

The Morris Dancer

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View of the Iron Bridge, Shropshire, by G. Robertson and J. Fidler.

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HELEN KARPELES, CECIL SHARP, DOUGLAS KENNEDY, MAUD KARPELES

Welcome to the latest edition of the Morris Dancer. Your co-editors for this glorious venture:

Mac McCoig I currently dance with Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris Men. I learned to dance with Winchester MM under the eagle eye of Lionel Bacon during the 1970s. A degree in Fine Art (Painting), a career in Social Housing and a parallel career as an officer in the Territorial Army may not, at first glance, equip one to be the editor of a journal devoted to research papers on Morris Dancing. However, I have a keen interest in Morris-related research and 40 years dancing experience and this, plus a request from Peter Halfpenny, has prompted me to become involved with the production of the Morris Dancer.

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Andrew Bullen I currently dance with Pullman Morris and Sword, in the Pullman neighbourhood in Chicago in the U.S. I learned to dance at the University of Chicago in 1980, continuing a proud tradition of Morris in Chicago that stretches back to 1904. I have been Executive Editor of the American Morris Newsletter, currently on hiatus, since 2005. I am a librarian and a computer programmer. I have had a keen interest in Morris research for many years, and am currently celebrating my 32nd year of Morris Dancing.

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Call for Papers

The Morris Dancer invites the submission of essays on the theme of Morris Dance and related subject themes, which throw new light on past and present aspects of the dance, its performers and collectors.

All papers must be submitted via email to the editors, and must be formatted in accordance with Modern Language Association (MLA) style with endnotes.

E-mails should include the submitter's name, a brief bio, and the paper, attached as a Word document.

The next edition of The Morris Dancer will appear (if sufficient materiel is available) in December 2012.

-- July, 2012

Further Reflection on Rural Morris Dance Sets in the Metropolis

Keith Chandler



[Coalbrookdale by Night](#) by Philip James de Loutherbourg, 1801.
The Madeley Wood (or Bedlam) Furnaces, which belonged to the Coalbrookdale Company from 1776 to 1796. ^[1]

Between 1984 and 1987 I published a series of A5 booklets on various historical aspects of Morris dancing. Running between 36 and 48 pages, this series eventually reached fourteen volumes. Nine volumes showcased my own research, while one was a joint effort with the late Roy Judge. In addition, I was honoured to be allowed to present invaluable ground-breaking work by John Forrest, Michael Heaney, Philip Heath-Coleman, and Jonathan Leach. I had plans to issue further volumes, and had already set Gordon Ashman working on one documenting the north Midland variant, and Roy Judge on the theatrical Morris, but I ran out of steam. Fortunately, both pieces appeared at a later date, Gordon's as a talk at the 1986 Traditional Dance Conference held in Alsager, Cheshire, and subsequently in the published volume collecting together text versions, and Roy's in an issue of [Folklore](#).

One of my own volumes dealt with the 19th century phenomenon of Morris dance sides who, while clearly originating from elsewhere, had performed in the streets of London and its environs. I later rehearsed some of that material in my 1993 volume,

Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles. On both occasions I was concerned solely with Morris sets which had originated in the south Midland area which has long been my main purview. It was clear from the sources, however, that there had been periodic visits to the metropolis by sets from other areas of the country. One such was that composed of colliers from Shropshire in 1817. Mike Heaney uncovered this one, and with his customary generosity passed it on to me. In turn I gave it to Gordon Ashman, who made use of it in the piece cited above. In checking the Internet, I find that there is no obvious transcription, and as few people will, I think, be aware of this source, it is worth giving again in its entirety.

QUEEN STREET. - MORRIS DANCERS. - *John Codman, Rowland Fowler, William Fowler, Edward Herbert*, and five others, were brought before the Magistrate by Benjamin P. Capper, Esq., of the Allen-office, under the following circumstances : -

It appeared, from the statement of Mr. Capper, that these nine men, who were decked out in all the colours of the rainbow, by means of ribands of various colours, white, red, and yellow paper round the edges of their hats, to imitate silver and gold lace, and other absurd imitations of finery, made their appearance, before the doors and windows of the Allen-office, in Crown-street, Westminster, between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon ; one of them bearing in his hand a tambarine, and the others with sticks in theirs, and began dancing in their usual grotesque way. In a few minutes a great crowd was collected, and Mr. C. having heard or read of some Morris-dancers who had annoyed different neighbourhoods about town, thought, as they were so near the office, it would be right they should see the inside of it, and hear what the Magistrate would say to them.

Mr. FIELDING told them they had committed a great breach of the law in thus arraying themselves, that they were amenable as vagrants, and as such liable to be sent to prison. He observed that on a paper in front of one of their hats was written "Colliers from Shropshire;" it would grieve him, he said, particularly at the present moment, to deprive the harvest, which is fast approaching, of the expertise of nine such stout, young, active lads as they appeared to be ; but he must do his duty, and, however painful to his feelings, put the law in force, unless they would solemnly promise him, upon their word of honour, that they would leave town immediately by two different routes, five in one party and four in the other. This they very readily promised to do. Mr. F. then asked them what money they had about them? They instantly emptied their pockets, and their whole store was found to amount to about 2s. in halfpence. He then asked them how much they had earned a day since they arrived in town ; they answered, never more than 2s. a day each.

Mr. F. also informed them they must immediately disrobe themselves of all their fantastic finery, give up their "spirit-stirring drum," with all their other implements of Morris-dancing mystery ; of all which they immediately divested themselves, and they were given in charge to the officer present.

Thus restored to a state of natural appearance, they looked like they really were, stout, well-made, and some of them rather handsome young men.

Mr. FIELDING then informed them they must leave town this day, and must endeavour to obtain employment at the first place where they could any of them meet with it ; and those who could not get it must make the best of their way in search of it in some other place ; and in order to make them somewhat more easy, in once more turning their faces toward their native county, he would (not doubting but they would keep their words which they had pledged) order them to be paid half-a-crown each to cheer them on their way.

[1] The Yorck Project: 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei. DVD-ROM, 2002. [ISBN 3936122202](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63878-p0011-9). Distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH.

Mr. COLOQUOUNOUN also advised them to be very cautious in their conduct, and by no means to attempt taking up again, as they passed along, the mystery they had just laid down; for if they came under the cognizance of any of the country Magistrates, they would most assuredly be sent to prison.

The Clerk was then desired to give them half-a-crown each, and they departed, after very respectfully returning the Magistrates their thanks for the kind treatment they had met with. (*The Times*, 8 August 1817, page 3)

In addition to formal visits by complete dance sets, there must have been a number of occasions when the Morris of the countryside was performed in the metropolis *ad hoc*. One such occurred during August 1856, on the occasion of a public banquet given in the Surrey Gardens to more than two thousand recently-returned Crimean veterans. As reported in several contemporary newspapers (this one from *The Lady's Newspaper*, 30 August 1856, page 135) :

...in one or two places, old soldiers gave practical evidence of their rustic origin by a vigorous exhibition of Morris dancing, barring the sticks and the ribbons, but with fife accompaniment, to the amusement of the lookers-on, and to their own profit, some silver coins being occasionally flung into the midst of the arena at the close of the performance.

One of the most important 'previously unknown' references on this tack surfaced very recently. There is no point whatever in doing a Google search using the term "Morris dancing" (or variants thereof), as it will yield hundreds of thousands of hits. But periodically I search using the term "dancing booth" for another book under research. This past occasion threw up four additional relevant references since the last time I checked. One of these was a volume of reminiscences by Thomas B. Ellenor, published in London by The Press Printers in 1901 under the unprepossessing title *Rambling recollections of Chelsea* (available online as eBook #32548). The author, born in 1827 and a bootmaker by trade, recalls growing up in Chelsea when it was still essentially a village. In addition to recollections of a dancing booth - a canvas tent with wooden flooring on which country dances were performed - at the fair, on page 71 he gives a quite remarkable account of Morris dancing :

The Morris Dancers at Chelsea on May Day or early in May would pay us a visit, generally consisting of from nine to twelve, all men or lads. They had the appearance of countrymen, dressed some in smock frocks, others in shirt-sleeves, breeches and gaiters, and all decked out in coloured ribbons tied round their hats, arms, and knees of their breeches, with long streamers, and others carrying short sticks with ribbons twisted round, and bows on top, or garlands of flowers tied on small hoops. They generally stopped outside the taverns in the roadway and danced to a drum and pan pipes, tambourine and triangle. They would form themselves into three rows, according to their number, about three feet apart each way, and would dance a sort of jig, and change places by passing in and out and turning round to face one another, striking their sticks and twisting their garlands to the time of the music, and then stamp their feet and give a sort of whoop or shout, and finish with a chant in honour of the month of May, and make a collection among the crowd.



Cheyne Walk, 1870. Cecil Gordon Lawson. ^[2]

He seems to be describing forms which nowadays, at least, we would typically associate with a number of different regions, including the conventional south Midlands variant, that of the Welsh borders, what Mike Heaney has chronicled as Bedlam Morris, and even north-west garland dances. The origin of these dance sets will never now be established, but Morris dancing in Chelsea was clearly a frequent occurrence during at least a portion of the author's lifetime, let us suggest the eighteen-thirties and forties. This wonderful find merely confirms what I have long believed, that there are still numerous references out there just waiting to be uncovered. The British Library, in conjunction with Brightsolid, is posting scans of their local newspaper holdings (<http://www1.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>). With more than five million pages already available, it is claimed that eight thousand are being added on a daily basis, and that by the end of the decade the resource will contain perhaps forty million pages. Already a considerable number of references previously unseen in this generation have resurfaced, adding immeasurably to our increased understanding of the history of the Morris dance.

[2] Cheyne Walk is a historic street in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. During the 18th and 19th centuries, it was a favourite setting for artists and sightseers.

See also:

http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/vmgallery/general/medium.asp?gallery=vm_then_now_chelsea_embankment&img=then_and_now/s_mall/vm_tn_0001.jpg&size=medium&caller=vm%5Fthen%5Fnow%5Fgallery%2Easp&cpg=3&tpg=3 at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Virtual Museum.

The Immortal Memory

Ivor Allsop

“Before we sit down I am going to ask you to drink to the memory of the one man above all others to whom we owe our knowledge of the English Morris. Cecil Sharp through a chance meeting with the Headington Dancers perceived the full beauty of the English Folk Tradition, at a time when it was either unknown or despised in the wider world. By his delight in all that is strong and vigorous in art; his love and respect for humanity, and his boundless enthusiasm he was able, in spite of physical illness, to collect and preserve the great tradition of the English Morris and to hand it on to us who are here today. Many of us knew and loved him, all of have delighted in his work.”

Let us drink to his Immortal Memory!

With these words, the newly elected Squire of the Morris Ring, Alex Hunter, proposed the health of Cecil Sharp at the beginning of the feast at the Inaugural Meeting of the Morris Ring which took place in Trefusis, Cecil Sharp House on Saturday, October 20th, 1934 and written down in the first log ^[1] by the Bagman Walter Abson. Are these words of adulation fully justified? To try and find the answer to this it is necessary to go back to Sharp’s final return from Australia in January 1892 and to his trying to make a living from music.

On his return, he first lodged with his brother Llewellyn (Lewin) and then in Langham Gardens in a ground floor studio which had a grand piano and where he was able to give lessons and give lectures and, of course earn some money. He was appointed music-master at Ludgrove Preparatory School in 1893. Early in January that same year he became engaged to Constance Dorothea Birch, who he met at George Heppel’s ‘Cambridge coaching establishment’ in Weston-super-Mare when she came to visit for musical evenings,

...he became intimate with the family during one holiday when he was laid up with a broken collar-bone and this intimacy led to a good deal of concerted music-making and private theatricals. To the music-making came Constance Birch, the second daughter of a neighbouring family, who becomes later on of importance to this history. She was a tall and beautiful girl with brown wavy hair and, behind some unfortunate glasses, brown eyes: she could sketch successfully, sing and play the violin. ^[2]

Constance lived at ‘The Wilderness, in Clevedon, Somerset. Their marriage took place at All Saints Church, Clevedon, in Somerset on August 22nd 1893, with his friend from Australia, the Reverend Charles Marson officiating. Their first daughter, Dorothea Margaret Iseult, was born in September 1894 at The Wilderness.

...Their prospects were not dazzling. Sharp was reasonably sure of earning £350 a year and was hopeful of increasing this to £400 whilst his wife had about £100 a year of her own. ^[3]

[1] The First Log Book. The Morris Ring. 1991. p. 7. *There were thirteen clubs represented at this meeting with a further four applying for membership over the 1934 winter.*

[2] Cecil Sharp. A. H. Fox-Strangways. Oxford University Press. 1933. p. 5.

[3] *Ibid* p.20.

[To put this into some sort of perspective, my maternal grandfather was born 18 years after Sharp and married in 1900. Between then and the First World War he brought up a family of three daughters on about a £100 a year. His occupation was as a skilled tool maker. Poverty is in the eye of the beholder.]

Having been a widow for thirty years Dora left 'The Wilderness' in 1897 and moved into Headington Lodge. In the spring of 1899 she again moved, this time to Sandfield Cottage on the edge of the Quarry. Dora Birch used the Oxford building firm, Knowles & Son to do some building alterations at the cottage. The employee who did the work was William Kimber! It should be understood that the cottage

...was no cottage but rather a Victorian Gothic style villa. Built of local limestone under a tiled roof, it sported a riot of bay, dormer and oriel windows in arched frames, gabled ends with ornate pierced barge boards and tall stone chimneys, and housed some six bedrooms with the usual offices and reception rooms; it needed at least a cook and parlourmaid to help run it. [4]

During the time he was there she asked about the activities which might take place in the village knowing something about traditional folk song from her time in Somerset with her husband but knowing nothing at all about traditional dance. On being told of their existence she got William to promise that the next time they were out they would call on her and show her their dances. William was true to his word and when the Morris Men went out on their traditional Whitsuntide tour they turned up at Sandfield Cottage and performed some of the Headington Quarry Morris dances.

She enjoyed the show and asked to be included on the itinerary next time they were out - this of course they did on the Boxing Day of that year. [5]

Whether they also graced her with their presence on an autumn tour I haven't been able to find out. Thus we have Sharp's mother-in-law knowing about folk song from her Somerset days and, now, knowing about traditional Morris dance from her discussions with William Kimber and the Whitsuntide visit of Headington Quarry Morris Dancers to Sandfield Cottage. Surely Sharp and his family must have visited their children's maternal grandmother at least once between Whitsuntide and Christmas and they must have talked, with his mother-in-law, about life in general, during these conversations folk song and dance must have cropped up-- or was the family so dysfunctional that they didn't talk about things which were, to say the least, out of the ordinary. So was the Boxing Day visit of the Morris men such a surprise as we have been led to believe! He may not have seen Morris dancing before Boxing Day 1899 but surely he had heard about it from his mother-in-law in the more than six months which had elapsed since she first heard about it from William Kimber and saw it for herself on that Whitsuntide Tour.

Was Sharp being more than a little pedantic when he said this was the first time he had seen Morris dancing even though, presumably, Dora had talked to him about what she had seen that Whitsuntide. Was he being very strictly truthful and it was the first time he had **seen** Morris dancing?

With their appearance on Boxing Day as part of a Christmas, Tour undertaken out of season because of the very cold weather and the men needing to make some money, the Morris men performed a series of five of the Quarry dances.

[4] The Folk Music Journal, 'When Punch met Merry', Bob Grant. Volume 7, No. 5. 1999. p. 650.

[5] *Ibid* p. 648.

The dance was the now well - known Morris dance 'Laudnum Bunches', a title which decidedly belies its character. Then, dropping their handkerchiefs and each taking a stick, they went through the ritual of 'Bean Setting'. This was followed by 'Constant Billy' ('Cease your Funning' of the Beggar's Opera), 'Blue-eyed Stranger, and 'Rigs O'Marlow. [6]

While there is a discrepancy between what Sharp noted down as the first dance (Laudnum Bunches) and what Kimber said they started with (Bean Setting), they both agreed on the dances which were performed.

It is noted that five dances were performed at the Sandfield Cottage 'pitch' although accounts of the order conflict. William said that the show started with Bean Setting whilst Cecil sharp was later to note that Laudnum Bunches was first. in some order Bean Setting, Laudnum Bunches, Constant Billy, Blue-Eyed Stranger and Rigs o' Marlow were shown from the Headington repertoire of some twenty-six dances. [7]

There is no doubt that he was taken by the music and Sharp asked Kimber to return to Sandfield Cottage on December 27th so that he could notate the sequence of dances for posterity, (my words not Sharp's). Sharp made his notations which he eventually orchestrated and scored for strings, bassoon and horn as a suite of Morris dances and which were played at a lecture on November 26th 1903 [8] but what should have been Sharp's 'Eureka' moment with regard to the Morris took rather a long time to arrive. 1900 came and went with no use made of the dances he had seen and notated, as did 1901 and on January 10th 1902 his mother-in-law died and his reason for visiting Headington was gone; she was buried in Headington Cemetery, and the tenuous hold he may have had on seeing the Headington Quarry men again, disappeared. I feel certain that Mrs. Birch would not have ceased seeing the Morris men at Whitsuntide and at other times when they were out on tour as she had in 1899. Why then, was Sharp not moved to collect any more of the Headington dances? I haven't been able to find out why, but his mother-in-law must have talked to him about the dancers and dancing which they had seen in the meantime.

In 1893, he was appointed the music master at Ludgrove Preparatory School and in 1896 was made the Principal of the Hampstead Conservatoire, so by the turn of the century he was actively looking for an alternative to the mainly German music,

In his need he turned to the folk-song collections made by other people, to Chappell's Popular Music of the Olden Time and other sources (for he had as yet collected no folk-songs himself), and out of these compiled A Book of British Song for Home and School, which was published in 1902, and dedicated to Arthur Tempest Blakiston Dunn, headmaster of Ludgrove. [9]

September 1903 turned out to be his 'Eureka' moment for folk song when he was invited to visit his friend the Reverend Charles Marson at Hambridge Vicarage. It was here that he heard John England, the gardener, singing the "Seeds of Love" as he went about his gardening tasks whilst Sharp was taking it easy in the garden. Sharp noted down the words of the song and also the tune making this his first collected folk song. He arranged both words and tune for his young 18-year-old protégé, Mattie Kay who would sing it that evening at the 'Choir Supper'.

[6] Cecil Sharp. Fox-Strangways. p. 28.

[7] The Folk Music Journal, 'When Punch met Merry', Bob Grant. p. 651.

[8] Absolutely Classic: The Music of William Kimber. Booklet accompanying the CD by Derek Schofield. 1999. pp. 10, 12.

[9] Cecil Sharp. Fox-Strangways. p. 28.

Why did Sharp arrange John England's song for Mattie Kay? Why not ask John England to attend the 'Choir Supper' and sing the song himself? I do not know who would attend a 'Choir Supper' but presumably it would be people who were members of the church choir and their friends plus friends of the vicar. Would John England have felt uncomfortable singing his song in front of the village choir? This is the only reason I can think of and it was to spare the feelings of John England. At least that is my hope and not something more sinister! It was in collaboration with Marson that Sharp collected folk-songs in Somerset and published three volumes of Folk-Songs from Somerset with both acknowledged as collectors. The final two volumes were published under just Sharp's name. There was a 'falling out' between the two as a result but that is another story. His collecting of folk songs continued from this time on but surely he had taken rather a long time to get round to doing any collecting bearing in mind that his mother-in-law knew about the Somerset folk songs before Sharp's marriage to Constance in 1893 and his use of Chappell and his compilation published in 1902.

In 1905 he had a difference of opinion with the owner of the Hampstead Conservatoire, Arthur Blackwood, over his salary being late and he resigned his post as principal.

During the years 1904-7 Sharp had the honour of giving musical instruction to the royal children at Marlborough House. He was asked to discover what musical talents they possessed, and to develop them in respiration, good carriage, diction, and discipline. The class consisted of Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales, Prince Albert, Princess Mary, and nine other children, and later, Prince Henry. [10]

Sharp would not have been too bothered to lose his salary for being the principal of the Hampstead Conservatoire since this would have been replaced by the stipend from teaching the royal children. This was, later, converted into a Civil List pension. He was always man on the lookout for a commercial opportunity.

Also in 1905 an interview in the Morning Post was seen by Herbert MacIlwaine, the musical director of the Esperance Club.

On Saturday 29 July 1905, McIlwaine read in his Morning Post of an interview with Cecil Sharp on the subject of English folk song. Later, at the end of the club's summer holiday, he suggested to Mary that this might be possible material for the Club's Christmas party that year. [11]

Cecil Sharp was approached by Mary Neal to see if he would involve himself with the Esperance Club and to teach the folk songs, which he had collected, to the girls. (Should this have caused surprise? I think not. Sharp's younger sister, Evelyn was an old friend of Mary's both being involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement. [12]) This he gladly did. And it was Mary Neal who also got Sharp to think about the Morris by asking him if he knew of any dances that could accompany the songs he had taught to the girls.

[10] Cecil Sharp. Fox-Strangways. p. 52.

[11] The Folk Music Journal, 'Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris', Roy Judge. Volume 5, No. 5. 1989. p. 549.

[12] Evelyn Sharp: Rebel Woman. Angela V. John. Manchester University Press. 2009. pp. 180-181.

Having found the songs, Miss Neal's next object was to find dances that would go with them. Sharp told her of the Morris dances and of William Kimber, and in a short time she had gone down to Oxford to interview Mr. Kimber, and had arranged for him and another dancer to come and teach her girls. [13]

So back to the question of the Morris; Sharp and his family must have visited Sandfield Cottage between 1899 and the death of his mother-in-law in 1902 on many occasions. Did they not talk about what they had seen on Boxing Day 1899? Did they see Headington Quarry on subsequent occasions whilst staying with Mrs. Birch? So far I have been unable to find answers to these rather vexed questions. Did Sharp maintain any sort of contact with William Kimber away from the Morris? Sharp did nothing between the day after Boxing Day 1899 and September 1905 about the Morris. For six years his enthusiasm for the dance was in abeyance and if had not been for Mary Neal asking about dances to accompany the songs Sharp had collected it seems that the gestation period for his Morris collecting might have been even longer.

Sharp told her of the Morris dances he had seen on Boxing Day 1899 and about William Kimber. Mary went to Oxford, found William Kimber and invited him and his cousin to London to teach some of the Headington dances to the girls of the Esperance Club. He started, according to Bob Grant of Headington Quarry with Bean Setting.

One day, when Kimber was teaching in London, Cecil Sharp came in and Kimber did not recognise him, until Sharp, remembering that at their first meeting he had been wearing an eye shade, put a hand across one eye. 'Ah, Sandfield Cottage' says Kimber. From this on they began to work together at the Headington tradition, checking up on the dances and noting them down with the tunes. [14]

(This suggests that there had been no contact between Sharp and Kimber since December 27th 1899.)

The Esperance club had for a number of years been performing musical items at a Christmas Party under the musical directorship of first Emmeline Pethick and later Herbert MacIlwaine and finally under Clive Carey. Sharp was teaching the girls folk songs, Kimber was teaching them Morris dances and the whole production was for Christmas 1905 with Sharp giving an introductory lecture. As a result of the success of this party a further performance was given at the small Queen's Hall on April 3rd 1906. Sharp was renowned as the folk song collector of the time. In the four years since he first collected the Seeds of Love he collected one thousand five hundred songs all done during the school holidays. His interest was folk song not dance. But he was interested in replacing the current emphasis on Germanic music in the school curriculum with national songs and folk songs. Again he had a pecuniary interest in getting his *A Book of British Song for Home and School*, into schools as a text book. This he eventually managed to do. Meanwhile Mary Neal and the Esperance Club girls were being approached by '... any village clergyman or local patron was interested' [15]. By November 1906 the girls had taught from Devon to Derbyshire in the traditional manner by word of mouth as they had been taught by William Kimber by word of mouth, enthusiasm increased by the month and none of this was due to Cecil Sharp.

[13] Cecil Sharp. *Fox-Strangways*. pp. 69-70.

[14] *The Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, William Kimber: A Portrait, T.W. Chaundy. Volume VIII. No. 4. 1959. p. 206.

[15] *The Folk Music Journal*, Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris, Roy Judge. Volume 5. No. 5. 1989. p. 551.

Mary Neal was asked to provide a teacher for the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon and the consequent performance brought the Morris to the attention of Edward Burrows an HMI for Portsmouth and West Sussex who organised a meeting attended 'by many hundreds of teachers' [16]. During the years 1905 to 1907 Sharp

...continued to help by giving introductory lectures to public performances and he was also necessarily involved in the activities of the Esperance Club because of the need to produce books of music and instruction which would help to satisfy the demand for tuition. His role, however, was principally that of musician and historical scholar; it was his co-author, MacIlwaine, who was responsible for the notation of the dance movements, taking them down from Florrie Warren, the best dancer amongst the girls. [17]

The Morris Book (1st Edition) Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine. Novello and Company, London 1907. From the above quotation it is almost certain that MacIlwaine came up with the system of notation and that in later editions Sharp has refined the notation. He was still friendly towards Mary Neal and the Esperance Club and he dedicated the book to:

TO OUR FRIENDS AND PUPILS
The Members of the Esperance Girls' Club,
CUMBERLAND MARKET, N.W.

There are eleven dances described but none of them have a designated village or tradition. (My copy of the 1st Edition of Part I has, in Kenneth Loveless's handwriting, '(written in July 1906)' on the title page.) Of the eleven dances seven are from Headington Quarry and four are from Bidford. It is obvious where the Headington dances came from but it was Lady Isabel Margesson who invited Mary Neal to meet the Bidford Morris dancers and together with Sharp and MacIlwaine they went to collect the tunes and dances. In November Mary Neal called an informal meeting at the Goupil Gallery with the idea of formalising folk music as an entity; Sharp was doubtful about this as a concept. By 1908, Mary Neal was writing in the Saturday Review

We do not propose in any way to do the work of collecting folk music, which, as he (Mr. Runciman) points out, is being done so admirably by experts such as Mr. Cecil Sharp. What we propose to is to facilitate the use and practice of folk music by the younger generation, and it is because we have already done this so successfully in connection with the Esperance working girls Club, which has carried these dances all over England, that we have found it necessary to form an association for carrying on this work... The dances which we are already teaching ... were collected by Mr. Cecil Sharp, who, in collaboration with Mr. MacIlwaine had already published two volumes of the dance tunes, and also a handbook of instructions, and they are both at present engaged in bringing out another volume. [18]

From this we can deduce that Sharp and MacIlwaine were in the field collecting dances.

The Morris Book Part II was published, again by Novello and Company, in 1909 so the collecting must have been done before this date.

[16] *Ibid* p. 552.

[17] *The Folk Music Journal*, Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris, Roy Judge. Volume 5. No. 5. 1989. p. 552.

[18] *Cecil Sharp*. Fox-Strangways. p. 75.

...Our reasons for publishing a further set of Morris tunes with instructions how the dances may be performed, are obvious and sufficing; we concluded, briefly that those who have learned the dances already published - and they are very many - would be glad to extend their Knowledge. This we can now put them in the way of doing. [19]

Of the twelve dances included in this volume, six are set dances from Headington Quarry although the tradition is not named and neither is their informant but presumably like Part I MacIlwaine would have taken down the notation from Florrie Warren with corrections from Kimber. The twelfth dance is The Processional Morris from the Derbyshire village of Winster where Sharp went to collect this and the Morris Dance and the Morris Reel, which incidentally appear in The Morris Book Part III which appeared in 1910. He still regarded himself as mainly a collector of folk songs and tunes not of dances but this was changing. Mary, on the other hand was beginning to regard herself as a collector of Morris dances. From an article in the Daily News

For the most part it (the revival) is due to the efforts of Miss Mary Neal and Mr H.C. MacIlwaine, working through the medium of the Espérance Club. This institution and the recently formed Association for the Revival and Practice of Folk Music embrace between them practically the whole movement Back to Folk Music. [20]

This, along with Sharp's thoughts on the style of the Esperance Morris not being pure, was the beginning of the rift between Sharp and Mary Neal.

By 1909 Sharp was in full flow of his Morris collecting, this was in addition to his folk song collection and led on to his collecting of country dances and sword dances. But he was discriminating. He did not collect any of the Border Morris because he thought it was degenerate, the North-west he thought was just a street processional dance performed by children and despite having much correspondence over the months May, June and July with the Scottish Society of Antiquaries and the Viking Club he felt that the sword dance from the Shetland island of Papa Stour was outside his collecting province because it was in Scotland. His discrimination was selective as his visits to America were to prove, although, on this occasion, he had gone to help Granville Barker with a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he did no collecting, on subsequent visits he collected both songs and dances. On this first occasion he did no collecting but returned

...Maud was at Euston when Cecil returned home. Constance had journeyed to Liverpool to meet him and all three proceeded to Uxbridge. Maud had been looking forward to his arrival with 'joyful anticipation ... I had come to picture him', she wrote 'almost as a knight in shining armour. This vision was dispelled when I caught sight of him of him walking along the platform with weary, dragging step and a careworn expression on his face. [21]

He was shortly to return to America where he met Mrs. Storrow and Mrs. Olive Dame Campbell and started his collecting of folk songs from the Appalachian Mountains. With Olive Dame Campbell he published *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* in 1917 which was result of their collecting. His third visit was to see his major collection of songs and dances in the form of *The Set Running*.

[19] The Morris Book. Part II. Introduction. Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine. Novello and Company. 1909. p. 5.

[20] The Folk Music Journal, Cecil Sharp and Morris 1906 -1909, Roy Judge. Volume 8. No. 2. 2002. p. 207.

[21] Singing and Dancing Wherever She Goes: A Life of Maud Karpeles. Simona Pakenham, EFDSS London 2011. p. 61.

Did Sharp come from a dysfunctional family or was it merely an eccentric one? I leave that to you, the reader to decide. But to get back to the adulation implied in the Immortal Memory, I have tried to show that it took Sharp rather a long time to use the material which he saw on Boxing Day 1899 and which he took down on the following day. In the case of the song four years but in the case of Morris it took him a further two years to do anything at all and then it was only when Mary Neal prodded him. In the end he did collect a vast number of dances tunes and songs and I think it fair to say that we would have lost a lot of the folk music which we enjoy today if he had not been there to make the notations of both tunes and dances.

Is this worthy of the implied adulation? I leave that up you, the reader.



[22]

[22] This portrait photograph was given to Maud Karpeles by C#, she gave it to Kenneth Loveless who gave it to me before he died and it signed by him.

The Revival of Morris Dancing in Kingston at the 1911 Coronation Pageant of King George V

Colin Messer

Prior to 1900 Kingston had an indigenous tradition of Morris Dancing and May Day practices. The May Day celebrations of 1902 were disrupted by bad weather and the 1911 coronation of King George V then saw the first recorded Morris Dancing in the area in the 20th Century.



A souvenir post card of King George V and Queen Mary from the 1911 coronation

Introduction

An analysis of the 1911 revival was written by George Frampton in 1984 for the 75th anniversary and published in Morris Matters ^[1]. My thanks to Beth Neill, editor of Morris Matters, who gave permission for 'Reviving the Morris at Kingston-on-Thames - 1911 style' to be reproduced in full ^[2]. I have not attempted to re-write the same excellent article, but rather to examine evidence for indigenous Morris in Kingston prior to the 1911 revival, determine the steps led up to the 1911 revival and provide some additional supporting evidence. I am grateful to Jill Lamb and Emma Rummins of the Kingston Local History Room Archives without whose help very little would have been achieved.

Time line of Morris in Kingston: 1870 – 1911

Pre-Revival Morris Dancing “indigenous” to Kingston

1890s	■	Whitsun	Dr Finny notes an interview with a man who danced Morris at Kingston's Whitsun Pleasure Fair around 1870-80
1893	■	Easter	Jack-in-the-Green and girl dancing to a man with a pipe and a boy collecting in Richmond

Celebrations planned and executed for the Millenary of Edward the Elder

1902	■	26-Apr	Mrs Peter Davey to observe Knutsford's Royal May Day celebration, including Morris Dancing and to reproduce it in Kingston
1902	■	05-May	Peter Davey's program will include a Maypole dance
1902	■	17-May	A ballet depicting an Old English May Day with revels – Morris dancing, Maypoles and a May Queen

1902	19-May	Procession through the streets of children who are to Crown the May Queen, and perform Maypole and Morris dancing
1902	21-May	Hurricane and deluge stops Morris performance
1902	17-Jun	Morris was to have been danced in the celebration

Celebrations planned and executed for the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary

1911	08-Jun	Final rehearsal of the whole pageant including Morris dancers from the Bonner Hill Schools
1911	10-Jun	Detailed plan of the pageant including Morris Dancing
1911	17-Jun	Rehearsal by Miss Lynn and Miss Watkins's class – no Morris
1911	24-Jun	Morris performance to extended applause from the audience

Pre-Revival Morris Dancing “indigenous” to Kingston

Morris Dancing was alive and well in Kingston 1870/80s as reported by Dr Finny^[3] who wrote:

One Old Kingstonian, who is now nearly eighty, remembers when as a boy he and seven others, with ‘Jack in Green’ and a piper who also beat a drum, dressed themselves up and “went about the town ‘gigging’ on May Day.” They went from house to house and did simple traditional dances which he learnt from the others, and they sang:

The first of May is Gala Day, Give us a penny and we’ll go away.

A lady who is over ninety-one years ... also remembers that the dancers were dressed up fantastically and had long waving streamers and coloured ribbons from their hats and costumes, and that they had a man with them who played a pipe and beat a drum, while they danced around the maypole, and did jerky dances which the people called ‘gigs.’

The Whitsun fair was established in 1351 and was held in the market place, but was abolished as a nuisance in 1889.^[4] The Annual Great Cattle Fair held in November also had a three day pleasure fair attached, but was lost when the Cattle Fair was moved to the Fair Field.^[5]

The authorities at Kingston have decided to continue the annual great cattle fair, but to abolish the three days’ pleasure fair. Alderman Marsh stated that every year there had been some serious case of infectious disease among the people attending the fair, and some of the inhabitants had probably suffered from the infection brought by the travelling caravans.

Jack-in-the-Green in Richmond

The closely associated Jack-in-the-Green is seen dancing in Richmond^[6].

I saw a Jack in the Green in Richmond, Surrey at Easter 1893. As far as I can remember, his cage was covered with yew trimmings. His arms were inside it and he looked out through a round hole. He was accompanied by a girl, whom a bystander described as “a Maid Marian”, and by a man with a pipe to whose music Jack in the Green and Maid Marian danced while a boy collected pennies.

Celebrations planned and executed for the Millenary of Edward the Elder

There is no record of the dances performed in Kingston before 1900 and when the idea of a Traditional May Day was proposed for the 1902 Millenary Celebration of Edward the Elder ^[7], an unexpected suggestion was reported in the Surrey Comet:

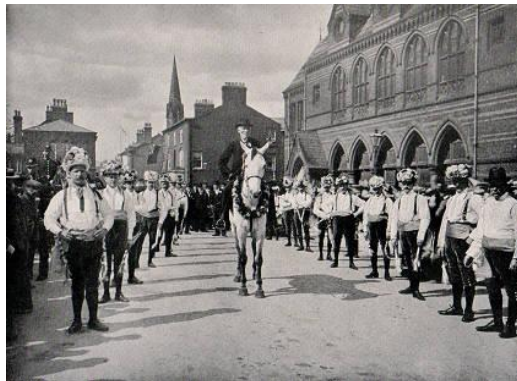
And to many the most attractive feature of the programme will be the very pretty May Day festival, which will be carried out under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Davey. In order to secure that this part of the proceedings shall be done in the good old style, Mrs. Davey has kindly undertaken to go down to Knutsford, in Cheshire, where on May Day the whole ceremony of the crowning of the May Queen, with attendant threading of the Maypole and the Morris dancing, is still kept up, and it will be reproduced as nearly as possible here on Whit Monday.



Crowning the May Queen, Knutsford 1902

Knutsford Royal May Fair was the most famous of the Victorian May Days and had received Royal patronage in 1887 from the Prince and Princess of Wales ^[8], and a report of the 1902 fair that Mrs Davey planned to visit is on Knutsford's website ^[9].

Later in the morning, as the time for the procession draws nigh, one-half the town is busily engaged in dressing the other half. The Morris Dancers, who - headed by the master of ceremonies on horseback - make a brave show in their snow-white shirts and floral chaplets, require a good deal of attention, and even more, of course, has to be given to the large number of children who take part in the procession.



Master of Ceremonies and Morris Men, Knutsford 1902

The style of Morris danced in Knutsford would have been "North-West Morris" that differs from the "Cotswold Morris" of 20th Century in Surrey.

Peter Davey, an amateur dramatist, was perhaps most famous as a writer of pantomimes, and it was to Peter Davey and his wife that the re-creation of Knutsford Royal May Day in Kingston was entrusted. The Whit-Monday Celebration was held in Dinton Field, St Agatha's Drive off Latchmere Road, Surrey Comet reported the event ^[10]:

The Crowning of the May Queen, with Maypole and Morris Dances, by the children of the Royal County Theatre Pantomime Company, was a feature of the afternoon's amusements eagerly looked forward to by young and old, and when the gaily dressed procession arrived and made the grand tour of the arena before ascending the stage in the centre, one could not help feeling that the Merrie Month of May was in reality with us. For some time prior to the arrival of "Her Majesty" and court the ribbons of the Maypole had been untwisted and held in position by Mrs. Peter Davey and Mr. J. E. Edgcome, but at this point the clouds gathered blackly in the sky, and cold north-westerly winds blew ominously across the ground. Rain descended as the children began their old-world Morris dance in front of the stage, and they proceeded to take the coloured streamers in hand, but the Maypole dance had scarcely commenced when the shower assumed the proportions of a deluge, and the breeze stiffened into a hurricane, positively forcing the Maypole from its place, and the large floral crown was seen toppling over. Luckily the children saw the occurrence and avoided its fall, but the rain was too heavy for a prolongation of the scene, and at Mr. Davey's direction they all scampered away to the dressing tent. The storm lasted twenty minutes, and the refreshment and other tents were closely packed by those who were fortunate enough to get under shelter; the majority of the spectators however remained in the open, and umbrellas and mackintoshes were brought into active use.

So after all the preparations, any planned Morris Dancing was rained off, there is no record of the style, and the revival of Morris had to wait for another occasion.

Remarkably, the intention to include Morris Dancing in the Millenary was noted as far away as New Zealand for example in the Coronation Notes article from the New Zealand Colonist ^[11]:

CORONATION NOTES

TWO EDWARDS — A COINCIDENCE

While the thoughts of the Empire are becoming daily engrossed with the coming Coronation of King Edward VII.; the loyal borough of Kingston-on-Thames went back a thousand years to the time of the earliest Edward who wore an English crown. For it was at Kingston that Edward "the Elder," son of Alfred the Great, was crowned, and the Millenary of the event was to have been celebrated there with old English revelry of Maypole and Morris dance shortly before the latest Edward is anointed at Westminster. A juxtaposition of the two Edwards separated by so long an interval of English history presents an interesting coincidence of figures :—

King	Accession	Coronation
Edwd. the Elder	a.d. 901	a.d. 902
Edward VII	a.d. 1901	a.d. 1902

The date chosen by Kingston-on-Thames for its local commemoration of Alfred's son was Whit Monday, which is specially appropriate because it was at Whitsuntide that Edward the Elder was actually crowned.



Dr Finny in his favourite Beadle's costume at Kingston's 1921 Historical Pageant

Celebrations planned and executed for the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary

Dr Finny was given responsibility for organising the Pageant, a second chance to revive Morris Dancing. Fourteen days before the performance the Surrey Comet reported on the final rehearsal including Morris Dancing by the Bonner Hill schools. ^[12]

The final rehearsal of the Children's Pageant in connection with the forthcoming Coronation Festivities was held on the lawn of the barrack-square of the Depot of the East Surrey Regiment on Thursday morning, under the direction of Dr Finny, who has been working exceedingly hard to make this part of the day's proceedings a success.

Judging from what took place on Thursday, there is little doubt that the performance which the selected band of children will give in Home Park on June 22 will be one of the prettiest spectacles seen in this neighbourhood for a long time. The Officers at the Depot have been exceedingly kind in allowing the rehearsals to take place on their beautiful lawn, and on each occasion the band has been present to play the incidental music. There Maypoles have been erected and the children have been well drilled in their various parts. The crowning of the May Queen is naturally a pretty scene, and the braiding of the maypoles, the country dance, the Morris dances, and the final "Sir Roger" in which the whole of the 200 children participate, present really charming pictures. All who witnessed the rehearsal came away delighted with what they had seen. Beside the dances there will be some Old English sports, and a grand finale of Britannia and her Colonies.



Bonner Hills School Empire Day 1922 with a tableau of Britannia and her Colonies.

A class of girls trained by Miss Lynn and Miss Watkins take the centre maypole and do some very pretty dancing. Girls from St John's, and boys from St Paul's are very expert with the other maypoles. Boys from St Peter's are being trained by Sergeant Wyatt, drill instructor at the Depot, in Old English sports; St Peter's schools will furnish a contingent of 24 girls who take a prominent part in the pageant; and from the Bonner Hill schools come the Morris dancers. St Luke's children furnish the concluding spectacle of Britannia and her Colonies.

The Coronation - Arrangement for next week's festivities

Nine days later the final arrangements are described with the same formula as was planned for the 1902 Millenary and as was taken from Knutsford. Morris and county dances are seen as distinct; Sir Roger de Coverley remains a popular country dance. ^[13]

There will be the ceremony of crowning the May Queen, dancing round the maypoles, morris and country dances and some other sports, concluding with a tableau of Britannia and Sir Roger de Coverley.

Rejoicings in Kingston and the Surrounding Districts

The coverage of the procession from Fairfield to Home Park ^[14], over one mile in length from the leader to the last and four abreast, the May Queen being drawn in her carriage by the Merrie men, crowning of the May Queen, Maypole dancing, and finally Morris Dancing is fulsome ^[15].



Morris Dancers, four abreast being processing through Kingston



May Queen in her carriage arrive in Home Park. There is a maypole on a platform in the background.

The Morris Dancing was scheduled as the last item, the climax to the set of May Day activities copied from Knutsford.^[16] The notable difference being that in Knutsford the style of Morris danced was North-West Morris where as in Kingston the style danced was Cotswold Morris.

The trumpets sounded again and the Morris Dancers, sixty four in number, took possession of the field. Their exquisite dancing was accompanied by the jingle of the bells on their garments, and was a sight to be remembered, receiving prolonged applause.

Conclusion

The Revival of May Day practices in Kingston can be split into two parts, first, the Procession, Crowning of the May Queen and Maypole dancing that was copied from Knutsford, and second, the Morris Dancing that was neither indigenous nor from Knutsford; the probable source was Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp's classes and publications.

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- [1] Frampton, G., 'Reviving the Morris at Kingston-on-Thames - 1911 style', Morris Matters, 7(1), pp. 10-11, 1984.
- [2] <http://www.springgrovemorris.org/history/kingston-pageant-1911/frampton-1984>.
- [3] Finny, W.E.St.L., 'Mediaeval Games and Gaderyngs at Kingston-upon-Thames', in Surrey Archaeological Collections, v. 44, pp. 102-136, 1936.
- [4] A History of the County of Surrey, v. 3, 1911, p. 501.
- [5] British Medical Journal, December 6, 1879.
- [6] Letter to the Times, May 6, 1930.
- [7] Millenary Celebration on Whit-Monday - Order of Program , Surrey Comet, April 5, 1902.
- [8] Knutsford Royal May Day <http://www.nfa.dept.shef.ac.uk/history/charter/knuts.html> .
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http://www.virtual-knutsford.co.uk/frameset.php?main=/mayday/mayday_past.htm
- [10] Whit-Monday Report - Surrey Comet, May 21, 1902.
- [11] New Zealand Colonist, Volume XLV, Issue 10437, June 17, 1902, p. 4.
- [12] Coronation Festivities - Surrey Comet, June 8, 1911.
- [13] Final Arrangements - Surrey Comet, June 17, 1911.
- [14] *Ibid.*
- [15] <http://www.springgrovemorris.org/history/kingston-pageant-1911/>.
- [16] Rejoicings in Kingston and the Surrounding Districts - Surrey Comet, June 24, 1911.

The Morris Ring as Fraternity

Mac McCoig

The build-up to the ARM vote which allowed Ring Sides to perform at Ring events with female musicians and, effectively, admitted female musicians to the Morris Ring, involved a long and, at times, venomous discussion. Where did these entrenched views get their supposed validity and what is the background to such views? This paper explores these issues and makes a comparison to some conclusions on the nature of fraternities.

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010. As a result of the provisions of the Act, the Morris Ring became engaged in a debate about compliance; specifically whether associate Sides of the Ring could continue to refuse females as members and whether Sides could have female members as musicians and yet remain members of the Ring. The Squire and Officers of the Ring sought a legal opinion on the matter and presented several courses of action based on this advice. This paper does not concern itself with the (often angry) debate about the admittance of women, interesting though that was, but does concern itself with some fundamental issues about the nature of men's Morris and the position of the Morris Ring as a men-only association which were highlighted as a consequence of the debate.

Although it was clear that many of the Sides which were then members of the Ring had women musicians and this situation had been tacitly accepted for many years, the Morris Ring did not admit women (although they were members of individual Sides) or women's Morris teams as members. This position had attracted comment over the years and, periodically, a negative press. So why was the Ring so determined to remain a male preserve, and why, in the face of (often public) criticism and the pervasive trend towards universal equality, did it continue to persevere in maintaining that position?

The issue of the moral and social justification for maintaining fraternities (and such is the Ring, I propose) has and continues to bedevil many organisations, particularly in the workplace and in politics. The Ring, however is different in that it is and always has been an organisation which specifically states it is the "National Association of Men's Morris and Sword Dance Clubs". This is in direct contrast to, for example, the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers at Muirfield, whose constitution does not specifically preclude women becoming members, but which has never admitted a woman to membership, the Ring is a stated men's association. The difference is clear: the Honourable Company is consciously discriminatory and the ring may not have been.

Neal and Sharp

We all are aware of the argument which was waged in private and public between Sharp and Neal in the early part of the 20th century, and we are aware that Neal came to the view, influenced by her conversations with Rolf Gardiner in 1924, that "these dances were the

remains of a purely masculine ceremonial" (Neal, writing in the late 1930s), and that the Morris was a "ritual of discipline for war and sex expression". Neal believed that "in putting women on to this masculine rhythm I had ...broken a law of cosmic ritual" ^[1]. Sharp wrote that "The Morris is, traditionally, a man's dance" ^[2]. Sharp goes on to state that, although not in keeping with tradition, "no great violence will be done to tradition so long as the dance is performed by the members of one sex." Sharp goes on to advise that many of the movements can be performed just as well by either sex, even if not identically, but women should avoid the "essentially masculine movements." Neal and Sharp differed violently on the essential nature of the performance of the dance; Neal subscribing to the 'Merrie England, spontaneous gaiety of the tradition', and stating that "There must be nothing in this revival which cannot be done by the average boy and girl" ^[3]. Her vision was that the tradition contained "some wonderful life-giving force". Neal also "believed in the power of the material to transmit itself, and did not consider that the rigid production of set patterns was essential" ^[4]. This was anathema to Sharp and is summed up in his own words: "the more closely we could get to the dances as they were originally danced, the more artistic, characteristic, and generally more pleasing they were likely to be" ^[5]. Sharp, in *The Morris Book* Part 1 states quite emphatically that the dances are not easy and "a great deal of the bad dancing which has disfigured the present revival must be attributed... [to]... this elementary fact." Sharp's view was that the Morris tradition was a male ritual and he argued successfully to promote and establish this dictum. Coupled with his eventual domination of the dance form as 'expert', he established his central authority and created a 'male Morris hegemony'. These concepts were, consciously or unconsciously, subsequently embodied in the founding of the Morris Ring in 1934.

Attitudes towards female dancers

During the 1970s there was a degree of comment and criticism of the Ring's stance from the growing number of women Morris dancers, which challenged male Morris hegemony, and thus the Ring fraternity. This challenge was also reflected in the popular press. The Guardian in 1978 ^[6], for example, reported that "Some men's sides are still contemptuous ('Nothing but a bloody cabaret act') and many refuse to dance on the same programme as a women's team." The Guardian went on to report that a certain Squire of a Ring side had commented in an Issue of *English Dance and Song* that the Morris was indisputably male and called the ladies "a concubinage of clowns". The article concludes with the arguments of the EFDSS (when criticised for allowing women's sides to appear at events promoted by the Society) that to forbid women's Morris would be "applying a false influence to the natural development of a living tradition" and that (paraphrasing Neal) "we can't ignore the spontaneous outpourings of the folk". The Morris Federation web site states: "There was a dramatic rise in the number of women publicly dancing Morris in the early 1970s, with several female Cotswold and Northwest Morris sides forming. This followed a period of three or four decades during which a 'male only' climate had been allowed and encouraged to prevail in Morris circles. The emergence of female dancers was greeted with some hostility by those who considered it to be 'untraditional'."

Although the criticism of the male Morris hegemony of the Ring persists in some form to date, there is nothing which is akin to the strength of comment which prompted a legitimisation crisis

at that time. With the formation of the Women's Morris Federation in 1975, and the Open Morris in 1979, the political pressure for change in the Morris Ring was effectively removed. Indeed, the Open Morris' web site claims that "Both organisations agreed that Morris Dancing shouldn't involve a mixing of the sexes". However, the trend in Morris clubs generally - and where the current growth in membership is centred - is in dual sex membership, even if not expressly mixed sex teams. Thus, since the mid-1970s, there has been no effective gender-based political pressure for the Ring to admit women.

The Ring as Fraternity

"The fraternity makes men". So went the motto of Baird's 'Manual of American College Fraternities', published in 1879. This certainly summarises the function of the US fraternity system. Researchers have found that US campus fraternities produce a stereotypical type of man through the creation of "hegemonic masculinity" ^[7], although this comparison may seem a little extreme within the context of the Ring's discussions surrounding female musicians. However, although the US college fraternity system is clearly reinforcing gender inequality at the expense of women and though the Ring does not promote male dominance in any pejorative way, there are parallels which can be drawn between the US college fraternity system and the Ring, which encompasses some of the more entrenched views of some of its associate members. Firstly, the Ring does exist to promote men's Morris and Sword and does, by definition, promote the notion that women cannot perform the Morris 'traditionally', because they are, as Sharp held, physically unable to do so. Secondly, some members of the Ring take an aggressively defensive stance when the hegemony appears to be challenged, citing this 'tradition' as the authority. This rigorous defence of the Ring status quo, in part, has a resonance with the definition of the US college fraternity male as "white, heterosexual, aggressive, dominant, competitive, muscular and middle-class" and maintains itself through the exclusion of women. ^[8]

The formation of the Federation and subsequently, the Open Morris, is significant in that it does not undermine the Male-only nature of the Ring, but evidences compliance in the structure of the Morris politic, rather than overt resistance to male domination of the Morris 'tradition', the male Morris hegemony. There remains, by implication, a female acceptance that men's Morris has some form of primacy, in that its position is not to be directly challenged, but by-passed.

The male Morris hegemony implicit within the Ring continues to have, I propose, negative impacts in the way the Ring is perceived by those excluded and also on recruiting to Ring sides generally. Yeung et al suggest that even adopting a strategy of an appearance of diversity within male-only groups, for instance, showing more femininity, sensitivity and enlightenment does not lessen the impact on those who are excluded.

Attitudes in male-dominated organisations

Broughton and Miller ^[9] suggest that in male-dominated organisations, men have more behavioural latitude. Those women who adopt a masculine style in order to compete, find this

behaviour is judged as inappropriate for a woman. In addition, where "roles are gendered masculine roles, this leads organisations to develop 'boorish cultures". Men are able to adopt "macho posturing", which excludes women and where women emulate this style they are perceived negatively. In addition, there is a tendency to recruit 'in their own image' and take on only those who reflect similar attitudes and behaviours.

Alice Adams ^[10] suggests that there is, in male-dominated organisations, an "overriding desire for group affirmation and a positive personal sense of identity". In the case of gender inclusion, this leads, Adams suggests, to make "some people feel as if the organisation's true identity and reason for being has been nullified". Adams suggests that there is a fear that the organisation will become unrecognisable and a "politically correct hell where men and women have to pretend they are just the same".

It is suggested therefore, that fraternities, such as the Morris Ring, nurture behaviours which are acceptable within the structure of the fraternity, but not necessarily within mixed-gender organisations. The presence of women may be perceived as a force for unwelcome behaviour modification. Fraternity members may assume that their behaviour is judged as negative by non-fraternity members. Thus, an underlying factor for the desire among associate members of the Ring to preserve the male Morris hegemony may be the wish to retain and protect behaviours particular to male Morris activities and not simply the preservation of an unblemished and infrangible male Morris 'tradition'.

In addition, as Adams suggests, the anxiety attached to change engendered by the introduction of mixed-sex activities results in a fear of diminution of the set of values the Ring is thought by its members to possess. Gender inclusion represents a perceived threat to organisations supporting a male hegemony, the Morris Ring included.

Some tentative conclusions

The Ring exhibits fraternity-like behaviours and it can be argued that its associate members thus exhibit behaviours which are typical of this type of organisation. It cannot be ignored that the exclusive nature of the 'Ring as fraternity' and consequent perceptions of its behaviours by those excluded suggest this may be one reason for slow recruitment into many Ring associated sides.

I have argued that the Ring could be seen as an organisation which serves to promote a male Morris hegemony. As such, the proposed introduction of a gender inclusion policy (even one limited to female musicians) predictably prompted a defensive response, impelled by fear of change, both to the behaviour patterns of members and to the Ring's existence as it was currently perceived by its associates - the repository of a male Morris 'tradition'. Alice Adams suggests that arguments offered in defence of the status quo will be those which best fit the 'no change' world view and which require the least commitment or entail the least risk to the perceived value set. Such strategies, Adams suggests, always fail. The decision to admit female musicians to the Ring supports Adams' tenet since, as she would suggest that there is no basis for preserving a male-only organisation. I leave others to answer the question about the often-

cited male only 'tradition' and how is it defined and whether this 'tradition' is historically accurate or merely a construct supporting a male hegemony?

It has been suggested that the formation of the Federation and the Open Morris have removed pressures on the Ring to admit women, and even served to entrench the Ring's male Morris hegemonic position. However, where the growth in membership of non-Ring sides is currently favouring mixed sex sides and the Ring membership continues to decline both in real and proportionate terms, its position may become increasingly irrelevant to the Morris as performed in public, no matter how staunch a defence is put up. Without a degree of change, Mary Neal's vision of the style and 'spirit' of what constitutes a Morris performance may yet overtake the Sharpian vision of authenticity and excellence perceived by some to be 'vested' in the Ring.

The issue of allowing female musicians to play for men's sides at Ring events appeared to be a direct challenge to the male Morris Hegemony of the Ring. However, was this really the case? In preserving the male-centred position of the Morris as a dance form, the gender of the musician is quite irrelevant. The hegemony is unchallenged in as far as the dance is concerned. There remains, therefore, only the perception that such a move would change fraternal behaviour sets, and this may well be the case, since the Morris Ring now has female members, even though they do not dance. If one separates the real from the perceived, only chauvinism remains. If this is true, the admittance of female musicians to the Ring will only, therefore, be a change for the better and time will, no doubt, tell.

[1] Mary Neal (1924). Quoted in "England, whose England? Class, gender and national identity in the 20th century folklore revival", Mike Sutton, School of Humanities, University of Northumbria, June 2000

[2] The Morris Book Part 1, Sharp and MacIlwaine, Second ed. (1912), Novello & Co. London

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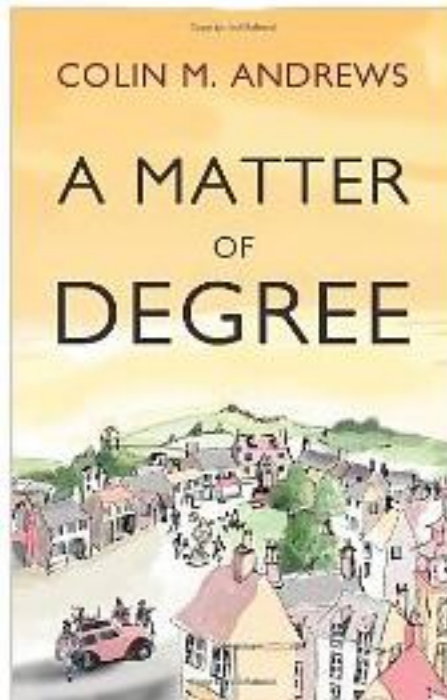
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BOOK REVIEW: *A Matter of Degree* by Colin Andrews



The author is an experienced singer, dancer and musician. He lives in Devon and is a member of the Exeter Morris Men and Winkleigh Morris, a mixed border side. “A Matter of Degree”, describes the experiences of a young man as he follows a three year course at a teacher training college in Wales in the early 1970s.

The story chronicles the various activities of the central character and his student friends. It reads very much like an Enid Blyton Famous Five story for adults, but without the dog. Folk is not a dominant theme but it is prominent. The friends get involved in folk singing, perform a mummers play and form a mixed border side. Colin’s experience has enabled him to present an authentic picture of the highs and lows of being involved in a morris side. When challenged on the issue of blacking up the students deal with the problem in a very articulate and effective way which is very impressive.

Colin writes fluently and at length but with little in the way literary depth, so I do not expect the book to be shortlisted for the Man Booker prize for fiction. Having said that, I enjoyed it and found it very readable. Ideal for the plane or the beach.

Published by Matador in 2011, price £7.99.

Brian Tasker