age of seventeen or eighteen..

He claimed to be "in the second lot" that is around the nineteenth to the twentieth century. When the team disbanded after their 1903 appearance at the Tea Party, his reasoning was, "They were tired, I think." He also claimed that it was John Thomas Southworth, who had moved from the village to St John's in

the Vale, Keswick, and there taught the dance to the schoolchildren. The local dialect turned his name into 'Southwaite'.



Mr Hugh Barron in later life.¹³

Mr Barren's memories were somewhat fragmented and he remembered very few details of the dances. However, other things came out pretty clearly: members of the same era included: Dick Christopher (the Leader), Jack Cobham, Hugh Cowley, "Th'only Roman Catholic among us", Dick Eccleston, James Higham, Harry Iddon, Jack Iddon, Jack Slater and Billy Southworth, all members of the village: "No outsiders!"

A uniform of blue velvet breeches, white shirt, white socks, yellow sash, straw 'boater' and black shoes; bells on breeches and shoes ; sticks with ribbons and bells at one end.

The procession route, in his day, had first of all followed New Street towards Eccleston; along Hall Lane passed 'Hell Hob' (The Black Bull) and turned around at Dark Lane end. It retraced its steps through the village and followed High Street to 'The Eagle and Child' at the hamlet of Bispham Green, where it again turned around and headed back to the Rectory Field. There had been variations to the procession route over the years.

The dances were 'The Road Dance' (a processional) and 'The Set Dance' (done on the field). The Leader walked backwards during the road dance (just as at Leyland), signalling the order of figures. The processional dance was practiced along some of the local roads and the set dance in the village school, with Tommy Holmes playing for them on a 'squeezebox'. He thought a band from Leyland had played for the team at the annual Tea Party. When I played some music to him he recognised 'Cock O'The North' as a tune they had danced to.

Other places they visited to dance included Ormskirk and Southport. At the former, "A regimental band played for us. They did go some speed! Wi

¹³ Loaned by Mr Hugh Barron's grand-daughter Mrs Kathleen Green of Eccleston

danced wur pumps through. Wi went to Southport in a waggonette: it wur Owd Bill Finch's fer Parbowd. He liked his bottle did Bill. On t'way he varneer (very near) drove us into a field by t'Douglasbridge agen Rufford Station. He wer too far to pull th'orses rahnd. Hugh Cowley wur up agen 'im an 'ee pulled em rahnd."

Some years after the disappearance of the men's team, a boys team was started up, with Dick Christopher doing the instructing. So far as memories served this was probably in the early 1920s. They only lasted a short time and were followed by a girls' team, Dick Christopher again involved in instructing, which was to continue for many years to come.

On one of my visits to Mr Barron, his next-door neighbour Mrs Shirley Callaghan was also present. At that time she was the instructor of the village girls' team. She was enthralled to learn something of the history of the dances she was teaching and invited me along to one of their practices. As the Tea Party wasn't too far off, it was a good time to go: the girls practised in earnest! I found it fascinating to see how the dances had altered and developed over the years since they were first recorded in November, 1909, from J.T. Southwaite¹⁵ and the children of St John's in the Vale School near Keswick. I was even asked to teach a couple of the figures as collected all those years ago.



Mrs Shirley Callaghan and the girls team; the ladies team.¹⁴

In addition to my talks to Mr Barron and Mrs Callaghan, I was also directed to the door of Mrs Rose Dalton at 8, New Street (better known simply as "The Street" to locals). She could remember seeing the men's team, the boys and the girls' team, but she was able to add little of substance to Mr Barron's memories – except that the word 'Temperance' came somewhere in their title. However, she recalled that two member's of the boys' team were Tom Halsall and Billy Markland; that she herself had been a maypole dancer at the Tea Party, and that her husband Billy had played his accordion for the girls' team to practise to. When weather permitted, this had been done up Daub Lane. Billy Dalton was a typical village musician, having had no formal instruction in playing an instrument: he had simply picked one up, experimented with it and learnt tunes by ear! However, he was always keen on music and singing, and he was a member of the choir of St Peter's Parish Church from being a young lad until his death. (See 'News From the Five Parishes', January 1970, for a tribute to Billy Dalton.)

¹⁴ Loaned by Mrs Ann Silcock (Nee Sexton) of Mawdesley also one-time instructor of the girls team

Mrs Dalton also recalled travelling by waggonette to see the Leyland May Festival – known locally as ‘Leyland Rant; - and combining it with a visit to a sister-in-law who lived on Chapel Row.

So how accurate were Hugh Barron’s recollections? In 1990 – as part of the celebrations to mark 150 years of the Parish of St Peter, Mawdesley , two local ladies, Jane Forrest and Joy Heggie, produced a book entitled ‘Mawdesley with Bispham – Past and Present’. Under the section headed ‘Parish News’, a selection of Parish Magazine items of interest over the years, it is noted for 1902 “... the walk proceeded to the Dark Lane End, turned and went back to Bispham and then to the Rectory field. The ... was the Leyland Subscription Band ...accompanied by Mawdesley Temperance Morris Dancers. Sixteen men dressed in blue, white and gold.”

His Memory had been spot on.¹⁵

Notation of The Mawdesley Morris Dance¹⁵

¹⁵ **Editors Note** During the editorial process I obtained scanned copies of some field notes of the Mawdesley Morris Dance. On the next six pages I offer them for the sake of completeness . If the reader zooms in at the rate of 150% to 200% the ‘writing’ becomes much more legible.

The Maudsley Stage Dance.

(Given me by
J. Southwaite)

Copy of notes & look & directions.
(Nov. 1909) H.M.

(danced by children of St. John's School.
Kew-ick)

Copy of notes & look & directions.
(Nov. 1909) H.M.

(danced by children of St. John's School.
Kew-ick)

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		3		
	St. John's			8th Nov/1909
13	7	<		7 <
	7	<		27 < 3 77 < 6
	7	<		47 < 5 57 < 4
	7	<		67 < 7 37 < 2
	7	<		87 < 8

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Notes.

On a small stage have only 8 instead of 16

V V
V V
V V
V V
V V
V V
V V
V V

that sticks.

clones to side.

sticks beat in B. by unit movement

stage

On skipping this side start skipping L. down
R. then

Audience

A. Begin with retide fast. Sticks down.

1-2-3 turn around. 1-2-3 turn

Repeat - - - -

B. Skipping. crossed legs 1-2-3-4 twist.

1-2-3-4 (this makes one turn) Repeat.

Sticks up: crossing - left arm under.

C. Steps short. bent knee. Sticks up.

2 X 7 < X
3 4 7 =
5 7 <
6 X 7 < X
7 8 7 <

Maudeley Stage Dance 166

1. Position in 2 lines back to back. - for provision

on a stage - in 2 lines facing audience

Cross straight first.

Up & Back.

1. A.

B. Skipping & twisting.

C. Cross. half right & left (like cancan). Twist.

2. A Up & Back

B. Skipping & Twist.

C. Twist for 16 bars

D. Skipping opposite in 4 lines

4. another way, & then then alone
March skips as in Fig. 2.

Then take the same positions as in the last figure
of the stage dance, leaving no. 1. 4. 5. 8

on each side to skip in a straight line
down the centre, the while the rest then
dancers. chain. turn round at the 2' as before.

(this can be done as an extra figure)

Page 3 of 10



1. Down & Back.

B. Skips to form arch.

March under from back.

Separating each side by stage.

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3.

A. Up & Back.

B. Skipping & Turning

C. Twist partners & turn back after meeting.

3rd. Repeat.

Right arm to partner. left to 2nd

2. to nest & turn back.

2. to nest & 2. to partner.

2 3

6 7

1 8

4 5 define ^{face} opposite me.

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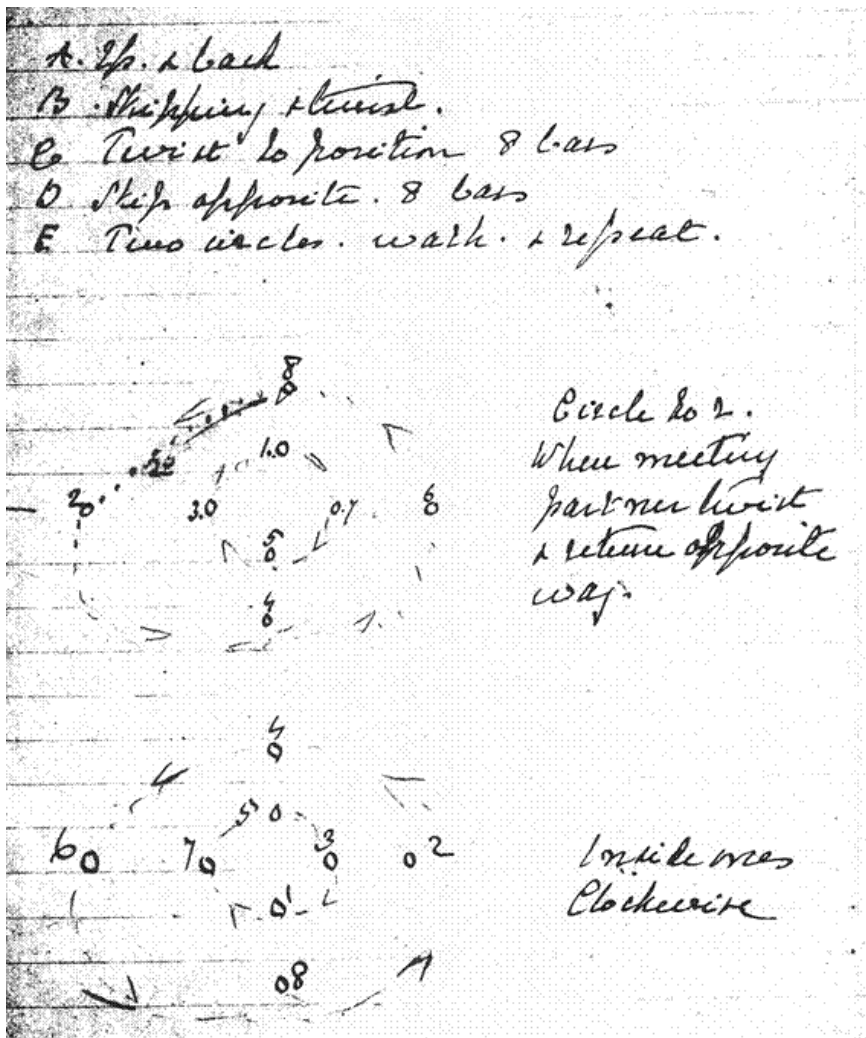
01 W

M 2 M 3 01 N 2 M 2 W

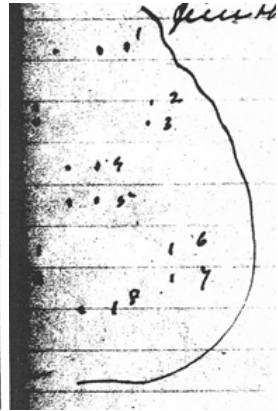
04 W

4

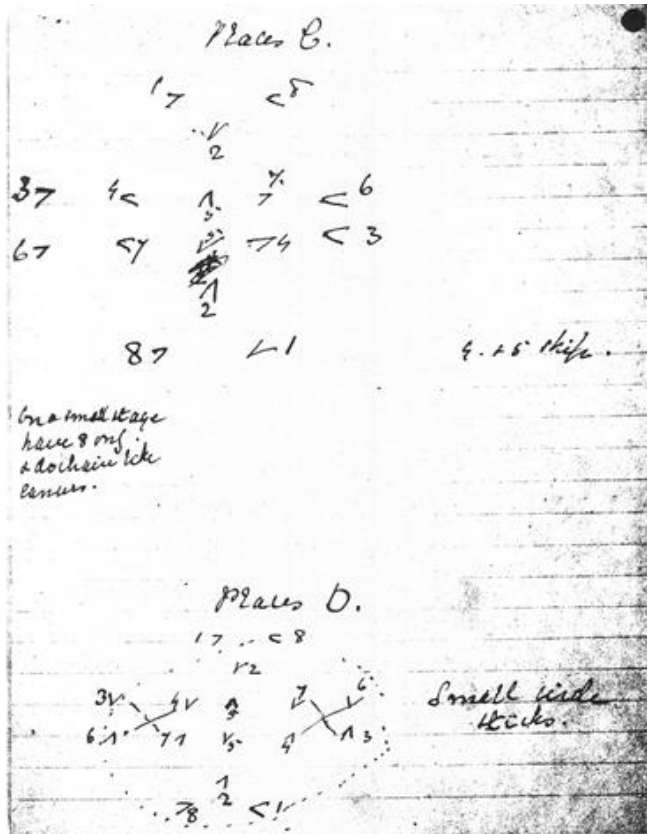
Page 6 of 10



5. 1. Up & back
 B. shipping & transit.
 C. shipping to places.
 D. Big with a chain. 16 steps.
 E. as on to pastures. 1. to 2?
 H. to 2? (pasture)
 Transit to mid of time.
 This is half way. 1 second time of time
 Transit to places.



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Rushbearing and Morris Dancing in Glossop

“A car or wagon loaded with a pyramid of rushes preceded by a group of dancers and a band of music”, wrote Ebenezer Rhodes in 1822, describing what he saw of the Glossopdale Festivities in his book, 'Peak Scenery'

Rushbearing was the transporting of rushes to church which took place annually in the days before church floors were boarded. The sweeping out of the old rushes and the spreading of the new ones symbolised cleansing and renewal and this simple act became a significant event in the church calendar. The villages on the north-west side of the Pennines made rushbearing into a colourful, ceremonial procession involving much merry-making and in particular, the dancing of the local morris. Eventually the rushcart and its attendant dancers formed one of the chief attractions at the annual wakes and the rushcarts continued to be built at wakes even after the church floors were boarded.

Although the Glossop Rushcart was paraded around all the local hamlets, it was built at Old Glossop and its rushes were destined to carpet the floor of the parish-church there. The early nineteenth century saw industrialisation creating a new Glossop town centre, because the Wakes celebrations were on such a grand scale it was felt that the fairground should be removed from its cramped quarters up near Old Glossop Church to a field in Howard Town. This was in 1839 and a fine rushcart was built to be part of the celebrations. This had to be locked up at night in a Mr Wood's mill yard because the Old Glossop folks, who bitterly resented the change, had threatened to destroy it.

Evidence suggests that the custom lapsed during the 1840s and 1850s but that there was a revival cart built from the Lamb Inn in Surrey Street in the 1860s and another built by employees of Messrs Woods Bros. in 1879. A really splendid effort was made that year by supporters of the Old Wake who disagreed with changing the dates of the annual holiday from September to July.

Sadly the new 'tin trunk wakes' became the most favourite holiday and the old wakes festivities seemed to lose their appeal. By the mid 1830s the appearances of the rushcart had ceased and although the Whitfield Wells Dressing took over as the principal attraction of the Old Wakes for a few years, even this lapsed in 1891.

It took the combined efforts of a number of hardworking Whitfield families to give the Old Wakes its reputation back. This was in 1911. The rushcart was back in the streets and it was accompanied by a band of Whitfield boy morrises, and the wells were dressed in the most lavish way possible.

The Whitfield Morris Dancers were led and trained by Mr R.B. Wilde. Half wore red 'knickers' and half wore blue. They wore white shirts, blue and red sashes and red and blue caps with gold tassels. The music was provided by several concertina players and a drummer. The rushcarts for this, and the following year's festivities were built by Mr George Broadley. These rushcarts

were for display only and were built of other materials beside rushes. The design may not have been exactly like those which had been built in Bridge End and Old Glossop because the rushcart builder was not a native of the town. He hailed from Yorkshire and was a rick Thatcher by trade.



The Last Rushcart to be built in Glossop¹⁶

His services were not called for again until 1925 when the Whitfield Wells Dressings were revived again after being in abeyance for some time. A team of morris dancers was imported from Eccles to dance with this cart. The carnival processions of 1927 and 1928 both had rushcarts and on these occasions they were accompanied by the Old Glossop Morris Dancers.

A report describing the various dancing items on the programme for the Carnival of 1927 refers to the Glossop people as being happily now familiarised with the Glossop Processional Morris Dance. This was because the 1927 revival team had appeared on their streets many times during that summer.

There had been no morris dancing locally since 1912 - except for that done by the girls teams visiting the carnival. Their dancing was felt to be merely improvisations done to jazz tunes and not a true morris dance and so, for the carnival of 1927, Harry the landlord of the Wheatsheaf Inn at Old Glossop and an old morris dancer himself, persuaded the Co-operative Society to pay for the costumes for a team of boy morrisers. They danced at many events for two very successful seasons.

¹⁶ It was in 1928. Mr Broadley, the rushcart builder is on the extreme right. The man in the centre of the group of three was the landlord of the Roebuck Inn at Whitfield from where a large part of the planning for the Old Wakes celebrations were organised



Norbury, Whitfield Morris Dancers¹⁷

They danced processionally and the cross morris figures were signalled by the conductor whenever he felt there was a big enough audience to justify a halt. In between dancing they marched along the road swinging their mollies in time to the music and the drum.

They are reported as taking part in several events in 1927 and continued to entertain the Glossop townspeople in 1928 where they danced at the Cooperative Gala Day and the Whitfield Well Dressing Carnival. Here they had the company of Onward Morris Dancers of Hyde: the Glossop Orpheans Jazz Band and Morris Dancers.

Morris dancing had become a big attraction at the carnivals and the teams that entered the classes were girls. The Old Glossop Morris dancers took part in one such competition at Padfield Carnival in 1927. It was judged by Mr Robert Brookes, an old Godley Hill Morris Dancer. He gave the boys second prize and awarded the first prize to the Padfield Girls Morris Team. This can hardly have been encouraging to the boys!

A careful scrutiny of the team photographs taken at Whitfield Wells Dressing in 1928 shows several dancers who look more like girls than boys. It is just possible that girls were recruited to swell the ranks when the boys dropped out. Local enquiries have revealed nothing so we cannot be certain. What is

¹⁷ From Morris Ring Photographic Archive

certain is that the company of the carnival morris teams at the events they participated in can hardly have encouraged the boys to commit themselves further. The newspaper reports of 1930 to 1936 do not reveal any reports of traditional teams of morris dancers appearing in Glossop, only class results showing that girls' teams travelled in from around the Manchester and Oldham areas to compete against each other.

Local interest in the traditional morris dancing has been kept alive by one performance of the Glossop Dance by Whitfield schoolchildren in 1934 and by visiting teams.

A further attempt to revive the dance was made by the pupils of Glossop Grammar School in 1953. The organiser of this team, a Miss Celia Timmins, managed to secure the services of Mr Alf Hall an ex morris dancer. Mr William Bowden - the last rushcart builder's son-in-law and concertina player for the 1927 team, and a 'very ancient drummer' all of whom would have ensured that the dance was being performed correctly. She passed the dance on to Bernard Bentley of the Manchester Morris Men who made a careful notation of it.

There are several other notations of the dance recorded:

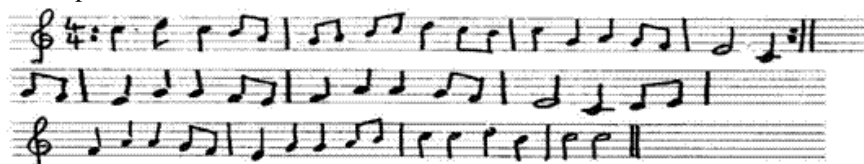
1. Barry Norbury described the steps to Alderman Doyle in the early 1920s
2. Mr Alf Hall, rather uncooperatively, described the steps of the processional part of the dance to Maud Karpeles of the EFDSS in 1938
3. Mr Wm Bowden also taught the dance to Mr J. C. Mainland, another Manchester Morris Man, who lives in Glossop. He has passed the dance onto several groups of young morris dancers, including my own team of Stockport lads. Anne Cohen made a notation of this version of the dance.

The music for the Glossop morris dance was made into a block by the Co-operative Society. It was also collected and recorded by Maud Karpeles in 1938 from Mr Tommy Byrom.

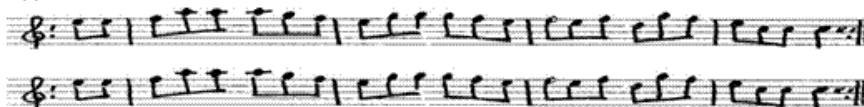
It is on record that the Glossop Morrisers sang before they danced:

Cheese and bread and th'owd cow's yed,
An' a puddin' baked in a lanthorn,
A bit- for me and a bit for thee,
An' a bit for't morris dancers.

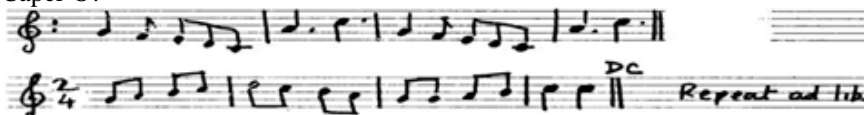
Glossop Morris Dance



Reel



Caper O!



The Glossop Morris Dance

The dance was done in two files by multiples of four. The earliest sources quote handkerchiefs as being used. Later teams used mollies made of 'varicolored ribbons bound so as to provide a hand grip' and sticks with bells and ribbons on. Soft mollie's with ribboned, ends seem to be the most satisfactory.

The music for the processional part of the dance is a variant of the Long Morris often called 'Cheese and Bread'. The cross morris figures have a simple little tune peculiar to Glossop. The final figure is done slowly to a 'Cross Morris' music common to many north west dances. Groups of dancers intending to reconstruct the dance ought to use the correct tunes in order to get the right feel of the dance. The steps are 'marching', skip or 'hop-step' and a change cape which is done by jumping up off the left leg, throwing the right leg up and then landing on it. The left leg then comes down and the feet come together. The hop-step in the 'reel' is faster than in the 'caper o!'. At the end of the introductory song or once to yourself is a change caper and throw up.

1. Processional Element of the Dance

Up the street or mark time for six steps starting on the right foot. Arms make alternate circles by swinging mollies up and in, right arm with right foot. On the seventh beat caper and throw up mollies. Repeat either moving up the street or moving backwards for four steps and forward for two and a caper.

2. Step and Turn

Face partners and do a crossed side-step to the right and then another to the left - R.L.R., L.R.L., in polka rhythm but with the weight transferred from one foot to the other. (More like a 'pas de basque' type of movement than what

is commonly known as a cross-polka). The arms are swung across the body with the right arm on the top when stepping to the right and the left arm on the top when stepping to the left. Mollies are crossed when feet are crossed.

Then four walking steps round in a circle to the right with hands down. Repeat the side stepping but this time start by stepping to the left and then to the right. Finally walk a circle to the left with the hands down.

3. The Reel

Using a hop-step, first corners cross over passing right shoulders and swinging the right: molly over head. The second corners mark time with a hop-step. Their hands are down loosely at their sides so that the mollies swing backwards and forwards in a natural manner. Second corners cross whilst first corners mark time. All throw mollies up and caper at the end of the phrase of the music. Repeat back to place. Repeat whole 'corners' figure. Then face up.

The dancers now make a tour of their own square. Working in their fours the front two dance backwards and the back two forwards to change places, passing right shoulders for those coming forwards. (All are facing up the set throughout. this figure). Next the files cross over, left file in front of right file. All caper and throw up at this half way point in the figure. Repeat this and return to places. The arms are down when hop-stepping so that the mollies swing loosely by sides.

One source quotes a third 'reel' figure. This is a 'wheel' half way round to the right with right molly to centre, and back to place with left molly to centre. It came after the corners figure.

NB. All these figures seem to have been hop-step and the music would have been repeated until the conductor was satisfied that the audience had seen enough. He would then signal to the band to revert back to the 'Long Morris' to march off up the street again and instruct his dancer likewise, or give instructions for the final cross morris music to be played. This accompanied the figure which concluded the dance.

4. The Caper O!

Files face each other and cross over passing right shoulders. They turn to face in and caper. Arms swing naturally when crossing and are thrown up on the caper. Next they take a quarter turn to the right so that the right file are facing up and the left file are facing down, take two hop steps in the direction they are facing and caper. Arms are swinging loosely by sides on hop-steps and thrown up on the caper.

Next they take a half turn to face in the opposite direction (right file facing down and left facing up) and repeat the two hop-steps and the caper before doing a complete turn to the right and another back to the left. Repeat the cross over, hop-stepping, capers in line and turns and end with a caper and mollies thrown up.

And that's the Glossop Morris!

Morris Dancing in Lymm: Revival of the Old Dance and Development of the New

Getting Interested

It seems such a long time ago now. It all started in the mid 1970's. I was one of the Thelwall Morris Men. Our foreman was Chris Maple who had moved to the North West from Chelmsford. He taught us dances that he knew, mainly from Adderbury, Bampton and Bledington. Occasionally he would turn up at practice with little snippets of something different in an attempt, I thought, to widen our understanding and to trigger our interest and imagination.

On one of these occasions he introduced us to the Lymm notation as collected by Maud Karpeles in 1938 (see The Journal of the EFDSS, 1951, vol. VI, no. 3). We followed Chris's instructions and danced the 'step up' and the 'step and turn'. The whole thing seemed ridiculous to me! Maud Karpeles had collected the stepping from Charles Simpson, and had noted it down as one step per bar! So there we were to the tune of Yankee Doodle making large steps forward and back with the large over-arm bowling action of the notation. Each step and arm movement being impossible to perform with any confidence or conviction, fitting the tune as follows:

Yankee Doodle went to town riding on a donkey,
stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni.
(The underlined syllables indicate the steps).

Maud Karpeles was a knowledgeable collector of dance with a long pedigree, but her notation just had to be a mistake.

Even though Maud Karpeles had collected the dance notation in 1938 and I knew that all her informants would be long dead, I nevertheless felt compelled to at least try to find out more of what was my local dance. So from 1977 onwards I began to devote some spare time to this end.
The search begins

I wrote to everyone that I knew who could possibly have any interest or knowledge of the dance. These were mainly members or ex-members of the Manchester Morris Dancers, who over the years had tried to recover more information. I wrote to Julian Pilling, Dan Howison, Eric Pollitt, Derek Froome and to Peter Coe as I knew he had been involved in collecting traditional material in his home county of Cheshire. This would make sure that I didn't waste time collecting stuff already known, and maybe give me points from which to start.

I borrowed the copy of C.E. ('Pel') Arden's second edition (1913 I think) of the "Illustrated Guide to Lymm and District" from the local history section of Warrington Library, as in it was information about the dancers and a photograph of the team from 1905. I later managed to trace and buy a copy of the first edition of the guide (1900), which has an earlier photograph from before the turn of the twentieth century.

I put notices up in local shop windows and in the village post office asking for any information and spent many hours in the library reading room looking through copies of our local newspaper.



Outrington Morris Team—c.1899

Lymm Rushbearing and May Queen

George Ormerod, in the 1882 edition of “History of the County Palatine and City of Chester”, wrote that the festival of Lymm Wakes featuring the Rushbearing ceremony was at use in the village in 1817, and that the cart of rushes was preceded by male and female Morris Dancers, who performed at each house and were attended by a man in female attire who rang a bell and held out a large wooden ladle to collect donations of money. The dancer in “female attire”, known as “Maid Marian” or the “Old Fool” was the leader of the troupe and in charge of the dancers. Rushbearing in Statham and Lymm took place around the time of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which occurred on the 15th August.

The formula for Lymm Rushbearing Monday was the first Monday after the second Sunday in August, although the newspaper reports always refer to the Saturday before this as the day when the rushes were processed to the church.

A painting showing the Rushbearing procession at Lymm Cross from about the year 1840 was mentioned and pictured in Arden’s guide. The picture belonged to Squire Trafford of Oughtrington Hall but was in the possession of Robert Oldfield of Lymm in the early 1900’s, and was sold by auction after his death as part of his estate at Oak Villa Farm Burford Lane, Oughtrington, Lymm, on Thursday December 12th 1918 by John Arnolds, Auctioneers, of Altrincham.

Although many locals were keen to acquire it, the picture was sold out of the village, and no-one knew the purchaser. The picture is described in the auctioneer's listings as a 'large Oleograph "Rushbearing at Lymm" in a gilt frame'. (Note: An oleograph is a print in imitation of an oil painting).



Lymm Rushbearing - 1840 Painting

According to the diary notes of folklorist Derek Froome, Donald Adamson, successor to Robert Oldfield, had many enquiries about the painting but could not help. In January 1954, Derek Froome met the old clerk of John Arnolds, the auctioneers, who remembered the auction, and he subsequently met with Mr. Arnold (son) who endeavoured to find a record of the auction which he also remembered, but all the records were pulped c.1938. The painting is now in the possession of the Castle Folk-Life Museum in York, but there is no record of when or from whom it was acquired. C. E. Ardern in his 1900 edition of "An Illustrated Guide to Lymm and District" says that "Up to about 1881 a rushcart paraded the streets each Rushbearing drawn by grey horses" and that "Two troupes of Morris Dancers paraded the village each Rushbearing Saturday until a few years ago." So just before the turn of the twentieth century Lymm boasted two morris teams; one based in Lymm itself, and the other at Oughtrington. Only the Oughtrington team continued to dance into the 1900's and this became the only troupe of Lymm Morris Dancers, and it was thought that this surviving troupe had ceased to dance by the end of 1910.

Tom Holt of Sandy Lane and "well-known Lymm fustian cutter", Thomas (Dossey) Brooks were the leaders of the Oughtrington dancers and the

Lymm dancers respectively and Ardern reports that they are "both now dead" in his 1900 edition. The photograph shows the 1899 team - the ribbons, which would be multicoloured, are offcuts/strips of "fustian" (velvet) which would be plentiful in a village which had fustian cutting as a major occupation.

A letter, which contained a description and a drawing of Lymm Rushbearing, sent by Sir Bartle Frere to his very young sister in 1844, was donated to the Cecil Sharp House library by a descendant of Sir Bartle's in the 1940's. The letter was stolen¹⁸ from Cecil Sharp House some time in the 1960's. Miss M. Dean-Smith, who worked at Cecil Sharp House until the April of 1950, said that at the time the letter was donated, manuscript material was not catalogued, so there is no specific or detailed record of what the letter contained. She suggested that the actual content of the letter could possibly be further clarified by locating papers bequeathed to the Folk Lore Society at this time, or



1907 Lymm Rushbearing at Lymm Cross

through Dr. E. C. Cawte or Norman Peacock who had access to the papers. The missing letter has not been located. The editor's note, on page 101 of the 1951 *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, says of the letter:

"It describes and illustrates in a most lively manner, the Rushcart ceremony as he saw it. The pen and ink drawing shows the cart, the horses mounted by boys, the dancers, preceded by a flag bearer, and leaves to the imagination the Town Band omitted for lack of space."

As well as the Rushbearing in Lymm, from around the late 1880's, Bands of Hope Whit Walks took place, bringing many thousands of visiting

¹⁸ It seems that a lot of desirable and collectable material goes missing from archival desposits

people to the village. These walks of witness took place on various days during Whit-week and Lymm May Queen Festivities were fixed on Whit Thursday. The May Queen celebrations were abandoned in 1914 and re-commenced after the First World War in 1919, but in the meantime the Statham May Queen had been established in 1911 on the Whit Monday, and it soon became the major event of the two.

From the 1930's there were no separate May Queen celebrations in Lymm, and there were no May Queen festivities at all during the Second World War. A revived festival combined the Statham and Lymm celebrations on the Saturday of Whit weekend in 1947.

Reviving a Lost Dance

Dan Howison mentioned to me that notes about the dance had been deposited at Warrington Library for safekeeping by a Mrs. Louie Booth whose father, Mr. Higgins, was at one time a leader of the dancers, and had taught her the dance.

The notes were no longer there¹⁹ and so Dan sent me a copy. The notes ended with the information that "The boys of Statham performed a version of this dance in 1923, as part of the May Queen celebrations."



The Lymm Morris Men - c.1904, at Henry Street, Lymm

I copied the photographs from both editions of Ardern's guides and took them with me whenever I went.

When I showed the photographs at the pub many of the dancers were recognised by sight or by family likeness and identified. I started on a trail, which was to last for years. It seemed that Ted Edwards knew everyone and he

¹⁹ (see previous footnote)

directed me to find Dick Rowles, one of the sons of Ned Rowles, the last leader of the dancers.



Lymm Morris Men - c.1910

It turned out that the men's team had danced up to at least 1912, and when Maud Karpeles had visited Lymm to collect information, many much younger dancers were alive than the ones she was aware of, including Ned!

When I eventually traced Dick, he produced a photograph of the Statham dancers of the 1923 May Queen, and named them all! The boys were all around eleven years old.



The Statham Boys Team, 1923

From that point on I slowly located most of the boys on the photograph. I met and interviewed many people including Albert Riley, George Finney, Frank Stirton, Herbert Taylor, Harold Struthers and Brian Leigh. All these lads still lived in the area. I contacted Robert Hartley, who was living in Macclesfield, by post.



Organisers and performers of 1923 May Queen

Frank Stirton provided me with a second photograph showing the 1923 May Queen participants on the bowling green at The Star.

Morris Dancing in Lymm - Press Reports

I combed the papers and noted every record of Morris dancing in Lymm Statham from 1853 to the 1960's. Too boring to catalogue here, but...

Monday 14th August was the start of Rushbearing week in 1893, and the following report from the Warrington Guardian is worthy of quotation in full:

"On Monday the village had quite a deserted aspect. Most of the principal shops and places of business were closed, and the greater portion of the villagers went to Scarborough with the excursion. There is little doubt that, like other such customs, Rushbearing is becoming a thing of the past at Lymm. At one time the ceremony was conducted on a large scale, and a deal of interest taken in it, not only by the villagers, but by all residents in the district. Gradually, however, the ceremony became each year less impressive, until at the present time it has been put back to the preceding Saturday, so that it might not interfere with the annual trip that takes place on Rushbearing Monday. Even as it is there is very little left of the old custom, and the actual ceremony of Rushbearing is now conspicuous by its absence. The modern version is as follows: between twenty and thirty villagers rise in the small hours of Saturday morning, and having donned fancy costumes, they divide into three parties and proceed into the village, each from a different direction. A kind of morris dance, very pretty in its effect, is executed by each party, and assistance is expected at each house the dancers stop at. At nine o'clock the proceedings come to a close, and the morris dancers divide the cash and depart to enjoy themselves for the remainder of the day.

Such was the ceremony which took place on Saturday, (12th August 1893) and a stranger would certainly have found it difficult to see the connection between it and the old custom. Collin's fancy fair occupied one of the large fields outside the village, and was well patronized by young and old alike."

Another entry worthy of quoting in full is the report of the 1923 Whit Celebrations for which a photograph has already been shown to play a part this research.

Whit-Monday 18th May 1923. 1923 Whit Celebrations - The Star Bowling Green The Warrington Guardian of May 23rd 1923 reports:

"STATHAM MAY QUEEN FESTIVAL - PICTURESQUE SCENES"

"Statham's May Queen Festival was held on Whit-Monday with full pageantry, the weather being ideal for the purpose. The scene of the revels was the same sylvan arena as the past, and the innumerable visitors who flocked to the village from all quarters were afforded an ideal afternoon's entertainment, which was at once spectacular, graceful and picturesque. The day is regarded in the village as one of family and general reunion. It was first organised by the late Mr. F. Lockyer, 12 years ago. During the afternoon the sun shone with brilliance, and its warmth was tempered by a breeze, which added greatly to the comfort of those taking part in the festival as also to the spectators, young and old alike. Infinite care and taste had been bestowed upon the costumes of the children taking part, and for this purpose a generous sum out of the funds is set aside annually.

THE PROCESSION

An early start was made with the procession, which, headed by the silver band of the Lymm branch of the British Legion, resplendent in blue uniforms with scarlet facings, proceeded from Cross Brow through Booth's Hill to Lymm's historic Cross, the return journey being made by way of Lymm Station. The tableaux were picturesque, particular care having been lavished upon the decoration of the lorries. Fortunately the inconvenience caused by the level crossing last year was not repeated, and the procession and visitors were very fortunate in being able to cross both the Statham and the Lymm level crossings. This year, for the second time in its history, Statham was able to boast of a queen. The character was portrayed with dignity and charm by Miss Mary Davies, who, attended by her court, presided over the subsequent revels. These included symmetrical plaiting of the maypole ribbons in a serpentine dance, which was executed with marvellous precision and grace; characteristic Scotch and Morris dances; a picturesque dance with gaily-hued garlands, and a naval hornpipe, executed by girls charmingly garbed. The children and the aged afterwards were entertained to tea in the school, and the children were given prizes and ices. The dances were

repeated in the early part of the evening. Apart from the thanks due to Mrs. Lockyer, her son and her band of willing workers, great credit must be accorded to Miss. Wibberley for having trained the children who participated in the Maypole dances. The chief organisers and workers were: Messrs. J. Bryers, B. Drinkwater, Finney, W. Jolley, N. Leigh, C. Lamming, C. Moss, Massey, E. Rowe, Rushworth, Wibberley, Sturton, Whittaker; Mesdames: Appleton, Leigh, Sturton, and Miss. Wibberley, Mr. and Mrs. B.A. Lockyer (honorary treasurers), Mr. W. Lockyer and Mrs. J. Smith (joint honorary secretaries).

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Rose Queen - Miss Mary Davies,

Maids of Honour - Misses Grace Bryers, Margery Hinglefield (Inglefield?), Iris

Parton and Lily Atherton,

Train Bearers - Joe Hewitt and Geo. Owen,

Fairy Queen - Mollie Hartley,

Fairy Queen Attendants - Misses C. Smith, Elsie Taylor, Dorothy Brazendale and Elsie Bryers.

Britannia - Sarah Atherton.

John Bull - A. Massey,

Peace - Doris Clark,

Faith - Annie Bate,

Charity - Doris Hewitt,

Hope - Mildred Rigby,

Spring - Clarissa Hinglefield (Inglefield?),

Summer - Doreen Dixon,

Autumn - Annie Moss,

Winter - Irene Smith,

Flower Girls - Annie Raymore, Elsie Appleton and Mildred Hinton,

Nurse - Mrs. Broadfield,

Red Riding Hood - Lily Atherton,

Pack of Cards - Harry and Arthur James,

Jack Horner - Henry Hartley,

Jazz Band - Harold Ravenscroft,

King of Diamonds - Wm Gilberts,

Robin Hood - Jimmy Taylor,

Miss Muffet - Joyce Ravenscroft,

Creche - Edward, James and Harry and Fanny Brookfield.

THE DANCERS

The following is a list of those who participated in the dancing:-

Maypole Dance - Annie Rushworth, May Manning, Dolly Struthers, Lizzie Wibberley, Margery Manning, Edith Hinton, Olive Clare, Eva Clare, Marion Finney, Gladys Drinkwater, Edith Thomason, May Field,

Dora Watts, Amy Hartley, Elsie Owen and Mildred Manning.

Sword Dance - Edna Phillips and Celia Phillips

Scotch Dance - Maggie Bell, Ada Field, Edith Gilberts, Mollie Turton and Eva Struthers.

Girls Hornpipe - Annie Rushworth, Lily Bell, Daisy Field, Margery Hinton, Edna Phillips and Celia Phillips.

Morris Dance - Kenneth Lockyer, Bert Appleton, Harold Struthers, Jimmy Brooks, George Finney, Wilfred Watts, Frank Sturton, Egbert (Herbert?) Taylor, Bryn (Brian?) Leigh, Ernest Leather and Arnold Appleton

Garland Dance - Ada Field, Mary Griffiths, May Field, Dorothy Field and Margery Hinton, Mildred Riley, Mollie Sturton, Edith Gilberts and Beaty Burrows.

Highland Fling - Edna Phillips and Celia Phillips

Special prizes were presented to the Rose Queen, Miss Mary Davies, and to last year's queen, Miss Olive Clare. These were a brush and comb and hand mirror and a box of chocolates. Miss Dolton made the presentation."

Morris to Carnival

Whenever traditions are under threat there are always those who try to set up situations to help their continuance. This has always been true of Morris Dancing. There have been many peaks and troughs in the popularity of Morris dancing and interested parties will endeavour to revive flagging teams, re-awaken traditions that are dormant or collect and preserve dances from 'dead' sides - so that these dances are able to undergo a renaissance. Whatever form the input takes, this input itself inevitably has an effect on the tradition.

After WW1 many sides found themselves unable to raise a team - the men simply weren't available. The responses to this situation were variable:

Some sides didn't dance again.

Some sides re-formed as mixed adults.

Some surviving dancers taught boys and some taught sides of mixed sex children.

Most of the 'old' dancers tried to maintain the 'maleness' of the dances but continued to struggle and the cancellation of many 'traditional' events such as Whit and May festivals during WW2 caused further breaks in continuity. It became rare for boys to dance and girls took it up in large numbers.

In the north of England and particularly in the north - west, competitions were organised in an attempt to encourage troupes once more to be a part of the village festivals. To this end the idea was very successful, but much was changed, and some would say lost, in the process. Prizes were awarded to the winning troupes in various age categories and there was a massive revival. However the structure which needed to be created for the competitions to succeed, changed both the form and style of Morris dancing very rapidly over a

very short time span and in any traditional context, revolutionary change, rather than evolutionary change, is unusual, not to say rare.

Points were lost if lines weren't straight, so movement in dances became much more regimented and shape changes in figures became slower to give more precise control. Regular stepping was rewarded, and the judges agreed on specific rules that regularised exactly what was 'correct'. The rules stipulated what was to be assessed and how it was assessed. Thighs had to come up to the horizontal, pumps had to be clean, innovation in costume and dance gained points. There was thus a very active encouragement for the dances and costumes to be changed annually to meet the demands and standards set by the competitions. Regional differences in dance and in style of performance could not be maintained if a troupe wanted to win and their dance and style did not match the criteria!

So regional differences were soon sacrificed for the sake of winning prizes and prestige. However the rapid growth of these 'carnival' morris troupes soon swamped the village fetes and festivals and the competitions became unwelcome to many organisers. Competitions now take place as internal events in carnival morris circles.

Morris Competitions

The morris troupes and the entertainer troupes were highly competitive and the competitions were a major influence on how the performances evolved over the years. The dances and the design and colours of the uniforms were revised and changed each year and were always a closely guarded secret. It was not unknown for rival troupes to have spies!

The competitions were in 3 age categories:

'Tinies' - under 11 years old

'Juniors' - under 16 years old

'Seniors' - any age (including Tinies and Juniors if good enough)

The judges of the entertainers troupes awarded equal marks for the following aspects of the display:

Entry

Uniform

Figures

Timing & Rhythm

Manner of Performance

Content of Programme

Formation

Exit

"Figures" refers to the static tableaux shapes formed, and "Formation" refers to the danced movements on the ground.

Competitions often went on till quite late and if troupes used the same music then they would sometimes dance at the same time in order to fit all the

troupes in. Pauline Doorbar remembered one occasion when they had to dance in car headlights. The morris troupes tended to use traditional tunes picked from a handful of about half a dozen possibles but the entertainers performed to any music they wished.

The decline in the popularity of carnival troupes at village fetes, May Queen and Rose Queen celebrations etc. over the years is always regretted by those involved in the heyday, because the presence of many troupes "made the processions". All mourned that in the later years the troupes danced to recorded music, and remembered with delight the joy of dancing to live bands. They danced to what they described as "the old band music" and tunes like 'Blaze Away' and 'On the Quarterdeck' were mentioned. The troupes became increasingly less interested in the processions, which tired everyone out, because they attended the fetes solely to win the competitions. When there were many troupes, these competitions would take all or most of the day, which didn't always suit the organisers. Nowadays the troupes arrange their own competition venues and invite the other troupes to attend and compete. This means that the carnival morris troupes have become a rarer sight at village fetes and are not seen so much in open public performance in any great numbers.

Teams performing dances from earlier traditional sources in the North West, or teams performing Cotswold style morris are now more common at village fetes in the north.

In 1980 The Thelwall Morris Men began to dance the Lymm/Statham Dance on specific occasions, and since 1986 have danced in kit as close as possible to that of the original Lymm teams. A smaller and less grand version of the Rushbearing procession and ceremony has been revived, and the dance is now performed annually by interested and willing individuals at this event.



Lymm Revival Team - 1986 Rushbearing)

The Statham Morris

Kit

Ordinary shoes or boots; dark knee-length socks; ordinary schoolboys' short trousers (with braces); white, or at best, pale shirts with rosettes pinned up the front and back in vertical rows, usually pinned onto braces; straw hats decorated with paper flowers, long ribbons hanging from waist band all round; a long white cloth held in each hand; some wore ties. '

Tune

Various tunes e.g. "Pop Goes The Weasel", "Oh Susannah", but mostly "Yankee Doodle" which was generally called "Charlie Barber" after the words sung by Ned Rowles:

"Charlie Barber shaved his father,
With a wooden razor.
The razor slipped and, cut his lip,
Well done Charlie Barber."
"Toasted cheese is very, very good
Toasted in a lantern.
A bit for me, and a bit for you,
And a bit for the Morris Dancers."

Ned also sang "Smack 'em up me lucky lads"

Dancers numbered 8 or 12, but could be done with any multiple of 4,

Figures

Step up

Step across (and back) = 2 figures

Star

Cast (up or down)

Double cast

Corners

The step up and turn is used as a repeated chorus.

Notation

STEP AND TURN

8 bars (used to start dance, and as a Chorus)

FEET

1

Jump on both feet, left in front of right.

Jump onto left foot.

Jump on both feet, right in front of left.

Jump onto right foot.

2

Turn (single upwards and outwards, starting on left foot making three steps and stamping right foot (walked).

Repeat **1** with opposite feet

Repeat **2** downwards and outwards starting on right foot.

HANDS

1

Cross hands in front at waist level, left in front of right.

Flick hands outwards (apart)

Cross hand again with right hand in front

Flick outward again

2

On first and third step, bring cloths smartly down from head level. On stamp flick cloths above head.

Repeat 1 with opposite hands in front.

Repeat 2

Even numbers reverse feet and hands,

Stepping for the figures is a fast skip-step, two steps to a bar of music, with the free leg behind, and starting on the inside foot. Hands are over-arm bowling action, left arm with right leg etc. and are flicked above head on the "feet-together stamp"

Figure Notation

1. STEP UP

Three steps forward starting on the inside leg, then outside leg thrown forwards. Three steps back starting with the outside leg, then free leg is stamped "feet together"

REPEAT - 8 bars of music

2. STEP ACROSS

Partners change places, and turn to face, using eight steps (four bars) All perform step and turn, then repeat to cross back to original place. (16 bars of music in all).

3. STAR

Partners cross passing right shoulder, then all turn left to form left hand stars in groups of four. Stars travel half way round, and partners again cross (this time left shoulder) and turn right into right hand star back to place.

Inside foot start. 8 bars in all. No information on hands.

4. CAST UP

Bottom couple dance together up the middle of the set, and cast out and down the outside back to places, with continuous steps starting on the inside foot. As this couple pass the top (four bars of music) the next pair dance up together and cast round, followed by each couple in order. While not on the move, all dancers perform the step and turn, and move off at four bar intervals. This was also performed as a CAST DOWN.

5. DOUBLE CAST

This is a combination of the CAST UP and the CAST DOWN, and was invented by Ned Rowles. Each couple goes in a different order, and in alternately opposite directions. Bottoms cast up, followed by tops casting down, and so on, until all couples have performed a cast. Again, step and turns are

performed in position while awaiting turn, or after returning to place.

FIGURES 4 and 5 both take 24 bars of music for an eight-man set, and 32 bars for 12 men.

6. CORNERS

First corners, in each group of four cross over, passing by right shoulder, while the second corners do a step and turn. Second corners then cross, while first corners do a step and turn.

This may be four bars or eight bars long, and the step and turn could be either "half" or "whole" in each case. If the crossing takes eight bars, then this is really two figures: a corners cross, and a cross back, as in FIGURE 2.

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