

The Morris Dancer

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In this issue:

A Just So Story Or ... How the Rapper Became

The Codnor Long Sword Dance

The Scorerer' Apprentice: Mary Neal & Rolf Gardner

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Editor's Note

Member sides will be aware that in recent years 'The Morris Dancer' has failed to appear. Here goes with a first edition in a new style

The plan is that each Morris Dancer will have as a theme a regional variant of the morris. Alongside this each holder of the Archive will be asked to make available an account of their recent activity on some aspect of the collection that they hold. The intention is to produce a quality journal of which the Morris Ring can be truly proud, and to open up the Archive to a greater audience.

The editorial brief is that The Morris Dancer will become an important vehicle of academic excellence; it will become a worthy flagship journal of the Morris Ring and in particular of the Archive Group. It will adopt a policy of editorial independence i.e. the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Morris Ring or the Editor.

As ever the success of this will depend on people who are prepared to contribute articles. In the first instance contributors are invited to offer a brief outline and to seek a copy of Notes For Contributors and a response from the Editor. Through this approach it is hoped to encourage many more people to contribute because contributions will be able to be worked up into something of real value. Don't be shy if you have an idea for an article please feel free to put forward your ideas even if they are only in embryonic form because they can, given the expertise of The Ring be worked up into something of value to the Ring membership. It is hoped that the next edition will appear in January 2010 and the editor looks forward to receiving possible outlines of contributions in good time.

This edition has taken Sword Dance as its theme and has an interesting article by Phil Heaton who has spent a lifetime dancing and teaching Rapper so is well placed to make this contribution. I have taken the liberty to present a shortened version my investigation into the Coxbench Long Sword Dance.

Dr Chris Bearman has continued the contribution of Rolf Gardner and Mary Neal to the early history of the morris revival.

A Just so Story Or.....How the Rapper became

“No traditional activity remains entirely unaltered with the passage of time. If it does, it soon dies”

Rapper, far from being an unaltered traditional activity is alive and thriving and hardly a museum piece - its appearance is probably a recent event in the grander scale of things.

Bill Cassie and Norman Peacock, went a long way back in theorizing about the origins of Sword dance, following the ideas of earlier writers such as Sir George Frazer and later Violet Alford who speculated on a Classical, almost Arcadian, connection, *“Each man or woman grasped the hand of a neighbour...the procession formed into a ‘magic’ circle surrounded by ritual action. Such a ritual was....intended to promote fertility.”* ¹ The connection between these ‘carols’ and linked sword dancing stretched somehow (metaphysically?) across the centuries until something tangible was recorded.

George Wallace in ‘Fit to jump over the Moon’ ², has followed the idea that the agricultural midwinter custom of pulling a plough around, performing and then cadging for money had been the basis of many traditions. Paul Davenport, suggested that many annual community activities were kept alive by very interested and committed groups. Indeed, it seems likely that some traditions were ‘discovered’ so that in the leanest times, usually midwinter, families and communities could rely on the income which came in from collecting.

Rapper was the North East’s response. And although it seems unlikely to have been an instant invention born in a specific time and place, it became an accepted part of the seasonal round - developing from the home grown ‘*Feulpleughs*’ with their, *“..old dances, often using swords made of wood”* ²

Writing in the magazine ‘North’ in the early 1970’s a contributor to the letter page asked the question,

“Where are the bonny sword dancers of yesteryear? When I was a boy, we looked forward to their coming as soon as it began to frost, but the best time of all was over the Christmas when they used to appear dressed in bright colours and ribbons and leapt about while Old Betty would be there rattling the box and cadging.”

The writer associated the dancers with the midwinter festival and gave the feeling that the season wouldn’t be complete without the sword dance.

1. “The Sword Dances of North-East England.”. Bill Cassie and Norman Peacock. EFDSS 1976

2. “Fit to jump over the moon,” George Wallace Gateshead Libraries 1986

It seems obvious that the development of the dance and associated Traditions, especially in the Durham and Northumberland coalfield, has been marked by the needs of the audience almost as much as by the dancers.

“A good performance of authentic rapper sword dancing is something to be felt and enjoyed as an emotional experience...”³

It came from where?

The massive rise in demand for black diamonds caused a cycle of speculation all over the area from local landowners or consortia that were willing to risk a rush of money to test drill. If successful, a shaft was sunk and a barely adequate row of houses for the newly recruited, often migrant, workers was thrown together and a rail link forged to the Wear or Tyne or even Seaham Harbour so that the coal could be shipped out and sold. Then they would move on and try somewhere else.

There weren't enough of the local North Easterners to make the new pits viable. So the landowners and agents touted for workers. Close at hand to begin with, but later, much further away from the coalfield. As the Industrial Revolution rolled on, more were drawn into the area from Wales, Scotland, Kent, Cornwall, Ireland and continental Europe.

Spurred on by the development of spring steel on Derwentside (just beside Winlaton, Swalwell and High Spen) the local sword tradition was thrown into the eclectic mix of locals and incomers. There were many who were looking for a supply of cash or entertainment and the incomers must have brought their own traditions with them and from the stir pot, the Rapper appeared.

The stepping - Whyfore?

It was not highly rated by all of the teams whose dances were originally collected but it is absolutely vital to today's top teams. Originally the single and double shuffles used were an offshoot from the local Northumberland and Durham stepping and clogging styles. These stepping and clogging dances were continually enriched by incoming workers from Cornwall, Wales and Scotland but especially from Ireland.⁴

Many if not most of the sword dancers would be able to show a few individual steps or even compete for a few pints. It's likely that Rapper stepping was more of an ad hoc means of keeping time with 6/8 jig rhythm than an integral part of the dance. To quote Cassie and Peacock ¹

“In the memories of the oldest dancers, there was little regimentation or standardization of the steps. The late George Osborne, holder of the Gold Badge of the Society and Captain of Earsdon for fifty years or so, would accept only accomplished clog dancers into his famous team.”

At Amble each of the Flanagan family would fight to dance at the Number 3 position

3. “Five sons an' nivor a dowter” Alan Brown EDS Spring 1970

4. “Rapper knots from Bedlington” , Brian Heydon EDS Spring 1979

and have the chance of performing flashy clog steps during the static figures while the other four brothers performed the menial tasks in the rest of the dance. Interestingly *Eddie Flanagan* told Brian Hayden that they regularly used „The High Level Hornpipe” for their dance.⁵ The stepping would have to be very different.

Debate about the exact meaning of single shuffles still goes on. At Murton, the *Lowersons* got out of the habit of stepping, performing a sort of sand dance shuffle. *Harry Lowerson* did not like the standard Rapper step applied to his dance. When the Kings College Men collected the Bedlington dance from the *Muldoon* family they were shown the ‘lazy shuffle’ and a half running step for the figures. The Winlaton White Stars had a bobbing swinging step, increasing in immobility as they grew older.

The performing stages - Where from?

It becomes obvious that over the years improvements to buildings and possible dance spaces must have taken place. Miner’s Clubs, bars and institutes grew and the Rapper teams were there to take advantage of the wooden floors. Many teams looked out for and entered and often won, Talent Contests or ‘Go as you please’ nights. These were held in the Clubs and also the local ‘Flicks’ or even the Music Halls..

Why that Kit?

Interestingly, not many teams were known to have danced in clogs. Stout shoes often highly polished were the norm and are another indication of the development of the dance as it became more organized and the kit developed into the current stylized form from the miner’s Saturday outfit. Flashy suits with long shorts and fancy stockings were Pitmen’s garb on show especially in the bigger towns such as Durham, Sunderland and Newcastle. David Douglass writing in the 1970’s described them as Dandys.

The collected Dances. What happened to them?

When Sharp was in the North East, he collected five dances between 1910 and 1913 and he noted a range of figures, simple, as at Swalwell and polished and intricate at Earsdon. The variation between the five Traditions shows a couple of interesting points. One being the fact that North Walbottle and Earsdon were in areas with a well developed set of collieries where the miners had built up a strong network of Clubs and Institutes with stages and performing areas for local concert parties and entertainments. Both of these dances show as strong forward facing exhibitions while the simpler Winlaton, Swalwell and Beadnell performances have the look of older, circular dances and were probably more used to being performed in less organized venues. When High Spen Blue Diamonds, who were bypassed by Sharp eventually emerged from the ashes of the Vernon Troupe and the Amber Stars their figures were sharper and definitely arranged for stage work. They had of course deliberately improved their dance and organized to enter and win many ‘Go as you please’ talent contests in Clubs and Music Halls around

5. “Winning the silver watch”, Johnson Ellwood in “Twizell Pit Village” ed. Gavin Purdon, Pit Lamp Press 1975

the area. Their smart dance and the eye catching speed showed. (As it does today). Later still, *Alan Brown and Bill Cassie* (Later, both Squires of the Ring) had the pleasure of learning figures from the old dancers such as *Charlie Bland* from the North Walbottle/Westerhope area but it was *Fred Forster* who looked at the figures and suggested rotating the jiggling knots. In fact *Fred* had the Blue Diamonds stepping to a different rhythm (possibly *The Forty Shades of Green*) when displaying the tightly knotted swords of *Choker and Bulldog* so that the effect was intensified.

Royal Earsdon so named after dancing for King Edward VII at Alnwick in 1906, had an elaborate dance when Sharp collected it. The team continued to develop their excellent figures and were considered to be the doyens of the Tradition, appearing many times at EFDSS events around the country but especially at the annual Albert Hall celebrations. They were also present at the annual Newcastle Musical Tournament and were consistent winners of the prestigious men's Traditional Short Sword competition. They continued strongly for a time as part of the Northumbrian Traditional Group led by *Joe Bennet*. The group included musicians, singers and country dancers carrying the 'Geordie' torch around the world. Included in the package were the amazing Shiremoor Marras, a knockabout trio led by the indefatigable '*Nibs*' *Pearson*, a dancer and the Captain of Royal Earsdon after *Geordie Osborne*. Alas Royal Earsdon are not currently performing but *Dave 'Nibs' Pearson*, has hopes of a return to practice soon.

The Tradition at Winlaton was probably the first widely seen sword dance. The old men, who won the Cowen Trophy outright in 1922, starred in many films shown all around the world, especially in the Pathe News shorts which described them as remnants of 'Merrie England' Their dance, using a circle chorus, was extant around the turn of the 19C. when the Betty appeared

*'All patch'd and torn. With tail and horn
Just like a De'el in dress'y-O'* ⁶

They used the same figures in the same order and as they got older, the set began to evolve around the Number 1, the oldest and least nimble, so that he had to move less while the youngsters (all over 60) did more to make the turns. By the time he was 81, Number 1 became almost static. The White Stars continued dancing until the late thirties and even though their special day was Christmas Day, they would turn out every Saturday ,

"Come rain or shine. Starting at the crack of dawn" ²

The thread that connected the older and newer Winlaton Traditions and the consequent teacher of the dance was *Jack Atkin*. He used to bribe the old men with the promise of beer if they would teach him some of the figures when he was a boy. Eventually young *Jacky* became a dancer.

6. 'Original pieces of poetry' John Leonard,c.1813

*“They used to call of me while it was still dark in the morning and away we’d go. We danced at farms, big houses and especially at pubs and clubs where the old men would expect pints lined up for them on the bar. Well I was always very popular since I was a Rechabite, a Blue Ribboner and swore off drink. The old chaps used to try and bribe me for my share and sometimes they would end up fighting. Most times more than one of them had to be taken home by cart in the early hours.”*⁷

In time, The White Stars, faded away and in the 1950’s, *Jacky* taught and led the Blue Stars who danced out in 1956 with a slightly different set of figures but based on the old dance.

In his time *Jack* taught most of the villagers at the Mary and Bessy Youth Club, the school, the local Scouts, Cubs and Guides, the Church groups and especially at the W.I. He sent teams of teenagers ~lads in white shirts and trousers with a stripe and girls in tartan skirts and tops ~ to the Annual competitions in Durham, Darlington and Newcastle where the dance was always recognizable as from the Winlaton Tradition. In later years he taught Addison Rapper and especially Beltane Rapper from Edinburgh, describing them as the best he had ever seen.

Every Rapper team should plan to dance in Winlaton. How wonderful it is to finish a spot chuffed with yourself and then some old lady will wander up and say,

*“Mind pet, ye nearly turned the wrang way coming out of Curly at the end. Aah wad show you how te dee it propley but me hip’s bad the day.”*⁸

Perhaps it’s because of this exposure to the Rapper, in the past that there is no dance in the village today. Nor is there a team at Swalwell, two miles away.

Sharp collected the dance at Beadnell in March 1912 spending a short time there with George Butterworth. It was obviously simple in relation to its Tyneside neighbours, with a flowing look to it and although not difficult it shows a different style.

And he considered it more of a fisherman’s dance, there being no obvious relationship with coal and miners. Subsequent research by Chris Clarke, has shown that the area, like the vast majority of the Northumberland and Durham coastal plane is sitting on a raft of coal workings.

Dances from beyond the grave of Sharps collecting

According to Cassie and Peacock, who were writing mainly as observers and who had danced with only a limited number of teams,

*“the knots are largely of common stock”*¹

The reality is that every dance team is unique and rarely are there any ‘stock’ figures apart from the very simple ones. *Cassie* danced with the *Forsters* at High Spen and was much taken by the strength of feeling that the family had for their Tradition. At the Spen there is little connection with stock or common figures and now as then the

7. Jack Atkin conversation. 1974

8. Conversation with Addison Rapper, Winlaton 1982

style is unmistakable . *Cassie* learned from *Fred*, danced with *Freddy* and was watched by *Ricky* He would have been constantly told to,

“*Keep the swords up; stand up; nee duckin and keep stepping man!*” 9

But many times he would have heard the catchphrase,

“*In the Rapper dance it’s the swords not the dancers that perform.*”

And although its *Ricky Forster* who now leads the team in his father’s and grandfather’s footsteps, the practices and performances are still performed to the highest standards.

Kings College dancers, now the Kingsmen were prolific collectors of the Rapper and it’s probable that without them, much of the dance as we know it today would have died out. They bussed, cycled and hitched beyond Newcastle and talked to anybody who would listen. The *Muldoons* at Bedlington and the *Flanagans* at Amble were able to pass on their dance only because of the persistence of the students. Their recording has provided a very different insight into a wilder Rapper world, far removed from the almost gentlemanly one that Sharp worked in. The figures from the Muldoons and Flanagans especially have a vitality like no other and although they seem rougher, their inclusion into a modern dance can be a real spark to innovation.

Unfortunately nowadays there are few existing Rapper teams in Northumberland and the epicentre has moved to the cities.

There are of course NO Pits left and therefore no miners ~ the inventors of the Rapper in the first place.

The most southerly dance collected was at Murton in Durham where the *Lowerson* family taught and organized a Rapper team from within a close circle of miners and relatives.

E.C.Cawte and Charlie Roper were able to collect a complete dance so unusual that new names were invented for the figures. The *Lowersons* , father *Harry* and son *Henry* worked hard at keeping their dance separate from the Rapper team known to have been promoted by the South Hetton Coal Company. The Murton dancers, “*worked back to front and inside out*” with Number 1 being on the right and the lock tied with swivels over flats. Some of their figures are called ‘*Scringes*, from the sound of the blades grinding together.

There was a revival of Murton during the Seventies using Cawte and Soper’s “*The Rapper Dance as taught by the Lowerson family of Murton*” 10 as a guide, but *Henry Lowerson* visited the practices, was not displeased with the dance, but asked that the name was dropped. They became Five Quarter, named after a rich Co. Durham coal seam. There is no longer a dance from the village.

Westerhope which was part of the Throckley. Leamington, Walbottle family of pits and

9. Normal instructions to a beginner at a High Spennings practice

10. “The Rapper dance as taught by the Lowerson Family of Murton”, EC Cawte & CJF Soper, Guize Press 1967

near to Newcastle, also had a revival in the 70's when the local history society and the Librarian, *Tony Wilson* dug up the local dance, an offshoot from North Walbottle which Sharp had collected 60 years earlier. It was taught to local school boys. Under *Les Williamson, Squire of Sallyport Swords*, the boys danced for a few seasons but eventually grew up and at least two of them joined men's teams. The research in the Walbottle area has thrown up many teams known to have danced in the area and especially to compete in the Newcastle Tournament. Probably the most famous team of the area, who danced under various names, eventually made a big impression on the Music Hall and danced at the London Palladium. They turned down the chance of a tour of Britain and the USA on the grounds that they weren't offered enough money. In the late twenties, a team from Callerton, in the same area, was disqualified at the Newcastle Tournament for being too gymnastic after an explosion of forward and back somersaults.

One of the most unusual characters involved in many of the Walbottle teams was *Billy Clark* he is reputed to have often entered but never won at the Tournament and he became determined to achieve some success. He moved to Newbiggin on the coast and started the team there. His ideas and simpler figures have almost become the standard Rapper dance as taught up until a few years ago at most Festival and Weekend workshops. This is probably because it is still in print after 70 years ¹¹. *Billy Clark* failed to find reward at the competitions. On the eve of the 1929 competition, two of his team were killed in the pit.

After *Alan Brown* moved on from King's College at Newcastle where he was instrumental in forming the '49'ers', he took his performing ideas based on the miner's philosophy, and so the Monkseaton Morrismen were born. Their speciality is the North Walbottle dance as collected by Sharp with some input from later dancers such as *Charlie Bland* in the fifties. *Alan* was much taken with the Walbottle dance which had last been seen during the 1926 General strike and considered by many to be the best example of a complete dance that Sharp collected. Some of the more striking features of the dance are the different ways of tying the nut, the fantastic build up as the figures become more complex. and then the climax with Tommy tied in to the dance and a raucous Betty, usually *Peter Brown*, these days, tumbling in a line of three as the audience hold their collective breath which provides the....

“emotional involvement between dancers and watchers which is the hallmark of authentic Rapper.” ³

Other dances and references occurred all over the North East and there are some known records in Scotland south of Edinburgh and also on the West coast of Cumbria. Fragments of older dances and ideas have been incorporated into modern dances and many now appear as part of excellent performances.

11. “The Newbiggin Rapper Sword Dance” Elsie Whitman & Margorie Sinclair, EFDSS 1927 + “The History of the Rapper Dance”, EC Cawte, Folk Music Journal 1981 Vol 4

And Today?

There are viable Rapper teams in the North East, such as **Benfieldside Morris, Durham Rams, Durham University, Smutt, Short Circuit, Addison, Hexham Morris, Stockton Blue and Golds, High Spen, Sallyport, Pengwyn** and the irreplaceable **Kingsmen** without whom the Rapper world would be very different.

The Tradition is alive and vibrant and the North East teams are only part of the story. The dance is expanding and the ideas of the old pitmen are taken up and used with consummate skill by the top teams. With the arrival of the Internet, information is so easily available that almost all knowledge is available at a keyboard.. The **Kingsmen** have developed, mainly through John Asher an excellent and growing resource. Rapper Online and the Nut on the Net are two of his contributions.

The Nut itself with editors Ron Day and Vince Rutland has continued to expand into a glossy edition full of the doings of the Rapper world.

And then of course there is DERT ~ Dancing England Rapper Tournament, a competition designed to provide a theatre for ever more skilful teams. At the very least, DERT gives a chance to spend some winter practices polishing up a dance and dancers in readiness for dancing out with the pride and confidence of the old performers. The latest event in Nottingham in March 08 attracted 20 competing teams including three from the States. The next, in Liverpool promises to have even more...This Tradition has absolutely not **“remained unaltered with the passage of time.”**



Newbiggin 1924

" - - - by laying the swords cross - bladed on the ground and dancing in and out before beginning their hand play in the air."

A geographical index of the ceremonial dance in Great Britain gives the most southerly occurring reference to a long sword dance as Newbold near Chesterfield, Derbyshire. A visit to Derby Local Studies Library will produce a series of references to a dance at Coxbench near Derby. There are six references including a play text to a dance with a unique hopscotch figure in an area rich in mummers plays known locally as guisers plays.

Thomas Ratcliffe we know was born at Coxbench about 1840 and that between 1851 and 1881 he moved with his parents to Worksop, at about the age of 15 by reference to parish registers and census returns of those dates. There are four pieces from him one dated 1914 another more specific 1920, another more recently came to light dated 1923 and another as yet undated piece, probably between the two. There is the text of a mummers play from his manuscript. The earliest piece speaks of the dance opening with stepping over the swords on the ground followed by the more usual figures. He speaks of being bemused because what is recorded and written elsewhere is different to what he remembers being performed in his village In 1851. The 1920 piece is more specific and would seem to be describing an actual dance because of the amount of detail. The third piece is more general but gives very specific detail of the dress largely confirmed by the 1920 document but has the dance end with a lock figure, like Grenoside. There is a 1923 piece repeating the dress of the dancers, establishing the team to be six dancers and a musician and a repeat of the unique figure.

Of one thing he is in no doubt, that is, the placing of the swords on the ground and the dancers stepping over them. We may surely conclude that this was the special feature of the Coxbench dance and a feature that stuck most firmly in his mind after all those years. A memory that could have been clouded by what he subsequently saw or read and was the source of his confusion. This highlighted the Coxbench practice because nothing quite like it happened elsewhere, with what he might have seen or read about at the time.

We could if we take the 1920 document see the Coxbench dance as unique in the country in not having a lock figure anywhere in the dance. I doubt this since there is such a fertile mumming/guising tradition in the area and without the lock figure there is nothing to suggest the idea of immolation of a sacrifice the central idea of the guising, sword and even the morris traditions. We may conjecture following Thomas Ratcliffe's grandmother that sword dances were more wide spread in this area than E.C.Cawte's survey suggests, for he has Newbold near Chesterfield as the most

southerly appearance. On the otherhand, there is the textual tenet of giving strength to the most difficult but if we do this then we have to disregard some of Thomas Ratcliffe's information and we have little alternative but to take him on face value if we are to trust any of his information and we must take into account that he is not always intending to give the same degree of detail when he speaks of sword dancers.

There are other interesting features of this information, namely that there is no suggestion of any singing or death resurrection snippet (calling on song), other than in the play text and that much is made of the increase of tempo to the same tune, the only other tradition where much is made of this is Grenoside, the suggestion of stepping concluded with a smack is there elsewhere but without so much emphasis and there seems to be some indication of a dance in two halves, again like Grenoside.

If we take all the Information together then we have a dance with the following features:

- a.)swords are placed on the floor and every dancer steps over them.
- b.)A circle is formed and they danced round 3 or 4 times.
- c.)Movements as in a normal sword dance.
- d.)There is a distinctive concluding smack at the end of a phrase of stepping.
- e.)A lock made and disengaged at the end.
- f.)Same tune is used throughout
- g.)Six men and a fiddler in distinctive dress.
- h.)Four figures danced to quickening music.
- i.)There is much detail about dress, including bells.

The information taken as it is presents certain problems:-

- 1.)Is the stepping over the swords at the beginning or end.
- 2.)How does the lock fit in.
- 3.)The quickening tempo rules out certain figures i.e. they need to be figures that do not have the hilt-point configuration. At least anything more complex than a circle is ruled out given the limitations of the long swords.

If you take all of the Long Sword Traditions both those collected and published and all the other evidence that has been collected, where there is enough to give a different danceable remnant, it would be interesting to see if there are any common figures. To do this it will be necessary to standardise the terminology by looking at all of the descriptions of the figures making up the dances, c.f. Table 1. This will bring to light any common elements that occur among the traditions. The pattern produced so far c.f. Table 1, is interesting in that it is those figures executed in the hilt/point formation that show a common group of figures, some occurring in all traditions. This must mean that given the geographical distribution that we can posit the hypothesis that the Long Sword traditions originate from an underlying common source c.f. Sharp's introduction to *The Morris Book 1* (Second Edition) and the *Sword Dances of Northern England*. The explanation surely lies in the limitation placed on the hilt/point figures by the

constraint of the rigid swords. It is even more interesting that where, what I will call the set figures exist, that there is no such pattern, which must make them products of later or separate development since there is no restriction on what can be done once you move away from the cirde.

By analogy, then, some figures can be inferred, small amendments to detail like being right handed can make it a tradition in itself. Some figures can be considered as a common element of the long sword dances and are scattered throughout their dispersion. A possible notation that takes care of all of the considerations of the information could be:-

First Group of Figures

Ring, Step over own sword
Single under,
Single over,
Arches under,
Arches over, clash,
Lay swords on ground, and dance over,

Second Group of Figures

Reel, each figure to music at increased speed.

Plaiting,

Roll,

Lock

The Play

None of this takes into consideration the Play that is a much fuller version at Coxbench than most. the text in its entirety as it appears in Ratcliffe's Manuscript can be found elsewhere.

This may shed further light on the sword dance in the following way:-

1.)The introduction speaks of a dozen people, three with blackened faces, dressed in tatters and the others in soldier uniform:. This could be a reference to the sword dance and extra characters of the play.

2.)There are several references to 'game' and I would suggest refers to the 'hop scotch' figure, which is a major element of the Coxbench dance.

3.)There are two death resurrection episodes and appearances of the Doctor.

4.)What is the point of this other than to accompany the dance.

We may have here a play that goes with the dance but how do the two fit together, there is another tradition with an expansive play in two distinct parts at Ample-

forth.

There are two considerations:-

A.)The entrance of the Noble Captain who may well be the leader of the sword dancers. This character's reference to 'game' is the point at which the dance takes place beginning with the 'hop scotch' figure. If the Captain enters the Lock and the swords withdrawn then we come to the second reference to the Doctor. With the second appearance of the Doctor he uses a pill like in the Ampleforth play and following this tradition is the place for the second part of the dance with its differing figures, not a selection of the others.

It may well be that there are two versions of the dance one with the play and one without. This would fit with Ratcliffe's grandmother's assertion that in her time long sword dances abounded in the area.

The second form would be as follows:-

First Part of Play

Lay swords on ground, Dance over,
Clash
Ring,
Step over own sword
Single under,
Single over,
Arches under,
Arches over,
Clash,
Rose, Captain goes in, all draw swords, captain falls to ground.

Second Part of Play

Reel, each figure to increase in speed.
Repeat
Plaiting, Roll,
Lock.

What you have here is a very interesting if not unique Long Sword Dance, there is not room here but a much fuller version is available on my website.

Table 1
Analysis of Long Sword Figures

Figure	Kirkby Malzeard	Grenoside	Handsworth	Escrick	Haxby	Ampleforth	Flamborough	Sleights	Askham Richard
Ring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Clash	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Double Sword Over		X	X			X			
Single Over	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Single Under	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Double Over	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Double Under	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Double Sword Under	X	X	X			X			
Twos Under			X			X			
Swing & Spin				X		X	X		
Roll		X	X	X		X		X	X
Reel		X							
Threadling Down			X						
Plait				X		X	X		
Your Own Sword	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Change & Clash								X	
Double Threadling							X		
Straight Hey							X		
Rose	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Lock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meet & Cross			X						
Three Reel							X		

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE: MARY NEAL AND ROLF GARDINER

In *The Imagined Village* Georgina Boyes falsely claimed that 'some of the same individuals' involved in Rolf Gardiner's Springhead Ring 'set up' the Morris Ring. She continued by alleging that Gardiner's views – particularly on women morris dancers – came to dominate the policy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) during the 1930s. These allegations came in a chapter headed 'Pressing Charges' which effectively concluded that the EFDSS and, by implication, the whole English folk music movement was sexist, misogynist, and an instrument of male hegemony with some very ugly political associations. In her edited collection *Step Change* she was even more explicit, writing that Gardiner was the 'chief theoretician and moving spirit' behind the Ring, and alleging that Gardiner's domination marginalized the role of Maud Karpeles because she was a woman of Jewish stock.¹

Boyes' allegations about Gardiner and the Ring have been authoritatively rebutted in these pages by Walter Abson, Bob Ross, and Ivor Allsop.² The stable door has been shut, but the horse has bolted. On the basis of *The Imagined Village*, Ronald Hutton called Gardiner Sharp's 'disciple', a contrivance for linking Cecil Sharp and the EFDSS with Gardiner's 'contempt and distaste for women' and fascist views. This poison is spreading through academia and providing ammunition for those who would like to write off any manifestation of English culture as inherently racist. Boyes relies largely on guilt by association. Her allegations about Gardiner's influence on the EFDSS rely on Douglas Kennedy's membership of some organizations with which Gardiner was also involved, most notably 'Kinship in Husbandry' an association of early environmentalists which eventually became the Soil Association. Others do not see the need to provide even this minimal 'proof'. In 1988 and 2003, Vic Gammon associated Cecil Sharp with Nazi Germany on the sole basis that he shared some National Socialist ideas. Gammon has never provided any substance for his mud-slinging (and probably never will) but he is probably thinking of *Blut und Boden*, the 'blood and soil' ideology which connects a particular culture with a particular national or racial group.

If *The Imagined Village* has a heroine, it is Mary Neal. If it has a villain, it is Sharp. In 1997, I added my mite to the 'Gardiner and the Ring' debate in an article pub-

1 Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology, and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester, 1993), p.159. Chapter 7 'Pressing Charges' pp.152-187; 'The lady that is with you ...Maud Pauline Karpeles (1885-1976) and the Folk Revival', in *Step Change: New views on traditional dance* (London, 2001), pp.185-191.

2. Walter Abson, 'The Morris Ring', *The Morris Dancer* Vol.3 No.10 (January 2003), pp.293-99. Bob Ross, 'Joseph Needham and the Foundation of the Morris Ring', *ibid* pp.299-305. Ivor Allsop, 'Rolf Gardiner Resume', *ibid* pp.305-9, and Ivor Allsop, 'Rolf Gardiner', *ibid* Vol.3 No.11 (January 2004), pp.345-354.

lished in *English Dance and Song*, which criticised *The Stations of the Sun*. I said that Gardiner had far closer, and more provable, links with Neal than with Sharp.³ This article follows those links in more detail and shows how many of Gardiner's ideas can be traced back to her.

In the 1990s, a major source of material on Gardiner became available through the acquisition and cataloguing of his papers by Cambridge University Library. Particularly interesting items in this collection are eight letters from Neal to Gardiner, and an autobiographical memoir, thinly disguised as a novel, entitled 'David's Story: A Young Man's Prelude', about his life between 1918 and 1925. Gardiner himself is 'David Cunningham' and various members of Cambridge Morris Men and the Travelling Morris appear under such pseudonyms as 'Endymion' for Arthur Heffer and 'Spensworthy' for Kenworthy Schofield. Others, such as Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal, are given their proper names.

Gardiner began dancing in 1919, but his career as a dancer did not really take off until he went up to Cambridge in 1921. It is no exaggeration to say that morris dancing was the most important thing in Gardiner's life at that time, taking the place that love affairs or ambition occupy in the minds of other young men. Those parts of 'David's Story' that deal with the morris are full of passages like this, mingling a passionate physicality with romantic nationalism:

Then the Oxford men took the floor and began the superb morris, 'The Gallant Hussar' [Bledington] ... This dance required great endurance of muscle-and lung-power. To sustain it was a test even for young men of twenty-one. One prowess-demanding figure led to a further one more demanding. In the final figure the two files cross over, passing one another with high kick-jumps, before turning to the choral 'hey' and 'galley' or leg-twist which comes as a refrain. The choreography of the dance evoked passionate excitement. The music is gathered up into plunging chords of antiphonal melody. David felt a lump in his throat, and tears filled his eyes. The glory of old England was expressed by this dance, the nostalgia for the England of the Cotswold countryside doomed to die.⁴

The problem for Gardiner at this time was that his enthusiasm outran his abilities and willingness to submit to discipline. Simply put, he was not a very good dancer, and resented being told his faults when, for example, he used the wrong step in Sherborne. He attributed such corrections to 'pedantry' on the part of his EFDS instructors.⁵

3. C.J. Bearman, 'Up to a Point, Dr. Hutton: Fact and Myth in the Folk Music Revival', *English Dance and Song* Vol.59 No.3 (Autumn 1997), pp.2-4.

4. [Rolf Gardiner], 'David's Story: A Young Man's Prelude 1918-1925', unpublished MSS in Cambridge University Library, Rolf Gardiner Papers A2/1-6, p.51 [172]. [Parts of 'David's Story' have double pagination, a typed number and a number written in above that. Numbers written in, where they appear, are given in square brackets.]

5. 'David's Story', p.44 [164].

Things seem to have come to a head at the EFDS Easter School at Aldeburgh in 1922. Additionally, Gardiner was planning a dancing trip to Germany, which came off in September. Sharp and the EFDS disapproved, on the ground that Gardiner and his friends were not good enough dancers.⁶ By July, Gardiner was in touch with Mary Neal. Roy Judge's pioneering article 'Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris' mentioned this contact, but dated it to 1924. In fact, it began two years earlier, and was far closer and more intimate than Judge indicated. Neal's letter to Gardiner dated 'Aug. 1' [1922] ends 'I have not yet lost the happy feeling your visit gave me – please come again.' On 19 September she wrote again to thank Gardiner for a letter about his German tour and commented:

I must adhere to my resolution not to take part publicly with your fight with the E.F.D.S. simply because it is my fight over again, but – you have all the [...?] (musical[?] metaphor I know) and the issue is now clear between youth, growth, life, joy & beauty and age, decay, pedantry and death. But I am with you in spirit and shall do my bit in private.⁷

The correspondence continued through 1923 and 1924 into 1925. In 'David's Story' Gardiner makes no secret about who he preferred. Sharp is represented as an elderly pedant: 'Sharp's pedantic eye exacting all the niceties of step and style. Sharp played the piano and laid down the law'; 'Sharp looked at David in crusty amazement'. Neal, by contrast, is described as 'a great woman'; 'a splend, rugged-looking woman of fifty' [in fact she was sixty-two, only a few months younger than Sharp] 'the type of an abbess or prioress who could hold her own with men'; 'Unlike Sharp she was not in the least pedantic, nor was she resentful or easily embittered.'⁸

By early 1923 Gardiner had made his peace with Sharp, who sent him some friendly letters addressed to 'My dear Rolf', or 'Dear Rolf'.⁹ But Gardiner could not leave things alone. At the same time he had acquired a magazine, *Youth*, which he used as the mouthpiece for his enthusiasms. In the June number he published a critical article about the EFDS, and in July drew up a manifesto for its reform which he insisted on presenting to the executive committee. Sharp was tolerant about the *Youth* article and may have seen it before publication, but much less so about the manifesto, especially after Gardiner published it in the October number of *Youth*.¹⁰ It seems there was

6. Cecil Sharp to Janet Blunt [date?], Sharp Correspondence Box 1 Miscellaneous, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML).

7. Roy Judge, 'Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris', *Folk Music Journal* Vol.5 No.5 (1989), p.575. Mary Neal to Rolf Gardiner, 1 August and 19 September 1922, Gardiner Papers C3/1/29; C3/1/30.

8. 'David's Story' pp.98 [written number illegible], 44 [163].

9. Sharp to Gardiner, 2 February, 16 April 1923, Gardiner Papers C3/1/1, C3/1/6.

Rolf Gardiner, 'The English Folk Dance: Some Constructive Considerations', *Youth* Vol.2 No.11 (October 1923), pp.52-54.

an interview between them which Gardiner took as reconciliation and Sharp as rudeness and defiance. The deputation which visited Sharp in his last illness and tried to get his blessing for the Travelling Morris was headed by Arthur Heffer, and Sharp was not told that Gardiner was on the tour. Gardiner may have left the EFDS in 1923 because his name is not on the 1924 membership list (though his mother's is), and there was a definite parting of the ways in 1924 over misunderstandings surrounding a dancing trip to Holland. He did not rejoin the Society until 1930.¹¹

Gardiner's primary disagreement with Sharp and the EFDS arose from his desire to run before he could walk, to dance in public and lead dancing expeditions before he had acquired the technical proficiency necessary to do so. If you do not really know about something, but want others to believe that you do, the option open is to pretend that ignorance is a virtue, which allows you to possess some special, esoteric knowledge about the 'spirit' of the thing, knowledge denied to those more prosaic souls who can only claim technical expertise. Gardiner left Cambridge with a Third in Modern and Medieval Languages (ironically, the same class of degree as Sharp) and it would be charitable to believe that his poor showing was the result of time spent on non-academic pursuits such as the morris and editing a magazine. But Gardiner saw positive virtue in it. In 'David's Story' he wrote of how he was 'balked by A.B.C. difficulties' and how:

it made him extraordinarily bitter. He had in him more of the spirit of things than anyone. But the expression lacked skill, lacked mastered detail. It was the same with his academic work. He understood the ideas of foreign literature rather well; he had an intuitive grasp of meaning and intention. But when it came to the test he was floored by the most elementary grammatical mistakes ... He watched others who plodded on, uninspired dullards, to capture the needed prizes of academic distinction but would never do anything big with their lives.¹²

It is tempting to read 'David's Story' as irony: the older man looking back in understanding and amusement to the follies of his youth. But there is not in fact any trace of ironical intention: he seems to have written it in full seriousness, and the sentiments are repeated elsewhere: in his essay: 'D.H. Lawrence and Youth Movements', he comments: 'When I went up to Cambridge in 1921 I was chilled by the false gaiety of undergraduate society, by its preciosity and cynicism, by its adulation of brains and cleverness.'¹³ The idea that it is more important to capture the spirit of something than to master its technical details is, of course, a very attractive one to those of limited abilities and application, but with plenty of money. One is tempted to wonder whether Gar-

11. Kenworthy Schofield to Gardiner, not dated, Gardiner Papers C3/1/19. Maud Karpeles to Gardiner, 21 July 1924, C3/1/21.

12. 'David's Story' p.44 [164].

13. *Water Springing from the Ground: An Anthology of the Writings of Rolf Gardiner* ed. Andrew Best (Springhead, 1972), p.14.

diner would have done ‘anything big’ with his life had he not had his privileges and large dollops of his family’s cash.

Gardiner’s attitudes chimed with Neal’s. Roy Judge claimed that by 1910 Neal had ‘positively become an expert and a collector’ [of the morris] because of her contacts with Sam Bennett and Abingdon. It is not sufficiently appreciated that Neal was solely an organizer and administrator. She was not a musician, and apparently never learned the morris or any other folk dance (certainly, there is no record of her ever having danced, in private or in public).¹⁴ Consequently, her technical knowledge of the dances and of folk music in general can only have been very limited. Sharp, by contrast, was a self-trained musician who appreciated that he had first to master the dances in order to describe them and teach them to others. Neal’s ignorance may have lain behind her insistence that the morris was best left in the hands of those ‘ignorant of all techniques’ and that ‘the blighting touch of the expert and the pedant’ never be laid on the dance.¹⁵ She at least claimed that she was following tradition. Some of her followers did not care a straw for it. Francis Toye declared that: ‘All I want are healthy English dances to dance and I do not care whether the steps are traditional or not. The spirit is what matters, the spirit and again the spirit. If we can save the soul of the Morris-Dance the embodiment is of little account.’ Gardiner actually quoted this in his manifesto demanding the reform of the EFDS.¹⁶

Effectively, Gardiner wanted the EFDS to abandon its existing functions and become the ‘English Festival Society’ dedicated to public performance. I have seen this proposal described admiringly as fifty years ahead of its time, but in practice it was unworkable and would have led to the rapid break-up of the Society. By the 1920s, the EFDS had two main functions. One was teaching. The Board of Education accepted folk dance as part of the syllabus of exercises in elementary schools in 1909, but no real encouragement was given until H.A.L. Fisher arrived as President of the Board in 1919 and Sharp was appointed as Occasional Inspector (of Schools).¹⁷ Teachers began to get their tuition fees refunded and to receive increments to their salaries if they learned, so the trickle of teachers wanting to learn folk dance became a flood. Then as now, most teachers were women. It followed that EFDS branches and summer schools – and thereby the morris dance itself – were dominated by women learning the dance for a professional purpose. Photographs taken on these occasions show Sharp surrounded by

14. ‘Positively an expert and a collector’, Judge ‘Mary Neal’ p.561. For Neal’s not being a musician, A.H. Fox Strangways [and Maud Karpeles], *Cecil Sharp* (London, 1933), p.69. That she was also ignorant of dance is apparent from her comment that (with regard to the Bidford dances) she ‘could have taken Florrie [Warren] to learn the steps, and got the tune taken down locally’: Neal to Sharp, 7 April 1909, Sharp Correspondence Box 5 Folder A, VWML.

15. Mary Neal, *Vanity Fair*, 14 April 1910.

16. Gardiner, ‘The English Folk Dance’, p.52.

17. National Archives, ED 23/406.

beviess of women in gymslips, like one of the schoolgirl fantasies of the late Arthur Marshall.¹⁸ It is sometimes romantically suggested that this female dominance was the result of male mortality in the First World War, and that the large numbers of single women in some EFDS branches were widows from the same conflict. That was not the case. Women had always dominated the EFDS. In 1923, about one-sixth of the 666 full members were men, the same proportion as in 1913.¹⁹ There were large numbers of single women in the branches because of the one drawback of teaching as a profession. Most employers operated a ‘marriage bar’ whereby the female teacher lost her job if she married. Women teachers had to be spinsters.

Initially (and contrary to what Georgina Boyes says) Neal was as keen on getting the dances into the public education system as was Sharp.²⁰ She publicly declared educational aims at the Goupil Gallery Conference in November 1907, there was special provision for groups of teachers in the price list for Esperance instruction, the Esperance Easter schools in 1911 and 1912 catered specifically for teachers, and Esperance Guild branches were teaching schoolchildren before the First World War.²¹ But it followed that, if the Board of Education accepted folk dance, there would have to be fixed standards of achievement and certification for the proficient. The Board demanded certification in every other field, and logically it would do so for folk dance. Neal refused to accept this necessity, partly because it ran contrary to her developing ideas about the morris as a source of unconscious joy and freedom, and partly because Sharp had established links with the physical training institutions where she had failed to do so. This refusal to accept the obvious was one of the things which, in the long run, doomed the Esperance organization.

Apart from ‘pedantry’, Gardiner’s disagreements with Sharp and the EFDS were over the nature of the morris (and of folk culture in general), and the uses to which it was to be put. Was it, as it were, a dead language, like Latin, whose grammar had to be taught to provide an understanding of a rich cultural past? Or was it something still alive, implicit in the life of a nation’s people, ‘something understood’, overlaid by generations of industrialisation and urban residence, but still there, readily recoverable, as in a vision of the Pied Piper leading the immured millions out from their Dark Satanic Mills to frolic and dance in the sun?

Sharp began by seeing folk culture as ‘something understood’, in the life

19. Some of these photographs accompanied my 1997 article in *English Dance and Song*.

19. EFDS Annual Reports, 1913, 1923. In 1913 there were 279 full members, of whom 67 were men.

20. In *The Imagined Village*, p.79, Boyes alleges that ‘the inclusion of morris dance in the Board of Education’s Syllabus ... did not recommend itself to her [Neal]’.

21. Typed verbatim report of Goupil Gallery Conference in Margaret Dean-Smith MSS, VWML; Esperance leaflet, Clive Carey Collection, VWML, Esperance p.28; ‘Folk Music and Folk Dances: an Easter School’, *Daily Telegraph* 23 March 1912

blood of the countryside and easily recoverable. But his actual contact with the morris dance taught him that it was also an art form. By 1909 he recognised that the morris ‘was a professional dance, the men who took part forming a sort of closed corporation ... The dancers were very serious, and the dances were never permitted to develop into a romp.’ By the time the EFDS was founded in 1911, it was his preoccupation.²² It is often assumed that the EFDS was narrowly concerned with folk dance as collected by Sharp, and eschewed any development. That was not the case. Before the First World War, Sharp had been bowled over by the visits of Diaghilev’s Russian Ballet, and one of his major concerns from then was development of an English ballet style based on folk dance steps. He had experimented with the music and dances arranged for Harley Granville Barker’s 1914 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. After the First World War, these ideas began to come to fruition. In 1922 the Cambridge branch of the EFDS experimented with dance-ballet in Cyril Rootham’s opera *The Two Sisters*. In 1923 it produced a full ballet, *Old King Cole*, to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The same year, the EFDS in London first performed Douglas Kennedy’s attempt to create a ballet of ‘absolute’ dance to Hadyn’s quartet Op. 64 No.4.²³ Of all artistic forms, ballet is among the most demanding in terms of the discipline and technical knowledge required of the performers. A folk ballet could only have been created by persons with a very thorough knowledge of the tradition, and only carried out by persons thoroughly schooled in its performance. This was among the reasons for the ‘pedantry’ which Gardiner so deplored in the EFDS.

Both the Esperance organization and Gardiner paid lip-service to the idea of developing folk dance into ballet, but their actual practices would never have allowed them to do so. Both formal teaching, and the idea of the dance as an art form, were anathema to them. Instead, Neal and Gardiner clung to the *Blut und Boden* idea that folk dance was in the lifeblood of the race and only needed to be awakened. In 1911, as a counterblast to the EFDS’s foundation, Neal asked what ‘we believe this revival of folk dances will ultimately stand for. Is it to be a real expression of the life of the people, a setting free of the best aspirations and ideals of those who toil for their daily bread ... Or [is it] only an accomplishment for those who can afford to spend years in the attainment of physical culture?’²⁴ What lay behind Neal’s assertions was her belief that the morris dance was the remnant of ancient religious rites. She had always been the strongest proponent of the idea that the morris was a ritual dance. Initially, Sharp and Herbert MacIlwaine accepted the idea that it was of Iberian origin, brought to England in the Middle Ages. This was

22. *Retford Times*, 29 October 1909; report of conference, *Morning Post* 7 December 1911.

23. *EFDS News* No.3 (March 1922), p.66; *ibid*

24. Neal, *The Observer*, 3 December 1911.

put forward in the first *Morris Book* (1907) and the second (1909) contained nothing to challenge that belief. But in January 1909 Neal described 'Bean Setting' as 'probably the survival of a priestly ceremonial danced in the spring'. In Part One of the *Esperance Morris Book* (1910), she surmised that the Abingdon dances were 'survivals of some ancient pagan festival connected with the worship of the sun', and from there it was only a short step to the sacrifice of sacred vestal virgins, with which she connected the Kirtlington Lamb in Part Two of the *Esperance Morris Book* (1912). Sharp did not accept the idea of the morris as ancient ritual until 1910, and his beliefs were tentative and prosaic by comparison.²⁶

If morris dancing is accepted as physical exercise and an art form, something that can be taught, there can be no objection to its performance by women. This was the position of the EFDS: just as most of those learning were women, so were most of the instructors. But if the dance is accepted as ancient religious rite, all sorts of meanings may be imposed on it. The chief influence on folklore at that time was Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, in which it was suggested that there was a complete separation between the kind of ritual dances performed by men and women. The men danced in honour of the earth-mother; the women to honour the sky-father.²⁷ Gardiner strongly resented having to learn 'masculine' dances from feminine instructors, and it seems likely that his dislike of women morris dancers arose from the fact that most were elementary school teachers, and spinsters, who could not provide the necessary 'virile' atmosphere. Article II of Gardiner's 'constructive suggestions' for the reform of the EFDS reads: 'The strongest possible discouragement to be given to Women's Morris ... continual and relentless furtherance of the fact that the morris is a male and purely male function.'²⁸

It seems odd, to say the least, that a feminist and former suffragette like Neal should have been willing to go along with proposals that women should be debarred from morris dancing. The reason why she did so is because by the 1920s her earlier beliefs in the dance as ancient ritual had led her to embrace a set of what would now be called 'New Age' beliefs. By 1924, Neal was asking Gardiner this set of questions:

What I want to know from anyone who can tell me is: -

The inner history of the morris when it was (if ever) white magic if there is a lost tradition of what the feminine side was as a discipline and a gesture and [word erased] how that is related to the male dance. If there is a mutual

25. Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book* (London, 1907), p.15.

26. For 'Bean Setting', *Morning Post* 14 January 1909. Mary Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book* (London, 1910), o.3; Mary Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book Part II* (London, 1912), p.xii. For Sharp, see *Morning Post* 1 June 1910; Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book Part One* (2nd ed., London, 1912), pp.10-17.

[27. to be provided]

28. Gardiner to Maud Karpeles, 8 July 1923, Gardiner Papers C3/1/12.

dance expressing the highest religious side of sex as a symbol of cosmic union.

When (if ever) the dance degenerated into black magic and why and what causes underlay this change.

If I had any part in either the black or white side what had Sharp and MacIlwaine to do with its past history and with me.

Where any records are to be found which would help us to use the old tradition as a foundation for the new and revived dance.

Whether, if I ever took part in the black side, I may now have any part in [word erased] any new constructive work.

I hope this is not too egotistical, but I can't shut my eyes to the possible significance of past happenings nor imagine that all I have suffered.²⁹

The catalyst for this change of heart was the Kibbo Kift Kindred. Before Gardiner's involvement with folk dance, his main enthusiasm was the Boy Scouts. Gardiner rejected Scouting around the end of the First World War, when Sir Robert Baden-Powell got a grip on his movement and tried to restrain the more unorthodox elements. Among these was John Hargrave. In 1920, he founded the Kibbo Kift as a rival organization. The founding meeting was held in the home of Frederick and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Neal's lifelong friends, and she may have been present. She was on the Kibbo Kift's 'Advisory Council' and Hargrave stayed with her for lengthy periods.³⁰ The Kibbo Kift shared the Boy Scout enthusiasm for camping and getting into the countryside, but it was an adult rather than a purely young peoples' organization, and it rejected orthodox religion in favour of strange neo-pagan mysticism and fondness for imagery and rituals. All its members took a Kibbo Kift name like 'Sea Otter', 'Batwing' and 'Golden Eagle'. A drawing of Hargrave's published by Gardiner shows a Kibbo Kift leader holding a curious totem pole and making the upraised-arm salute later associated with fascism while three others crouch before him. The caption is: 'We are of one blood, you and I'.³¹ Gardiner was soon appointed 'Gleeman' to organize entertainments and rituals. He tells us what these were like in 'David's Story': the scene is the 1925 'Althing' at Bradenham, Buckinghamshire: 'At sunrise the men of the Guild emerged, stripped naked except for North American Red Indian leather Gee-strings, to stand with upraised arms in silent meditation, before moving in a follow-my-leader run to the sound of a tom-tom.' Then there was a 'sunrise tattoo' in which six men toured the camp with branches of green leaves, singing a 'stirring song' of Gardiner's own composition.

This was the background behind Neal's letter to Clive Carey which Roy Judge quoted, in which Neal wrote of Gardiner that: 'He has got the real spirit of the morris as a priest's dance of ritual and discipline', and it led her eventually to express the belief

29. Neal to Gardiner, 'Aug 27' [1924?], Gardiner Papers C3/1/26.

30. Paul Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements, 1908-30', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.4 No.2 (1969), pp.19-23;

31. [to be provided]

that by allowing women to perform the dance she had ‘ignorantly and innocently broken a law of cosmic ritual’. Judge comments of Neal’s change of heart that ‘the encounters with Rolf Gardiner were possibly a final crystallizing influence’, but it seems far more likely that Neal and the Kibbo Kift were the influences on Gardiner, rather than the other way round.³³ Gardiner’s ideas had their origins in Hargrave’s mumbo-jumbo and Neal’s interpretations of *The Golden Bough*.

The fact of the EFDS’s overwhelmingly female membership made it impossible for its Committee to accept Gardiner’s proposals for reform, even if they had thought them a good idea. No society dominated by women could have accepted their exclusion from the morris dance: no society largely composed of female teachers, learning the dances for a professional purpose, could have accepted the end of their classes and examinations in favour of public shows by a small number of professional performers. They could only have been carried through by a bold authoritarian, willing to disregard the interests of the majority. The other dividing line between Neal, Gardiner, and Sharp was democracy. In *The Imagined Village*, Boyes presents Sharp as a narrow authoritarian, in contrast to Neal, the alleged ‘socialist’ associated with ‘struggles for greater democracy’ via the suffragette movement. But the fact is that Sharp established the EFDS as a democratic organization, with an elected committee whose members retired in rotation – the system which has descended to the EFDSS. Neal was the authoritarian, refusing to open her organizations to any form of democratic control or even to work with a committee in the Esperance Morris Guild. It was a one-woman band, and this refusal to share power and use the talents and abilities of others was among the other reasons for the demise of Neal’s institutions.

This love of authoritarianism, of being the Leader, or following a greater Leader than oneself, seems to have come naturally to Neal. The ‘struggles for greater democracy’ in which she was involved were the campaigns of the suffragettes, the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). But the WSPU had no internal democracy. When rivals appeared who might steal the thunder of the Pankhurst and Pethick-Lawrence families, they were swiftly ousted and the WSPU became a family concern, run in exactly the same way as Neal ran the Esperance Club and the Esperance Morris Guild, and following the cult of the Leader. In an admittedly extreme passage, Cicely Hamilton, the suffragette actress and playwright who wrote the words of *The March of the Women*, wrote of Emmeline Pankhurst as the forerunner of Hitler, Lenin, and Mussolini. John Hargrave began as a Quaker pacifist with left-wing sympathies, but the organization rapidly became authoritarian and right-wing, despising democracy and subordinating women. In his book *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift* (1927) Hargrave described equality between the sexes as ‘a dysgenic phase of democratic enfeeblement’.³⁴ In 1931 the Kibbo Kift became the Green Shirts and (while not sharing all the ideas of

33. Judge, ‘Mary Neal’, p.575.

34. John Hargrave, *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift* (London, 1927), p.59.

Oswald Mosley) seem to have joined in fascist demonstrations. By that time, both Gardiner and Neal had left, but Neal's letters constantly refer to Hargrave's need to be 'big', and she is not talking about his physical size but his potential to be the Leader, the fuhrer.

If the future is going to remember Gardiner for anything besides his farming and ecological work it will be the Travelling Morris, the idea of placing the morris dance back before the people. In 'David's Story' he says that Neal 'encouraged' the idea but that otherwise it was his own project, which he first put to Arthur Heffer. It is far more likely that the idea came from Neal, assisted by the example of his friend Christopher Scaife. As early as 1910 Neal had proposed a 'travelling morris' of her own, telling the *Morning Post* that: 'Next summer I am meditating a fortnight's tour by motor bus from London to Yorkshire and back, giving a display in a different town or village every day but Sunday.'³⁵ In 1922, Scaife put such an idea into practice, though concerned with folk song rather than dance. He and a friend took a punt up the Oxford-Banbury canal, camping out at various points en route and performing in villages and towns with the avowed intention of awaking memories that might otherwise be lost. Scaife described the experience in an article in *EFDS News*.³⁶ There is no doubt that Gardiner and Scaife knew one another: in the 'Foreword' to the memorial volume of Gardiner's writings published after his death, Scaife related how they met in 1919. The article by Heffer on the first Travelling Morris tour says that Scaife (at University College, Oxford) was not able to come but provided the side with a changing room before their display in the city.³⁷

In 1929, the economic crash occurred that led to the great depression of the 1930s. Democracy was still an experiment then. Gardiner, like many others, assumed that the experiment had failed and that the future had to be totalitarian. These ideas were not extinguished by the defeat of fascism in 1945, nor even by the collapse of Communism in 1990; they are still readily apparent to-day. If you would like a window into the world Gardiner occupied, one is provided in Henry Williamson's novel cycle *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* (1951-1969), particularly the volumes which deal with Williamson's life in the 1930s and 40s, when he was struggling to combine careers as writer and farmer. Williamson and Gardiner corresponded, and their circle were preoccupied with the idea that in choosing industrial development and Free Trade Britain had made a profoundly wrong decision, that estranged the Land from its People and strangled their natural development. That could only be restored by benevolent despotism, which could see beyond the 'Money Power' and its ability to direct and corrupt public opinion. Williamson's vision is strikingly attractive to a modern eye, and ninety-nine

35. *Musical Herald*, 1 April 1910.

36. 'A Test of Folk Song', *EFDS News* 4 (Nov. 1922) pp.95-98 [signed C.H.O.S.].

37. *Water Springing from the Ground*, p.xv; Arthur Heffer, 'The Tour of the Travelling Morris', *EFDS News* 9 (May 1925, p.249.

percent of it would be eagerly accepted and applauded by an audience of modern 'Greens' and anti-capitalists. But then you come on to Williamson's admiration of Hitler ('the great man beyond the Rhine, whose symbol is the happy child') and his sincerely-held belief that the Nazis murdered Jews in retaliation for RAF bombing raids. It is sometimes stated that Gardiner backed away from Nazism when he realised the true nature of Hitler's regime. That is untrue. In 1933 Gardiner wrote to Goebbels, who published the letter. In the same year he defended the expulsion of Jews from public office, despite the fact that he himself was of Jewish stock through his mother, and that, had he been a German, he would have faced increasing restrictions on his employments, movements, and even rations. He continued to visit Germany and enjoy contact with the Nazi regime and its leaders until long after war had become a certainty: in early 1939 he was teaching ceremonial dances to Brownshirts and members of the SS.

But, as Georgina Boyes must have known – through its publication in Roy Judge's article in 1989 – Mary Neal continued to have contact with Gardiner throughout these years. In 1937 he was present at a lunch given for her after she received the CBE; in 1938, she discreetly attended the Morris Ring's meeting at Stow-on-the-Wold, probably through Gardiner's influence, Neal showed him her autobiography 'As A Tale that is Told' after she finished it in 1939, and she wrote to him soon after she moved from Littlehampton to live near the Pethick-Lawrences in 1940.³⁸ If Cecil Sharp had lived into the 1930s, and if he had had such provable contact with a known Nazi sympathiser, we would never hear the last of it from the modern sniffers-out of any departure from political correctness. Because Neal had these contacts, they are not discussed, even when Boyes is specifically writing about the events of the 1930s. Unlike Boyes and others eager to foist fascist and Nazi sympathies on to Sharp, the EFDSS, the Ring, and the folk music movement in general, I do not assume guilt by association. I assume that Neal, with others of 'progressive' left-wing sympathies like Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Laurence Housman, were prepared to associate with Gardiner because they valued shared friendship more than political association. However, the next time someone tells you that the Ring, the EFDSS, and Sharp are 'racist' or 'fascist' because of their association with Gardiner, I suggest you tell them that the heroine of *The Imagined Village* and *Step Change* had far more in common with Gardiner than did Sharp, the Ring, or the EFDSS.

Gardiner had no influence over EFDSS policy. Women's morris faded out because the main motivation for it was removed. The Board of Education accepted folk dance on to its syllabus because it provided a cheap way of providing exercise for schoolchildren before elementary schools had playing fields or gymnastic and sporting

38. Judge, 'Mary Neal', p577; Gardiner Papers [to be provided].

equipment. Before 1914, very few children went to secondary schools, but this number greatly increased during the 1920s and 30s: most secondary schools had playing fields and, quite naturally, football, cricket, and other team games replaced folk dance – one imagines, to the pupils’ general satisfaction. There was no longer any need for teachers to learn folk dance. Neither was Gardiner the founder, or motivating spirit, behind the Ring. If he had been, you would probably be performing his absurd invented rituals to this day. Can you imagine standing naked (except, of course, for your Red Indian leather Gee-strings) in the campsite at Thaxted, worshipping the sunrise with upraised arms, then going on a follow-my-leader run to the sound of tom-toms, after a heavy night in the Swan? If so, be thankful, be very, very thankful, that the founders of the Ring were men like Joseph Needham and Arthur Peck, and not like Rolf Gardiner.

The Morris Ring Folkplay Archive - The Ron Shuttleworth Collection

The Collection started many years ago when I had difficulty in locating a reference which I knew that I had somewhere, and whilst searching for it came across items which I had forgotten all about. At the time I had access to a good photocopier and decided to locate and copy all the material in my possession. From there it was only a short step to copying items which I came across in libraries, and I soon found myself actively looking for new material. I then got hooked by the 'thrill of the chase' and collecting became an end in itself.

Initially I tended to treat it in rather an offhand way but eventually came to realise that I might be building something of lasting usefulness, and should behave more seriously and make safe provision for its future. I felt that the Folklore Society's collections were less than secure, and at this time the futures of both the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and the Centre for Cultural Tradition & Language at Sheffield University looked uncertain.

The Morris Ring had recently started to expand and improve its Archive so I offered my collection to them. It makes little difference to me in practical terms as I still retain and work on the material, but it gives me a useful official standing and hopefully ensures that the collection will survive.

The choice of parameters is quite arbitrary and governed by practical considerations including the absolute essential of what will maintain my interest. To attempt to collect all texts and references to teams would be a horrendous task which I leave to others.

I suppose that most of the 'important' material could be acquired quite quickly by someone working full-time with unlimited academic resources, but it would not be half so much fun! There is a fringe of items which should perhaps be reclassified as 'trivia' but at this bottom level the decision to include or not is obviously very subjective. To my parameters of "everything good, bad or utter rubbish" I add occasional items which just catch my fancy - did you know for instance that the King of Egypt is alive and well and raising goats near Stroud?

As a collector, I started just at the right time. Travel was relatively cheap and photocopiers had just become common. Since the demise of the Nett Book Agreement engineered by the large booksellers, I think it would now be impractical for anyone without backing from a university, to do what I was able to achieve. Administered by the Publishers' Association, this gave libraries a blanket

discount on all sales. A well-kept secret was that it was conditional on them granting unrestricted public access to their bookstock. Now it is harder, and often expensive to spend significant time in university libraries, etc. The Inter-libraries Loan Scheme is fine in theory but often slow and patchy in practice.

The Collection contains all published specialist books and booklets, together with ephemera & trivia, some video & audio tapes; also listings of other collections, of which some microfilm can be accessed. I can now say that, to the best of my belief & within the stated parameters, this Collection holds more material than *any* other which is publicly accessible! The special section for unpublished works—Dissertations, Theses, Papers, Essays, etc, is unique in its scope with more than 140 items.

Probably the most important things are the *Access* databases, which list details of everything - currently 7357 entries - and cover items (not collected) which looked interesting but proved to be of very little or no significance.

The current project (2008) is to scan as much of the material as is feasible and store it electronically as pdf files, OCR'd where possible. This will free the database from the paper and enable material to be disseminated as attachments. I must be nearly half way through by now, (2500 files) but that was the easy half – it is going to get a lot stickier.

If anyone out there can help or supply material, welcome and thanks. Anything relevant, whether it be from the Mickle-Swiving Parish Notes or your own monumental work which deserves to be more widely known, will be accepted with gratitude and payment if required.

'Wants' lists available on request.

More about all this on my bit of the website of the Traditional Drama Research Group at <http://www.folkplay.info/Ron/Index.htm>.

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For the record listed below are the photographs of Rapper dancing held in the Ring's Photographic Archive

Rapper Sword.

Ref No. Photo Title & [Detail] Date if Known Negative file No. in (brackets)

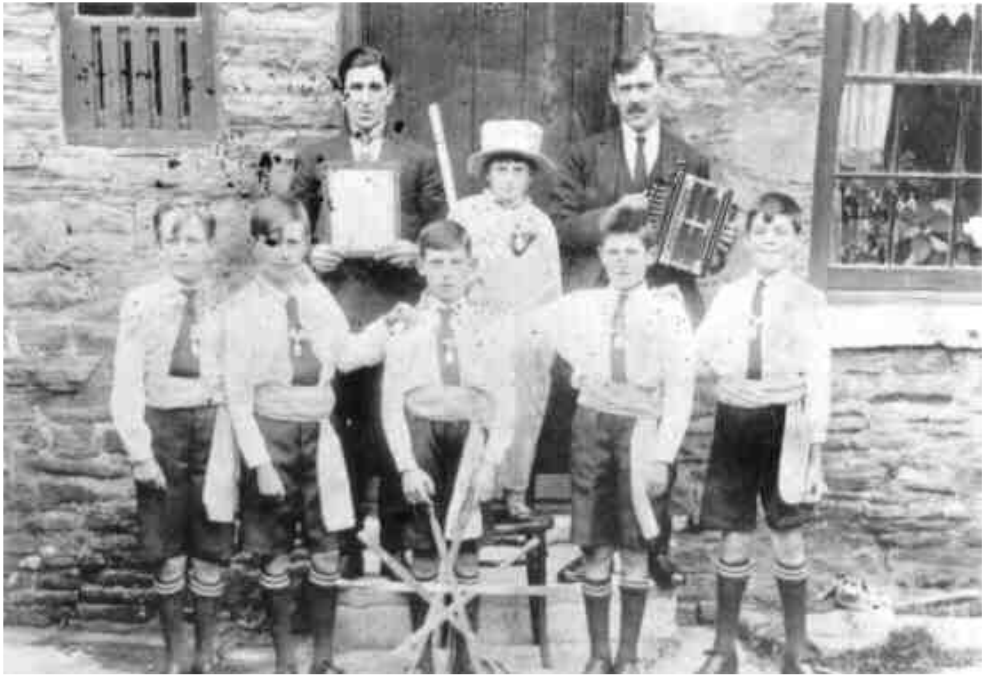
{E.C.C.} = Photographs © E.C.Cawte.

- RS1 Winlaton Rapper Sword Dancers Xmas 1955 (K 36)
- RS2 Winlaton Rapper Sword Dancers Xmas 1955 (K 35)
- RS3 Winlaton Rapper Sword Dancers Xmas 1955 (K 34)
- RS4 Beadnell Rapper Sword Dancers (G 21)
- RS5 Westerhope Rapper Sword Dancers (E 22)
- RS6 Throckley Rapper Sword Dancers about 1900 (L 24)
- RS7 The E.F.D.S. H.Q. Team dancing Rapper about 1913 (D 17)
- RS8 Swalwell Rapper Sword Dancers 1910 (E 17)
- RS9 Geo. Osborn and Tommy Spence of Earsdon Rapper Team 1906 (I 8)
- RS10 Royal Earsdon Rapper Dancers [named] 1899 (D 12)
- RS11 The E.F.D.S. H.Q. Team dancing Rapper about 1913 (D 18)
- RS12 The E.F.D.S. H.Q. Team dancing Rapper about 1913 (D 16)
- RS13 Winlaton Rapper Sword Dancers (E 33)
- R314 Winlaton Rapper Sword Dancers (E 34)
- R315 High Spen Sword Dancers 1927 (D 23)
- R316 Winlaton Sword Dancers 1955
- RS17 Royal Rarsdon Sword Dancers 1947 (D 20)
- RS18 Royal Rarsdon Sword Dancers 1910 (D 36)
- RS19 Westerhope Sword Dancers (E 21)
- RS20 Newbiggin Sword Dancers pre 1930 (E 12)
- RS21 Bedford M.M. dancing Rapper at Thaxted 1967 (I 6)
- RS22 High Spen Rapper Team - Vernon Troup 1930
- RS23 Bedford M.M. dancing Rapper 1934 (N 33A)
- RS24 Newcastle M.M. at Thaxted (J 18)
- RS25 Unknown team (MM 38)
- RS26 Kings College Newcastle Rapper Team 1949 (MM 33)

- RS27 Unknown Team of Rapper Dancers from Westerhope area 1906 (MM 37)
- RS28 High Spen 'Blue Diamonds' Team at Darlington (MM 28)
- RS29 High Spen 'Blue Diamonds' Team at Manchester 1955 (MM 16)
- RS30 Swalwell Rapper Team 1910 (MM 18)
- RS31 Swalwell Rapper Team 1910 (MM 16)
- RS32 Royal Earsdon Rapper Team [named] 1906 (MM 20)
- RS33 Jimmie McKay, fiddler for Royal Earsdon. 1966 (MM 19)
- RS34 Murton Rapper Dancers, Co. Durham, 26 Dec 1904 or 1905 (R27)
- RS35 Murton Rapper Dancers, Co. Durham, [same as RS39] 26 Dec 1904 or 1905 (R28)
- RS36 Murton Rapper Boys Team [same as RS38] 1937 (R26)
- RS37 Murton Rapper - Harry Lowerson II 1953 (R25)
- RS38 Murton Rapper Boys Team [same as RS36] about 1937 (R26)
- RS39 Murton Rapper 1904 or 1905 [same as RS35] (R28)
- RS40 J Atkin in Winlaton 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS41 High Spen [Calling on Song] in St Ann's Sq, Manchester 18 Sept 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS42 High Spen [Curly] in St Ann's Sq, Manchester 18 Sept 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS43 High Spen [Choker] in St Ann's Sq, Manchester 18 Sept 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS44 High Spen [Bull Dog] in St Ann's Sq, Manchester 18 Sept 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS45 High Spen [Line Out] in St Ann's Sq, Manchester 18 Sept 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS46 Winlaton [Calling on Song] in Newcastle City Hall 22 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS47 Winlaton in Winlaton [Roll] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS48 Winlaton in Winlaton [Double Jump] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS49 Winlaton in Winlaton [Double Jump] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS50 Winlaton in Winlaton [Fiddler] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS51 Winlaton in Winlaton [Tumbler] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}
- RS52 Winlaton in Winlaton [Back to Back] 25 Dec 1955 {*E.C.C.*}

- RS53 Winlaton in Winlaton [Line Out] 25 Dec 1955 *{E.C.C.}*
RS54 Winlaton in Winlaton [Fiddler] 25 Dec 1955 *{E.C.C.}*
RS55 Winlaton in Winlaton [Tommy] 25 Dec 1955 *{E.C.C.}*
RS56 Winlaton in Winlaton [Line Out] 25 Dec 1955 *{E.C.C.}*
RS57 High Spen 'Excelsior' boys team [Choker] in Darlington 10 March 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS58 Winlaton Sword Dancers [Fiddler] in Leeds 29 April 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS59 Winlaton Sword Dancers [Back to Back] in Leeds 29 April 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS60 Winlaton Sword Dancers [Roll] in Leeds 29 April 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS61 Winlaton Sword Dancers [Double Jump] in Leeds 29 April 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS62 Earsdon [Calling on Song] at Folk Festival 27 Oct 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS63 Earsdon [Geordie Osborn]at Folk Festival 27 Oct 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS64 Earsdon [Old Fiddler] at Folk Festival 27 Oct 1956 *{E.C.C.}*
RS65 Earsdon at Folk Festival 27 Oct 1956 *{E.C.C.}*

The Keeper of the Photographic Archive is Duncan Broomhead



High Spen Blue Diamonds 1926



High Spen Blue-Diamonds

The Morris Dancer

The Morris Ring was founded in 1934 to encourage the performance of Morris Dancing, to maintain its traditions and preserve its history. The Ring is an association of over two hundred dance sides

This Morris Dancer exists to support those aims by promoting study and research into all aspects of English ritual dance. The Editor would welcome any such articles.

Potential contributors are advised to consult a copy of Notes For Contributors at www.themorrisring.org.uk/themorrisdancer/notes

