

THE MORRIS DANCER

No. THIRTEEN *****AUGUST 1982

The Morris Ring's first Autumn circular should carry the subscription rates for Issues Nos.14, 15 and 16 (for. November, 1982; and for March and August, 1983). Individual subscribers will be written to by the Editor.

The Editor shared the pleasure of many other people in watching two overseas teams this summer; the Sydney men (who danced Sherborne Orange in Bloom and Fieldtown Trunkles at Thaxted Guildhall): and the Black Jokers of New England; who, out with East Suffolk M.M., danced before Douglas Kennedy at Waldringfield in Suffolk.

Write to

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THE NORTH WEST MORRIS DANCE

During the 1970s there has been a great revival of interest in the North West morris dance. This is the form of traditional dance common in Lancashire, the areas around the south and east of Manchester and the north of Cheshire. Until fairly recently little was known of this tradition and, in fact, it was commonly believed that the dances were performed mainly in the region: around Manchester, the best known of these being Royton. Much of the research before 1960 had been centred in this area and little work had been done elsewhere. It was not thought, therefore, that a tradition as such existed on or around the Lancashire Plain nor in Cheshire, only a few brief references having been found naming teams who performed in these areas. Since 1965, however, much detailed work has been carried out which covers the whole of the North West and it has now become clear that the dance was more common than had previously been supposed.

The whole of the North West may be divided, for the purposes of simplification, into three main regions: The Lancashire Plain, Cheshire and the areas around Manchester and to the south and east of this city, hereinafter known as the south-east. Each area appears to have been slightly different in its background history, types of festivities and forms of dance, though there has obviously been movement and exchange of ideas over the whole region.

The South-East

Collection and research in this area was mainly carried out during the 1950s by Dan Howison, Bernard Bentley and Julian Pilling and other members of the Manchester Morris Men, though Sharp and Karpeles did visit the area during the first half of this century.

The tradition appears to some extent to have been associated with rushcarts or rushbearing, the ancient custom whereby rushes were carted or carried in bundles for the annual renewal of the rushes on the floors of churches. The custom generally ceased when the churches were paved and in this particular area this occurred at a later date than in other parts of the North West, the last documented occasion being around the middle: of the 1800s. After this date the rushbearing ceremonies, though

obviously no longer functional, were often revived for a period as many people felt that they were a custom which was worth preserving. The attendant teams likewise continued to accompany the carts, their dances being based on memories of previous performances, and thus the south-east had a more consistent tradition than did other areas since they used the old customs as a basis for their steps and costumes.

The general appearance and performance of the teams were far more flamboyant than those of the teams in the Lancashire and Cheshire areas. Clogs were commonly worn and the dancers usually performed with slings. These were flexible, approximately fifteen inches long, and were made with a hank of soft material such as cotton waste, bound round and covered with a sheath of cotton cloth. The modern versions are made with a base of cotton rope. The slings were sometimes called 'mollies' or 'tiddlers' and their use formed an important part of the movements of the dance, being held at one end and twirled in a circular motion throughout.

Although one or two teams wore..jockey caps, the most popular form of headgear was an ordinary hat lavishly decorated with flowers and greenery, either real or artificial, and there seems to have been a friendly rivalry between the teams for the finest hats. The dancers generally presented a very impressive appearance. Knee breeches were common together with brightly coloured sashes which were worn diagonally over either shoulder and tied on the hip, or tied around the waist, and the dancers often wore strings of beads around the neck as an added decoration. The basic step of the dance appears to have been the cross-polka.

Lancashire

Unlike the south-east the morris dance in Lancashire, as it is presently known, does not date any further back than 1890 and has few apparent :links with any prior traditions, most of the teams being formed specifically to take part in the festivals and carnivals which became popular after this date. At present nothing is known of the dance before 1890 and that performed after this year appears to have been more simplistic than that of the south-east, both in the stepping and the movements.

The first known team to have performed in this area was the

4.

Leyland Morris Dancers who appeared in the Leyland May Festival in May, 1890, heading the procession, having been trained specially for this occasion. This festival and the appearance of the dancers seems to have been responsible for the inauguration of many local festivals and processions in which morris dancing played an important part. The great interest and enthusiasm for morris dancing continued until around 1900. At this point in time many of the festivals ceased, probably due to lack of financial support, and because they were dependent on them many of the morris teams disbanded also. The only ones which continued to perform up to 1914 were two of the Preston juvenile teams and the Horwich Prize Medal Norris Dancers. Membership of the many teams was composed mainly of men or boys, though there are a few records of female dancers, the earliest of these being 1893. After the First World War many of the dancers from the old morris teams formed new teams whose members were mainly girls, since for unknown reasons they were unable to interest either the men or the boys. These teams enjoyed great popularity throughout the 1920s and 30s and were responsible for providing the basis of the present day girls' carnival morris movement in this area.

The costumes, though still decorative, were not quite so lavish as those of the south-eastern teams. The dancers did not make such a feature of the hats, nor were decorations, such as beads, added to the basic costume. The major differences were in the footwear and the sticks which the dancers carried. With the single exception of the Horwich teams none of the Lancastrian teams wore clogs. It is a popular misconception that the North West morris dance must be performed in clogs and it is often incorrectly referred to as 'clog morris'. The wearing of clogs is mostly a modern innovation and while not quite incorrect, strictly speaking, shoes should be worn to perform the dances of the Lancashire Plain and Cheshire. The dances were also performed using a rigid stick which was approximately fifteen inches long, mostly held in the middle, as opposed to the slings of the south-east. The basic step was a skip-step or a hop-1-2-3 (sometimes known as the 'straight' polka).

Cheshire

The tradition in Cheshire followed a similar pattern to that of the Lancashire Plain, except that there are references to teams dancing in the area pre-1890, and the involvement of women at an early date appears to have been much more common than in other areas, there being records of female dancers during the early part of the 1800s. Although documentation exists referring to teams pre-1890 these are few and their appearances spasmodic. The main 'revival', as in Lancashire, began during the 1893s and reached a peak in the early 1900s, this revival apparently having little connection with previous traditions and likewise having a basis in the carnival movement. One of the main factors was the arrival in Crewe during this time of David Billington, previously a dancer with one of the Preston teams, who appears to have had a marked influence over dancing in Cheshire. Competitions were taking place in the very early 1900s, much earlier than elsewhere, these having an effect on the dances and causing them to change more rapidly than did the dances in the other two areas. There were almost as many female teams as there were male, the earliest recorded revival female team being the Crewe Alexandra Troupe of Lady Morris Dancers in 1902.

The costumes of the performers and the movements of the dance bore a marked similarity to those of Lancashire, not least in that almost all of the teams performed in shoes and carried sticks.

Morris dancing continued to enjoy popularity until the Second World War and afterwards and, as in Lancashire, there is now a strong tradition of carnival morris directly descending from the original teams.

Research continues and is constantly uncovering new facts about North West morris dancing, making this tradition one of the most active and exciting in English dance.

PRUW BOSWELL, 1982

Useful Reading

Bernard Bentley & 'The North West Morris: A General Survey'.
 Dan Howison Article in Journal of the English Folk
 Dance and Song Society (JEFDSS) vol.1X, No.1.
 Dec.1960. (Journal Reprint no.11, pp42-55.

- Pruw Boswell 'Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain, the Preston Tradition.' Claughton Press for The Morris Ring. 1981
- Alfred Burton 'Rushbearing'. Manchester: Brook and Chrystal 1891
- Derek Froome 'The Britannia Coconut Dancers'. Article in English Dance & Song, vol.XVII, no.6, June/July, 1953, pp 209-10
- A.G.Gilchrist 'The Lancashire Rushcart & Morris Dance'. Article in Journal of the English Folk Dance Society, 2nd series, no.1, 1927, pp 17-27
- John Graham Lancashire and Cheshire Morris Dances. London; Curwen, 1911
- D.Haworth 'The Manley Morris'. Article in English Dance & Song, vol.XXXIV, no.4, Christmas/Winter, 1972, pp 129-130
- Alex Helm 'The Rushcart and the Northwest Morris'. Article in JEFDSS vol.VII,no.3, 1954, pp 172-179
- Maud Karpeles 'The Abram Dance'. Article in JEFDSS, vol.1, no.1, 1932, PP 55-59
- Maud Karpeles The Lancashire Morris Dance. London, Novello,1930
- Julian Pilling 'Morris Dancers at Gisburn'. In: English Dance & Song,vol.XXX, no.1, Spring 1968, pp 10-11 Julian Pilling 'Morris, Nutters and Rushcart in Whitworth'. In: English Dance and Song, vol.XXVII, no.5 October, 1965, pp 142-143
- Julian Pilling 'The Morris of the North West'. In: Sixty Years of Folk. EFDSS, 1971, p.6
- Roy Smith 'The Leyland Morris Dancers'. In: English Dance & Song, vol.XXXI, No.2, Summer,1969, pp 48-49
- Derek Froome 'The North Western Morris Dances'. In: E.D.& S., vol.XI, no.1, Spring, 1978, p.23
- Cecil Sharp Folk Dance Notes, vol.1, p.14
- Roy Dommett Notes on the Morris, vol.2, pp 31-49
- Joseph Needham 'The Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions'.JEFDSS, vol.III, no.1, 1936, pp 1 - 45
- J. & T.Beasant 'The Marston Processional Morris Dance'. In Eng.D.& Song, vol.43, no.2, 1981

- Dan Howison & Theresa Buckland 'Morris Dancers in Crewe Before the First World War'. In: English Dance & Song, vol.42, no.2, 1930

The book mentioned above, MORRIS DANCING ON THE LANCASHIRE PLAIN, by Pruw Boswell, can be obtained from her at 26, Watkin Road, Clayton-le-Woods, Chorley, Lance.. This well-produced book contains the historical background of several of the North West teams including Preston Royal, eight pages of photographs, music and four previously unpublished dances. For a copy send £1.50 and an envelope 9" x 7" stamped at 20 ½ p.

JIM BARTLETT'S GREAT JIG. (See The Morris Dancer, Nos.9,10,11,12) A Commemorative Cover was produced to record the dance from Orpington to Worcester in April, 1981. It shows the route Jim danced through the Cotswolds, and has been endorsed with the total number of miles danced. It carries these stamps:-

18p "Morris Dancers" from the 1981 Folklore issue

22p "Wheelchair" from the IYDP issue.

These stamps combine the Morris Dancing aspect of the event and the fact that the proceeds from the sponsorship and the sale of the covers is donated to the Multiple Sclerosis Society. The stamps have been hand cancelled by the Post Office at Worcester on the day of Jim's arrival there (24th April, 1981). A small number of covers remains for sale at £1.50 each (plus 15p post and packing). Orders, with cash please, payable to David M. Jex (also of Ravensbourne MM.), should be sent to 48, Crescent Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6LF.

THE MORRIS AT LOWER SWELL (Glos.)

An Appraisal of Cecil Sharp's Field Notes.

The Field Notebooks used by Sharp in 1909 are full of random information on the Morris. Making sense of this information requires that the investigator has a means of sorting the items into some sort of order. This was achieved by the simple process of photocopying, not just the 1909 notes but the entire collection. By sorting the copies according to names rather than dates, it became evident that there was a great deal of inform-

ation which had not been investigated. The reasons for this oversight are partly due to Sharp himself, and partly due to the way in which the information is made available. After sorting through the enormous pile of photocopies and so placing the items in relevant files, I encountered a considerable number of papers remaining. This was either because I couldn't place the information, or I couldn't read it!

There then began several months of painful processing; our copies were very poor due to the fact that Sharp wrote his notes in hard pencil, which does not copy well. We were resolved to find a way round this problem. By means of the democratic process by which the Ring Archival Committee operates I was told to get on with it. The processing consists of re-marking every mark on the copy with a black pen. By means of this it is possible to make sense of words that were previously illegible. What emerged from this process was most interesting. Firstly Sharp may have been selective in his publishing but he noted down some most explicit songs and other curiosities such as a cure for lumbago and a host of information on dance traditions which even he never mentioned again. These include, Northleach, Idbury, North Leigh, Kirtlington, Stretton and Lower Swell. There are references to the Forest of Dean, Longsword and even dances from well known traditions which have never come to light. (Was there really a dance from Fieldtown called 'The Duke of Grafton'?)

One of the most impressive collections of obscure dances is that from Lower Swell. At first glance it would be dismissed as Longborough until one notes that there are a large number of snippets which refute this. After carefully checking each page I managed to collect together a total of thirty pages of music and words together with detailed accounts of the stepping. The following is a summary of Sharp's information together with a few items on the dances themselves. I offer this in the hope that a side somewhere will become interested and perhaps adopt and develop the information as my own side did with Kirtlington some years ago. (Green Oak M.M. See Morris Dancer No.2, Nov.1978)

LOWER SWELL (Glos.) Field Notebooks 1907 - 1910, bulk of information 1909. Informants J.Hathaway, W.Hathaway and Mrs. E.Hathaway.

Summary... The information gives small detail regarding the

Morris as ceremony but includes details of dress and a certain amount of information regarding 18 dances which include 4 double jigs and a Bacca pipes type dance. It would appear that Sharp used this information quite freely when he published the dances from Longborough.

The dancers wore pleated shirts and high hats. Blue baldricks with bows at the shoulder and hip and red rosettes at the crossings. A red sash was worn about the waist and the costume was completed by breeches and blue stockings. There are no stick dances. If a dance required a noise in addition to the music, then hand clapping was used.

The dances are as follows:-

Hey Diddle Dis.....	Morris On or Off
Swaggering Boney....	Corner dance
Gallant Hussar.....	" "
Belleisle's March...	" "
Cuckoos Nest.....	" "
Old Woman Tossed Up.	Sidestep dance
Constant Billy.....	Handclapping
Young Collins.....	" "
British Grenadiers..	Not classified
Maid of the Mill....	" "
London Pride.....	" "
The Marriage Vow....	Progressive
Princess Royal.....	Two man jig
Jockey to the Fair..	" " "
Shepherd's Hey.....	" " " (handclapping)
Sherborne Jig	" " "
Greensleeves	Solo jig (Bacca pipes.)*

* A note alongside 'Greensleeves' seems to suggest that this was also used as a dance around three candlesticks or pint pots. This seems to be a variant on Three Jolly Sheepskins.

Tunes exist for all the above. Several tunes have been acquired from elsewhere and Sharp notes down the likely origin whilst W.Hathaway admits to having picked up at least one tune (Over at Longborough).

The order of figures is given as

OTY-FU-HG-BB-WG-WH

There are certain aspects which are peculiar about these

figures.

OTY...Come in on backstep rb.lb. jump.

FU...Up and down, normal 4 step with hookleg to turn. Jump.

HG...Sharp says 'jump every 2 bars'. Come back on backstep.

BB... As normal but with jumps as in HG.

WG...As above for BB & HG.

WH...As normal Morris Hey but 4 plain capers into position.

HR...Dance round, 2 bars 4 step, jump and caper.

There is no mention made of Half Heys and this places an interesting complexion on the sidestep dances.

Steps...The stepping is very similar to Longborough but there are minor local variations which make the tradition distinct from the more well known neighbour.

4 step as normal.

Sidesteps...always closed. Usually right foot lead.

Backstep...not shuffle and not crossed.(Sounds like Fieldtown).

Plain Capers...as usual.

Half Capers...R 1 r, L r 1 etc.

Fore Capers...rtb ft. R L, ltb ft. L R etc.

Whole Capers...rtb. ftj. Hk (rt), ltb. ftj. Hk (lt)

Upright Capers...xh. j. R L. xh. j. L R etc.

Hookleg (Hk)...as Bledington (?) but always followed by Ftj.

Hands...There is little detail and only practice will give a satisfactory answer. One assumes that in 4 step the hands are as at Longborough. (Personally I would opt for the wave in a low position as at Brickley for no reason other than to provide a distinction between Lower Swell and Longborough.)

Again by presumption (or assumption) it is to be expected that waves will occur on Plain Capers (Arms at sides.)

There is a clear indication that waves were used in the high position as at Longborough when the dancer used sidesteps.

Right hand raising with right foot lead and the reverse in the case of the other foot.

Hands balance in front position in backstep and the slow capers, arms outstretched in front of the body, fists clenched and the fingers underneath. There is a suggestion of a snatch and backwards swing in these steps where the hands are concerned.

THE DANCES

There is a certain amount of reconstruction involved here. I would not be surprised to find that there are better ways of performing these dances and so the following is meant to act primarily as a stimulant rather than an Archival Edict.

HEY DIDDLE DIS... Hathaway cheerfully admitted to learning this dance from Longborough. Indeed the Lower Swell men, presumably out of courtesy but I suspect more likely a sly and arid sense of humour used to sing,

'Hey diddle dis, my backside you may kiss
and away goes Longborough Morris'.

This could be useful in cases of public disturbances where the authorities would be sent down the road to harass the innocent Longborough men whilst the real culprits could rest easy. This last is an observation of my own based on my twisted imagination rather than hard fact.

The dance consisted of the side, in order, dancing on using 4 step (2 bars) ftj and caper round on the spot (4 PC). On the B music Half rounds with sidestep and 4 PC turning. This was repeated ad nauseam until in position. The final half rounds would consist of doffing one's hat to the crowd (2 bars) and 4PC to finish in position ready for the first dance.

SWAGGERING BONEY...Almost as at Longborough but the half capers appear to be missing which means that each distinctive figure is a fighting type.

Sequence..OTY/FU/DF/HR/HG/DF/HR/BB/DF/HR/WG/DF/WH

DF..ss(rt),ss(rt)/ss(lt),ftj, fight (rt), fight(lt) 4Pc to opposite corner.

GALLANT HUSSAR...probably similar to William and Nancy (Bled.)

Suggested sequence as follows:-

OTY/FU/DF/HG/DF/BB/DF/WG/DF/WH

1 2 3 4

DF 1...	corners	cross	with	HC	then	ss(rt)ss(lt)	all	4PC	(ss in new
DF 2	"	"	"	FC	"	"	" _n	"	pos.)
DF 3	"	"	"	WC	"	"	"	"	
DF 4	"	"	"	U C	"	"	"	"	

OLD WOMAN TOSSED UP....Sharp says sidestep dance.

Sequence OTY/FU/DF/HG/DF/BB/DF/WG/DF/WH

DF...sidestep and half rounds (no mention of the more common half hey in Sharp's notes).

ss(rt)/4step/ss(lt)/ftj. HR repeat

YOUNG COLLINS...sequence as Old Woman

DF...Clapping xxx/Heel,toe,heel /XXX/ Heel,toe,heel

Right foot Left foot

Raise rt.hand Raise lt.hand

There is no indicating of what happens next so why not try the sidestep sequence from Old Woman? This completes the B music. Then repeat with the hands and feet reversed and the sidesteps going the other way.

THE MARRIAGE VOW...A progressive Dance (A version of Saturday Night)

Line up in single file first dancer starts.

The notes say sidesteps then capers. There is apparently no 4 step in this dance. Each dancer then dances in turn. Then presumably the set is formed and the dance finishes either on whole hey or more likely Half Rounds.

Considerable work needs to be done here on both tune and the two verbal descriptions.

There is very little information on the other set dances. But a close investigation by a complete side should pay dividends.

There is no information on the jigs with the exception of Princess Royal. Here the detail is excellent and forms the basis of most of the above.

PRINCESS ROYAL (Jig)

Sequence...OTY/FU/SSS/FC/SSS/WC/SSS/UC/SSS

The jig is done by two men. One walks in a circle while the other dances. They both join in on the sidestep section. The changeover being done by means of a whole gip type movement at the end of the A music.

FU...8 bars 4 step ftj.

SSS...ss(rt),ss(rt),ss(lt),ss(lt), xxx,xxx,xxx,x fa,ft,
4 step, 4 step, 4 step ftj.

FC...4Fc then 4 step ftj.

WC & UC...as for FC.

As I stated earlier this is meant to be something of an appetiser, not a directive. There is considerable work to be done on the material and on the dances. This can only be done by a dancing side. I am not attempting to be academic here; if I were an academic I'd spend my time more usefully trying to prove that Cecil Sharp did not exist or that Mary Neal was really a man, or whatever else is in vogue in the world of Morris scholarship. As a member of the Ring Archival Committee I am more concerned with getting danceable information to the sides whom the Ring serves. The real academic work has to be done by men dancing. The work has really still to be done.

Any side who wishes to have a copy of the Lower Swell notes has only to contact me or Uncle Ivor, your friendly neighbourhood fount of all wisdom.

PAUL DAVENPORT

Morris Ring Archival Committee 1981

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DOUGLAS KENNEDY, O.B.E., Squire of The Ring 1939-1947, was 89 on the 11th of May, 1982. He wrote to ask that his thanks should be given to the clubs and men who sent him their greetings. "Hamish (Fraser) produced a great side, including the hobby horse made by Peter Spencer which I took to South Africa and Portugal, and later to Yugoslavia. Battered by performance and weary of travel, he languished in a storeroom at Cecil Sharp House until he was quite recently dug out by Hamish and restored to his former beauty. Manned by Rowland Howls he charmed my birthday gathering and added lustre to the dancing."

Also from Douglas, dated "The Ides of March" (1982)

Reading The Morris Dancer (March 1982) and the "Forest" tradition of the Morris reminded me of the tendency of many commentators to refer to the "Gypsies" as its possible carriers. They certainly have been great carriers of song - but ritual dance is another matter. They have been credited with providing the Sweeps (and so too the Jacks in Green) in London. But it only makes for confusion if we think in terms of the "Travelling People" of our own generation. Kimber, Wells (Jingle) and Sam Bennett were each conscious of the Morris men being of or having in them a distinctive 'strain'. Kimber was sure the people in the Quarry - certainly the Morris families - were 'different'. Wells also used to point out the Morris at Bampton tended to be confined over the years to just a few families. Sam Bennett was himself a Tinker type - showman, hawker of songs or any consumer goods. He held that the Morris men of Ilmington were in a class by themselves, but he would not have liked to be called a gypsy.

But Forest-Morris country in addition to the 'Dean' area are of the regions "In the Bush", "Field Town" and 'tinder Wychwood", all zones of pre-historic occupation (Iron Age?). Quite recently on BBC T.V. I heard Prof.Hoskyns (talking of the landscapes of England) refer to these regions as strongholds surviving the Saxon invasion up the Thames and establishing landings and creating settlements on the banks. In fact Hoskyns said the name Wychwood might refer to a distinctive tribe of the 'Wyks'. The dancers of Town in the Field, e.g., the Franklin brothers, were an impressive and distinctive couple. Brooding as I tend to do over the Cotswold area and the Forest patches still evident it does look like a stronghold of the 'older' people with their customs included in "Morris" and now just holding out in their final 'bunkers', but no longer needed as charcoal burners or smiths or sweeps, only tenacious of the Morris.

DOUGLAS

TRAVELLING MORRICE AND THE FOREST OF DEAN MORRIS

The article by Mike Heaney in Morris Dancer No.12 sweeps up much of what else is known about the morris in the Forest but there are a few items in the logs of the Travelling Morrice.

I saw Rolf Gardiner's copy of the 2nd log for 29th June - 4th July 1925.

RAGLAN Old Mrs.Jones at Raglan Post Office remembered morris at Raglan but long dead.

RUARDEN Mr. Claude Parnell introduced Mrs. Watkins who remembered dancing in Ruarden and possessed a real Forest of Dean coat as well as a letter from Sharp about it.

CHEPSTOW Mr. Hughes, the vicar, took them to see an old gentleman. Without hesitation he sang Shepherd's Hey (Bampton!) though he had not thought about it for nigh on 40 years. It appeared that in the 1880's a great pageant was given in Chepstow Castle and some 20 people processed onto the stage to the morris 4/3 step. He demonstrated the step quite successfully. The dancers wore bells, ribbons and carried sticks. More he could not remember, but promised to look out some old photographs.

It suggests to me that someone should look for newspaper accounts and the photos.

I later saw Lionel Bacon's copies of the 24th and 28th tour logs for 1946 and 1948.

WOOLASTON-ALVINGTON - at Longhope, Mr. Roy Workman, his wife's grandfather had been a morris dancer at Woolaston and that they used to dance about Xmas time and had a man dressed as a woman. On one occasion the dancers were putting up at a pub for the night; the landlady said she could just squeeze them in if they didn't mind sharing beds and if the lady would share with the maidservants; as the time passed the uproar was more than the landlady had bargained for:

Later in the summer Mrs. Workman herself told Russell something of what her grandfather, who died in 1913 aged 86, used to relate about the morris. He and his brother had taken part in the Woolaston-Alvington team, one of them being the "Mad Moll"; bells and ribbons were worn and Mrs. Workman was fairly certain the dancing took place in the summer and not at Xmas time.

Other entries are adequately covered by Russell Wortley's article EDS 1980.

With reference to Mike's comment on my article in Morris Matters, it had been produced a long time before for the Forest of Dean

side, and also sent to Russell to jog him into writing an article based on his experiences, the possibilities for which we discussed at a meeting at Cecil Sharp House once. Its value is that it sticks closely to Sharp's own words in his Field Notes.

R.L.DOMMETT April, 1982

MISS NEAL'S NOTES AND EXPERIENCES

This document was prepared by Miss Neal at the height of the "Controversy"; a copy was sent to Cecil Sharp which is now amongst his correspondence in the Vaughan Williams Library, and further copies distributed to the chief members of her staff, of which I have seen Clive Carey's. There is little of Miss Neal's material surviving. This Note given circulation at the time of arguments on the morris step gives insight into the extent and nature of her contacts.

R.L.DOMMETT, 11/12/1981

NOTES

Folk dancing differs from composed dancing in the same way that folk song differs from the composed song; there is therefore no set Step which applies to every morris dance. The dancing, the same in spirit and form, varies in each locality and with every interpreter, as to the actual step. Each centre of morris dancing seems to have 1 or 2 dances peculiar to it, but some dances are found in more than 1 centre: for instance "Glori-sheers" was danced at Kirtlington and Bampton, "Jockey to the Fair" was danced at Kirtlington and Headington, "Lumps of Plum Pudding" at Kirtlington and Bampton, not at Headington and so on.

EXPERIENCES

Headington Kimber danced differently every time he came up to Town. The first time he stamped and wore thick boots. The sticks held like a pen-holder in "Bean-Setting" (see Mr. Sharp's book.) "never mind the modern emasculate, get out on the highway and stamp"

(Quoted from memory, I have not got book here) •

He did the back step, 1 hop, 1 hop, 1 hop. He bent his legs both in the Caper and in the ordinary step.

The second time he did the backstep by crossing his feet 3 times and he still bent his legs.

The third time he did the hack step, right behind, left behind, together jump and danced with a straight leg.

The fourth time, straight leg and full of criticisms about the way in which the girls held the sticks, etc.

Mr. Trafford, aged 75, one of the original traditional team at Headington said, Richard Kimber could not do the morris dance because he danced with a straight leg; he also said there should be no stamping, as the great thing was to make the bells "oiler". He also said that Kimber missed out a sidestep in the shake-up in "Jockey". In several other dances there was some omission. Also Kimber called the dance "Drawback" "Hunting the Squirrel" which was wrong. Also said stick should be grasped in "Beansetting" not like a penholder. All this was confirmed by Trafford's brother and Mr. Horwood, aged 64, members of the original Headington team, and Mr. Cox, who played the fiddle for them before Kimber, and taught Kimber some of the dances.

Kirtlington :- Mr. Hawtin, aged 72, danced here in his youth. I went there and interviewed 2 dancers and the widow of the oldest dancer. Mr. Hawtin danced "Jockey" differently from Kimber. The dances which were danced here were almost the same as the list from Bampton.

Marston :- There Mr. Cummings, aged 84, said that the legs should be straight and that the best dancers could make the bells sound by what he called "whetting" them, i.e., rubbing the bells together while the feet were off the ground; somewhat after the Chassee in the Ballet. He showed us with his hands. I had not seen the step before. It is very difficult.

Yardley Gobion, Northants :- Mr. Cad, who had learnt the dances in his youth from old men, and revived them about 20 years ago, (since when he has taught the school-children) danced an entirely different step, which was a thrust forward, and 2 movements, 1 of which was to the side, which was very like the pictures in old books. ••

Mr. Sharp said that Cad told him that he had invented "Beansetting" 5 years ago and that it was a mockery. On this point see the letter accompanying these notes from the lady at whose house I saw Cad dance. I saw him do several dances including

"Beansetting" the particular step was the same in them all, and I have not seen it elsewhere.

Leyland, Lancs :- Here I saw some children dance whose instructor had been sent to a neighbouring town in Lancashire (the name of which has slipped my memory) to learn, as it was considered a traditional centre. The dance and step were again quite different from anything I had seen before, but I did not think it interesting enough to take it down.

At Headington, Bampton, Marston and Kirtlington the dances seem only to have been done at Whitsuntide.

Abingdon, Berks :- 7 dances here were called the Royal Morris and were performed when Royalty visited the town, before any others were performed. The step is again quite different, though the form of the dance is very much the same as the Headington, etc. The step is a fling backwards with the heel almost level with the knee. Caper is quite distinctive, part of it being done by a series of short steps on one leg. There is a good deal of evidence in my opinion which points to the Abingdon dances being older tradition than any yet discovered. My reasons for thinking so are as follows:- Each dance ends in a circle which may connect it with a pagan religious ceremony connected with the worship of the sun. The dances are danced on the 19th June, but in connection with a fair, held on the 21st June, the longest day, which again points to sun worship. A beast used to be slaughtered in the market place and the horns carried round in the dance in triumph. The horns at present in existence are tipped with gold, pointing towards a sacrificial and sacred beast, and to a religious ceremony. The written tradition at present in existence goes back only to 1700, but there seems no doubt that the dances are of much earlier date.

* NB. There was once a book of notes.

** A good description of the NW polka step. Cad had been some time in the NW.

R.L.Dommett

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Don Gott, Squire of the Escafeld M.M., sent the Editor the EASIBIND (4, Uxbridge Street, London, W8 7SZ) catalogue leaflet; he bought that Company's C5 binder, 216mm high, 63mm wide, to

hold his copies of the Morris Dancer.

EAST SUFFOLK IN JORDAN

To perform the Morris in a Roman amphitheatre before a crowd of several thousand Arabs can be a daunting experience. To be told we were the first people to use the theatre since the Romans had left eleven hundred years ago was mind-boggling! It was in this situation, and incidentally in a temperature of 92 degrees in the shade - if you could find any - that the East Suffolk Morris Men found themselves last October.

The occasion was the first Jerash Festival of the Arts and Crafts sponsored by Queen Noor-el-Hussein and Yarmouk University who, through the British Council, had invited us to attend, all expenses paid. The Roman city of Jerash, largely wrecked by an earthquake about 800 A.D., had been dug out from the sand and reconstructed. It was all there, the forum, the temples, fountains and theatres, and streets lined with columns and paved with massive stones worn into ruts by the wheels of chariots long ago. The ruins, flood-lit at night, were thronged with Jordanian visitors in festive mood; the many craft stalls and street vendors made an impressive backcloth for the Magic of the Morris.

Never before had we been asked to pose for so many photos. Our horse, 'Billy' Herring, was a winner, every time, and the cause of much merriment.

The festival was opened on a Wednesday by the Queen before an invited audience. Security was unbelievably strict following the recent assassination of President Sadat of Egypt. Was there a bomb in my concertina? And what were those swords and sticks for? Armed guards could be seen around the hill tops silhouetted against the sky.

The Queen accepted from us a ceramic bowl, which we had brought with us, and a letter of greetings from the Mayor of Ipswich. On the Thursday and Friday we danced before ever increasing audiences, had a brief dip in the Dead Sea, and were flown home again from Amman in a Tristar on the Saturday. It was a trip none of us will ever forget. Thanks, Keith Froom, for organizing it all.

Ivo Barne, Squire, E.S.M.M., 1982

From the Ring's Seventh Log Book, P.70

Meeting at Ipswich, 12th-13th July, 1975, East Suffolk M.M.

(In his speech) Roy Dommett said that he had found a 1534 reference to the morris men in Ipswich being paid 3s.4d. As he was a Civil Servant, he had written to the Treasury to ask what that was worth in today's money: the Treasury wrote back to ask which day; finally it was worked out to be, as at the first of July, £242,000,13.75p; which meant, of course, that morris was a paying game in East Suffolk.

Same book, P.233. Colchester, 15th-17th July, 1977

As Past Bagman of The Ring Ewart Russell sat at Sunday lunch a Westminster man put a pile of money, wrapped in newspaper, on his table: "Horse-droppings", said the Westminster man; it was money from the Unicorn.

TRANSMISSION (A Newsletter for researchers in cultural traditions) is produced to meet the need for information exchange amongst folklorists and others working in the field of cultural traditions in the British Isles. It provides news of forthcoming events, conferences, courses, lectures and exhibitions; details of publications, records and films; it includes information on grants, research projects and job opportunities; and there is a section on requests for information. It is published four times a year, and is available free from all folklore centres in the British Isles. For a personal copy, the annual subscription is £1 in the U.K. or overseas. Paul Smith, Cultural Tradition Research Press, 2A Westfield Road, Bramley, Rotherham, Yorkshire.

The five papers presented at the first TRADITIONAL DANCE CONFERENCE, 28th March, 1981, published as an 108 page volume by Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education, can be obtained from Theresa Buckland, 10, Addison Close, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8BY, for £2.95, plus 35p postage and packing. Tel. Crewe (0270) 663041.

(The second Conference, also at the College, took place on 13th March, 1982.)
