

THE MORRIS DANCER

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This is the last issue to be put out by the present Editor. The man to take over the work of the magazine is

Eddie Dunmore, 77, Royston Road, Penge,
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Eddie dances with the Ravensbourne Morris Men.

The retiring Editor renews his thanks to all those kind people who have sent him the results of their discoveries and researches, over the past seven years. Much otherwise unrecorded and scattered material is now in permanent printed form. Thank you all, very much.

The latest four books in the series Morris
Dancing in the South Midlands

are available from Chandler Publications, 5, Evans Road,
Eynsham, Oxon, OX8 1QT. Postage is 25 pence on one volume:
35 pence on two or more.

IDBURY AND BLEDINGTON MORRIS

Continuity and Interaction, by Keith Chandler £1.50
36 pages, and eight maps.

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The final paragraph of this book's text is "The evidence for frequent migration between communities and for dance sets, composed of men living in separate villages strongly suggests that the prevailing notion in Morris scholarship of distinctive "village traditions" is erroneous and needs to be replaced with the realisation that the mechanics of the dance forms, steps and tunes resided with the performers, not the location."

MORRIS DANCING AT DUCKLINGTON by Keith
Chandler, £1.50, 44 pages, with two maps.

On P.3, "The evidence suggests that for much of the first half of the last century - and almost certainly before this time - Ducklington was one of the focal points for a number of the festivities associated with the annual Whitsun Hunt in the Wychwood Forest, when villagers from the surrounding area hunted and were allowed to kill three deer. According to Akerman, the 'headquarters of the hunt was at Ducklington'. Whit Monday was obviously an important communal occasion in the village, within which the morris dancers played a vital role."

TAKING AN ANNUAL CIRCUIT
Peripatetic Rural Morris Dancers in London and the
Home Counties, 1780 - 1870, Keith Chandler, £1.50 36pp

Not car, nor coach, nor even bicycle; the 'tour', of many miles, was on foot. (ED)

BEDLAM MORRIS by Michael Heaney £1.75
48 pages, with three illustrations and six maps.

The Editor draws attention to page seven, Morris Dancer No.17, November 1983, describing the first two volumes in this series (Interim Checklist, 1733-1914, 48pp, £1.50: Morris Dancing at Hampton Until 1914, 36pp, £1.25) Seven more books are in preparation; a stamped addressed envelope, to Keith at the above address, will bring details of present and future volumes. EDITOR'S NOTE: he thinks that any dancer, interested in the Morris beyond actual dance and club conviviality, should read these books. Keith Chandler has established his own Press

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to avoid long delays in getting work printed elsewhere - "waiting times may be up to three years".

DANCING IN THE SHORT DAYS

Icknield Way M.M. For some years men from the Icknield Way M.M. have performed a Mummers play as the 'Traditional Wantage Mummers'. The play is from a local village and has been adapted slightly with King Alfred - he was born in Wantage - representing 'good' and a touch of Morris as a finale. The dance is a homebrew of Bucknell/Bledington origin with its own tune.

The play is performed during the day at pubs in local villages and old folks' homes in Wantage with the main performance at midday in Wantage market place. The proceeds of our collections go to charity - this year Helen House.

Richard Browning

EAST SUFFOLK M.M. Dancing out on Boxing Day is not 'very traditional' at East Suffolk. It has been taking place for the past eleven years only. It consists of two stops - the first at 12 o'clock and the second at 1 o'clock. Several venues have been tried for the first stop, including The Swan at Westerfield, The Brook at Washbrook, and The Woolpack, Ipswich. The first stop never seems to attract much of an audience, but the second stop for the last seven years has been at the Sorrell Horse, Barham, and this has become successful. In this time there have been four different landlords at the Sorrell Horse, but each one has been keen for us to dance there on Boxing Day. Hot sausage rolls and mince pies are normally provided, following the dancing.

Some years the dancing is followed by a mummers' play, involving two or three of the East Suffolk men and a couple of others.

East Suffolk also dance out in Ipswich on the last Saturday before Christmas. We perform 'blacked-up' Border, and make four stops including dancing inside the Great White Horse Hotel. They 'expect' us to drop in and they provide a glass of 'liquid welcome'. We started this 'traditional' stop seven years ago after the side learned the Border traditions.

For the last two years we have been booked to entertain

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the residents at the Post House on the day following Boxing Day. So, in recent years Christmas has become a busy time for East Suffolk.

John Helliwell.

Coventry M.M. Coventry Morris danced out twice over what could loosely be called the Christmas period. On Christmas Day itself a side has danced for the last three years at lunchtime at the Queen and Castle in Kenilworth. This is the pub right opposite the castle and we have danced at it during the summer for as long as I can remember. The dances were a mixture of Cotswold and Border this years Bledington and mainly our own dances in the style of and derived from Ascot-under-Wychwood. Border dances were our own dances derived from the Upton-on-Severn dances and the stick dance from Brimfield.

The second occasion was our annual winter tour, the 35th we think, of the Precinct in Coventry, which took place on January 12th. Formerly we had invited local longsword sides to tour with us as we had only managed rapper and Flamborough but for the last three years we have been able to put up competent sides for longsword, rapper and a number of Border dances. To avoid overlap we invited this year one of our local women's sides, the Ladies of Green Willow from Nuneaton. They dance a mixture of North Western processional and garland dances.

The dances were longsword, the first three figures of North Skelton; rapper, a selection of figures from High Spen; Border Morris, again our versions of the Upton-upon-Severn dances, Brimfield, and the processional dance from Much Wenlock, which was of considerable benefit for moving from spot to spot. This latter dance some of us had danced with Dave Jones of Silurian on a tour which took us to Much Wenlock where we met one of the surviving dancers. Although an elderly man he played the harmonica and led us at some speed up the main street of the towns Since it was after the lunch stop of that tour nobody in the side still remembered the dance so we brought Dave Jones up to Coventry to refresh our memories.

Martin Trewinnard.

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Winchester M.M. For a number of years now our side has danced in the High Street of Winchester, by the Butter Cross, on the first Saturday of December, usually three or four 20-minute spots from late morning onwards. Between times we keep our favourite landlord company and finish up with a ploughman's lunch before being dragged away screaming by our ladies to start the Christmas shopping.

A few days later, usually a Friday, the large shops in Winchester open their doors in the evening for the elderly and disabled to do their Christmas shopping and at the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce we dance for them. When we first accepted, we danced outside in biting wind and semi-darkness with the shoppers rushing past to get into the warm shops. Now (those that survived learned quickly) we ask and get a space set aside for us in three of the stores. It is limiting, but with the warmth and atmosphere of the Festive Season about, everyone enjoys it. This year we had to move quickly when we found that a brass band were also on the circuit.

No, we haven't succumbed to the pleasures of dancing on Boxing Day yet.

John Reading.

Manchester M.M. Boxing Day 1984 in Manchester was brilliantly sunny, with no biting wind. Whilst the sun was there on the hills it had not got down to the Fox at Brook Bottom, a pub nestling in a fold of the hills in the High Peak district just below Kinder Scout. The single track road from New Mills was open, unlike some recent Boxing Days when snow and ice kept cars away. This hazard does not affect the Ramblers who arrive to enjoy the roaring log fires in the two bars. This year there were three groups of ramblers and two pony trekking clubs.

Dancing is sometimes a chancy business as the site slopes and water running off the hill flows across it. In the past this has meant an early arrival and hard work with brooms and spades, salt and sand before the performance could start. But the real heroes of the Boxing Day show are the musicians who as ever endured the alternate freezing and thawing of their fingers.

The Morris Men mustered eight dancers and two musicians by 12.45, and decided to make a start. The fiddler then

found he'd left his fiddle at home. An appeal to the crowd brought forth a lady who offered a replacement if someone would drive her a few miles over the hill to her home at Marple.

A shortened Saturday Night, Bucknell, opened the show, followed by Banks of the Dee and Lads a Bunchum. Was it the singing or the clashing of the sticks which during the latter caused two of the horses tethered by the pub, and already skittish from the sound of the bells, to tear loose? Anyway, it was another exciting diversion for the crowd as the horses were cornered in the car park, soothed, and led away with no damage to them, the cars, or the onlookers. The men then danced The Webley, Vandals of Hammerwich, and William and Nancy, Bledington, finishing in time to cheer the fiddler returning with his borrowed fiddle.

One of the pony clubs then decided to leave and inevitably as they passed across the dancing site two of the horses left steaming reminders of their passing. Dancing The Black Joke Adderbury and Balance the Straw meant it was not much of a hazard but to follow those with Step and Fetch Her was surely more for the amusement of the crowd than the dancers.

They must have been out in a good humour though, for some thirty couples joined in Circassian Circle. The object was to warm them up so that they stayed for the Lancashire dancing. This started with Manchester's version of Colne, and was followed by the Oldham Dance.

One of the Manchester men who lives in New Mills recently collected the New Mills dance. By popular request from local people it was performed next and balanced by Medlock, the dance named after the river that flows through the centre of Manchester. The show concluded with the Abram Circle Dance.

Back in the Fox in front of the log fire the singing inevitably started with carols. During the next hour and a half a wide repertoire was drawn on, including some French songs, Green Grow The Rushes 0 with actions so that everyone in the bar could participate and the usual selection of shanties, hunting and drinking songs. Due to lack of space only Monks' March was danced in the bar.

Just before 4 p.m. the party repaired to the home of the New Mills member, whose wife had prepared hot soup and sandwiches, before the drive back to Manchester.

In all, it was a splendid uninhibited day thoroughly enjoyed by all who were there; except, perhaps, the horses.

Dick Rendell

Colchester M.M. danced, as usual on Boxing Day, in the yard of the ancient Red Lion, High Street. The pattern was as usual, too; the arrival, in twos and threes, of sixteen or seventeen men, wives and children accompanying: at 12.30 Wheatley on, the show announced and then proceeding; the crowd being told that the collection was for a named local children's fund, and that the charity's receipt would be displayed in the bar. The collection, £21, was counted by the Deputy-Mayor-Elect, no less, and the total announced forthwith. Three genuine old men danced the Old Man's Jig; and after Bonny Green Garters the manageress provided ale for the dancers.

EJR

Thames Valley M.M. went on their now traditional Boxing Day tour of the five public houses in Claygate. The series has continued without interruption since 1954. In the first years the crowds were small and it was possible for the men to reach the bars for drinks, with ease. Nowadays the crowds are so big some of the men take their own liquor; the time taken to press through to the counters leaves little time for dancing.

Thirty men turned out this year, although one or two were too old to dances Jim Brooks dispensed no fewer, than four cakes from his cake-and-sword and expects the usual crop of babies next September.

The weather was fine and bright and no colder than it should be in December. On only about three occasions in the last 30 years has the Boxing Day weather been really bad. Once it poured with rain till midday and a valuable fiddle was damaged. Twice snow has had to be cleared. In '63 the snow started with Bonny Green and went on for six weeks. The noonday thrash at the Hare and Hounds is regarded as the highlight of the tour. Here the space is most convenient and the crowds the biggest. Here we have our special ceremonies. Here Phil Underwood danced out and John Glaister danced into the office of Squire, and the staff was handed on. Here the apprentices dance their jigs, but, although we have five of them, none felt ready to do

this. We have a full member just joined us from Cardiff M.M.

The T.V.M.M. costume had no waistcoats originally, but these garments, embroidered as they are with the Tree of Life, gave extra comfort on Boxing Day, and so became uniform. Our characters, Fool and Goat, made appearances; but our Horse is out to grass. The Horse, incidentally, is modelled exactly on the one shown in the Betley window.

The bag, as always was generous: we make donations to various charities from our funds. One such donation this year is to Holy Trinity Church, Claygate, which is renewing church furniture. Our hassock will be decorated with the Tree and our title.

A handful of the men have never missed Boxing Day morris in all the thirty years. Our presentation of the morris may leave something to be desired; our dancing, we think, is good; but there is no doubt at all about the men's cheerfulness and enjoyment. Surely our visitors stare this enjoyment or they would not come to join us in such big numbers; and, many of them, year after year.

C. D. Smith

Boxing Day at Datchet. It was in 1972 - eleven years after their formation - that the Datchet M.M. first performed on Boxing Day, and they have done so every year since.

Each Boxing Day, the proceedings follow much the same pattern which has evolved over the years, and start by the Village Green at Datchet at the now mandatory time of 10.45 a.m. This fits in very well with another regular Boxing Day activity, namely the start at 10.30 a.m. of a swim by the local Sub-Aqua Club in the River Thames from Datchet to the Bells of Ouzeley at Old Windsor. After seeing the swimmers into the water, the sightseers can join the crowd, including many 'regulars', gathering by The Green for the Morris Dancing and performance of the Mummers' Play. The whole show lasts for approximately 1¼ hours.

The Bag is always donated to a charity decided upon by the Club, and last year it was given to the Save the Children Fund. This came about as a result of the gift of a top hat to our newly-volunteered Fool (the previous occupant of this office having resigned.) The donor would not accept payment, but asked

that something be given to a Charity, and it was ascertained that his own favourite was the Save the Children Fund. Contact with the local branch of the Fund resulted in the loan of publicity material and the gift of balloons, which, to quote one of our men, "Always go down well!"

The Show started with Morris, and, in due time, came the Mummers' Play. The characters filed out from the Women's Institute Hall (the use of which, for changing purposes, is generously granted by the W. I. Management Committee) to sing a Wassail Song; then the strident demand from the Turkish Knight to "Open your doors and let me in" set the action going. Father Christmas, the King of Egypt, the Dragon (played by the same person for twelve years), St. George, Giant Turpin, and, of course, the Doctor (complete with flashing light and a siren borrowed from his young son) enthralled the audience, who cheered and jeered most heartily and contributed no less than £98.54.

At an informal gathering on 7th January, 1985, in the W.I. Hall, where the Datchet M.M. have their practices on a Monday evening, the Squire (Ian Turvill) presented a cheque for £100 to the Treasurer of the local branch of the Save the Children Fund.

Charities supported by the Datchet M.M. with collections on Boxing Day performances include Cancer Research, R.N.L.I., Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Ken Thomas Body Scanner Appeal Fund, Cliveden Hospital Taplow, and the local Blind Association.

Colin Turvill

Chanctonbury Ring M.M. Boxing Day, 1984: a cold day by any of our previous standards, although bright and clear. Chanctonbury Ring M.M. long ago settled into a Boxing Day ritual which starts at the Marquis of Granby, Sompting. A new landlord here this time, who had heard of our traditional annual visit and was pleased to see us. The audience was not as large as we have seen there before but was still more than adequate - at least everyone has a good view of the proceedings. After some general dancing, the 1984 version of the Steyning Tipteers Play was enacted. The play as we know it was unearthed from Steyning Library by one of our members (a master at Steyning Grammar School) and researched by him prior to being first performed by the team in 1955. It has now become an established part of our Boxing

Day and New Year's Day performances and is apparently always enjoyed by the audiences, who appreciate the enthusiastic presentation.

Every year is a vintage year for the play and 1984 was no exception. The play is always rounded *off* by dancing the Chanctonbury Ring "Christmas Dance", this having been assembled by a member of the team from notes on earlier dancing in the area, and performed to the tune of the Sussex "Holly and the Ivy" carol.

After inviting Sompting supporters to join us again in 1985 the team move on to our second traditional stop, the White Horse in Steyning, to repeat the exercise, this time with the Tipteers play on home ground. The White Horse is always a delightful setting for this event, being not only picturesque but also well sheltered from the cold winter wind, and able to house a large audience (those at the back standing on the surrounding flint wall). To make up for the smaller Sompting audience, that in Steyning was as large as we could wish for and again a good time was enjoyed by all present.

On completion of all the outdoor activities the team and a large proportion of our supporters moved indoors to enjoy the ale, surround the fire and remind ourselves of some of those old Sussex carols of which we have become so fond.

Brian Cooper.

The Editor has been told that Cambridge, Foresters, Headington Quarry, Gloucestershire, City of Gloucester Mumpers, and Goathland, went out in the Short Days. There must be others.

GEOFFREY METCALF, of the Ravensbourne Morris Men, was Squire of the Morris Ring from 1952 to 1954. He writes:-

I am asked how we were taught and what we were taught in the morris when I started dancing in 1934. I think it necessary to understand the general folk dance scene at that time.

It is probably fair to say that at that time practically all folk dancing was controlled by the EFDSS (the Society) either through their own classes or through teachers trained by the Society. The Society was then organized on a more or less county basis, each area being the responsibility of one of the Society's staff - sometimes more than one. This individual was responsible

for teaching in her (they were almost all women) area as well as organising events etc. East Surrey where I lived had its county team (for giving displays; more about this later) and I think other counties also had theirs. Cecil Sharp House however was very much the headquarters, where the National Demonstration Team met. The attitude is illustrated by an incident when a county team was reprimanded for wearing breeches, being told that they were reserved for the headquarters team!

As far as the morris is concerned this organisation resulted in complete uniformity of style and content of the dances. And the Society's examination system reinforced this. The various traditions were classified as elementary, intermediate and advanced and candidates were tested in set dances - it was said to be possible to become an advanced certificate dancer whilst only knowing the six or so dances which had been set for examination.

Morris clubs as we now know them had hardly begun to exist. Cambridge, possibly Letchworth, St. Albans, Thaxted, had some sort of existence as independent men's clubs, but most morris sides consisted of the men attached to folk dance groups or classes. This was certainly the case at Morley College where I started my dancing. Morley ran very popular evening classes in folk dancing and from these individuals were invited to join the "team class" which met separately. The men in this team class made up the Morley College morris side. Some clubs, I believe Green-sleeves was one, had a requirement that men should learn the morris elsewhere, usually at the Society's classes, before being allowed to join.

It will be seen from the above that practically all instruction was given in formal classes. The vast majority at these classes were women and this obviously affected the atmosphere and the approach to the dances. Morley was exceptional in that of the four to six sides on the floor one would be of men, one mixed men and women, and the rest female. At the Society's classes I believe there were only one or two men among twenty or so women. One has to bear in mind the general social climate at the time. Even the young were prepared to accept authority, turn up on time, keep quiet etc. This made formal instruction a good deal easier than it is now.

Apart from the Travelling Morrice and the Thaxted weekend dancing in the public street hardly existed before the time of the Ring. (The Ring's main achievement has probably been to get the morris out of the classroom). The morris was shown at folk dance demonstrations, festivals, fetes or as an interlude at a dance. A strong club could put on a "demonstration" lasting 1½ hours and consisting of Playford and traditional country dances, men's morris, women's morris, men's sword (rapper and longsword) even women's sword. Men and women never danced morris together. All these events were of course by invitation. After the Ring was formed men's sides began to dance in public places on their own initiative, but it would have been unthinkable for women's sides to do likewise at that time.

What did we dance? The repertoire consisted of the dances in the five Morris Books plus some additions to Field Town, Longborough, Bledington and Upton on Severn published in the Society's Journal, and Royton and Abram from NW. In sword were the dances in the sword books plus North Skelton and Newbiggin. The "complete morris dancer" was expected to be familiar with the style and steps of all the published traditions and to know a good many of the dances sufficiently well to stand up and dance them without prompting. The steps and figures are described in detail in the Morris Books and this, with very minor exceptions, is how they were taught. (My impression is that they had not changed since the MBs were published). I have recently passed to Ivor for the Archives the bound copy of the Morris Books which I have used over the years. This was annotated in 1935 by Cecil Capp, who was a leading light in the Morley club and a competent and experienced morris dancer. His notes in some cases clarify or amplify the text but in some cases are alterations; e.g., "all start right foot" "omit hop" "Kenney teaches other arm" and other such minimal amendments.

How were we taught? Most instruction being given in formal classes the normal teacher/student relationship existed, allowing for the fact that the students were adult. Richard Callender, the principal instructor at Morley College (and I have little experience of instruction elsewhere) was a school teacher during the day time, as were some others. As already said there were also the Society's full time staff teaching the morris. Callender's method was to take a tradition for one term and

study it in depth (many of the Society's classes also did this). He would work through a dance describing the steps and figures as they occurred and physically illustrating where appropriate. As Callender only took the advanced class a knowledge of basic step was assumed. Great importance was attached to the differences between the various traditions, particularly as to the arm movements (NB. count up the number of types of twists in front of the body described by Sharp). What was learnt one week was carried over to the next so that by the end of the term one had a good grounding in the (revived) style of the tradition and knew at least six dances in detail.

Callender had a cockney upbringing and claimed to have been the youngest Sergeant Major in the '14 - '18 war. He had a down to earth approach to teaching and used many of the usual teachers' ploys to keep attention etc.

Three points which he always stressed were:

Galley Give a good spring into it and then see that the supporting leg executes the step-hop-hop cleanly, no swivelling round.

Hop backs Keep the ball of the twisting foot on the ground all the time - on no account swing the free leg across the supporting leg. (Note. Kenworthy Schofield said that Franklin was never satisfied with revival hop backs but was unable to say what was wrong or show how it should be done. Kenworthy said "try reading Sharp's description in the Morris Book and see if you can do it". He thought the step was more like the Hampton back step.)

Shuffles These were practised first of all with feet parallel. Only afterwards were alternate heels turned in. (See diagram in Morris Book).

The elementary/beginners morris at Morley was taken by Billy Lee, a crony of Callender's. We started with Headington, Rigs then after a few weeks Blue Eyed Stranger. At that time Headington was considered to be the beginners' tradition, possibly because they were the first dances Sharp found. We also did Tideswell procession with its alternating single step and hop step, so that we could then combine them to make the 3/4 step.

I imagine that other classes were conducted on much the same lines, the style depending on the individual teacher. Everything was analytical and worked out mentally, there was never any suggestion

of throwing someone into a dance and letting .them find out by doing it.

I also attended the East Surrey practices after a year or two. The East Surrey men met weekly and only joined with the women for practice on an ad hoc basis as required. The morris was taken by Kenneth Constable and was less formal than the usual classes. Sometimes we had a side, sometimes not, so Kenneth had to make the best of what he had. Ability and experience were very uneven and the time was spent in working up dances for display rather than "learning the morris". I never felt I got much from this although something of Kenneth must have rubbed off.

After I had been dancing a couple of years I was invited to attend the weekly "staff practice" at Cecil Sharp House. This consisted of the Society's staff who were in London, and other experienced dancers (about two women for each man). It was taken by Douglas Kennedy and formed a nucleus from which the National Demonstration Team was drawn. There was a very strong morris side and with only a dozen or so men involved it had something of the nature of today's clubs. When I joined the morris side consisted of Callender, Constable, Gordon Neil, Willie Ganiford, Spencer Ranger and Edward Nicol with some other lesser lights. Callender always danced number one, Willie and Spencer were middle couple. There was no instruction in the usual sense but time was spent polishing particular dances. The evening also included country dancing and time was spent on other things. One year we spent many weeks practising a ballet "Five and Twenty" devised by Douglas to music by Arnold Foster which was performed in the Albert Hall festival on the Society's 25th birthday.

It was during this period that Douglas was developing and putting into practice his ideas about more natural dancing, using the whole body, anacrusis etc. These related both to the social and the ritual dances. I still have visions of Douglas dancing round the hall waving a long chiffon scarf to illustrate his point. I think these ideas were very important in my own development as a dancer as they no doubt were to other younger men. Some of the older dancers with many years experience did not take so kindly to being told that they had been "doing it wrong" all the time.

Apart from the Society some instruction also took place at

Ring meetings. As far as Thaxted is concerned there was instruction/practice on Friday night and Saturday morning, a short afternoon tour, evening dancing in Thaxted itself, more dancing in the Swan yard after Church on Sunday and a country dance on Sunday afternoon. Even at the Thaxted meetings the number of full sides was very few and the incomplete sides and odd men had to be put through their paces so that some sort of show could be presented to the public. The fact that, as already mentioned, men throughout the country danced the same dances in the same way and in the same style made this comparatively easy - not as it would be nowadays. Inevitably in putting together these ad hoc sides and running through the dances to be performed publicly later some instruction took place, and some new dances could be picked up. It was not however an occasion for seriously learning the morris. These rehearsals were taken by Alec Hunter and Kenworthy Schofield and I cannot remember whether it was pre or post war that Kenworthy took the opportunity to teach the "new" Bampton.

At other Ring meetings there was a full day Saturday tour, but there would be Friday evening dancing if enough men were available and again on Sunday morning. This might be partly instructional, but it was also used to put over new dances. It was at Wargrave with Kimber present that the "29th May" first saw the light; at Stow I recall some of the unpublished Bledington dances; at Barton Seagrave Kenworthy and Jack Putterill told of what they had gleaned trying to recollect Brackley; and at Tideswell one Crompton tried to teach us the Godley Hill dance where he had made contact with old dancers. These were in no sense attempts to instruct *in* the morris and I cannot see that they have any relevance today.

Having read through the above I have come to the conclusion that there is little if anything that can be usefully learned today from the pre-war methods described, and for two main reasons.

Firstly I do not think anyone wants to return to formal classes divorced from clubs at which a rigid body of knowledge and way of doing things is imparted. We have already come some way towards the traditional system in which each club had its own repertoire, personality and way of performing, and it is my belief that this

is where the future of the morris lies, if indeed there is any future for the morris as we have known it. It is for this reason that I have for some time had serious reservations about the Ring instructional meetings. It is true that in the short term they are a way of passing on knowledge and possibly improving standards. At the same time they perpetuate the notion of a fixed body of knowledge to be shared by all clubs. A morris club can really only operate successfully if it has at least one man who has gained a reasonable amount of experience of the morris elsewhere; and he should teach his club what he knows. In the long term this will create clubs each with their own style and dances; and attempts to force the pace by conscious creation of dances have as far as I am aware been largely unsuccessful.

Secondly, some men learn by cerebral analysis, others by dancing next to an experienced dancer, mostly by a combination of the two. The pre-war methods were entirely analytical and, coupled with the Morris Book's concentration on arms and legs, tended to result in stiff and mechanical type of dancing, lacking the vital spark. In my experience many men have to be made to dance in spite of themselves and without their being aware of what is happening. A limited number of simple dances helps in this. I could elaborate on this but it does not seem appropriate here.

Some quotes from Kenworthy Schofield which ought to be recorded somewhere: "A little tiredness helps to produce good morris". "The more I dance the less interested I become in complications".

In reponse to my request for information/clarification on the Field Town dances, "The wish to do exactly as the old traditional teams did is understandable. However exactly what you do is not so important; what matters is that all the side should do the same thing".

Perhaps this should be my last word.

Geoffrey Metcalf, Jan.1985

OZ MORRIS IS ALIVE AND WELL

I went to Adelaide with Marguerite in 1983 for the annual morris gathering held in conjunction with the National Folk Festival each Easter in a different major city, Canberra in 1984 and Perth in 1985 etc. Sides and representatives were

present from many of the Australasian teams, including New Zealand, but also individuals from Hong Kong and Dublin. There were public displays, an Ale and many workshops. At the same time the Adelaide Morris and Glorishears had a contract to dance at breakfast at a winery in the Barossa Valley as part of the wine festival, for which each dancer received in payment half a barbeque chicken and a bottle of champagne for their own breakfast. I gave lectures as part of the Festival, including a general one to a hall of non-dancers who were persuaded to try Bampton and Longborough. The University was running a vacation course on medieval theatre so I spoke to them about my experiences with traditional mummings. A collection of mss and videos of English morris was left. It was a wonderful experience to be there.

The standard of Cotswold morris is what should have been expected. A few men's sides, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney were quite good by English standards, but most sides were too young to have achieved anything consistently high. The women's sides have the difficulty of shining when men's sides are around. The level will rise steadily but dance skill and technical knowledge has still to be gained. They need a very good side to emerge to set a target for excellence for the rest. So much seemed like the USA in a comparable stage of maturity about 1978, but Australia lacks a reservoir of trained dancers as exists in the Country Dance Society of America with its own dance and teaching tradition going back to Sharp. However, there is considerable traffic between Australia and the UK in dancers.

There is considerable enthusiasm and considerable caring about the morris. Some traditions are unknown as there is no-one with experience to teach them. But some things get through - I saw the Hartley Lying Down Dance done by six mixed couples! The costumes like the USA tend to be more exuberant than in the UK. Also like the USA the audiences seem more receptive, more participatory.

The conditions are much more difficult in Australia than here. The temperatures are high which encourages longer gaps between dances and discourages height in the dancing. Each team has a large territory as there are so few teams per city. Cities tend to be 500 miles apart so a joint tour can be 1000 miles long. The Australian pub is not quite the equivalent of

the English one, so sites for dancing are different. I do not remember being able to push all the chairs and tables back in an English bar and run a workshop all afternoon. Posters were good, tee shirts abounded as did the different beer. In many ways they have it going for them. I wish I could have learnt more of the individual teams' histories; perhaps someone else can write them in.

Oz Morris is quite innovative. The garland and clog dances were quite interesting. Even the Cotswold showed ideas. One side used "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" for Bledington "Young Collins". Adelaide danced Bledington Trunkles with the corner crossing being done around the other corner and back to the starting place every time, making it refreshingly different. Another side had a Bledington "Lillibolero". The DF was diagonal crossings. I believe the first was by 1 & 4, then 2 & 3 and 1 & 5 together, 4 & 5 and 2 & 6 together, and finally just 3 & 6, thus reversing the set. The first DF was done with two sidesteps and a hook each change, the second with furries etc.

Ducklington was danced by the Free Settlers from Perth. They did "Jockey" chorus on the spot facing their opposite as in the jig, not with the hey. They also did a Ducklington "Swaggering Boney", as the "Lollipop Man", but after the jump in the DF corner movement they did either fighting or half capers etc. then half capered through. Sydney's interpretation of Fieldtown "Trunkles" had the DF entirely a corner movement with the corners crossing the diagonal on the first two sidesteps and galley, then approach the centre and retire on the second sidesteps and galley, and then straight into diagonal crossing with the 4 off of the particular step for each turn etc, so the hey end in the place they started from, (AA(BBC)³)⁴ for the music. Walton Bay from Brisbane did "Room for the Cuckoo" Bucknell with sticks. They dibbed butts on beat 1 of bar 1, dibbed tips on beat 2 of bar 1, hit butts right to left on beat 1 of bar 2 and hit tips right to left on beat 2 of bar 2. In the half hey the middles faced the same way throughout, the tops went between the middles and turned out to finish the travelling with a back-step, and the bottoms came up the centre and turned out as passing the middles to back along the line.

Glorishears danced a four handed "Pershore" dance. The

DF was sticks hit tips right to left and butts left to right every bar for 4 bars. The tune used was the Bampton Brighton Camp. The figures were (1) Half Gip Ilmington style with the turn back (2) Half Gip more ordinary, just forward and back (3) Bottoms to top while other pair continue to tap (4) Back to Bottom (5) Diagonals cross in turn and back (6) anticlockwise rounds (7) Right and Left through and All-in at end with sticks up in the centre.

Adelaide had an Adderbury "South Australia" dance to the sea shanty tune. When hitting the stick was held in both hands at one end for a big swing, when receiving it was held up and horizontally with hands at either end. Bar 1 - odds hit evens, Bar 2 - evens hit odds, Bar 3/4 - both hit tips right to left, left to right, repeated. Then all did a long open sidestep away from the music, carrying the stick horizontally and pointing down the set and finally all faced up and moved back to place with 4 plain capers, holding the stick vertically in the right hand and clashing on the last caper.

Roy Dommett © 1985

TED PURVER, presently of London Pride M.M., sent a note about his introduction to the Morris, in Cambridge.

Early in the last war he found himself in front of an Army Medical Board, and "my medical grade which had been A1 when, in a suicidal moment, I'd anticipated the call-up by volunteering in 1939, was dropped to somewhere around the region of E5" "I slunk past the Cenotaph with a shame-faced salute, took a train home from Victoria and, with a sigh of secret relief, returned to civilian status. A year later I was working my way through university by teaching part-time in the King's College Choir School in Cambridge."

He was "listening to high pressure musical lore from Imogen Hoist in a Cambridge garden. Suddenly I woke up to hear her play a pipe and tabor and say that there were morris dancers in Cambridge before the war. I found it difficult to track down the morris dancers in the autumn of 1944, because they are not a university side. I got on to the Round (the university Country Dance club) and I heard mention of a Russell Wortley. As he was working on potato virus at that time, and I was studying

languages, our paths did not cross. But eventually I met him in a hall somewhere in Cambridge, and he said that they were so short of men that I was welcome.

The difficulty was to raise six men to dance. I can't remember who provided the music. The names that come to mind are Fred Bacon (cousin of Lionel) Ernie Preston, John Innes (a conscientious objector who was working on farm-work) Kenneth Sauvery (an expert on sludge) and William Palmer, who was teaching at the County School.

I remember finding morris practices far more tiring than lectures, I remember breaking Russell's heart through my inability to master Bledington. And I remember meeting him at Cambridge station in the summer of 1945 to visit Thaxted. For some reason, the plans were changed, and we were told to meet a train early in the afternoon. As I missed the train, I cycled to Thaxted. Russell was delighted to see me, and said 'Here's our fool'. This was news to me. No-one had told me that there was a fool in the morris. 'Don't worry, Ted, just dance as best as you can', said Russell. But that baffled me, because they wouldn't let me get near the set, and I had to mix with the crowd and dance there. Without five bodies round me, I hadn't got a clue what I was supposed to do. But, thoughtfully, Russell had given me a collecting tin as well as the ridiculous rabbit-skin hat. The crowd was delighted. I found it easier to collect money than to dance Bledington, and Russell said that all the men wanted was peace and quiet during the dances.

I am sorry I can't remember the names of the Thaxted men. I suppose Alec Hunter was there."

Ted Purver, 23/12/1984

 In acknowledging "Roomer" (Steve Roud,9,Albert Carr Gardens, London, SW16 3HD. 01 677 9393)Vol 4 3,4,& 5, the Editor must mention that No.5 is a scholarly article on Folk Drama as a Science. No.3 has reprints from Illus.London News Dec.1861, & Dec. 1866; and The Graphic, Dec. 1889. The American Morris Newsletter,Vol 8 & 4, has Roy Dommett's "Molly" and "Border" articles; Graham Sloss, evidently of the Wadard M.M., sent his 23pp book of poems.

E. J. Russell, 50, Mile End Road, Colchester.