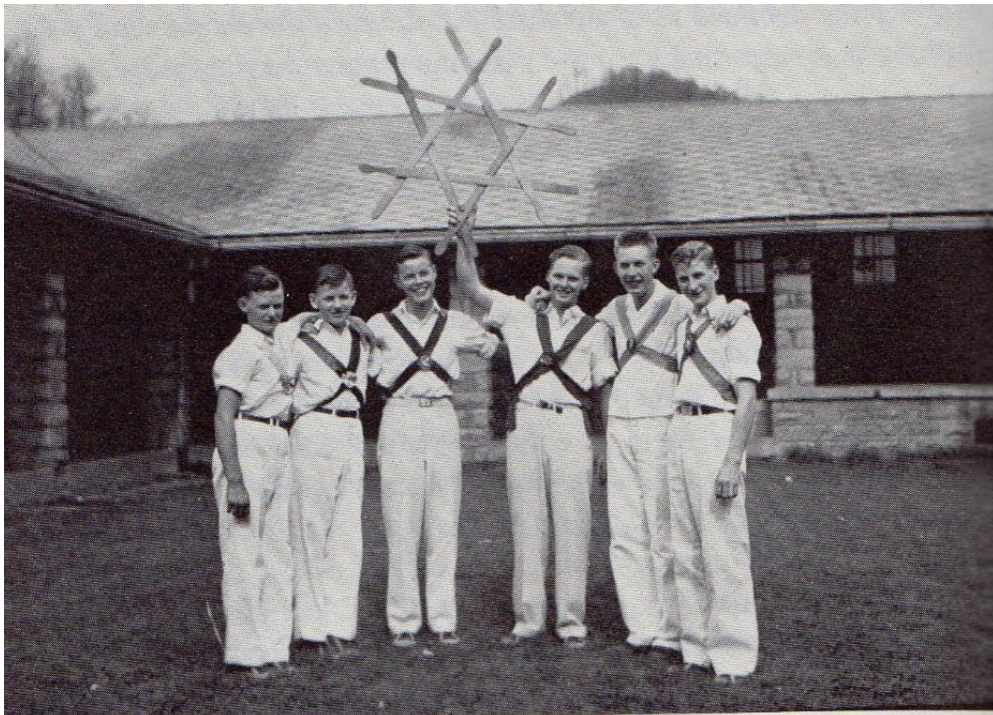


The Morris Dancer

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THE MORRIS DANCER

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Cover picture: Sword Dance Team of Hindman Settlement School students, 1940s, Knott County, Kentucky. See: Whisnant D.E. (1983) *All That is Native and Fine*, University of North Carolina Press. (Also source for picture on page 68)

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The Editor of The Morris Dancer will consider for publication any article, paper or study which expands our knowledge of the Morris in all its forms, including its culture, history and theory. However, current events, unless they have a significant historical or cultural content, need to be submitted to The Circular. It is better that your text is referenced, so that other researchers may follow up if they wish to do so, but non-referenced writing will also be considered.

Text and pictures should be forwarded to: Mac McCoig, mac.mccoig@btinternet.com 01785 851052

The provisional date for the next issue of The Morris Dancer is March 2015

Editorial

The English Morris tradition continues to inspire and repel in equal measure. In this respect, Morris has a great deal in common with Marmite. But unlike Marmite (which I personally find utterly repellent) the Morris seems to engender in some an irrational repulsion not dissimilar to the reactions found in more serious forms of prejudice. Whilst one doesn't find those who detest Marmite throwing stones at the jars in the supermarket, some who find the Morris not to their liking feel perfectly justified in acts of anti-social behaviour at worst and ridicule (in writing and verbally) in its mildest, but most persistent form.

The only parallel to this iconoclastic impulse to act on the dislike of Morris Dancing is to be found, I suggest, in the art world. The history of art contains many examples of irrational, often violent reactions to art objects; and yet art objects, like the Morris, are intrinsically harmless.

Barry Flanagan's sculpture *Vertical Judicial Grouping*, which consisted of four somewhat organic vertical fibreglass pillars plus a geometric structure resembling a goal-post, was installed on a public open space at Laundress Green, Cambridge. From the outset, the reaction was one of anger and disgust. A local vicar suggested that someone should blow it up. Shortly after this opinion was reported in the media, the sculpture was subjected to a series of attacks (both by residents and undergraduates) and within a few weeks of its installation, it was eventually removed by the local council. It appears that Cambridge, although a major centre of learning and enlightenment, has a visceral intolerance of contemporary art.

In 1994, Jamie Wagg exhibited two computer-generated photographic works themed on the James Bulger murder. These were part of an exhibition sponsored by British Telecom at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. They were on display for several weeks without any significant comment and during this time, were presumably seen by the several thousand visitors to the exhibition. Coinciding with the presentation of a petition to the Home Office which demanded that the murderers be imprisoned for life, the Daily Mirror suggested that Wagg was exploiting the murder for personal gain (although the works were not for sale) and thus provided journalists with a neat frame for further sensational narratives in the media. Wagg subsequently received hate mail and death threats. The Gallery was forced to close for a time. The particular image used by Wagg was a still taken from the shopping precinct CCTV camera and had been previously used widely in the media and on the cover of the many books written on the case (some by journalists) without any previous complaint. The journalists and authors writing about the Bulger story had, presumably, used the image in order to enhance personal gain from their own work.

Walker, John A (1999)[1] suggests that the 'hypocrisy and double standards of the media is well-known'. He further suggests that the use of the Bugler image was offensive to journalists because they feel that 'art is frivolous, other worldly and trivial, and so when it tackles the same subjects they deal with they feel professionally undermined'. Walker further states that 'The tabloids' interest in contemporary art is sporadic rather than consistent and is governed, not by serious interest and enquiry, but by such 'news' values as entertainment, money, moral outrage, sensationalism, sex shock and violence' and are generally indifferent to the consequences experienced by the targets of their outrage.

I now draw your attention to the press reaction to David Cameron being photographed with Foxes Morris at the Banbury Folk Festival on 11 October this year. Whilst the reaction is mainly fixated on the cultural issue of blacking-up, why, when this practice is carried out virtually every weekend somewhere in the UK and has been going on for years, does it prompt such a press storm? The Morris Federation Autumn 1997 Newsletter ran a feature on this subject and reported by way of context: "Flag Crackers of Craven (a blacked up Border team) have been featured in a national advertising campaign for NFU Mutual, where they are clearly seen as a Morris team dancing with blacked faces. The campaign has been running since October 1996, and was most recently featured in the Radio Times. At the 1st August 1997 the Advertising Standards Authority have received no complaints of people experiencing the photos as offensive." I would therefore suggest that an explanation lies less in the fact that it's David Cameron apparently sanctioning a

display of make-up which could be seen by someone with a political agenda as having a racist connexion, but it is that David Cameron is simply providing a focus for a media outpouring of a phobic dislike of Morris Dancing.

In an amusing but not particularly original rant at various dislikes, themed on what he would do if he were king for a day, the Guardian's Terry Eagleton (Friday 10 October 2014) would, amongst other things, reintroduce 'capital punishment for people who listen in on your conversation in public places without even making a feeble pretence of not doing so, occasionally irritably asking you to speak up. Morris dancers and Bruce Forsyth will be executed along with them'. Morris dancing is often included in lists of dislikes in the media (but not always suggesting they should be executed) and this instance would be of little interest, were it not for the fact that of the twenty or so 'dislikes' mentioned by Eagleton only Morris Dancing (and Bruce Forsyth) is thought significantly eye-catching enough to be used as a headline for the piece. Although largely flippant in nature, the article touched on some deeply important issues, although treated in a context bordering on political satire: a barb sent in the direction of 'former British prime ministers with blood on their hands' and comments indicating a basic distaste for NATO and capitalism, both serious current matters that politically aware readers will be familiar with. Eagleton's piece reaffirms the use of the journalistic framing tool: the tacit assumption that all readers agree with the author's views and can chuckle along with him. You become a member of his inner set and are self-affirmed. Morris Dancing is not and incidental character in this playing-out of Eagleton's fantasies, it is a major element of his dislikes and worthy of pride of place.

There are many more examples I could use but space and time constrain me, so I'll make some concluding remarks. What is behind this vilification by the media of all things Morris? Is it an irrational loathing of that which is not common-place, is different or suggests an inner knowledge not understood by all? Is it part of the complex relationship between the arts and society? I wish I knew, but within these issues is the key to some important questions that currently exercise us, the most significant of which is: why can't we recruit more young people into Morris dancing?

But here the comparison with the art world ends – some contemporary art specifically sets out to shock or disgust and the Morris (hopefully) does not – it sets out to thrill and entertain. Whilst the world of contemporary art seems to move further into the realms of post-modern impenetrability, we in the Ring would do well to ensure our performances are as good and as entertaining as we can make them: whilst shock value is by no means an indicator of artistic quality, neither are garish costume, wild, grotesque or exaggerated forms of dancing. For whilst the press focuses on the supposed outrage caused by contemporary art and comments hardly at all on its merits, so the media will comment on the supposed risible nature of Morris in contemporary society and not at all on the quality of the dancing. Were Foxs Morris any good? Was the crowd entertained? We will never know from reading the current press reports, but if the standard of performance continues to improve and inspire, maybe the current media consensus will begin to change.

1. Walker John A. *Art & Outrage, Provocation, Controversy and the Visual Arts* (1999) London, Pluto Press

The Farnborough Morris

Stephen Earwicker

My first contact with morris dancing was when my older brother, Paul, joined the Farnborough Morris in 1962. As a family we went out to the pubs and watched them dancing and I thought it was all rather fun! It was natural then that in 1974 I started to learn the morris with two of the Farnborough men, Nick Wadsworth and Alan Browning and I danced out for the first time on 2nd May 1975.

So what had I joined? Certainly not your *usual* morris team; but to me a rather special one.

Farnborough Morris danced their own style of dances, derived from Bledington with dances from other traditions altered to fit the Farnborough style. In this way they had much in common with a traditional team, who would have only danced in one style – their own!



A little history

The team was formed in 1955 largely by new graduate scientists & engineers recruited to the Royal Aircraft Establishment who found themselves in the RAE Hostel with time on their hands. Of the original team only three had previous experience of Morris Dancing; Alan Browning, Don Campbell and Barry Caress. They were joined by some complete beginners including: Roy Dommett, Joe Rowe, Keith Sanders, Dave Lloyd & Brian Stratford. Reg Hall played melodeon for them. In 1955 as well as dancing at pubs in Farnborough & Farnham, they also danced at the RAE Fete, camped for the weekend at Stratford-on-Avon and attended the Lichfield Ring Meeting. In 1956 they were joined by Nick Wadsworth, who was later to teach me morris, and danced at amongst other places, Shalford – a photo of which appeared a few years back as the “mystery photo” on the cover of *The Morris Dancer*! Over the years Farnborough had many young recruits; but they had gone off to university and moved away, often continuing to dance with sides in their new home. So, after many successful seasons, the Farnborough Morris finally hung up their bells after their 40th anniversary in 1995.

What was different about Farnborough?

A number of things made Farnborough unusual; not just the dancers! The idea of dancing in one style, although not unique to Farnborough, did set us apart. We had the feel of a traditional village dance team who got together for the annual events and then put the dance to bed for the winter. The team as a whole only practiced together twice in April before the summer season. The thinking behind this was that once you had learnt the style and therefore the dances; a practice was simply to brush up on technique and to

help integrate new members. As a new member back in 1974 I went to Nick Wadsworth's house for about an hour each week and making use of his tape loop machine danced to the same 8 bars of music for several months! This was to learn the basic steps and hand movements. We also worked on the jig, Lumps of Plum Pudding, which again incorporated all the basic steps, capers etc. In the last couple of months before May we were joined by some others so that I could learn how to dance a hey and the other basic figures. Having progressed through this apprenticeship I was then given first refusal to dance in any dance throughout the first season. This meant that as the new lad, I got plenty of opportunity to dance and built up lots of experience in that first year. Incidentally, another new member in 1975 was Don Campbell's son Ian; who went on to dance with Hammersmith and to be their squire. I went on to dance with Beaux of London City and when I moved to Nottingham in 1982, The Foresters, for whom I was Bagman. I have now reached the dizzy heights of Rapper captain for Dorset Buttons; but I have always kept my allegiance to Farnborough.

The Dances

The Farnborough Style was based on Bledington with some noticeable changes. The most obvious was the first figure replacing half gyp, which was "Into Line" facing your partner up & down the set in one straight line down the middle. The arm movements were also lower down than most sides would dance for Bledington. We also had some of our own dances based on traditional dances, but altered to fit Farnborough. The Spittoon was a particular favourite, based on The Rose, but with a circular hey to fit the circular shape of the dance. Another popular dance was the Old Man's Dance, a corner stick dance with very slow but aggressive "walking stick" fighting in the distinctive figure contrasting with extra fast and athletic common figures. We had some completely unique dances such as the Mexican Weasel Dance from the Dommett tradition! Another Farnborough dance was our Fool's Jig danced with two short sticks to the tune Trumpet Hornpipe, better known as Captain Pugwash. As a child I watched in amazement Nick Wadsworth dancing this jig and decided that when I grew up, that was what I wanted to do. I do indeed still dance Captain Pugwash; but there is debate about whether I have grown up yet. The Farnborough Style was taken up by at least one other team; the Churchwarden Morris; who were set up by an ex-Farnborough man Ray Tayler when he moved to Stoke Gabriel in Devon in 1974.



Dance outs with Farnborough

Farnborough typically danced out on five weekends between May and September with a weekend camp in July. A weekend of dancing followed a fairly standard pattern which proved very successful. We started with one pub on the Friday night at which we would do a couple of dance spots with music and singing inside the pub between the dancing and at the end of the evening. On the Saturday we would start in a town centre dancing to the shoppers and having mid-morning refreshment at a pub. We then went to a pub for lunch & dancing. In the afternoon we danced at a village fete or old people's home followed by tea and sometimes a visit to a swimming pool! In the evening it was off to a pub for the whole evening, again with typically two shows and music in the pub. The spots were well planned with a set of 5 shows each consisting of two set dances, a jig and two more set dances. These shows were carefully worked out to give a mix of handkerchief & stick dances, corner dances & set dances and even variation of keys & time signatures for the tunes! The idea was to ensure that the show we gave was varied and interesting for the audience. We also had a well-developed set of pub entertainment with musicians to play, comic songs, and a couple of dances that could be done in the pub. These were The Ox Dance, a Swedish fighting dance and The Three Man's Dance from Wyresdale. We also had for many years Mike Cherry in the team who is a wonderful clog dancer and would roll out his bass drum which he then danced on. At the end of the evening Dave Barke would lead us in the Djachko Kolo, which is a great way to include the whole audience and get them out of the pub into the car park at closing time!

Other Special Features

Farnborough were lucky to have a splendid Horse made in the form of a knight in armour riding an armoured horse. The "armour" was a light alloy which we believe may have had aviation connections – this meant that although looking massive, the horse was actually quite manageable – although not that light! Another Morris tradition that we kept up was to hand out Lucky Morris Cake to the audience from our cake tin mounted on a sword bayonet. We didn't collect from the audience which often surprised people, but over the years we found that this removed many barriers to the places that we wanted to dance at. As it said in our hand out, we dance for our enjoyment!

Costume

Our costume was distinctive, with bright red knee breeches made from cotton sailcloth, black waistcoats, a red neckerchief, white shirt & socks, black shoes with buckles and straw hats. The red sailcloth was hard wearing, but did tend to fade over time; you could always tell an older member of the team by their pink breeches! The costume turned up again recently in the film, Morris a Life with Bells On. The film was written by and stars Charles Oldham who lived with the Campbells for a year when his parents emigrated to Australia. During that year he was dragged along to the Farnborough Morris events and no doubt he realised that red knee breeches were the right colour for real Morris Dancers to wear! A lovely touch is that the film is dedicated to the memory of Don Campbell who died from Motor Neurone Disease, but had danced with Farnborough Morris from its beginnings in 1955.

In Conclusion

Over its forty years, Farnborough Morris demonstrated a different approach to the Morris as well as providing a fertile training ground for some of us who have gone on to dance with many other teams around the country. The influence of people like Alan Browning, a superb dancer and musician, is hard to underestimate. His understanding of how to play a tune that would really lift the dancers was superb. For Roy Dommett, Farnborough was the start of a lifelong career influencing the Morris world – I think that is something Farnborough should be proud of! Above all, though, for me Farnborough Morris understood how to put on a good show and to please their audiences.

THE FARNBOROUGH MORRIS

In the past most villages of England supported a Morris side which danced during the annual Festivals of Whitsun and Christmas. In this area there are records of the Morris being performed at Crondall, Old Basing and Old Farnborough. The custom had lapsed in most places by a century ago due to the decline in local patronage and the luring of the more spirited countrymen to the growing towns.

We, the Farnborough Morris, have revived the custom in recent years because of the intrinsic merit of the dancing and for the pleasure it gives to ourselves and others. Unfortunately, the local traditional dances are irrevocably lost and we now perform a version of the Cotswold Morris, derived from the South East corner of Gloucestershire.

With the disappearance of Mayday celebrations and the annual Fair and the changed character of the Bank Holidays the obvious occasions for dancing the Morris have gone. Today we dance during several week-ends between Whitsun and July, visiting the pleasant places around Farnborough, and support local Fetes and celebrations where possible.

There are more than twenty distinct dances in the Farnborough Morris and if you have enjoyed watching those that you have seen we feel that all our effort and trouble will have been well rewarded. We hope that you have had a piece of the Lucky Morris Cake, a remedy for all ills and troubles. If you are puzzled by the absence of a collecting box this is because we dance for our enjoyment and our expenses are not unduly heavy.



Farnborough Morris at Alton 8 May 1976

The Morris Dancer at Sulgrave Manor

Julian Whybra

In August while taking a group of children to the ancestral home of George Washington, Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire (www.sulgravemanor.org), my eye was caught by a framed picture in a dark corner of the last room on the tour, the Oak Parlour. The guide talked about everything else in the room but never mentioned the picture. When I had an opportunity I looked it more closely and asked the guide what he knew about it. He said that he called it The Green Man (which it plainly was not).

The picture is in fact a tent-stitched embroidery on canvas in an ebonized frame measuring 13" wide by 15³/₄" high and is listed in the property's inventory as 'The Morris Dancer' having been presented to the Sulgrave Manor Trust in 1930 by the Viscount and Viscountess Lee of Fareham. It is stitched in wool and silk on linen.

It may well be stitched on to a pre-drawn template, a type of work which was very popular in the 1600s. One wonders whether this particular sudden marketing opportunity was inspired by William Kempe's Nine Days' Wonder which took place in 1600 (New Style) with the book of his dance from London to Norwich being published later the same year. This would date the embroidery to the first years of the seventeenth century making it one the very earliest portrayals of the Morris.

The colours have faded a little over the centuries but are still bright in places. The dancer is stepping vigorously on a stylized hill covered in plants and on either side of him are oak trees. He is wearing a red cap, red-brown knee-breeches, and a blue jacket over a pale shirt. Bells are plainly visible round his calves as are the buckles on his shoes and his expression is one of determination (just as Sharp might have expected!).

I have not seen this particular work mentioned in Morris literature before but if you are in the area, I would thoroughly recommend a visit.

There is no postcard available but it does appear with commentary in Overson, Jenny, *Textiles at Sulgrave*, (Sulgrave Manor Publication, ISBN 0 851013716, 2002), p. 5, available from the Manor shop or sulgrave-manor@talk21.com). The photograph below appears with the permission of Sulgrave Manor Trust.



'The Morris Dancer' at Sulgrave Manor ©Sulgrave Manor Trust

The Lost Sword Dance

Julian Whybra

In early 2007 I was reading a book review of *Nature's Engraver* by Jenny Uglow about Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) the engraver. Accompanying the review was a tiny 2" x 3" illustration of a sword-dance team showing four men, longsword dancing, accompanied by a fool and a fiddler. Never having come across a four-man longsword dance before and, therefore intrigued, I obtained the book and found the illustration in which the engraved legends, at bottom left and right, can just be made out: "*Xmas in the olden time*" and "*Pitmen*", respectively. There was no reference to the dancers' village or tradition, no dated watermark, and no indication of the date of the engraving. In fact, there was no proper reference to the source – it is simply called *Pitmen sword dancing – proof* in the list of illustrations where it is included with those that are not by Bewick. It is obvious from the dress of the dancers that it could be dated from the 1780s to the early 1800s.

Thomas Bewick's principal activity was as a tradesman metal engraver and copperplate printer. Wood engraving represented a relatively small part of his activity but it was through this that he drew acclaim for his exquisite little vignettes of the countryside of the north-east and its people. He rose to national fame from 1790 with illustrations for three books in particular, which were the work of his spare time, and a number of famous woodcuts. Although the *Pitmen* print was in Bewick's possession it was not engraved by him. It is not of a poorer quality; it is very well-executed and very fine. It is merely a different style to Bewick's. Iain Bain, David Gardner-Medwin, and Jenny Uglow, all experts on Bewick's engravings, are of the opinion that it does not resemble his work but instead could be the work of an apprentice. It is known that from 1804-1828 Bewick and his school engraved to designs from professional artists commissioned by other publishers so the dates of the *Pitmen* print can be narrowed down to 1790-1828 (though the drawing from which it was done may well date from an earlier period).

A close examination of the *Pitmen* print shows that the four dancers and fool are ribbon-bedecked, definitely holding longswords, and performing the 'Single-under' figure. Assuming that the print showed a side performing an extant longsword dance, I then began to look for the dance that might match this description. An examination of the 34 extant longsword dance-cum-folk plays indicated that, from the similarity of the costume, the *Pitmen* print might be an early representation of the Sowerby side at a time when it had four men; the existing information relating to Sowerby was taken down in 1913 with the dance having lapsed thirty years previously; and at that time there is mention only of six dancers.

It was at this point that my researches took an upward turn. My inquiries had prompted the discovery of a second print. One of the country's leading Bewick experts, Iain Bain, has in his possession three copies of individually-created Bewick print books made up and annotated by Bewick's daughter. One of these contained a second *Pitmen* print, undated, but clearer, with much more detail visible, and larger (3" x 4½"), than the first print. The dancers' and the Fool's dress can be clearly seen. The Fool has stitched on to the front of his upper garment the figure of a running dog. It was this dog, coupled with the fact that the print shows four men dancing, that reminded me of an account dated 1815 of a four-man (apparently) longsword dance by Robert Topliff which had been the subject of a paper by E.C. Cawte in 2002. Cawte's paper collated evidence of a play with sword dance as reported by several writers during the nineteenth century.



The 'Pitmen sword dancing' print

The first of these writers was Topliff, a musician with an interest in the traditional songs of his native Co. Durham. He described a sword dance with play, twelve four-line stanzas of text, and the song *Kitty, Bo-Bo*, from Co. Durham. There were nine characters: a Singer, four named sword dancers (Squire's Son, Sailor Bold, Tailor Fine, Keelman Grand), a Doctor, a Fiddler, and a Fool and Bessy (who are not named in the cast but appear in the notes). Accompanying the text are notes including this extract:

"This ceremony, which in its origins is extremely remote, is performed chiefly by pitmen, who at Christmas, emerge from their subterranean employ, forming themselves into parties, each having a sword by his side, and decorated with all the varied coloured ribbons of his mistress, resort to the more populous towns, whereby their performance, in which they display numberless feats of activity, excite the liberality of the inhabitants..."

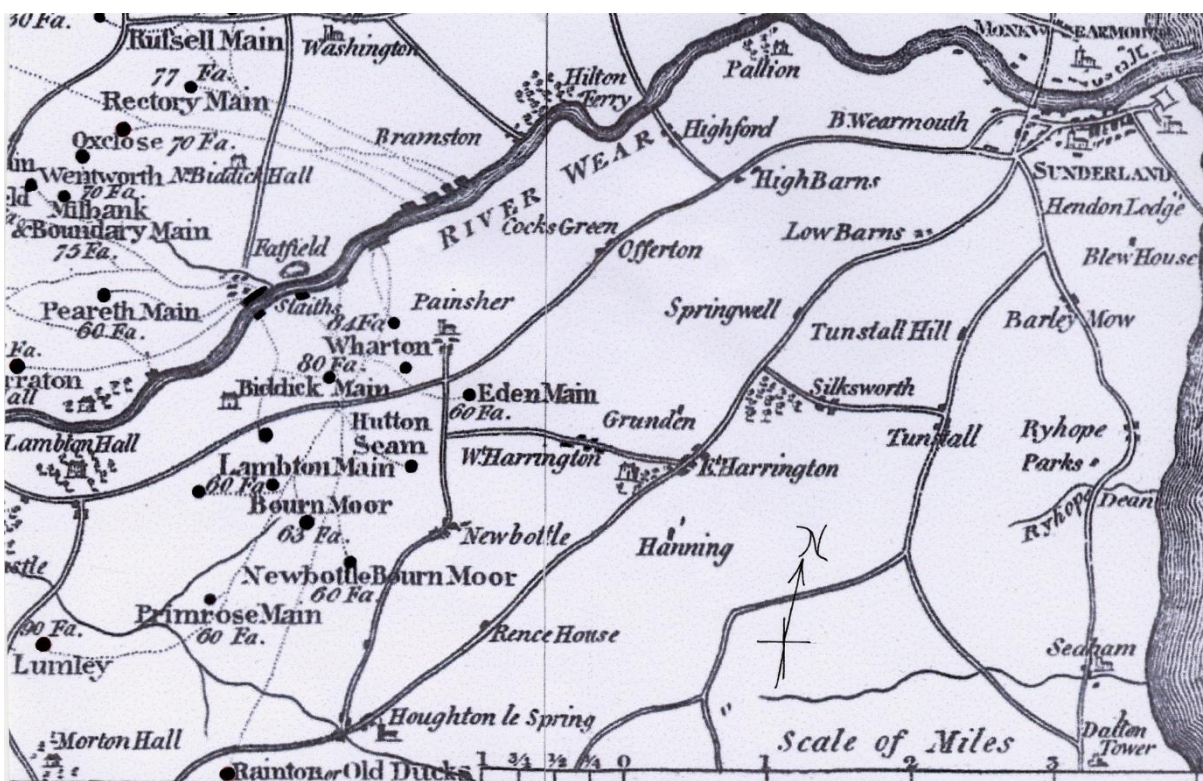
The second eye-witness account of the same dance was recorded by Sir Cuthbert Sharp in 1834. It echoes Topliff's account but adds certain details including the name of the Fool – the Jolly Dog. A third account dated 1854 by William Clepham copies Sharp's but adds a few more details stating that there were performances of the dance in 1854 implying personal observation on his part. A fourth account of the dance was recorded in 1857 by Robert Bell who reprinted and 'corrected' Sharp's account and indicated that he had also witnessed a performance himself.

These and other accounts and the *Pitmen* print have the following connections between them: a **four-man longsword dance**, performed at **Christmas**, by **Pitmen**, with a **Fiddler** and **Fool** (named **Jolly Dog** with a **Jolly Dog sewn** on to his costume who appears to be carrying a **tobacco-box** in which to collect money) all decorated with **ribbons** and **touring the Tyne and Wear (Durham and Sunderland) towns**. If the texts are compared then it is obvious that the same performance is being witnessed.

Cawte made the natural assumption that there were six dancers but a close examination of the text shows that (in Sharp's fuller text) each of the four dancers is given two stanzas by way of introduction before the

other actors are introduced: “to join us in this play”. It may be the case that the extras (True Blue, Jolly Dog, Bessy even) might have joined in the dance as the occasion demanded, for example in the lock for the mock killing, but Topliff’s text makes it clear that there were just four dancers, as is corroborated by the detail obviously apparent in the Bewick Workshop *Pitmen* print. Cawte suggests that the reason that Topliff introduced only four dancers and provided a shortened text is because there might have been limited page space made available to him. However, the greater likelihood, based on the evidence of the *Pitmen* print, is that there were actually four dancers.

As to the origin of the dance there are clues in the text of the play. The first stanza of the last song in Topliff’s text indicates a familiarity with Cox Green and Painshaw. Cox Green is a hamlet located on the right bank of the River Wear. Painshaw Hill is half a mile to the south and the village of Painshaw is a further half mile southwards. Sunderland lies about 4½ miles to the east and was home to Cuthbert Sharp who states, as does Topliff, that the dancers were pitmen who visited the larger towns in the area, specifically naming Sunderland and Durham. Durham lies 9½ miles to the south-west. In addition, there was in Painshaw Staiths in the early 1800s a public house called ‘The Keel’, a fact which would surely not have been lost to an audience upon the introduction of the ‘Keelman’ character. Painshaw Staiths lies a mile to the west of Painshaw. A ‘staith’ is wharfside equipment for loading coal (from Old English ‘stæth’ meaning ‘bank’) and Painshaw Staiths on the south bank of the River Wear served thirteen pits south of the river (five of them within a mile radius of Painshaw) in the early 1800s according to Akenhead’s collieries map of 1807. Painshier, Cocks Green, and Staiths are all shown centre left. Pits are shown by large black dots.



Painshaw villagers seemed to have been widely employed in the surrounding pits. For example, in an explosion in the West Herrington pit in 1812, twenty-four men were killed, all of whom came from Painshaw and are buried in its All Saints’ Churchyard. It therefore seems highly likely that in Painshaw, we have the pitmen’s village origin.

It was at this point that Iain Bain contacted me to say that he had found in Bewick’s Weekly Engraving Book for the week ending 16th July 1814 the entry:

“Bell Wood Cut Sword Dancers [£] 1 . 2 . 6”

It is almost certain that Bell is John Bell (1783-1864), Bookseller, Antiquarian, Folklorist and ardent Pamphleteer who had his shop on the Quay, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The date of the print (but not of the earlier drawing on which it is based) can be fixed at 1814.

There are a number of websites which use Topliff, Bell, or Stokoe's descriptions as early illustrations of rapper rather than longsword. This error probably stems from a 1981 article by Cawte. However, the date of the cut from 1814, taken from the earlier drawing portraying the dance being done "*in olden times*", predates the discovery of the process for creating the flexible steel used in rapper swords and precludes such illustration. It may be that the Penshaw dance is one of the original Tyneside longsword dances from which Rapper ultimately evolved at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The unusuality of finding a pictorial representation of a four-man longsword dance and the similarities of three or four eye-witness accounts (one of them contemporary with the print) describing four-man longsword performances in the same place as the print leads to the inevitable conclusion that they are describing one and the same event, viz., the singular occurrence of the existence of a longsword side so far north as to be, essentially, in 'rapper country', and, in all probability from the village of Penshaw, Co. Durham.

It remained to try to discover the nature of the dance itself. A reconstruction of the dance was hardly feasible given that only one figure can be ascertained with any certainty but an idea of the dance's original figures may be gained through a comparison with the order of figures from other 'nearby' surviving dances to produce a hybrid of the original Penshaw dance.

This I have managed to do, paying particular attention to the formation of the four-sword locks which I have spaced evenly throughout the dance giving it a harmony, symmetrical structure, and framework. Ivor Allsop's *Longsword Dances from Traditional and Manuscript Sources* describes a four-sword lock, stating that it "*is the only lock that can be made with four longswords.*" His lock is similar in shape to the locks I have created for the 'Penshaw' dance but the position of the swords and the creation of the lock are different, being neither mirror images nor reversals of Allsop's lock.

The 'Penshaw' Pitmen's Dance was first performed by a longsword side from the Mayflower Morris Men of Billericay, Essex, in 2007. A fully-annotated and illustrated description of the story of the print's discovery, the tentative reconstruction of the dance, and the musical notation is available in booklet form from the Morris Shop or from the author (obtainable by e-mailing enquiries@giftltd.co.uk).

Julian Whybra, Foreman, Mayflower Morris Men, Billericay, Essex

Acknowledgements

I must thank Iain Bain for his permission to reproduce his copy of the *Pitmen* print and the Mayflower Morris Men of Billericay, Essex for their patience in learning the dance.

The Oxford University Morris Men 1899 – 1914

Roy Judge (1970)

Part One

It is difficult to know how much of the London and national background to supply. Its complexities could be misleading when presented in this summarised form, so I would refer the interested to Maud Karpeles' clear and full account in the life of Cecil Sharp and the very interested to the Cuttings Books in the Vaughan Williams Library.

The twentieth century revival in Oxford has, of course, always had a special character given to it by the fact of the original historic meeting between Cecil Sharp and William Kimber at Sandfield Cottage on Boxing Day 1899, and by the continued presence, activity and influence of Kimber during the next sixty years.

In 1905 Mary Neal first brought Kimber to London to teach the Headington Dances to her Working-Girl's Club in Cumberland Market. The first edition of the Morris Book Volume One of July 1907 was dedicated to "our friends and pupils of the Esperance Girls' Club and its notation was based partly on the dancing of the girls and particularly that of Miss Florence Warren the chief instructress.

In November 1907 Mary Neal called an informal conference "to talk over plans for putting at the service of all who wish for it, this great possession of English folk-music in which it has been our good fortune to be the means of reviving interest." But already Sharp was doubtful of the wisdom of further collaboration. "There was a fundamental difference in attitude towards the dances between him and Mary Neal. He was fretted by her lack of artistic discipline and she no doubt considered him to be unduly repressive." (Karpeles)

In April 1908 Mary Neal began the 'Association for the Revival and Practice of Folk Music'.

The first extant piece of Oxford documentary evidence follows on from this, being a leaflet issued by the 'Oxford Society for the Revival of the Folk Dance'. It says: "An attempt is about to be made to revive old Morris and Folk Dances in Oxford City and County, as has already been done with singular success in other places. With this object a small committee has been formed and a teacher engaged to come down from London for a week, to instruct all who wish to learn in the method of dancing, classes being formed to suit different ages and needs.....Miss Mary Neal, Secretary of the London Association, has kindly offered to give an address on the subject, to be accompanied, if possible, by a demonstration. This will take place under the auspices of the Teachers' Guild on Saturday, October 10, at 8:15 p.m. Entrance free".

The Oxford Times (17.10.08) gives a full account of this occasion, under the heading 'Revival of English Folk Music':

"An enthusiastic meeting, composed mostly of ladies, gathered at the Girls' High School on Saturday afternoon to hear a lecture on 'Folk-Songs' and to witness an exhibition of Morris-dancing. Mr E.F. Davidson (HM Inspector of Schools) took the chair and briefly introduced the lecturer, Miss Mary Neal, hon. Secretary to the Esperance Working-Girls' Club in London.

The latter reviewed the history of the movement, which had crystallised into the course of dancing and singing lessons which that meeting would inaugurate in Oxford. A demonstration was given by boys and girls from Iffley Church School instructed by Miss Rosina Mallet, a member of the Esperance Club. Mr William Kimber and Miss Mallet gave some exhibitions of other dances such as 'Jock at the Fair'.

At the conclusion of the performances which were enthusiastically applauded by the audience, Mr Scott thanked Miss Neal for the treat which they had enjoyed and remarked that while on a recent tour in

Norway he had noticed these dances in that country and was agreeably surprised to find them revived in England on his return."

The Oxford Chronicle picked out another point from Mr Scott's thanks: "For his part he was a Somersetshire man who had lived in that county for most of his life, and yet he had never had the least idea of the existence there of these beautiful enjoyable Morris Dances".

It also gives a story that Miss Neal was to tell many times: "There was nothing in the least objectionable about these folk dances; none of the unhealthy influences and emotions were aroused. An old Somersetshire sailor had seen her club dancing and exclaimed 'that's the dancing of my heart; I wouldn't have missed it for two big apples.' (Loud laughter) Then he added significantly 'It's what I call clean dancing.' (applause)." (Incidentally, as reported in the Central Somerset Gazette for 13.6.1914m he also added 'There's no hugging in it.'

(To be continued in The Morris Dancer Vol. 5 No. 4)



Mary Neal with Robert Beadle at Štoup Brow, Fyling Hall, on the North Yorkshire Moors; taken by Clive Carey on 22 September 1911, the occasion on which he collected 'One Midsummer's Morn; or, Lemady', *Folk Song Journal*, Number 19 (1915), 175–76; the photograph is in Mary Neal's typescript autobiography at p. 150. See also Neal to Carey, 9 September 1911, Carey Collection, VWML.



Pine Mountain Settlement School sword dance team at the White top Folk Festival 1935.