

FIRST ISSUE
DOMMETT'S MORRIS WORLD

1 INTRODUCTION

Morris Dancing is not Rocket Science. It requires no skills to watch, a minimum of skills to participate such that almost anyone could dance in it, but an almost encyclopedic knowledge to fully appreciate it in its varying historical context, because it is an event, interacting with its audience.

This paper is a personal perception derived from involvement in the last fifty years of the morris world and a sharing a little in the research into its origins and development. It has been wider than most people's experience, although no one person has seen more than a minute fraction of the morris being performed, especially in the last twenty years. The story of necessity is of a personal odyssey. It is also in my opinion appropriate to review the morris world as we appear to approach the end of an era of the morris with the retirement of yet another generation of influential leaders. There are many people who have made major or minor contributions to the modern morris. Although only a few are mentioned here by name, I would like them all gratefully remembered.

This booklet started as a Sidmouth Lecture in 2004 called *A Look at Morris, Evolution, and Sidmouth - 150 years of people watching the morris and other observations*. Why 150 years? Roy Judge in his research into the use of morris in theatrical performances, commented that post 1840 they often spoke of the traditional morris in the past tense. The hey day was over. The major events that continued to sustain the so called Cotswold dance had all ceased by 1860 and then an even more severe decline set in, though it did not finally fade away. It meant that the collectors only met dancers who had performed from the mid 19th century onwards. The significance is that our real knowledge of that dance idiom and its context is only from its final period of decline. It was different for the other regional forms that have been called morris, some of which grew in the late 19th century because of changing social conditions, but were then cut short by the first World War. Their relative lateness of occurrence led to them being ignored by the prejudiced early dance collectors, and the realisation of their importance has often come too late to be sure of what a traditional performance had been like. This paper also has its origins back with the first lecture I gave on the morris with vuoils in 1982. This is how I understand it, it can not be accurate in detail, and at best is perhaps a vision from thirty years ago.

At one time, not so long ago, the world was noticeably different. The experience, roles and attitudes only three or four generations away were not as today, even the ordinary things which conditioned people, such as the presence of the dirt, the smells, the flies, the quiet, the being solitary, the limited education and horizons, and having no strangers, but having a crowded family life. We need to understand the "past", or the why of what has been happening, in order to grasp properly the present. In some ways it was not so long ago. I once met an old woman who had known a man who had served in the army of William IV as a guard at the Winchester assizes following the Captain Swing riots, so I myself am only two people distant from the terrible Speenhamland poor law system, which one thinks of now as distant history. It is interesting how such apparently well thought through attitudes were limited by their time and era and have had long term effects which we can only appreciate now with our greater knowledge of the world.

Of one thing I am sure, the appreciation and popularity of the morris has changed enormously in the last 40 years, whilst the various "traditional" forms have flourished and expanded all over the English speaking world. However morris dancers, being mainly performers, are usually out of touch with recent developments in history and sociology and continue to repeat long discredited ideas about the morris, probably because they want to support the existing public image. Past folklorists have been very successful in indoctrinating the public with Victorian and Golden Bough ideas.

Morris is defined here as public performance by a group of costumed and rehearsed dancers for entertainment and reward. It may for good local reasons be seasonal in occurrence, but there is no evidence that it is ritual or pagan in origin, despite a century of searching. It is one of the ephemeral art forms, which only exists when it is in performance. It is traditional in that a particular team's dance repertoire settles down and then changes slowly. But "tradition" in the broadest sense is like a piece of string - it's as long as you like, but it is made of many short strands entwined together. At most it can be no more than a moving window on the past of two generations ago set by the limits of personal contact. With such a broad net, the varieties of performance idioms covered are many,

including some that would not now be encompassed by what is now considered to be "folk", like comic bands and minstrel troupes.

The following discussion is intended to be interesting rather than deeply profound, putting some happenings and insights into a context. I have written much about the morris in the past, often for the journal **Morris Matters**, but more with the attitude of a journalist rather than of a propagandist, reflecting other people's researches. I want to draw attention to some of such tensions inherent in the history of the morris. Much of what I will mention of more recent times is water under the bridge and not intended as a raking over of old sores or to imply criticism. One thing that ought always to be remembered is that older people were young once, and have had similar concerns and frustrations, but they also have gathered other responsibilities and things that they have to do that now fills their time. The young do not appreciate the consequences of an age gap and have not been around long enough to see that changes are actually occurring, although the pace will be necessarily be slower than they would like.

2 PERSONAL

Typically, as most ultimately influential people have done, I started as somewhat of a rebel and ended up as an ex-pillar. Unfortunately the consequential changes in my perspective may also be very significant in affecting what I have to say. It has been seen from a point of view initially generated by a working class upbringing and being evacuated to the country for most of the war. I met the morris in 1952 and joined a newly formed side in 1954. The dance research started in 1958, but was not fully underway until 1960 (when mild was 11d a pint). An 8mm silent cine camera was bought in 1962, and a car in 1964 (petrol then 4 gallons a pound), which was when I was also first involved in teaching at a morris workshop.

The Dommetts first appeared in East Devon in the 14th century, just before the Black Death, and my mother's family the Diapers (d'Ypres) at Rye a century later, both coming from the cloth trade areas of Flanders and the Somme, whose commercial and hence cultural dominance was built on English wool. This was when Flemish clothiers and farmers were settling in Southern England. They also brought the word "booze" into the English language! My brother has produced a male family tree for both sides back to 1600, making us in England about as old as the morris. Three Dommetts were hanged by Judge Jefferies following the Monmouth Rebellion. More immediately my great-great-grandfather Thomas worked for the LSWR latterly at Talaton, East Devon, and one of his sons, Henry, also worked for the LSWR at Breamore station, Hampshire, then became a coal merchant at Downton, Wiltshire, and finally a farm balliff at Bournemouth. My grandfather Bertram was a painter and decorator who moved to Southampton, but at his funeral his younger brother told me that Bert had been a mummer in his youth. My father was in a black faced Minstrel Troupe before he was married. This was a form of entertainment that had largely replaced the mummers widely in England and now has disappeared, quite forgotten in what became its traditional local form.

3 ACCESSIBLE SOURCES

Not surprisingly, most of the books on folk customs are uncritical, sometimes careless of sources and too often based on assumptions that are unsupportable under detailed examination. A better starting point is the series of books written by Prof Hutton at Bristol reviewing recent research, supported by the book *The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750* on early morris by John Forrest. Keith Chandler produced a descriptive book, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, and a chronological gazetteer and then a vastly updated CD, available from the author, covering the Cotswolds and now also the Forest of Dean. John Forrest covers up towards 1750 and Keith Chandler from there onwards, but the 18th century is still relatively weak on morris sources. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson, Secretary of the Folklore Society, and Steve Roud, Honorary Librarian of the Folklore Society, has an impeccable background and gives the earliest actual references to many customs rather than the locally imagined ones. relevant extracts have been published in *Morris Matters*. David Schofield's book *The First Week in August* is a good general overall account of 50 years of Sidmouth with mentions of the morris and its developments. Otherwise it has to be mainly specialist conference proceedings that have to be consulted, accessible via the Vaughan Williams Library at Cecil Sharp House of the English Folk Dance and Song Society or in the accessible archives of the Morris Federation.

Booklets exist about the Border and Molly forms and all the extant notations for the long sword dances have been collected into a book *Longsword Dances - from Traditional and Manuscript Sources* by Ivor Allsop. The rarer short sword dance notations only exist in booklets and journals, and still need bringing together, along with the many additional modern figures that have appeared. The North West tradition is still recorded only fragmentarily, in particular needing a good account of the Cheshire dances. A new book on the *Morris Dancers and Rose Queens* by J Haslett, recently published is valuable for contexts and related activities. A list of known collected dances is accessible on the Manchester Morris Men's web site.

Not to be ignored for the discussion of origins are the continuing series of comprehensive **Early Drama Records** collated by the University of Toronto, which cover much more than morris dancing, of which a set is in the Vaughan Williams Library. Part of the background to this paper is a wide reading of books in order to grasp the social background into which the morris had to fit. For once I include in an annex a list of books I found useful that have been part of my library. Thankfully there has been a great outpouring of material in recent years as people have worked through the surviving original sources. We have to shake off the myths and allow the facts to speak for themselves to better define the truth. Lets start from the beginning.

4 ON THE MODERN INTERPRETATION OF ENGLISH HISTORY

The Megalithic Ages lasted two thousand years and fashions in monuments and hence probably any customs and rituals changed as the social structures varied, but not in any simple evolutionary or cyclic manner. Fashions, fads and exotic introductions happened then as now. The idea of waves of invaders has now been discredited, it being as likely as that the UK has been taken over recently by Indians, Chinese or Thais. Archeologists have realised in my lifetime that the field systems of the countryside often date back to the Iron or even Bronze Age and that the supposed introduction of new practices were not accompanied by invasions and imagined mass slaughter. For example it is now fairly clear that the so called advent of the Anglo-Saxons and their conversion to Christianity was a creation of the Venerable Bede writing well after the actual events and that really the British/Celtic church of Roman times had persisted through what has erroneously been called the Dark Ages. The absorbing of the Saxon language and culture does not appear to have been the consequence of invasion, slaughter and destruction, as the archeologists can find no evidence of disruption but only of continuity. Presumably the new language and its associated culture artifacts represented something extra for the local inhabitants that their post Roman language and lifestyle lacked in the new economic situation. It is very important to ask of every source, **who** is writing **what** for **whom** for **which** intended effect.

The Mediterranean civilisations did not separate the personal and social, or religious and secular worlds, and life was an integrated mix with the need for visible deeds predominating. The Christians recognised a difference, and the Early Church Fathers struggled with the implications. Leisure in itself was not sinful. That activities may have had pagan origins or associations did not mean that they continued to carry that baggage. This dicotomy of festive and religious cultures has plagued Western societies ever since, mostly because the festive side could so easily get out of hand without an effective police force. The split between the King and Parliament in the Civil War was mostly along such lines. The continual swings in what is generally acceptable within communities reflect the continuing internal split between those with such attitudes. Seldom has there been periods of moderation on both sides.

What has to be accepted is that there are many things which claim an ancient origin which does not exist, and that these muddy our understanding or interpretation of history. Freemasonry, Druids, Wicca, some religious sects, and many modern sports must spring to mind - that they may be recent does not invalidate their present form. But neither does a genuine past ensure a present validity.

5 ORIGINS OF THE MORRIS

Was it likely that there was a wide spread native equivalent to the morris before the 15th century? In "Saxon" times it has been "estimated" that the population was between ½ and 1 million, and that the average settlement had only about 25 adults. The arrival of what is collectively called the Anglo-Saxon culture also matched the break up of the British tribal structure and produced a very mixed population without a common language, perched on the border of mainstream western civilisation. It is well explored in David Crystal's book *The Stories of English*. It was still over 500 years from the final conversion to Christianity to the first millenium, and by that time the country was entirely

church orientated without any community based pagan survivals, despite modern wishful thinking. Actions to bring luck probably still existed, as always, but would not have been morris. Superstitions, songs and all one-on-one transmissions were not community based. For another 500 years England was a pillar of the European catholic church, following all the trends, Marianism, Corpus Christi, processions, church drama and mystery plays. The Black Death, whether bubonic plague or an Ebola like haemorrhagic virus, killed from a third to half of the population in the 14th century, leaving about 4½ million, and it stayed at about that level until 1688, before the level started to rise dramatically. It is hardly surprising that there was nothing recognisable as morris in the records of the middle ages, but the social and economic roots from which it could grow are obvious. It has only been another 500 years since something called the morris appeared.

It is important to have an appreciation of what happened and why from the end of the Middle Ages through the Reformation, the destruction of the monasteries and the old catholic religion period and all the tensions of the new Protestantism continuing through to the English Civil War and the so called Glorious Revolution of 1688.

The current understanding of the early years of the morris in England in the 16th and 17th centuries is owed to John Forrest and Mike Heaney who have listed and printed the found references, and the former had subsequently published a detailed analysis in his book. It is clear that the morris was reasonably popular for about a century, starting with sponsorship from the church and civic bodies, but the church in particular turned against it, because of the morris' perceived association with the "old unreformed church", so that it gradually became dependent on private patronage. Many such civic and religious sponsored activities were driven to survive in private observance. The whole process of change with the forbidding of processions and the ending of the mystery plays is given in detail in the analysis of the religious changes from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I in *The Stripping of the Altars* by Eamon Duffy. Queen Mary's reign saw the start of what came to be called the Counter-Reformation as later codified by the Council of Trent. What could have happened to English traditions if we had stayed a reformed Catholic country can be deduced from what actually occurred in parallel in the Catholic continental countries.

Identifying the characteristic that made such a "morris" has been difficult, rich coats, bells, energetic movements or raucous music have all been suggested, but they do not necessarily occur together. There are a growing number of discovered surviving references to the morris in the late 15th century, but they can be explained as exotic imports or performances by non-indigenous groups. There is nothing to compare in Britain with the early references on the continent, particularly from Flanders and through old Burgundy, even to around Munich, where figurines survive comparable with those in the Betley window. They are still sold with holes in the hands, suitable, said the shop, for handkerchiefs, sticks, staves or garlands! The dominance of these regions in western European fashion, music and economics at the time is seldom appreciated in England nowadays, even though they were in closer contact with eastern England than were more distant parts of this country. The early forms of morris declined by the start of the 17th century. King James' *Book of Sports* tried to encourage it, along with other old activities, and William Kempe danced to Norwich as a publicity stunt. The description has been reprinted by Chris Harris.

The rise of Puritanism and the Civil War have often been thought of as reasons for a decline in the morris, but these were concerns with the excesses of popular behaviour in general. The repressed Victorians read too much into their perceptions of past behaviours, such as with the maypoles. The maypole was actually a signal for community celebration, relatively uncontrolled and prone to excess, also thought of being symbolic of the old unreformed ways. When there was considered to be a risk of rebellion or other disturbances, the authorities just banned maypoles and football matches, the major occasions at which crowds gathered and sedition, riots and the like could be communicated and spread.

There is evidence of three common forms of early morris dance,

- 1 going two-by-two.
(Quakers were accused of going out like morris men, because they went out two-by-two!)
- 2 the linked chain, holding hands.
- 3 all circling individually around a central person,

All these survived into recorded times, in processional dances, adult and children's games, etc. They were shown at the start of LEAP at the 2004 Sidmouth Festival by a Renaissance Reenactment Group.

The country dances of the Elizabethan era seem from manuscripts to have been simple compared to the later publications by Playford during the Civil War. That there must have been some sort of link between the morris as we know it and the later country dances in steps and figures is obvious, but which has the precedent is unknowable. The Duke of Monmouth taught English Country Dances to the Dutch Court during his exile before his invasion of the West Country through Lyme. The exploitation of the lively "country-dance" by dancing masters would suggest that they came first and that the growth of morris in the 18th century was based to some extent on the memories of that idiom. This is "Country" as in "Town and Country", not implying a rural or peasant origin.

6 HEY DAY IN THE 18th CENTURY

Typically of a community based activity, it seems that the morris was common for just over a hundred years, from somewhere soon after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when the UK was occupied by Dutch forces, until the accession of Queen Victoria. This Hanoverian period was tough for the classes of people usually participating in the morris, although in the 18th century it was not uncommon for farmers' sons to be involved. Remember it was the period of the enclosures, the establishment of estates, the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the farms going upmarket, the highwaymen, with no police, and no representation. The relationship between the strata of society was more formal in those days. But it was still a time when money, a "box", could be expected in return for appearing rather than as a reward. References to the morris are accumulating, but there is little published about attitudes, about what were the competing activities, in fact too little on the ordinary levels of social life. The 19th century turned against the apparent licence for its associated crudity of behaviour and drunkenness. Although the sources are few, the implication of Keith Chandler's work is that morris teams were fairly thick on the ground in the Cotswolds and its northern extensions, were mostly ephemeral, and were associated with a leader rather than a place. Surprisingly, important country household accounts suggest that different teams appeared each year rather than the same local group.

We are fortunate that records exist for a comparable contemporary activity, the Hambledon Cricket Club, which at its peak beat sides drawn from all England. Its significance to us is that the matches were followed by a large feast and then a singing session as the normal and still acceptable social behaviour.

Some surviving accounts of the latter days are copied in Annex A.

Mike Heaney has found from estate records that the cost of kitting out a dancer was very substantial and probably needed sponsorship. Surviving descriptions are interesting on describing the Ales and their goings on - perhaps they were not so different in attitudes from modern dancers. Over time, with the growth of the village Friendly Societies, Club Days became a significant venue for the morris. Perhaps there were few other choices available for entertainment?

7 THE ORIGINAL MORRIS ALE

It is impossible to improve on a contemporary description.

Walford's Antiquarian of May 1886 described an ale at Combe near Woodstock in 1774.
This is the earliest account of a recognisable morris event, 230 years ago.

"The May-games at that period were planned by the sons of wealthy farmers who undertook the burthen of the expence in case the want of success should leave any undefrayed. Some convenient spot, near the middle of the village, where the use of a barn could be obtained, was fixed upon., and with a green sufficiently contiguous, where the bower and May-pole could be erected. The intended festival was then announced by the Morris-dancers upon Maundy Thursday, if that day fell conveniently; and they paid visits to the halls of the neighbouring gentry where they usually obtained a seasonable contribution. It was also known upon the market days at all the adjacent towns.

The May-pole and a thrave of boughs to form the bower were occasionally purchased, but more commonly obtained as a donation. The first, when erected, had the top adorned with a garland of flowers and the latter, being arched over was made sufficiently capacious for the country dances.

In the barn, or, as named for the occasion, the Lord's Mansion, there were placed several barrels of ale, brewed for the purpose, with cakes newly baked (for a daily supply of which some neighbouring over was engaged) and for a large quantity of ribbons. The sale of these articles usually saved the promoters of the games from loss.

In choosing the Lord and Lady of the May, care was taken to select a smart, active and handsome man, as well as a lively, pretty woman, the daughter of some respectable farmer, and to whom it often proved the prelude to obtaining a husband. It is doubtful whether the Lord derived any pecuniary advantage from the revenue that supported his state, though the Lady was allowed daily, new shoes and twenty yards of ribbon, and, at the end of the sports, was complimented with a guinea.

In procession the Lady carried a bouquet, which was called her mace, and she and the Lord held each the end of a ribbon, as did their attendants, called my Lord's footman and my Lady's maid, part of whose province was to sell ribbons. The maid also carried a mace which might be named the Mace of Mischief, as, to tickle the noses of her admirers, the flowers were often mischievously entwined with pins as well as with briars. Another attendant whose presence gave life to the show, was called the Squire. His dress was a fanciful compound of those genuine mimes, the Harlequin, Clown and Scaramouch. He was furnished with a weapon to prevent the crowd from obstructing his Lord and Lady in their progress. It consisted of a short stick having at one end a narrow round sand-bag, sewed in tan leather, at the other the dried tail of an ox. The incorrigible, on whom the weight of the sand-bag has repeatedly fallen without effect, seldom ventured to provoke a second stripe from the latter. The Squire was expected to have a wise or foolish speech ready upon every occasion; for by the laughter his nonsense occasioned was commonly decided his ability to support the character.

Early upon May morning, the Lord and Lady, with their attendants, waited by the May-pole for visitors,

(from Playford's "Choice Songs and Ayres" of 1673 - visitors made presents -

"About the Maypole we dance all round, and with garlands of pinks and roses are crowned.

Our little tribute we merrily pay, to the gay Lord and bright Lady o'the May,")

whom they preceded in due form, their squire and two servants leading the way, first to the bower and then to the mansion. Here the company were shown the curiosities, viz. a flail, hung over a beam, as my Lord's organ; the portrait of a lion for my Lady's lapdog, and that of an owl for her parrot. The regulations and forfeits of the mansion were also communicated, and finally, the party invited to partake of the refreshments. That being done the duty of the Lord and Lady ceased and they returned with their attendants to their former station to wait other visitors. If while they were engaged, as it frequently happened, there arrived a set of morris-dancers, often with all the good folks of their village in company, the whole halted at a distance until the cavalcade could be preceded in due state to the mansion.

No inconsiderable portion of good humour and mirth arose from the non-payment of forfeits. To call either of the above named curiosities by any other appellation than that assigned to it, incurred a fine of sixpence; and he that refused to pay was forced to ride my Lord's horse. This was a wooden machine about four feet high, borne upon poles, and having the head of a horse with a bridle. Upon this my Lady first mounted sideways, holding the reins, then the delinquent was placed behind her and both carried by two men round the Maypole. A fine was often wilfully incurred as during the ride it became the duty of the swain to salute my Lady; and whether he was bashful or a gay gallant, the process always proved a subject of merriment for the spectators.

To these festivals the Morris-dancers came in sets far and near; those from a distance commonly on horseback, with the manes and heads of the horses decorated with flowers, etc. They usually wore shirts closely plaited buckskin or white linen breeches, cotton stockings and pumps with bells fixed upon the outside of each leg, the whole dress tastefully adorned with ribbons and white handkerchiefs or napkins, to use in the dancing. In procession, first came the fool, next the piper and then the dancers; of whom 12 seem to have been the customary number. It was not uncommon for them to be attended by persons to take care of their clothes.

There were also the dancers of the Bedlam Morris. They did not wear bells and were distinguished by high peaked caps (such as worn by clowns in pantomimes) adorned with ribbons. Each carried a stick about two feet long, which they used with various gesticulations during the dance, and at intervals, struck them against each other. A clown and piper attended them."

Note that at that era, 1774, sticks dancers were considered a different idiom.

8 THE MUSIC AND REPERTOIRE

There is little evidence of the tunes used by the morris in its hey day, but it is likely that this was a conservative aspect of the Cotswold Morris as the manner of playing for the dance was important. Most tunes recovered for the morris later have been traced to earlier publications spread over a wide period of time. 80% of them seem to have been common to all sides, perhaps because of a continuing shortage of experienced musicians, which became more acute in the 19th century. There seems to have been some fondness for tunes of odd lengths, such as Jockey to the Fair, Princess Royal, and Black Joke and its relatives. Most accounts talk of the morris being done to the pipe and tabor, presumably the three hole English pipe that could be played with one hand. In those days there was no background noise to drown it out. In the 19th century the knowledge for making such pipes was lost locally, and other instruments were pressed into service. Basque three hole pipes were being sold in London but they had a different tuning to the English and consequently switching was very difficult. Powell at Bucknell played a Basque pipe and could not get on with a copy of Bampton pipe made by Dolmetch(?) and given to him by the EFDS. The problem with the fiddle is that even the "cheap" ones were expensive, so dancers told me, and older dancers reportedly found the playing difficult to follow, which ought to be telling us something about the way it was played before. The various "boxes" based on free reeds came too late to save the traditional Cotswold Morris. What should be noticed is that the versions of the common tunes were often massaged to fit the instrument being played. Most musicians had their own "turns" to the tunes which the others recognised as special to them.

The collected speeds for dances was fast, typically 96 beats to the minute or 4 bars in 5 seconds. Better dancers were slower, because they were making larger movements. These higher speeds probably came from having inexperienced dancers, or, as today, some elderly dancers, both of whom go for smaller movements and need the speed to avoid gaps in their movements. The audience's excitement should come from the dance movements not the foot-tapping quality of the music. Bands were unknown.

If what the collectors found in depth was representative of the morris at its best, an established team could have a rolling repertoire of up to 40 dances remembered, although not all in current practice. Of the 20 regularly in use, 6 or 7 would be jigs. This is in marked contrast with today, and probably all were simple in chorus and all in the same style. But by the 20th century local sides with limited dance opportunities could get by with only 5 dances - enough for one show. The morris was only ever as complicated as it needed to be for its context.

Many descriptions exist for European morris equivalents but, unlike for the sword dances, few notations exist in English. The Basques, Northern Italians, Provençals, Spaniards and Portugese and others can be found in their native languages but no attempt appears to have been made to translate or recreate. Yet they are inspirational, several of the Basque stick choruses translate into very effective "Lichfield" style dances. The processional form of morris appears most common. The Basques have the richest variety, mostly for 8 dancers, their sticks dances are usually without figures between the tappings. I was told by a Sidmouth visiting troupe that of 700 known dances in the provinces before the Spanish Civil War, 400 have been collected along with full details of the appropriate costumes. In the Provence of France the side seen had a sequence of dances with different implements which had fairly common stepping sequences between their usages which gradually became more complex through each dance.

There existed dances akin to the morris in other parts of Europe up and into the 19th century, some of which have survived to be seen at Sidmouth. A fine set not ever seen there were those that the Spanish taught in the Americas, some still being performed. One day perhaps the morris organisations and the EFDSS will sponsor a conference that starts to bring together these threads, as the recent Sword Spectaculars have done for their idiom.

It is a regret that every year English morris dancers go abroad for holidays and visit the folk museums of other countries but never report back what there is to be seen so that we never benefit.

9 THE PRESERVATION OF THE MORRIS

The Antiquarians of the late Victorian era had shown interest in the morris as part of the Shakespearean heritage and there were "learned" debates on origins and content. Eleanor of Aquitaine and John of Gaunt were popular suspects and Staines Morris was thought to be the original dance. It occurred to Darcy Ferris to exploit this interest, he had

already been the Pageant Master at the Ripon Millenium Festival. He arranged for a young team to be raised at Bidford, Warwickshire, in 1886, trained them with the aid of various morris dancers, and then toured, they being paid but having to keep to a typical set of rigid rules. Ferris gave illustrated lectures, but it was not the success that he had hoped. In 1904 Evans, a Stratford-on-Avon vet, was that year's Stratford Festival Secretary who reactivated the team, and they continued creating local interest until the First World War. Mr Evans had an early phonograph and interviewed dancers and singers, as well as visiting Abbots Bromley. Granham saw them about 1912 and published an account. Percy Manning employed T Carter to collect morris memorabilia and information which formed the basis of a lecture, supported by a revived Headington Quarry morris. The interest created caused both Billy Wells and Sam Bennett to write to the newspapers about their teams. Fred Hamer used to say that Curtiss at Brackley contacted the newspapers but Keith Chaulder has not found any such mention, perhaps he wrote letters to people, and these were remembered by his sources. These actions, as well as the inspiration of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Jubilees, encouraged short lasting revivals in a number of other villages.

At the start of the growing wider interest in the morris in the first half of the 20th century there was a common belief in absolute standards, although for the morris this could only have been in the minds of the propagators because not one of them had seen a morris in its supposed "heyday" in the 18th century. This attitude led to non-evolutionary and authoritarian concepts of dance interpretation, because no one knew what variation was tolerable, and to the disputes over authenticity, eg. between the Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp parties over William Kimber. Neal noticed that Kimber changed what he taught on each visit to London. He was checking from old dancers how it should be done in between trips! Incidentally it is difficult now to appreciate the impact in London of his music, dances and appearance on the young women of both groups. It is easy to understand why he tried to keep the contacts within his own control. There was a later fear of the apparent simplifying changes that appeared to have been introduced even at the many traditional revivals which were found to be suprisingly common, and which presented intellectual problems against the strict interpretation of what "tradition" meant which were then current. There were serious attempts by Sharp to reconstruct and publish the oldest forms of the dances. Heated correspondance on the manner of the performance of the details of the morris appeared in the newspapers, eg. the Morning Post, which sheet incidentally survived for many years as the court page in the Daily Telegraph. Forgotten today are the Mary Neal books of notations, each of which went through several editions, each of which has significantly different detail which had not been correlated.

The EFDSS lived with the Cecil Sharp legacy. But how did he know how it should be? He knew what he wanted it to have been like, and it had to be so to make it generally acceptable in his time. He had no traditional model that he wanted to show other than William Kimber, and he made disparaging remarks about the then current teams. He told his followers who had started the annual pilgrimage to ignore the detail of the dancing at Bampton, which even at that time was somewhat variable. Most of the sources that he used were quite old men. Only Jinky Wells and Bill Kimber were middle aged. The then recently active younger people at Abingdon, Bidford, Bledington, Brackley, Chipping Campden, Headington, Ilmington, Longborough and at Upton near Didcot (in the Sherborne tradition) were ignored. Maud Karpeles claimed that Sharp based his own views on the step and style of even older dancers such as Bampton's Charles Tanner! The approach gave Cecil Sharp and his heirs immediate control by eliminating the impact of any independent access to sources. Douglas Kennedy had said that this was Sharp's policy and he also made observations in an interview on his own uncertainties about Sharp's interpretations of the movement actions of old dancers, eg. Taylor at Longborough and the team at Eynsham. In contrast Mary Neal invited about 30 dancers to London to teach their dances directly.

The collectors probably missed the significance of the traditional performance of the morris and it being properly at that time a young men's activity with one or two older men to add responsibility and hence provide respectability. Its economic background has been recognised only recently, both as a source of income but also because of the impact of the cost of suitable dressing. In the "improving" environment of the time it was not possible for contemporaries to reflect on the poverty/economic aspects of the morris. The popularisers had views about the role and use of the morris that may never have been true. The concept of a separation of men's things from women's things in life was a late Victorian idea which two world wars has almost killed at last. We are today however still seeking to find a way to describe the magic of the morris, and the past significance of maleness to it, whilst simultaneously adapting to today's social mores. People of various age groups have different ideas as to what is acceptable behaviour and what are to be the reasons for performance. These issues can still be seen in the behaviour of new and of university sides. You have only to read the media discussion on the social background and history of job behaviour to realise that the

morris was a more self disciplined example of the young persons' culture, which has still to be studied properly rather than just complained about, even if whingeing is a traditional English pastime. Unfortunately there is a thin line between aspects of modern yobbishness and serious social misbehaviour, which makes thinking about such linkages difficult for most people. In the past the wilder aspects of youth culture were only available and tolerated for the rich, leading to the double standards separating "yobbishness" from "high spirits".

Drinking has always been associated with the morris, it was one of the stronger grounds for opposition to it in the 19th century. But before the last war few could afford to drink much - many old men spoke of making a pint last all evening - hence the popularity of pub games to justify the time spent there. They also denied the existence then of affordable real ales of modern quality! The performance of the morris inhibits drinking time, we are not great customers from that point of view. Binge drinking, the modern curse, is a consequence of too much money and too much encouragement and too few alternatives without appropriate role models. In my time the police admitted to having few problems with morris men, never a problem in getting them out of a pub, although perhaps in making them go home! Very few morris men have been charged because of their behaviour or for drinking and driving. The advantage may be in the dancing before drinking minimising its effects.

We in the folk world with a concern for preservation perhaps should guard against ignorantly and unnecessarily suppressing any true folk life behaviour patterns and of deliberately or inadvertently changing the tradition by guiding it into new areas, particularly in this case of domination by older less sympathetic people. Historically in any field, control by councils, guilds or other elderly staffed bodies has led to eventual stagnation. I have always been wary of elderly engineers in my profession, they are always trying to solve yesterday's problems. It is all too easy for mature and dominant personalities to impose views regardless of their unappreciated long term impact. It is not our task to adjust society but to fit within it, but traditional forms of behaviour was often a realistic solution to a real problem. Older people holding on to the morris in good faith but denying it to young persons contributes a little to society's problems with the teen and young twenties age group. To preserve this manifestation of our culture we continue to need enough sides with low average ages.

Sides grow older because they don't give up and can only recruit in kind. It is not a fault, this should also be seen as natural and quite acceptable to the public, even though such "old" sides contribute too often to the overall poor public image of the morris. There is the compelling principle that people who want to express themselves through dance should not be dissuaded. It is always better than no morris at all. However we cannot be fixed. in attitudes. Society's appreciation of the value of what we do is constantly changing. Today the existence as well as the content of the media changes the balance of people's experiences of the world, so the morris has to respond to what are now different expectations. It is obvious that 40 to 50 year olds today have the energy, strength and the finances to belong to dance sides, a near impossibility over a hundred years ago, and it is to their personal benefit. An obvious mechanism already exists to pass on the necessary performance skills to young sides without imposing on young people old role and body language models, although many older clubs do not accept or even recognise their responsibility to such sides. In looking forward, it is dangerous to guess which of today's expressions of the morris will be that which is most successful in the long term.

The problem of having middle class attitudes within the morris is that they are seldom recognised by their holders for what they are, and they do not provide a grasp of the culture from which the morris was drawn and so see no issues implied in its deliberate modification. This concerned point of view has been expressed over the years by a group which included such involved people as Mervyn Plunkett, Reg Hall and Frank Purslow. However there is not much that we can do about it, and thus it is not worth much agonising over, no matter how much it is to be regretted. It has been almost seriously suggested that the role of the EFDSS was to give those who might interfere with the surviving tradition something else to do! However in my experience over forty years as a barn dance caller, people, who are economically middle class, often show in their attitudes to leisure that they have working class roots. It is almost the only area of life that does not provide a conscious role model to copy.

From Sharp's position the morris could not be allowed to be seen as popular culture as were the Kitchen Lancers and other village level Old Time social dances, partly because the EFDSS and its predecessors were dependent on gifts and government department grants, and also because popular culture was subject to fashion and commercial pressures. The older "folk" art part of folk culture had to be elevated. Missed in the arguments were the important differences between the survival processes of superstition and songs. and of social activities which exist because of

the contrasting levels of community involvement. Most of the academic study of the "traditional process" has been related to the one-on-one transmission, not to activities involving a group who have to exist in the wider community with a role that is not perceived as essential by or for the responsible local hierarchy.

Instructional classes were the cry of the times, for the approaches available then to meet the challenge were still new and inevitably simple. We must remember that compulsory schooling for all had only started in Sharp's lifetime. One of his objectives was influencing the Board of Education to insert the more artistic "folk" material of both song and dance into the schools to catch the next generation. This was an age when there were many "do gooders" on both sides of the Atlantic. However my experience of talking to villagers on the receiving end was that to the villages the classes had a social not a revival or improving role. Unfortunately perhaps it was a movement started and dominated by women who had few other channels at the time for active expression, and it made prowess visible by badges, certificates and competitions. This is not to denigrate them as their position in society then was as much imposed as chosen, even if they did not then realise it, and, as many had found ways to compensate, it was not realised to be an issue. The EFDS structure involved many teachers, growing out of the early background of the Chelsea College of Physical Education, part of the South Western Polytechnic, the simpler material available being seen as suitable for use in schools. It was county organised and village based and worked hard to be true to its declared objectives, but it could only give what was acceptable within the opinions and prejudices of those with the ultimate local and national control.

10 THE BEFORE SIDMOUTH DAYS

On Festivals, Rolf Gardiner's published view in the early 1920's was that the EFDS should become the English Festival Dance Society sponsoring displays by the best traditional performers. It took fifty years to happen! Gardiner had led the first public hikes across the Berkshire Downs after WW I. His 1923 Cotswold walking tour with his friend Christopher Scaife met a couple of the surviving dancers and was one major factor in initiating the first Travelling Morris tour in 1924 following the collapse of a proposed dance visit to Germany. Believing in the need for a reconciliation between the peoples of the countries, he had a lifelong involvement with the countries around Northern Germany and called his later irregular magazine "North Sea and Baltic". He was seen to be in dispute with Sharp and his monstrous horde of women and was dropped from the stage performance of Sharp's "Old King Cole" at Cambridge. Despite this action, he was strongly and lastingly affected by having been dancing with the Travelling Morris on the last day of the first Travelling Morris tour in Adderbury as Sharp died. He became involved with Mary Neal after WW I through the Kibbokift organisation and she passed to him some of her material to assist his arguments. Through his uncle Balfour Gardiner the composer, he bought Gore Farm in Dorset and then the Mill at Fontmell Magna, and eventually formed the Springhead Ring from townee professionals who wished to rebuild roots with the land through seasonal work camps. An enlightened view for the time, but also adopted by the fascists. His writings criticised the National Socialists and their impact on ordinary Germans. They were in some ways romantics but with nothing to do with the folk tradition. I remember an AIDA opera performance one evening where all shared the singing and the playing without any other audience and the gods descended by cable across the mill pond. He went with a coach party to sing privately in the churches along the west side of the East/West German border as a civilised protest against the barriers. Rolf Gardiner was practical as well as visionary, the farm was as wood based and self sufficient as possible and he showed later his considerable skill in organising the countries flax production during WW II. The family was involved with enlightened farming in Rhodesia. His ambition to dance the "Gallant Hussar" on his 60th birthday was fulfilled.

The genius was combining the English invention of the club of like minded people with the English version of the so adaptable morris. The major and long lasting influence on men's teams has been the Cambridge Morris Men, and its style was adopted by the new morris clubs with the titles of squire, bagman, and a feast, although the tradition mostly called them captain, secretary and substituted a share out. This style remains an effective approach in today's world. It was found that having guests at the CMM annual feast was too slow even in those days to bring all morris dancers within a single organisation. Discussions led to the formation of the Morris Ring in 1934, self protectingly men only, involving most existing male groups. There were Ring meetings, always one each year at Thaxted where the morris had started under Mary Neal's influence. They were notable for the small numbers involved and the essential collective Saturday morning practice before the afternoon tour. At the Wargrave meeting in 1936, where all 38 attendees camped on Major Fryer's lawn which backed onto the Thames, Bill Kimber played for the instructional and Jinky Wells fooled on the tour. Henry and Percy Hemmings met them dancing in the Bury at Abingdon. The follow

up party visited Tom Hemmings and also the Russells at Eynsham, and these contacts helped to spur their team revivals in 1937. At Stow-on-the-Wold in 1938 surviving dancers were invited to the end of tour feast and a Bledington dancer spoke about the old days while Mary Neal, who had recently been made a CBE, was a guest of honour. Unfortunately little was noted or later remembered of what was said.

The inherent respectability implied in the records from this period is now a little misleading. Any history, oral, files or the media is severely limited by its omissions, often of the things which everyone at the time took for granted. It was convenient to ignore such aspects as the public house culture into which few respectable women were allowed. The public bar male exclusiveness, which could lead to embarrassing remarks aimed at any women present, died with the great pub rebuilding since the last world war done to tap new markets. Saturday night fist fights were once common, but the police's and populace's attitudes were more tolerant as they were still conditioned by an even rougher and coarser older age. I once interviewed two male dancers from the New Forest whose side in the early 1930's would dress up in morris kit and go out to a local pub just to provoke such a fight. Not surprisingly there was a greater sense of fair play around, which reflected into limits on violent behaviour which are now often ignored. Unfortunately every time any group or person, trade unionist or pro-animal rights activist, pushes behaviour beyond its previously acceptable bounds, it widens them for the rest of us, but this degradation is ignored by the perpetrators. Eventually it forces government to restrict all our freedoms.

People had uncritical views on what was claimed about the tradition. They were ill-informed and little experienced, and community value judgements were mostly against common culture. Most "research" was very limited and "authoritative" statements were mostly only opinions. Even today people need very little evidence to support what they want to believe. What was said was determined as much by perceived necessary marketing messages as it could not be "popular", consequently there were many outside persons publically critical of the movement because of its inherent inconsistencies. Many of the views held until recently have proven by better founded research to be incorrect, arising often from the immature state of the turn of the century anthropology sciences. The morris was mainly seen as dances, not as something that was to be performed as an event, but to be demonstrated.

Despite the widespread teaching and the grass roots involvements, a university class background and attitudes existed which dominated the movement's leaders. At Thaxted could be seen the vicarage lawn culture, and at the Cheltenham Summer School the public school. There was the goal of dancing complex Playford and Long Sword, but not the traditional and more primitive forms of social dance which grew up later with the public dances following WW II and the arrival of the American string and square dances. Morris leaders in the late 1930's was discovering that the "tradition" as it was then understood could still be tapped in the Cotswolds. But the existence of good mss sources were largely unrecognised. That there were traditional dancers and details of performance to find elsewhere from Yorkshire to Worcestershire and in the southern counties was unsuspected. There was a hiatus in the morris during WW II and it was not until 1949-50 before it started up again in a big way and even then it took several years to settle down. Attitudes and possibilities were changing. The early 1950's was the time of Peter Kennedy, being groomed to follow Douglas and collecting songs and social dances, and involved in the weekly BBC broadcasts from villages. It had been the policy to minimise impacts on the tradition other than by giving encouragement as even well meaning advice influenced the tradition. Violet Alford persuaded Marshfield mummers that the indoor style of performance was traditionally correct for all circumstances, based on some theoretical judgement, whereas the uninfluenced Crookham Village mummers now use the outside style exclusively as indoor performances don't happen any more. Peter Kennedy told Bacup that their fourth quadrille garland figure was modern and for a while they hardly ever performed it, even though the repertoire had a mid 1860's origin.

The impressive achievement was fifty years of preservation. It was not really a revival, more of a transfer of interest from one section of our English society to another. We must be very grateful. There were too few numbers involved for there to have been a real impact on the wider world or on the interpretation of the roots material, although there was a drift in the stylisation of each Cotswold dance tradition. There was so little danced outside in the streets that morris was still unrecognisable by the public for what it was when seen on the street after WW II.

Before Sidmouth happened, the immediate pattern for participating events was set by the Stratford-on-Avon Festival and its programme of public displays and busking. But the initial freedom on the streets there was gradually curtailed, a trend that was to be echoed elsewhere. The attitudes of control and limitation showed an ignorance of the nature of the morris, for example in its role as a safety valve.

Inherently the morris is more than just a public display of pleasant movement to simple music. Yet, after all these years, we have not assembled the positive arguments in its favour but still treat them as self evident!

11 THE SIDMOUTH ERA

The SIDMOUTH Festival has reflected the changes in the idioms and attitudes that have developed over the last fifty years. It has been a showcase for most of the new departures and a mecca for many fresh sides, especially since in parallel there has been the advent of the massed performances on the esplanade at Sunday lunchtime and the growth of "display" or "theatrical" morris. Unfortunately the growth in the numbers of Festival and of town visitors from 100 to 50,000 attendees has stressed the town's resources and forced many changes, not only in the moving to an ever widening range of sites, as described by David Schofield, but also in an erosion of freedoms for the morris.

The enormous growth of the morris has made it impossible to comprehend all that has been going on, but that which has been visible at Sidmouth serves as a summary of what has been happening.

12 SIDMOUTH STARTS

The festival started in 1955, run by the EFDSS with about 100 attendees under Nibs Matthews as artistic director. It started on the August Bank Holiday Monday which was then on the first monday of the month.

Amongst the foremost teams in the late 1950's were the Beaux of London City, with Jack Hamilton as fool, who had an annual Thames Valley tour, and Greenselves with their influential Chipperfield weekend. They could do a little of everything known, eg. at the first Broadstairs Folk Festival in 1966, Greensleves demonstrated Cotswold, Winstler, Rapper, Flamborough, Royton and social dances, all with appropriate costume changes, and were praised for it. Headington in 1964, Beaux and Westminster in 1966 had their first visits to Sidmouth and Hammersmith came for the first time in 1967.

Elsewhere this was the era of the Friday evening phone round to complete a side for the Saturday. There appeared to me to be a peas-in-a-pod attitude which expected interchangability, although in practice integration was often difficult, because the more subtle points of timing and emphasis had not been codified, even though the differences would be obvious in performance. When there were very small clubs and much less personal mobility, dual membership and moves to other sides were frowned upon. At the Chichester Ring Meeting in the 1960's, the Martlett Morris Men put up the then unheard of number of twenty one men. Some of today's sides complain if they don't have three sets up at practices. Their performance and repertoire limitations often led new sides to the inclusion of singing, playing instruments, comic stunts, and to the use of jigs, all very traditional and a good step towards returning to what it should have been, an event!

At first Sidmouth created displays from the paying attendees. The set of golden tabards probably still exists. After a Saturday evening get together they were formed into busking groups and had some rehearsal each morning to ensure a common if limited repertoire. There were bus tours for the buskers and money collecting shows arranged in the neighbouring towns, and these trips included the foreign teams once they started to be invited from 1964 (Israelis). As East Devon Council was involved in its sponsorship, the Festival was seen as greater than Sidmouth. For two years, 1959-60, the Festival was taken to Exmouth. It was back again in 1961 with Bill Rutter as administrator and Tony Foxworthy as the dance director, then Ron Smedley in 1965. There were also small shows away from the town centre for the local population, eg. at the recreational ground by the Cross below the Balfour Arms. Because there was so little motor traffic in the town the buskers could use the esplanade all day and dance in the roads outside pubs. Morris was even danced on the eastern shingle bank before the beach changes occurred, as well as on the eroded western rocks at low tide! The crowd densities were much lower and major Festival shows could be accommodated in the small Connaught Gardens site over by the western cliffs until 1970.

When the cohorts produced by the 1944 Education Act with its free Grammar School places had arrived in the folk world, the new professional people from the right culture rediscovered their roots. It appeared to coincide with a rapid growth in the numbers of new teams. We really need a histogram of the growth in the numbers of clubs with time to draw proper conclusions as to the timing of such influences.

There was an annual Ring Instructional Meeting at Cecil Sharp House, eagerly attended, covering new traditions, for example Lichfield, living traditions such as Headington Quarry, and the best of the current interpretations. In the 1960's the older Abingdon men volunteered an instructional because they wanted their dances to be accepted into the common repertoire and not to be continually denigrated. It almost happened but failed partly because of problems in transporting the men to London after their President and former musician Major Fryer died and his vehicles were no longer available. The existing morris repertoire was the eighty Cecil Sharp dances plus Schofield's Bledington, Fieldtown, and Bampton notations : published to be consistent with Sharp books : Peck's booklet with a better approach to Bampton, Schofield's recollection of Quarry : Kimber had said that EFDSS did not want to know about Sharp's books errors : Hamer's articles on Adderbury and Brackley in the English Dance and Song Magazine, and then there was Maud Karpeles' Royton and Upton on Severn. There was the start of new thinking with the creativity from Westminster Morris. To be invited to their Day of Dance in central London was an accolade. Some of their foreman's notes and interpretation on Longborough and Fieldtown had limited circulation. They created "Old Harry" and a leapfrog to the "Golden Vanity" and worked up dances from the Butterworth mss. Odd dance interpretations existed in the Cambridge and Oxford sides which could have represented the start of a traditional process but these were eventually rationalised away, eg. Oxford's Badby, where in the crossing figures the dancers went as far as they could in the first half rather than returning to place. This loss was a negative aspect of making information available and of bringing it to everyone's attention.

Oxford University Morris Men, who when they restarted after WW II found that they were already a member of the Morris Ring, their offshoot the touring Ancient Men, and Oxford City, who were devastated for a time when Headington Quarry formed, did much to encourage and sustain the recognised traditional sides through their common love of the dance. Although there were perceptive folk who saw this involvement as ultimately damaging to the surviving tradition because it would have to adjust. The Cambridge Morris Men with their associated Travelling Morrice week long travelling two or more times a year, and at least to the Cotswolds every other year, built on the idea of the traditional tours of the 19th century, often visiting areas that were weakly populated by morris sides. I have thought about encouraging a dancing trip more closely simulating an old week long walking tour. The Ancient Men prided themselves on a very wide repertoire, and often had to practice new material all week to avoid repeating themselves! Not all sides with dance innovations were easily accepted. The Farnborough Morris from Hampshire were much criticised by some people for adapting dances from other traditions into the Bledington style and probably for being proud of it. This was basically a Ravensborne Morris idea, and was encouraged by the then Ring squire.

13 WIDENING HORIZONS

Following the "discovery" of the Lichfield dances in the mid 1950's, they were interpreted and danced in the EFDSS annual Albert Hall show, at the Lichfield Ring Meeting, where all present danced the well remembered processional, and at several Instructionals. This was progress within the then current attitudes and a bigger step forward than was then realised as it opened the door to exploiting other material. The recovery of dances from the mss on the Cotswold traditions began about 1960. I was inspired to start by the Helm index to the Sharp mss at Clare College and finding access through Douglas Kennedym, then Director, to a microfilm copy in the Vaughan Williams Library. Besides consulting the Sharp mss, travelling by train and bus, I met various major and minor collectors, including Carey, Karpeles, Schofield, and Hamer who were generous with access to their own work, and visited and talked with the survivors of the early Travelling Morrice tours and other key pre-war dancers such as Ralph Honeybone. He had been a young dancer under Tiddy at Ascott, his batman at one period in WW I, a post WW I scholar at Oxford and for a time a member of the HQ display team until he settled as a teacher at Evesham. The approach to the material that we had then, still aimed for accuracy of reproduction in the dances rather than inspiration from them. The overall position was reviewed by the Ring Advisory Council who were provided with draft papers and lists of dances, tunes, titles, etc. but the attitude favoured was transmission only by word of foot. Dr Peck as Recorder kept all the copies of draft examples of possible publications. Via Arthur Warland I had seen an early version of Lionel Bacon's pocket book, started in his Whitchurch days, when Arthur, an ex-Whitchurch man, was a Guildford Morris dancer and I had then corresponded with Lionel about the dances that I found.

I had met dancers at Fieldtown, and one evening with Ewart Russell, the then Ring bagman, they got together to show us their dances at the Fox Inn in Leafield. One played the piano for the dancing. What they did was good but

unrecognisable, until they tried Bean Setting. We realised that they were reproducing not very well the Headington dances probably how they had been taught them at school - no wonder the Franklin brothers had thought them rather poor. I also met the last of Sam Bennett's Ilmington mens side, who although only partially sighted showed us his photographs and told about the personalities, as well as Sam's son and daughter who had danced as children. There were the sons and a daughter of old dancers at Bidford who had started training to replace the older men before the first world war, the son and daughter of Mr Evans who had gone to Bidford practices with their father, the younger son of Harry Taylor of Longborough, persons who had danced at Ascott-under-Wychwood as children and learnt the steps of the local jigs, the son of a Ducklington dancer who could dance his father's Jockey to the Fair and had danced jigs with Joe Buckingham at Bampton. Then there were old dancers at Eynsham and Abingdon whose memories were later tapped locally for the revival of their dances. The traditional dancers and children talked to me about the dances and movements on the understanding that it would be made generally available, a promise I have tried to keep.

The exploitation followed midweek Thames Valley Nights which started in 1961 at Jim Brooks' cellar in Thames Ditton and then at Chris Panton's house. It led to Morris Ring Instructionals under Squire Dr. Lionel Bacon in Oddington and Wheatley. We were at Sheffield University giving such an instructional the day President John Kennedy was killed in 1963.

In the 1960's in Bampton the weekend started with the shirt race and a barn dance on the Saturday, pub sessions and a practice on the Sunday, dancing all of Monday starting at the doctor's, ending with street dancing including social dancing outside the Horseshoe. They were so stiff on the Tuesday! The morris would stop in the late afternoon for milking until the key dancers took jobs at Smiths in Witney. It was in 1962 that I bought a cine camera because no one seemed to be recording any of the traditional morris and it was all on hard times, that it seemed unlikely to survive for long. Later Bampton invited sides for the evening. Some dancers were so insensitive that they walked around all day in kit and often had to be shooed out of gardens well after the local morris party had left. There had been two sides at Bampton from the year of the General Strike until the second world war, and then the second side started again in the 1950's until Arnold Woodley had his illness. It restarted about 1970, and then split further over a disagreement about performing in London at Cecil Sharp House after an Albert Hall Show.

Until 1970 there were the annual Halsway Manor advanced morris weekends organised by Bob Bradbury, which influenced a whole generation of eventual leaders. Nibs Matthews led the first about 1964. There are many anecdotes of the goings on from the Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, covering the outrageous social dancing and the inspirational sessions. Bob used to arrange for a coach load of women for the Saturday evening social dance or party, but at the magic hour of midnight it would revert back to a male morris event, which went on until the last dancer gave up. The first session Sunday morning was always something special to follow on the fun of the night before, it was when tasks or ideas were passed out and groups were given time to work up something to encourage creativity. I remember a dance with teapots and cups and saucers to the Billy Wells tune Polly Put the Kettle On, a blacksmith's dance with croquet mallets and a log, and Moulton performing the Battle of Waterloo complete with cardboard cannon and a heap of bodies for the final All-In! The evening dances were enlivened by constructing routines by spinning a wheel of fortune or pulling labeled balls out of a lucky dip, and the most memorable stunt was Jim Reynolds jumping through a flaming hoop!

Much new material was tried, including the then known North West morris, under the teaching of Julian Pilling, and what became called by Dr Cawte the Border dances. Typical was Ascot-under Wychwood of which Hugh Rippon later took an interpretation to Herga and then another to Coventry. Later I found, after a Blackmore Morris Men workshop, that Royal Liberty had had an independent start into this tradition, derived I think directly from the Sharp mss.

Halsway Manor became too expensive, so it was followed by the Cardiff Morris weekends at Boys Town, St Athan, near Cardiff Airport and Barry Island, and mostly held in an unheated gymnasium in the depth of winter. But where else could you drink the place dry and have a lorry load of beer delivered on Sunday morning on sale or return! The site staff loved us because we ate everything put in front of us! These events also left memories, playing Cardinal Puff into the small hours, someone's suitcase being placed on the top of the flagpole, and the man who slept so soundly that he was moved bed and all out into the garden area. Then there was the flag that was burnt, and filling up the car with organic produce by the sackful from a store in Llantwit Major.

In my workshops I was exploiting the differences between the publications and the mss, even though I believed that the publications were probably the author's best views, although there was evidence of adjustment for consistency with previous publications and of Sharp's modifications to collected material for his later editions. The intention was to force people to choices rather than to repetition, so that it was not a museum morris, and it could become a question of interpretations rather than replications. It would then be closer to traditional behaviour, a continual rejuvenating of the heritage, and with the dancers being in charge of the dances not the reverse. Changes to the root material were not encouraged, particularly those appearing due to ignorance, but the possibility was admitted. However diversity was thought to be essential for the future health of the morris, as is bio-diversity now for the world.

Morris workshops at Sidmouth started about 1967 and were soon confined to men only.

I developed a personal style of a tradition per workshop session. In one and a half to two hours I found that I said all that was needed on a particular tradition without imposing styles that would be inconsistent with a dancer's club's practice. The detailed teaching of unfamiliar dances was not realised by many leaders to be a fraud as they could not know the original fine detail, so that it became just an ego trip. There is a difference between classes and workshops, one is to hone a dance and the other for the formation of attitudes. Creative morris material was not yet available as it is today. I found that it was a mistake to try and make annual workshop contributions at Sidmouth, the Festival deserves the best to be inspirational, and freshness is important.

One problem with my approach was that people left with various impressions of what they had learnt. The story got around that I taught it differently every time, although I did not, and my notes prove it. The issue was that the dancers did not remember everything as shown at the time and substituted elements from their previous experience. It did not worry me, as I assumed that Clubs could sort themselves out, but to have what they last did presented as authoritative was not what I expected.

This was a time of defined Sidmouth Booking busking sites which were booked and often advertised in the Festival's daily newsletter.

It is worth recalling the half a dozen people who profoundly influenced me with the morris. First was Alan Browning (Farnborough) who introduced me to the morris and its role as an event. Then Mary Ireson (Border Morris, Surrey/Hants that is) who showed how to run a group and be involved locally. Frank Purslow (Abingdon) introduced me to the surviving tradition and to its roots in the way society was. Jim Brookes (Thanmes Valley) had infectious enthusiasm and encouraged the recovery and exploiting of material. Eric Reynolds (Bath City) brought the inherent fun of the morris, and finally Tony Barrand (Marlborough/Vermont) gave me the appreciation of the aesthetics and fundamentals of movement. There are many others who made contributions, to whom I will be eternally grateful. None of it would have happened without the support of the then Ring Bagman Ewart Russell.

A great long term influence from the 1970's was the morris at Bath University. I first met Eric Reynolds, known as Tubby it was said because of a resemblance to Tony "Tub" Hancock, in the first National Folk Week held during 1967. He had danced with Bathampton and then Apley. That week I also talked with Hargreaves of Evesham collecting fame at Hereford while watching Chipping Campden, having seen earlier in the week the first public performance by Leyland. They were out with women doing country dances as well, so they were not drinking. Bath discovered that the folk world stopped for the Albert Hall Show so they created the "Albert Out of Town" weekend of workshops, dances and shows. Tubby and I became a well known double act, influencing each others styles of calling, teaching and playing. My personal debt to him and Betty is enormous. Later I was able to work up with the Bath City men on an annual cycle reviving the Cotswold traditions of Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt, and Ascot-under-Wychwood, leading to a Ring Instructional in Ducklington, a first for a young side from a university. A lesson from working with students was never to repeat stunts. Repetition tended to make them crueler and more unpleasant. Fun should arise spontaneously, out of the circumstances.

15 PUBLICATION

After Sharp, Neal, Graham and Miss Herschel, Maud Karpeles published collected dances in the Journal of the EFDS and then a booklet of dances and jigs. These included the Upton on Severn stick dance, which had actually been discovered by Prof and Mrs Schofield, and was published to a Newfoundland jig tune that Maud had collected, rather than to the popular tunes to which it had been danced traditionally. Maud then published a book on the Royton dance from Lancashire which many local people from the north in the 1950's and 60's told me was the definitive description of the North West dance tradition! Kenworthy-Schofield published in the Journal dances from Bledington, Longborough and Fieldtown, gathered as a result of the Travelling Morrice tours and follow-up visits. Arthur Peck produced a limited circulation booklet on Bampton and Schofield wrote an intended to be published mss on the recollection of Headington. Major Fryer circulated notations for the recovered Abingdon dances and noted the Eynsham dances as they were being performed just before the last War. Fred Hamer was able to collect dances in Brackley after the war. Ignored were the vast collection of unpublished dances in the Sharp mss and Field Notebooks.

How was it originally done? It is unknowable. One insight that I have gained through my failure has been that one cannot establish how it was done, how it was as collected, or even how it was taught from then onwards. No morris dancer appears able to show how their past teacher moved, only how they do it themselves now. The dancing of some sides looks like that of their role model foreman, but also club style can persist for 25 years or more, as can be seen with the older university sides. This makes the current mature morris the reference for the traditions, as there is nothing else to tap. Films records are not so conclusive as might be imagined as they capture only one performance of something which is inherently variable.

All the early collectors and interpreters of the 50's and 60's have gone or are now inactive and the next two decade's leaders are going rapidly.

The key step following the workshops was the BLACK BOOK written and produced by the late Dr Lionel Bacon and drawing on the experience of the interpretation phases. It would have been unacceptable coming from anyone else. We now had 380 dances. The book production had to be a several stage process. There was an uneven result as the first sections were committed for printing before the presentation style matured. The Abingdon, Chipping Campden and Evesham dances were omitted. The latter because Russell Wortley wanted to publish them first in English Dance and Song but never did.

There were further publications around including audio tapes and printed tune books. These did not face up to the problems of the music and the dancers working together. Country dance musicians learn to lead the dancers, which is not desirable in the morris as the dancers have normally a greater understanding of what they want to do than do the musicians. Dance booklets addressed steps not style, and books like Tony Barrand's *Six Fools and a Dancer* are still rare.

The Morris Ring archives produced several evidence summaries, some rather unthinkingly as with Stretton-on-Fosse and Lower Swell, which were Bennett's Ilmington and a Longborough respectively. These summaries could be the basis for a new interpretation of an existing tradition, but not of finding new traditions from well worked over sources. The Fieldtown set was not a complete collection of the available material. It would have been better if there had been some checking around before rushing into publication.

I circulated unsigned and undated mss on all the forms of traditional dance at workshops, eg. Halsway and St Athan, and at any other opportunity. A set of early material was given to the Vaughan Williams library and to the Morris Ring archive. Then Tony Barrand in the USA published through the CDS of America a vastly larger five volume edited set of the material that I has passed to him privately covering up to a cut off date of 1980 because of the perceived need in the USA. I continued to produce sets of notations and essays based on lectures.

Sides are now producing publications of their own distinctive "new" traditions, not all of which are successful I have to admit. The origins of notations in circulation is now of less interest - the concern is with the quality of the dance. Good simple dances are still hard to create. Clubs are now happy to work over a new dance until it suits them.

16 WHAT WAS MISSED

Although a rich harvest has been gathered, a number of opportunities to recover dances were lost, some due to prejudice, but mostly through looking too late, thinking wrongly that all had been found. When the foreman of the Stony Stratford Morris was found by Russell Wortley he was too old and too ill, no one had been looking that far over. A man called at Salisbury Museum and spoke to the attendant about the Salisbury Morris and its dance, but he did not think to catch his name and address. Younger dancers at a number of villages were ignored until it was too late, the fiddler for Simpson's children's side at Upton near Didcot, who reputedly played the tunes until near her death, was just missed. The morris at Yardley Gobion was considered untraditional because the leader had been influenced both by Brackley and by dancing in Lancashire, and the adverse comments, particularly by Maud Karpeles, put off collectors and the possible informants in the village. A traditional dancer had a late side at Minchinhamstead.

We are now aware of other dance traditions which could have been captured if the early collectors had bothered. There were solo morris dancers at Horsham and Puttenham under Hogsback, a late Victorian dance team with a fiddler in North Farnborough, the Bezant dancing procession at Shaftesbury, set dances in the Somerset mining areas, and other Furry Dances in Cornwall. It was only luck that references to dances done by Friendly Societies in Dorset during their annual walks were found in their deposited records in County Archives. Another ignored area were the simple dances done by mummers, often versions of reels. Thomas Hardy wrote to the EFDS saying that the reels were the common social and presumably competition dances of the people before the Country dances spread to them in earliest Victorian times. The urge to dress up/down and dance seems to have been universal.

The plaited ribbon maypole dance was once part of the repertoire of professional dance display organisers, appearing in pleasure gardens. One such had a 128 dancers in four separate rings. As an idiom it appears infrequently across Europe, but was danced as far away as Southern India. The popularity in England came from its introduction at a Teacher's Training College and hence the spreading to schools at the end of the nineteenth century. A true pole has both a fixed and a rotating head, although the commonly published five figures (or dances) hardly exploit this feature. Many more figures were available at the start of the twentieth century, at least twenty. Many people have found that with small children the movements often need some simplification, but there is no mechanism existing to tap the experiences and learn the lessons. However Anne Marie Hulme showed that very effective use can be made of the two rings by combining simultaneously open and closed figures with outer and inner rings separately. On the continent men perform maypole at great speed, and have asymmetric figures as well.

17 SERENDIPITY

I came to Sidmouth in 1968, the year after the branch line closed, with Griff Jones to film on 16 mm the invited Loftus long sword team in a quiet spot, we could still do that in late 1970's. They had long and short versions of their dance, depending on the performance circumstances. Other sides came to Sidmouth just for the morris despite the wealth of other available activities at the Festival. They wanted the accolade of just being there, for example Adderbury, England's Glory, Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish, and Windsor in skirts, came in the mid 1970's. Sidmouth Morris workshops were held in the Drill Hall and Ham Marquee. The informal Morris was performed in the ford, at the Ham turning, in the road at the Marine Bars and outside the Swan. The morris workshops excluded women.

The EFDSS staff had felt the pressure for something which would be widely acceptable for use in mixed sex workshops and eventually in public performance. Bill Rutter's two ladies' ritual dance sessions were initiated in 1972, although it involved neither ladies or ritual. The terms were chosen to avoid giving anyone offence but were still a little denigrating. They were presented with otherwise seldom used material, including 19th century dances mentioned in the Dorset Friendly Society lists, eg. Spithead Fleet, enthused over at the time by John Kirkpatrick. There was not a great deal of material in existence in the mid 1970's. But it was a trigger. Women went home from Sidmouth, talked and formed the first women's clubs. The series that year were called "serendipity", and included a percussion session with Bill Willcocks playing which allowed even large pebbles off the beach, and the making of wallpaper strips covered mummers jackets using wallpaper sample books. I lost a large number of scissors that day.

There were no precedents, and the women had little self confidence. It was not known what a feminine morris would be like. Perhaps we imagined it could be like Stroud have become. There had been past traditional children's and teenage teams, but most were thought then to be derivative from men's dances. The feminist position was then only beginning to be appreciated. I am still surprised how we all accepted the previous position without question. But to be as good as a men's side seemed an uninspiring goal.

The dances used included North West Morris (what we called Knutsford I believe was really the Leyland Junior dance as seen at Knutsford), Garland dances, some from foreign sides that came to Sidmouth, the morris like Isle of Man dance Mona's Delight, Wheatley, and Sam Bennett's morris at Ilmington which had been done latterly by women and then children. The use of this version as a starting point led eventually to a dispute between the revived Ilmington village side and England's Glory which reached the media. Ilmington also scuppered a proposal for a linkage between the Cotswold sides because it would have involved women's teams.

This was also the time of Whitethorn in long Laura Ashley dresses, but it did not take long for such mistakes to be rectified.

A number of modern dance tradition interpretations were initiated about this time.

There was little North West and Garland dancing around : Bacup, Manley, Manchester, then Colne, John O'Gaunt and Garstang but the folk world ignored Carnival Morris, adult survivors such as Altringham and other relics. Recognised morris had to come from within the "folk" world. There was still a looking back in time. Welsh "Border" morris, not the Welsh "Marches" which would seem historically more correct, although the majority of the counties are normally grouped as the West Midlands, has existed in its modern form only since the Ledbury workshop in January 1972. I know because my youngest son Reuben was being born. That weekend involved Tubby and left Betty babysitting the Dommetts. I had published a set of notations called "Other Morris" because it included similar dances from elsewhere, such as Kimber's Headington Morris Reels and Steeple Claydon, Bucks. Such had been used at an EFDSS weekend residential Staff Conference because of the already mentioned perceived need to have some easy morris that could be used in mixed sex situations. Then there were the Dorset and Wiltshire Friendly Society Stave dances taught to Bath by 1978, and worked up by Abercorn, but only Ursa Major have brought them to Sidmouth, although others, eg. the Dorset Knobs and Knockers mixed club have danced them on the front. The dances have not been much workshoped at Sidmouth because of their limited regional interest.

One influential feature at this time were the half hour talks at the Bowd Marquee before or between the morris workshops. The pressure on the workshop programme has eliminated such possibilities. The more recent talks at less convenient locations and timings do not get to the same sort of audience.

There were now three national coordinating organisations, rather than regional ones. That in itself is not a problem, other activities, such as the Northern Carnival Associations, have many more, for similar aggregate numbers. The core of the men's problem with sharing the morris with the women appeared to centre on finding what was being lost rather than what was being gained. They had seen what had happened to the North West tradition when it had centred on the carnivals with their competitions for children and teenagers. The issues often arose because men had no relevant knowledge of our social history and therefore had a naturally inappropriate response. The issue was of "history", based on facts, versus the "past", which is the "understanding" or perception in people's minds. Women as a group had spent 25 years working on the issues and problems, but the men, perhaps not realising the significance of the new perspectives, had hardly started into theirs in the same period. I expect to see change and progress still occurring as the balance swings again.

There was a Morris Ring Advisory Council meeting, of ex and current Ring Officials, mostly elderly, plus area representatives, which discussed the attitude to be taken towards the imminent growth of women's sides. It was concluded that the constituent clubs would not welcome any compromise, despite the fact that all the members who spoke owed something about their morris to individual women as teachers, organisers or musicians. The Ring initially took a destructive attitude towards the Morris Federation and to avoid being swamped and closed down the Federation had to be centred on Women's sides. The Open Morris which formed later did not face an equivalent threat and never seemed to understand that initial condition, however it proved that a realistic third position existed. It has adopted stances very similar to those that have been found desirable abroad. Perhaps it is consequence of a

greater dissociation from the past and it may well produce the healthier attitudes. The conflict still consumes some individuals. I believe that such internal dissent leaves self inflicted wounds that we still can't afford. Today the organisations interface well and are collaborating successfully in a number of areas.

I believed that the attitude had to be that if anyone must dance, they should dance well and not be given second or third rate tuition, as poor morris reflected onto the standing of all morris, past, present and future. Times have changed, most formerly chauvinist sides in my experience now coexist with their neighbouring women's teams, although some people do not seem to agree with me.

Having worked with many sides, some for years, I find that there are significant differences between a men's and a women's side. Women tend to role play during the day depending on circumstances and who they are with, to the extent of choosing appropriate clothes, etc. At the morris practice they seem to be just themselves and get stuck into it. The men have the opposite experience, work does not allow of role playing, and it comes out in their leisure activities.

The so called Village revivals in the Cotswolds provided a new attitude to the handling of the available material. It had all to be exploited, interpretations rationalised and perceived repertoire gaps filled. We can see the wider effect of the Eynsham revival on the style of performance of their tradition elsewhere and no one ever dances Brighton Camp in the old EFDSS way.

The 25th Anniversary of the Sidmouth Festival occurred in 1979, the year that Bill Rutter retired, and the organisers arranged for two dance platforms to be available by the arena all weekend for near continuous morris and many sides volunteered to come from both far and near.

18 COMPETITIONS & OTHER BENEFITS

They had occurred regularly in the 19th century at Kirtlington and Stow-on-the-Wold and occasionally elsewhere as discussed in Keith Chandler's book. Competition still exists in achieving grades in Arts and Musical Festivals and even in the degree of needle when any sides meet to dance to each other. Probably there were always some competition, as most people will try anything, if there is the prospect of a reward at the end, as at the 18th and early 19th century ales.

The ritual competition at Sidmouth, which started in 1983 and ended in the late 1990's, always produced problems with the judging as it was a premier competition, partly because of the spread in the standards of the sides who have entered such varied traditions. My experience of Llangollen was that there the judges were hot on authenticity and tore into the Scots for wearing unhistoric costume and the Israelis for inherently not having an old dance tradition. At the Bath Festival competition the majority of judges applied purely artistic standards knowing nothing of the tradition. How else could Bampton come last, just because they could not dance in shoes a very slippery ballroom floor and took them off! Too often side organisers wanted to hear kind words, more appropriate to local festivals where encouragement is important.

The solo jig competition at Sidmouth started in 1988, sponsored by the Seven Champions and organised by Tracey Rose, in memory of John Gasson, musician of Mr Jorrocks Morris and a dancer with the Seven Champions, who died on the way to the Festival.

There have been folk dance sections in Arts Festivals. They can be very stimulating if the organisers are sympathetic to the morris as it is today. Entering for a year or two is a useful stage for any club to go through, it builds self confidence, focuses and raises standards all round, and informed adjudication is always helpful. At the level of children's sides, poor technique can be commented upon constructively, such as avoiding learning the dance in sections and pausing between them, rather than flowing on. Judging is itself a test of character, you have to find a realistic way of ranking large numbers of children dancing in turn Baccapipes or Shepherd's Hey jigs.

In the north-east there were rapper sword competitions very early, Dougla Kennedy judged one soon after he became EFDS director following Cecil Sharp's death

The concept of "Meet-the-Teams", "An-Hour-with" or "A Chance to Meet" at Sidmouth has been stimulating, it stretching back in concept to the "Swappers Club" started in 1966. It has brought to our notice "ritual" material such as a Czech sword dance, the Flemish and Provence garland dances, the Italian Carnival dancers from Ponte Caffero with their longways dances in masks, many solo and group dances using sticks and the Basques of course with something of everything. Seen also have been the comic dances, the equivalent to the UK's morris skits and stunts and which has helped fill in what the earlier English collectors had missed or ignored. As the English role model was often old men, the young disciplined overseas sides appeared so stimulating. I have realised that dance body language depends more on age than on differences in a dancer's initial training. Although there are always a few older dancers around foreign groups, they are seldom prominent in the dancing.

For a while there was an English afternoon at the Connaught Gardens using small size stage which looked like those often seen for sideside perriots.

The discovery of creativity which was the aspect of tradition naturally ignored by the collectors has been a significant gain. Now teams teach from own repertoire which solves the problem of how to approach the finer detail of performance without imposing outside standards for the well known traditions onto clubs, and it is a positive advantage in that the teachers are fully conversant with their material. With so much morris now around, hopefully regional versions of all the types of "traditions" will evolve, as with other performing arts which do not have nationwide exposure.

19 INVITED TEAMS

From the start of JKL filming festival sides, starting in 1988, the invited English and American Morris have included,

1988	Adderbury, Seven Champions
1989	Horwich, Lizzie Dripping, Shropshire Bedlams & Marth Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish
1990	Bolton, Carlisle, Sheffield
1991	Half Moon, Kirtlington, Poynton Jemmers
1992	Bantam Cocks, Handsworth, Rivington, Seven Champions
1993	High Spen, Ironside & Severn Guilders, Leyland, Windsor
1994	Eynsham, Great Western, Mayflower
1995	?
1996	"Frost & Fire", Bacup
1997	?
1998	Half Moon, Hammersmith, Stroud
1999	"Flashback", Bampton, Fosbrook, Handsworth, Headington, Rivington
2000	"Whistlestop 2000", Abingdon, Berkshire Bedlam, Betty Lupton's Ladle Lakers, High Spen, Ripon City
2001	Chinewde, Ouse Washes Molly, Great Western, Shropshire Bedlams & Martha Rhoden's
2002	Bacup, Orion Longsword, Windsor, Witchmen
2003	"Flame!", Chiltern Hundreds, Gog Magog Molly, Grenoside, Hexham, Stubbing Billy
2004	"Leap!", Albion, Bacup, Hammersmith, Seven Champions, Stroud

A significant impact of the SIDMOUTH Festival has been from the invited English teams which have all been of the highest standard and represented all aspects of the current interpretations of the traditions. We have seen orthodox Cotswold with Kennett, enterprising morris with Great Western, revivals from Adderbury and Kirtlington, the old tradition from Bampton and Eynsham, the developed traditions from Old Spot, Jorrocks and Windsor and own traditions from Sheffield and Bantam Cocks (Raglan) amongst others in recent years. There have been border and street dance teams, and the unclassifiable Seven Champions and Lizzy Dripping. There have been North West teams from Lancashire, Cheshire and the neighbouring counties of Yorkshire and Surrey, both mens' and womens' sides dancing collected and newly created dances. The performance of invited sides at Sidmouth is more telling than at the other massed morris festivals and meetings or days of dance where sides are not really watched and thought about in the same way.

There has been some success in that dances have been given back to the people, but only as dance troupes, not to communities as part of their repertoire of means of expression, therefore there is still a need for historical research as to actual happenings as models, and the need grows increasingly important, as society becomes more a set of loose network of contacts and not neighbourhoods.

Over time it has been obvious that side's standards plateau and their repertoires settle down after a few years. It became a good policy to see a new side in its second or third year while its initial impulse was still there. Another lesson has been in realising the different rate of progress as sides and people age. The urge to bring in new dances and traditions to a Cotswold side is perhaps a response to wanting to regain the early excitements. It is not driven by outside objectives such as a community interaction. In practice you don't need much variety but stamina for a one and half hour carnival procession.

20 THE GOLDEN AGE OF SIDMOUTH MORRIS

I had contibuted workshops to the Morris Federation from its beginning and it eventually settled into a series of weekends dotted around the country, Norwich, Brighton, East Grinstead, etc, but then they found Lains Barn, recently restored near Wantage, with non-segregated sleeping at a Youth Hostel on the ridge above the town. It proved an excellent base for weekends, held every 18 months to alternate spring and autumn. The food was always incredibly good. As many of the dancers attending were very experienced, it was possible to work on dances which would have been impossible in other circumstances, Matachin, Irish Mummings, Sand Dance, etc. I felt that it would lead to a better appreciation if the dances were experienced rather than just watched, although it was very unlikely that anyone would try to introduce them to their own club! The last I led was in 1998. Unfortunately Lains Barn appears to have becoime too expensive for the weekends to continue economically. My very last day workshop was with very old friends Knots of May at Lewes.

However the days of instructionals based on traditions or particular dances was now largely over. The need was for the more subtle issues to be addressed which had only made in passing at previous workshops, such as the fundamentals which all should learn without having to reinvent them in each club.

By the late 1980's the morris at Sidmouth was being marginalised with reducing involvement and dance opportunities. There was a general feeling that the morris was difficult to control in a fast paced public show. In 1991 the morris workshops were not programmed until the last minute and could only be fitted in at an unsocial time for the morris dancers (lunch time).

Sue Swift and Sally Wearing, who had extensive experience of running workshops and forman's weekends, took up the situation with the Festival organisers, and the result was that they were in charge in 1992. Their intention was to raise the public profile of the morris, it took six years! First they introduced the Morris Party, and the idea of sides coming to perform outside of the arena having half price tickets. The workshops covered various dance idioms, with exciting titles and different teachers each day, and including topics such as jigs and presentation.

In subsequent years the workshops included, presentation of the morris, Crookham Mummings, preparing for performance, fools and announcers. 1994 saw the introduction of tasters for traditions. Then followed alternative therapy, shouting for the morris, jig masterclass, morris kit design and voice projection. An ever widening range of dance workshops were held. More workshops were on massage, and the public image of the morris. Finally in 1998 was the first Whistlestop show in the arena, then Flashback in the evening on the arena in 1999. Flame and Leap appeared in 2003 and 2004. But then you all know about what happened in the last few years!

21 MEETING THE MORRIS OVERSEAS

I have been lucky to have had several morris orientated visits. I felt it to be important to see what is universal, what is dependent on local culture, and what reflects greater social needs and activities. The first visit to each country occured at about the same stage of their development. Each country had a long history of morris teaching, but a recent morris culture, like a average age of four years at my first visit, and they were bootstrapping with a lack of good sides to emulate. I found that there was no experience around of workshops given at any real pace, and a general expectation of it providing dances rather than conveying ideas and concepts. Pleasurably I have brought back

good dances from every visit. The last three women's sides with which I worked, Fleur de Lys, Minden Rose and Fleet Morris owe something of their repertoires in my time to my travels. I like to think that they have the best dances in the world!

I was in the USA in each of 1978-80 and then in 1994 and 1997. They have an old tradition going back to Sharp and Neal, and probably a better continuity than in the UK. Florrie Warren went out with Mary Neal before WW I in 1910-11, and she stayed and married an American in February 1912, who had followed and caught up with her before the return ship sailed. Her story was been established and published. She only came back to the UK for Mary Neal's CBE celebration in 1937. May Gadd had provided the continuity. She was invited out soon after Sharp died, and she was still active and attended my first Christchurch UK Festival workshop on the Abingdon dances. She was a stickler, and still teaching in her 80's, as she admitted to me to having lied about her age to remain in employment. Another key person was Mrs Storrow, after whom a room is named in Cecil Sharp House. She was like Rolf Gardiner with a passion to involve the hearts and minds of young people. Rhett Kraus has written a "Hundred Years of Morris in America".

The US morris of necessity has to have two short seasons, which keeps it fresh. They talk of regalia not kit, which a healthier view. It could be quite different in odd ways. Berkeley at first practiced on a hired tennis court. At Knoxville I did a workshop on an empty building lot, which was advertised on the local radio! Tours can be difficult because settlements can be up to forty miles apart, except around Boston, with few or no pub equivalents. There are dry counties, including Beria, Kentucky, where we had an ice cream parlour tour. Students there sometimes spread empty beer cans in the street in the small hours to upset the local law enforcers. Fall craft fairs can occur in woodland miles from anywhere. I saw on TV a stave dance with bamboos as a background on a Whicker's World broadcast. The dancing reaches high standards, perhaps they have not realised what we put up with in the UK! Perhaps also there are few authoritative voices to spread confusion. Costumes are good, there is more money around and they do not have such a penny pinching attitude. There is a current growth of clog and border morris but there not sufficient information available to their clubs and much is owed to videos of a few UK sides,

A great experience was conducting workshops in mirrored dance studios. Seeing oneself directly comparable to the session leader is a powerful leaning tool and I am surprised that English clubs do not exploit the possibility or the Morris Organisations arrange a teach-in with such facilities occasionally.

The annual Pinewoods Camp occurs near Cape Cod on a permanent site between two ponds and has several dance platforms. I went for three weeks in 1980. There is nothing like it and the experiences gained anywhere else. Each week has a different theme. But the children's programmes in family week are compulsory as my youngest children found. This is where a small group of morris dancers, who met annually, became very skilled and danced uniformly, and in 1968 had the first tour of a USA club into the streets. The Pinewoods team joined the English Morris Ring at Nibs Matthews prompting, even though it did not meet all the admission requirements, and has toured around the UK.

By 1973-4 other sides began to form, and in 1976 the first ales started. Perhaps that at Marlborough, Vermont, remains the most influential. Often they were mixed sides. They failed to recognise any value in single sex social functions. Perhaps it was for fear of being split and reverting to older cultural models. There was a strong interest in Morris because it was not competitive, which made it a less usual activity in the USA. They did not want a Ring like super-organisation, a newsletter was enough. Perhaps the distances and isolation are important to forming their attitudes, leading to other modes of interaction. Even within the UK there are many sides who don't want to be in an organisation, and others who are only there for the third party insurance. The audiences have no expectations. My own experience was of them offering helpful advice when they saw mistakes and giving very un-English vocal encouragement. The US lacked fools at the start, but now there are several even trained in the art of mime. Clowns and characters must be seen as an indicator of a stage of morris maturity.

In 1994 I went to the South East to see mostly garland teams, and for the only time to video them dancing in kit as well as teaching new dances. The side from Little Rock travelled about one thousand miles to attend one workshop. It coincided with the coldest winter in ages, we were frozen in near Charlottesville for a week. Because of their relative isolation and limited access to existing dance notations the sides needed reassurance as to their standards and

achievements, which in my opinion were fairly high. Although I did get lost in finding a workshop in a micro-brewery in Richmond and had to deal with a well lubricated Border side!

In 1997 I went to the West Coast at a time when serious doubts were growing about my health. The flight out coincided with the death of Princess Diana. Besides a number of specialist workshops with sides in the San Francisco Bay Area, there was a Cotswold weekend at a camp in the woods behind Santa Cruz. I taught choruses non-stop that I had seen in the UK. It was the first time I found that what I taught was being relayed on the internet. We went onto Seattle where the workshops turned into a series of lectures using the vufoids I had taken, just in case. Yet again the dancing level was high but the isolation of the clubs was a handicap.

From outside everything may be seen as a borrowing, but, if you think it out, the "borrowings" are extensive in both directions, various sports, cheer leaders and pom-poms, etc. They see the morris as part of their own heritage! But the public image is strongly influenced by the appearance and behaviour of the other ethnic groups that exist in the USA.

Flying visits do not indicate the local community involvements, although there are many communal procession opportunities. We need in the UK more understanding of the US morris viewpoint on audiences and street entertainment to help us discover the universal truths. Of my 132 visits to the USA, the vast majority were professional, involved with Anglo-American missile related projects, but the few morris orientated ones at least allowed of the meeting of ordinary people.

The early visit of the women's side Ring O'Bells of New York to the UK was fascinating. They came at a time when some of the UK's women's sides were still being treated as third class citizens. The inquest as their tour ended at Tunbridge Wells was animated!

Australia in 1983. They were boot strapping with too few excellent sides to copy and being too far apart for any to make much impact. The sides seen were single sex. Their annual get together occurred at Easter and I went to an Adelaide meeting and then to a following wine Festival. The massed dance used was the Abram Circle, and with the numbers available it was impressive! They have pubs, and in them we just cleared space for workshops. As major cities are five hundred miles apart they often travel to meet overnight, taking turns to drive and sleep. Other than the formal workshops for the weekend, I was kept away from many of the visiting sides and did most of the work with the Adelaide men. I wish I could have mixed more widely.

New Zealand in 1990. Mr Reynolds had been there before me and was probably the best person from the UK to ever go there to encourage the morris. This is a country of mostly mixed sex sides, which has led to problems in associating with the Australian organisation a thousand odd miles away across the Tasman Sea. Their lively newsletter is called the Sphere and they have listed every dancer's address not just the club contacts. They get together at their new year although it is out of season. Distances are also a problem. Erehwon, from Christchurch on South Island, was started by an ex-Bath lecturer but they had no musician for three years and used UK supplied tapes. A success has been that morris was included in the opening ceremony at the Auckland Commonwealth Games. The morris world comradeship is unbelievable by English standards. There is steady flow of dancers to and from England.

The tour to New Zealand, from Boxing Day until February, had the most profound effect on me of all my trips abroad. The people, the attitudes, the places, the food, the morris, and even the beer, left lasting memories and the searching for New Zealand's products in English supermarkets.

A common problem abroad is being English, where for historical reasons it is often considered related to colonial attitudes and has to be lived down.. In Vancouver with so many Asians, the local men's side has three short seasons, cotswold, clog and border, to uphold Englishness.

I did one workshop in Scotland, for the Caledonian Morris in Edinburgh, made particularly memorable by teaching North West processional dances in a street in front of a crescent of grand houses.

I have talked to people about morris in Denmark, Holland, Hong Kong, South Africa, Abu Dhabi, a team of Lascars on a tanker with mahogany sticks, and one on the Antarctic supply ship. This is only done going south. Perhaps there is a cove there full of penguins and morris dancers!

22 EVOLUTION

That society has been changing since the beginning of morris dancing is not surprising, so the role and character of the morris has been changing with it. The quotations on morris 200-250 years ago suggest that the basic motivations of morris dancers have hardly changed, but the form has been developing. The stick dancing of the Central Midlands spread south and was gradually adopted by South Midland teams, stick dances are a larger part of the northern team repertoires than the southern, and the sticks have gradually got longer in the revival, once no more than 27 inches long, they have grown to a yard! It has been even worse for the Border dances, which were often done with very short sticks perhaps only 8 inches long, the tradition emphasising precision not strength.

Evidence from the tradition is of rolling repertoires, although the rate of change might have been less than today because teams met less frequently, but sides were more short lived and each reincarnation seems to dramatically alter the detail.

Over the decades the morris fell in status, involving more of the lower classes and the events becoming more boisterous. However remember that the brighter members of the communities did not receive higher education or go onto university as they do today.

It had been felt by the Kennedys after the last War that there was a place for a simpler teaching "tradition" as the commonly performed Sharp published morris had technical difficulties which could take two or three years for proficiency yet some surviving teams had small and simple repertoires. Of course there was no agreement on how it might be. The issue was solved by the reconstruction of traditions such as Wheatley, Ducklington and Stanton Harcourt.

Due to the general absence of knowledge of the collected but unpublished dances, a number of variations had grown up within morris clubs, particularly in the touring Travelling Morrice (Cambridge) and the Ancient Men (Oxford). These seemed to be the natural developments that would be expected in a living tradition, but they were mostly dropped as fuller information became available.

23 THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

The average standard of dancing today is only moderate. There is a great ignorance of the basics of movement and a heavy reliance on mimicking role models rather than explaining principles. Such elementary points as the "dancing" of the handkerchiefs, the control of breathing, the angles of feet are not considered. No matter how stirring jig dancing is in the Sidmouth competitions, no one will obtain the highest marks possible without attention to such detail.

The collected "Border" dances, about twelve of them, each quite different in details, as at Brimfield and White Ladies Aston varying from year to year, were all rather simple. It is possible that these were the core versions which could have been elaborated as occasion required. In the days when sides did not choreograph their own dances, they had very limited appeal, even in their native West Midlands. The breakthrough came with the realisation that the material could be rationalised within a "house" style, of which Shropshire Bedlams were the most obvious exponents. The idiom exploded, another niche had been discovered. The proliferation of ideas was enormous - the problem, as with all new fields, was how to promulgate the best of what was appearing, to give new sides a boost. My part was to run an annual day long workshop passing on what I had seen. Each was organised by a local club for two or three years in turn. The first was at Church Crookham run by Fleet Morris, a Cotswold side, then in Alton and then Farnham by Alton Morris, which had been a male Cotswold side but which became a mixed Border team, followed by some at Woodley run by Shinfield Shambles, a womens side, and finally at Bracknell by the mixed OBJ. One point of honour was never to repeat the teaching of a dance another year.

I had far less to do with Modern Molly, although I encouraged The Seven Champions through a Masterclass with them during an early visit to Sidmouth, and I have had great pleasure from the occasional visit to Whittlesey Straw

Bear, even though the fens in January can be very bleak. I had been to Cyril Papworth's workshops on Cambridgeshire Feast Dances, and I did a morning workshop in Norwich for local Molly sides of the collected material to contrast with their own developed versions of the same dances. It was said that when the Cambridge Morris Men did the traditional form of the dances in the original villages, the locals much preferred the Cotswold dances they had done on previous visits. But the music hall style of the "Champs", so appreciated by my mother, is winning hands down. Seeing the children from local villages around Downham Market in colourful costumes performing in that style one evening demonstrated its rightness for today.

Although I had a hand in recreating a number of traditions, it was always based on existing information, plus dance experience and practicality, for a "realisation". Familiarity with a wide range of sources avoided many of the problems of interpretation which have spoiled other efforts. Perhaps the most obvious example is the reconstruction of the Welsh Nantgarw dances, for example Y Gaseg Eira - The Snow Mare, which has been published several times from the original wording as remembered to more and more elaborate interpretations, or Tom Jones Rally, whose modern performance is far removed from what the source originally said. Personally I never thought about inventing something entirely new - there was always so much other material to work on anyhow - until at one Wantage weekend I was inspired to produce a tradition along the lines of Brackley rather than those being created elsewhere. I called it Juniper Hill, and named the dances after places in Flora Thompson's books. A side at Norwich took it up and I had the thrill of filming them later. However there have been some material passed to me over the years which in retrospect I view with suspicion because they have been impossible to confirm independently. I think they may have been deliberate cons, but as they were often good dances they have not been worth ignoring. In the present climate who has the last laugh?

Another generation of influential dancers are passing.

Most new dances have some good ideas, but also a significant amount of padding. Teams seem reluctant to combine the best elements from different dances to raise the standard and keep the size of their repertoire within bounds.

J.K.L. Video Film Services of Temple St, Sidmouth have been filming/videoing the Festival for 17 years and have over 350 films in stock, covering the Arena shows, Meet-the-Teams, Jig Competitions, and specials, as well compilations of the Festival, International dancers, and English Folk and Morris. It is the best accessible collection of English morris dance available in the world. The problem of remembering the main past Festival visitors has now been overcome by David Schofields book, although it is still pot luck on what is on the English Folk and Morris tape which always includes considerable amounts of busking material. Finally it became possible to ask for special compilations to be prepared of any side that has been filmed.

24 THE FUTURE

There has been little added to the morris traditions in forty years other than new ground patterns. There are no really new traditions other than the music hallish Seven Champions, even though the performance of some of them might not be recognisable by the previous generations involved. The style of stepping and body movement seems to be wedded to each particular type of tradition, Cotswold, Border, Molly, Cheshire or Lancashire. It has proven very difficult to invent new slow capers for Cotswold traditions that don't have them, even though in other areas cheer leaders have a score of different jumps. Looking elsewhere at Scottish, Irish, English Step and Appalachian display dancing in groups is no guide, growing as they do from solo stepping and being rhythmic and percussive rather than expressive in movement. The modern ballroom Formation Dancing as used to be seen on TV's "Come Dancing" also emphasises steps and static not dynamic patterns. "Strictly Come dancing" is a very different sort of beast. To grow the Cotswold morris in variety would require new step sequences as at Sherborne of four or even eight bars length. The Cotswold morris appears to be based on a rigid torso, but is this an English posture characteristic, or an effect of most of the sources having been old men? There has been much more posture variety at Bampton where young men have always seen young role models.

A problem arising from the transfer of leadership to a more middle class community has been an isolation of the morris from current cultural influences. In rhythm and movement the characteristic of the 20th century has been the off beat which has influenced the pulse of the stepping at Bampton and Chipping Campden, but by staying with the 19th century it has been difficult to fit to modern tunes and movements. A consequence is that the morris is and will

be rejected by many youngsters and the commercial music and dance world influences will continue to dominate their interests. Perhaps the modern Border dances show the way, with a freedom for individual expression, strong rhythmic movements of any degree of complexity and infinitely adjustable patterns. One great experience was touring with Eclectic Morris from London. I would enjoy it if the future of the morris grew out of what was considered by the early collectors as the degenerate morris! But so much of it today is poor. Some interpretations in dance are now so far from traditional forms that a new term is needed for them - it was going to be "street dances" but the pop world has taken that title over as well.

One feature that has been largely lost is regionalisation of the styles. Examples of each idiom can be found far from its origins. The clubs today have very overlapping catchment areas.

Real history is a complex mess of anecdotes and influences, largely unrecorded. The "past" is a simplified model which enables description, discussion and prediction. The generalisations involved must be illuminating to be credible. A century ago the model for folk customs was of a former richness of behaviour for which there was evidence of recent decline from a distant period lost in the lack of surviving records. Over the last 20 to 30 years many researchers have diligently accumulated the still existing evidence and a different picture has emerged. That an conventional long established view can be overturned is not unusual (1) when all the old evidence is assembled and reconsidered in the light of new material being found. Community based customs come and go, and most of those of which we are aware have an apparent origin in recorded times (2), (3), (4). Another weakness of the old model was in not explaining the motivation, "doing it because it was always done" does not fit in well with much of our present understanding of early modern behaviour, if only because of the known effects of a continually changing social and economic background.

What is tradition? Its no more than a moving window or filter linked to the oldest memories from 2 or 3 generations ago. Before that is unknowable, at least at the level of detail needed to maintain it. Nowadays it would appear that customs can go in waves, each persisting over the timescale of about a century, that is for several active generations of performers. The cycle is of novelty, exuberance, decline into respectability as it is tamed, then perhaps boredom, before a possible rebirth, but this time with many essential differences. But this is still explaining "the what" rather than "the why". For that, the opportunities have to be considered.

What gross changes would have been influential? To begin with there was a phase change in attitudes to the importance of "self" at the Reformation (5) and again a reawakening from the late 18th century into Victorian times, both of which led to massive shifts in what was considered to be acceptable behaviour. The Henrican dissolution of the chantries and monasteries had released monies and encouraged social changes which led to the so called great rebuilding, the generation of layers of gentry and middling prosperous folk, eventually producing a new stratified society ripe for largesse gathering (6). No one has examined yet the distribution of the big houses and large farms and their local implications for patronage, for even a county sized area of the country for which sufficient custom distribution data exists. This social development should have opened up new opportunities. It would support the reason that customs are not evident in the surviving records from before that time because they may not have existed. Of course that would be difficult to prove or disprove. But it also could deal with the intellectual problem of expecting a pre-Christian origin and looking for its survival through centuries of a level of religious commitment which has not been matched since the middle ages.

Another approach is in terms of self interest. The economics in the well substantiated (7) alternating periods of price stability and of rapid rises ensured periods of financial stress for the lower classes through increases in cost of living and rises in rents, and this should have been sufficient encouragement for any local exploitation activity. Hence a probable cycle of novelty, followed by "its customary", and finally by what was in effect a loss through local disinterest. What about the in-between times of price equilibrium? There was a slowly falling cost of living and a steady rise in wages, greater opportunities and diversification, and new fads. As the drive of economic necessity faded, analysis (7) shows that the following periods of apparent social stability actually led to increasing population, pressure on resources, increasing violence and crime, ending with yet another price runaway. When were such runaway periods - there are three that can be identified for consideration, the late 16th and 18th centuries and modern times. But as Mark Twain said, "history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes!" It does not because too many other conditions are changing at the same time.

The model hypothesis to be briefly examined is of a growth of customs seeking largesse in periods of instability and their decline in periods of stability, with probably some time lag between the economics and the customs. Is there evidence to support such an explanation? Consider our "ritual" dance history. The morris appears to show three periods of peak popularity, the 16th century, the mid 18th to early 19th century and the late 20th century, but each is quite different in detail. The sword dance shows two, the mid 18th to mid 19th century and the late 20th, as do Border and Molly Morris with the first one in the 19th century. But we all know that the late 20th century interest is different from the previous two. In another area, although some sort of "Sporting" activity appears always to have been with us, its nature had changed dramatically several times. Late medieval hunting and rough games, went into the chase and shooting, then by the mid 19th century team games became codified, and since the mid 20th century they have become spectator based activities. There are peaks of involvement, but at first sight they are not contemporary across the country. Each would need to be reconsidered in the light of local economic conditions (8).

In general evidence exists for recognisable folk activity only for the late 18th century, not the 16th. Then it was other participatory topics that were developing, music, plays, civic functions, but also the social imbalances that led to the civil war. There are marked changes in society in the periods of instability, so it might be concluded that each wave of any custom is not necessarily driven by economics. The 18th century price instability was a reflection of the agricultural revolution, the enclosures, the transport revolution, the industrial revolution, and the associated changes at all levels as well (9). The Victorian stable period gave early collectors the illusion of enduring activities, and of course the later selling of "folk" as an activity, but without its begging aspects. At least the idea can be a basis for further debate.

The most likely conclusion is that many of our recognised seasonal and calendar customs were responses to the particular conditions of the great price crisis on the end of the 18th century. Thus the new suggestion is that far from the innovations in society of the late 18th and early 19th centuries killing our "ritual" customs, it actually created popular versions of them. We now need more attention to the 18th century and the setting of "folk" elements into context. But the most amazing change since the 19th century is from doing it for economic necessity to supporting charity

25 ENGLISHNESS

It is important to realise that much of our behavior is conditioned by being English, and that we have to stay within the English ways to be accepted. One advantage of my professional job which took me to several countries, meeting and being interested in the local culture and history, was that the exposure to their morris helped me understand what was basically the morris and what was really the local cultural influence. As an example at Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Pueblo Indian Centre has displays and books about their attitudes to exposing their culture to Americans which were very similar to what I have heard morris men say about keeping the morris to those who appreciate it.

Body Language : Morris dancers in costume are always visible and they convey messages to their audience whether dancing or not. The non-participants in any dance will set the mood of a show, so some attention to the impression being given is sensible. The key is to realise that a public performance is not just another practice session done in costume and that normal behaviour at rehearsal may be quite inappropriate to the occasion. Ignoring the dancing and the audience is a fundamental mistake.

26 FAILURES

The major problems with modern morris arise mostly from its inclusiveness, the desire to accommodate as many people as want to join either the dancing or the music. The result is that public shows are just practice nights in kit, with everyone behaving as they do at practice, socialising and ignoring what is going on, and worst of all ignoring the needs of any audience. Inactive dancers treat the audience as just another wall, standing to block their view, ignoring the needs of the elderly and other disadvantaged persons, and often being quite offensive when their anti-social behaviour is pointed out to them. Yet no side appoints a stage manager for public shows.

Letting everyone play is another issue. A serried rank of melody instruments is all too common, standing in a line in front of the dancing set, again blocking the view of many of the audience, but worst of all, just playing the tune and not playing to the dance. Phrasing means reflecting on the effort profile of the dance movements, which requires

some understanding of what is happening in the dance and adjusting to it. Without such a response, the dancing is always much poorer, and the public impact much less. The Cotswold tradition is not played evenly - try dancing to a metronome!

Why do these persist? The majority of a club are usually not even aware of the needs.

27 CONCLUSION

Much has still to be written to put both the historical and the modern morris into their social context. Also to be addressed are the psychological issues, why there appears to be this need to relate to a near mythological past, what is ritual or magic about the performance of the morris, what should be the messages conveyed by body language. If one stops to think about it, the morris has always been in a state of change, at least as far back as we can examine, say to 1860ish. It is happening now as teams "improve" their repertoires. It must be a natural and a healthy characteristic. The appeal today is that it is still the only activity that goes out and meets its audience. Re-enactment and foreign folk groups are mainly locally or nationally funded and perform mostly in closed environments.

The conclusion is that the morris was always changing, it is still changing, and probably change is necessary for its good health. It's wonderful to watch it happen.

To end, there is nothing like the morris and there has been nowhere quite like Sidmouth!

October 2004, R L Dommett V 2.2
December 2010, V3.0

ANNEX A

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE MORRIS

Here are some extracts on the morris towards the end of its hey day.

G Rowell wrote in "Notes on Some Old-Fashioned English Customs" in Folk Lore, Vol 4 part 2 1886.

"So long as Morris dancing was kept up with spirit, ie, to about 1830 or 1840, there was a sort of rivalry in parishes as to which should have the best turn-out, so that the six selected were generally the pick of the parish for activity and appearance. Their dress, if well got up, was uniform, ie, no waistcoat, white linen shirt of good quality pleated and got up in the best style. A broad ribbon from each shoulder was crossed on the breast and back and, terminating at the waist, the ends formed a sort of sash. Small bows of narrow ribbon were fixed on the crossing of the wider ribbon, the shoulders, the wrists, and the upper arms; the colours were sometimes various, but generally those of the nobleman or leading family of the parish. Small bells, producing a sort of jingling sound, attached to the coloured bindings, were fastened around the legs below the knee and above the ankles. Black beaver hat of good quality. From the above, considering the times to which I refer, it may be seen that starting a morris, complete on all points, was rather costly.

The dances were in various forms, but in all the six had to move in unison; sometimes with a white handkerchief in one or both hands waved about in various manners; in other dances there was a clapping of hands, either by each bringing the palms together or by each meeting those of his partner; and, in others, each had a staff of about two feet in length, and these were flourished and clashed together in various ways. There was no display of "footing" in the dancing, but the great aim seemed to be to keep the time and figure, so that every sound and every movement should be strictly in unison.

The music was the simple tabor and pipe, and these probably merely to mark the time: the use of the fiddle in late years seemed quite an inappropriate innovation.

My memory will go fairly back to the first decade of the century [19th] but I have no remembrance of seeing any representation of Maid Marion in connection with the Morris dance, and I see no grounds for mixing up this dance with the Robon Hood characters otherwise than for their being popular amusements of the same times.

The clown I have always known in connection with the Morris dance, but it is probable that this was merely an adoption of the domestic fool from necessity. There was nothing in his get-up to connect him to the dance - he was merely grotesque. He had a stick of about three feet in length with a calf's tail fastened on one end and an inflated bladder suspended at the other, and in the use of it he was privileged. He made very free use of this in clearing and keeping a space for the dancers and in his endeavours to raise a laugh one of the most successful being in the dexterous manner in which he could take a man's hat off by a mere whisk of the calf's tail, or bonnet him by bringing his hat down over his eyes by a blow from the bladder. For such tricks as these, as with the domestic fool, rough as they were, he had full immunity in the general privilege of the clown.

The evidence from Churchwarden's accounts and other statements, given in Brand's "Popular Antiquities" (1873), shows that these and similar pastimes originated or were adopted - at least in some cases - as a means for raising money for parochial and charitable purposes At meetings called for such purposes, even the highest in a parish might attend with propriety, and could hardly avoid doing so, and, doubtless, under such circumstances, the choice of lord and lady (or May Queen) would fall on the apparently most deserving, thus becoming an honour to be wished for. "At present", says Diouce, quoting from Rudder (Brand Vol 1 p 279), "the Whitsun Ales are conducted in the following manner :- Two persons are chosen, previous to the meeting to be lord and lady of the ale, who dress suitably as they can to the character they assume. A large empty barn, or some such building is provided for the lord's hall and fitted with seats to accomodate the company. Here they assemble to dance and regale in the best manner their circumstances and place will afford, and each young fellow treats his girl with a ribbon or favour. The lord and lady honour the hall with their presence attended by the steward, sword-bearer, purse-bearer, and mace-bearer with their several badges or ensigns of office. (The mace is made of silk finely plaited, with ribands on the top and filled with spices and perfumes for such of the company to smell as desire it). They have likewise a trainbearer or page, and a fool or jester, drest in a party-coloured jacket, whose ribaldry and gesticulations contribute not a little to the entertainment of some of the company. The lord's music, consisting of a pipe and tabor, is employed to conduct the dance".

Bearing in mind that in those times bear-baiting, morris-dancing, and the like were royal amusements, it may well be imagined that such meetings as those above described were pleasurable in a high degree, and thus Whitsun-Ales were continued long after the causes which had given rise to them had ceased; but, being carried on merely for profit or sport, degenerated into amusements of a more rollicking and boisterous character than those of the earlier times. However, since the earlier part of the present century [19th] when they were not infrequent, they have altogether ceased, so that there are not many who now know the meaning of the name, which must soon pass altogether out of remembrance.

Under these circumstances the following description of the most recent period may be interesting :-

A large barn was fitted up with seats for the company, and called my lord's hall; a portion for the sale of beer, etc, was called my lord's buttery; and another portion, fitted up with branches and flowers for the sale of cakes and confectionary, was called my lady's bower. Owls were hung about in cages and called my lord's parriots; other songless birds, as the rook, jackdaw, raven, or the like, were called my lady's nightingales; and anyone using a name for these and other objects otherwise than that thus given them became liable to a fine, with a ride on the wooden-horse or my lord's charger.

The lord and lady, with their male and female attendents, all gaily dressed and bedecked with ribbons, were free in their offers of flowers or cake, for the acceptance of which the fee was expected.

The wooden-horse, the principal source for amusement, was a stout pole, elevated on four legs to a convenient height, with a small platform on which the lady's chair was fixed and the man could set his feet as he sat astride the pole. Every man who paid the fine was privileged to mount the horse and be carried round the boundaries, with the lady seated before him, with kisses unlimited. If a female paid forfeit she took the lady's place, and the lord had to mount and do the kissing part. But if a man would not pay in money he had to mount the horse per force and alone, with a practical lesson in rough-riding which he would not readily forget. It was not however altogether as a fine that the money was paid as men and mere boys would intentionally incur the penalty to boast of their ride on the charger and kissing the lady, and many females for mere frolic would follow suit. There were morris-dancings and

other amusements; but enough has been said to show that, whatever we may think of the Whitsun-Ales of olden times, there is not much to regret in their suppression in the later period."

*Laura Gammon wrote **Chalgrove - a Sketch, in "Pelican" Vol V, no.25, February 1883***

None of the old village games, so graphically described in "Tom Brown's Schooldays", are now kept up in the village; but the last hoisting of the Maypole is still kept within the recollection of one or two of the oldest inhabitants. The Maypole took a prominent part in the Wissenail [Whitsun-ale] a merry-making, which lasted for some days at Whitsuntide. It seems to have been a court of misrule. A Lord and Lady were chosen, who were carried round the village on a wooden horse, and afterwards with their followers adjourned to a capacious tythe barn, still known as "Lord's Hall", where morris dancing and feasting were carried on. The Wissenail was held for the last time in the year 1805 or 1806, and at the time the dancing round the Maypole was abolished. The Maypole itself, engraven with a large "M" is still to be seen built in among the rafters of an old barn. In the place of the Wissenail, the village club now holds its annual dinner.

T C Carter collected material for Percy Manning who published in Folk Lore vol.8.

This includes comments that the threshing flails were called "The Lady's Nut Cracker". If the paying of a forfeit was refused, they were carried round the Maypole on the wooden-horse, and, if they still refused, their hats were taken in lieu of payment. Many University men would come over [to Woodstock] from Oxford to ride the wooden horse for the fun of the thing and frequent fights took place between them and the morris dancers when they would not pay.

*Thomas Little wrote "**Confessions of an Oxonian**" in 3 volumes in 1826.*

"The Oxonian was walking one evening in Blenheim Park. I was suddenly roused from my reflections by the sound of tabors, flutes, pipes, tambourines and fiddles, mingled with shouts of merriment and rustic songs, all indicative of glee and rural festivity, and having now passed the gates of the park, I was able to discern the quarter whence the sounds of this merry making proceeded. On enquiry, I learned from an honest, chubby looking clod-pole, that the present occasion was one of no small importance in the vicinity of Woodstock since it recurred only in the space of seven long years; that the period of celebration was always at Whitsuntide and that it was denominated by the ancient appellation of an Ale. Off I walked to be a spectator of the festivities of the Whitsun Ale. On elbowing through the throng, the first fellow I met who was engaged as a party in the revels was an old man dressed up in motley garb of a Tom Fool or Clown and I must say he looked his character to perfection.

"How do master?" cried he, "May I ask your honour what you call that yonder?" pointing to a painted wooden horse, placed in the middle of a ring.

"A wooden horse, to be sure", said I, "What should you think it was?"

"A shilling, sir, if you please," answered the clown, "A forfeit, if you please sir."

"A forfeit, a forfeit! What for?" I enquired, "I'll give you no shilling I assure you."

"Bring out his Lordship's gelding. Here's a gentleman who wishes for a ride! Bring out the gelding!

His Lordship's groom, Hey! Tell her Ladyship to be mounted!"

Here I was seized by four or five clumsy clod-poles, dressed up in coloured rags and ribbons. They were forthwith proceeding to place me on the wooden hobby just mentioned, behind an ugly, red-haired freckled trull, who personated the Lady of the revels. I bellowed out that I would pay the forfeit without more to do, and thus was I scoured of a shilling for not calling the cussed wooden hobby his Lordship's gelding. Shortly after, one of her Ladyship's maids of honour came up to me, and begged me to look at the pretty bird in the cage, hanging over her ladyship's saloon, or dirty oblong tent made of tarpaulin. This was a great ugly white owl, stuffed and I thought I should be safe by answering that it was the very handsomest owl I had ever seen! No sooner had I uttered this, then the fair maid of honour screamed out in treble, shriller than the squeak of a Xmas porker or a pig-drivers horn!

"A forfeit, sir, if you please, a shilling forfeit!"

"Pooh" said I, "I've paid forfeits enough".

On which continuing in the same strain,

"Bring out her Ladyship's cook! Here's a gentleman wishes to marry her!"

On this all the dirty baggages, which formed the group of her Ladyship's Maids of Honour brought out an ugly wench with a nose and cheeks reddened with brick dust and bearing a toasting fork in one hand and a dish-clout in the other; and were on the point of commencing a mock ceremony of marriage between myself and this fair syren of

the kitchen; in the course of which I was to have received three pricks with the toasting fork on each buttock and to have had my nose wiped with the dish-clout, had I not saved myself by producing a shilling as the penalty of my mistake which consisted, as I was afterwards given to understand, in not denominating the stuffed owl as her Ladyship's "Canary Bird" At short intervals tents were erected for the purpose of dancing; and all the maidens and swains of the whole country round, were hoofing and clumping up and down the middle and up again, beneath the welcome canopy.

In 1773, the Rev. Richard Graves "the younger" (1715-1804) poet and novelist of Mickleton, aged 57, published The Spiritual Quixote (reprinted by OUP in 1967)

This was a satire on the Methodists of his day drafted about 1758. Graves imagines his hero Wildgoose and his rural friend and assistant Tugwell, setting out to convert the world and very early in his mission going to Dover's Games. The account of the scene gives an idea of the taste and flavour of an eighteenth century country gathering, being of course no better or no worse than any other.

"They now approached the place of the rendezvous, where the revel was held; which was a large plain on the Cotswold-hills. Their ears were saluted with a confused noise of drums, trumpets, and whistle-pipes; not those martial sounds, however, which are heard in the field of battle; but such as those harmless instruments emit, with which children amuse themselves in a country fair. There was a great number of swains in their holiday-cloaths, with their belts and silk handkerchiefs; and nymphs in straw hats and tawdry ribbands, flaunting, ogling, and coquetting (in their rustic way) with as much alacrity, as any of the gay flutterers in the Mall.

A ring was formed about the wrestlers and cudgel-players, by the substantial farmers on their long-tailed steeds, and two or three forlorn coaches [were] sauntering about with their vapourish possessors: who crept out from their neighbouring seats - to contemplate the humours of these aukward rustics, and waste an hour of their tedious month in the *country*; where (as a great modern observes) *small matters serve for amusement*.

... they were refreshing themselves ... when the company began to divide; and proclamation was made, that a holland shift, which was adorned with ribbands, and displayed on a pole, was going to be run for; and six young women began to exhibit themselves before the whole assembly, in a dress hardly reconcilable to the rules of decency.

... a shrewd young carter (with a silk handkerchief about his neck) ... thinking that this harangue would spoil the diversion, which they were now intent upon, he threw the rind of an orange at the orator's head. Another levelled a piece of horse-dung (with an unlucky dexterity) exactly into Tugwell's mouth ... Their example was followed by a great part of the company; who began to bombard then furiously with clods of dirt and horse-dung ... One of them tilting up the form on which Tugwell was exalted, laid him sprawling in the moisture, occasioned by the staling of horses, or spilling of the liquor; where he lay wallowing for some time, being saluted with several bumps and jostles in contrary directions; which prevented his emerging from the slippery soil."

They met Morris dancers when near Gloucester as they retreated from the games.

"Those who are acquainted with this sort of morrice-dance must know that they are usually attended with one character called the Tom Fool: who like the clown in the pantomime, seems to burlesque upon all the rest. His fool's cap has a fox's tail depending like a ramillie whig; and instead of the small bells which others wear on their legs, he had a great sheep-bell hung to his back-side. Whilst the company therefore were all attentive to the preacher, this buffoon contrived to slip the fool's cap upon Tugwell's head, and to fix the sheep-bell to his rump. Which [he] no sooner perceived, than his choler arose, and spitting in his hands, and clenching his fists, he gave the Tom-fool a swinging blow in the face. The Fool, having more wit than courage, endeavoured to escape amongst the crowd. Tugwell pursued him in great rage, with the sheep-bell at his tail; the ridiculous sound of which, forming a sort of contrast to the wrath in [his] countenance, caused a great deal of loud mirth amongst the company."

ANNEX B

MORRISOGRAPHY

I first saw the morris at Bristol in 1952 and then went to watch various sides without understanding it. Then a chance to join a new side came in 1954 and I danced out for a year before I was married, and also started to play an accordion. My first ten years were learning, from the mid 1960's I became a public figure teaching and lecturing, and then drew back and worked on a regular basis with three women's sides in succession over the last twenty years.

Primarily I danced with, Farnborough Morris mostly drawn from the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Border Morris, practicing near Farnham and then near Alton, Abingdon, and Oxford City. Those were the days when none were very active and it was practical to support more than one side simultaneously. I stopped dancing regularly in 1973. I have had then and since multiple sessions working and teaching with : Thames Valley of Claygate, Bath City, and Kennett of Reading, working on specific traditions : in the case of Kennet, on Sherborne and Brackley. I played and created dances for, Fleur de Lys of Godalming, Minden Rose of Alton and Fleet. Of many sides that I have visited, there were two that I have worked with a number of times, Great Western of Exeter and Windsor.

Naturally my children came to morris events, although this was resented by the first side, as none of them had had any children of their own yet. The Border Morris, the border between Surrey and Hampshire, danced mainly at fetes, often two or three an afternoon, in the days when produce stalls allowed stocking up with cheap vegetables. I met Abingdon by invitation when they attended the Reigate Ring Meeting in 1960 through Frank Purslow who was then dancing with them. I found the men were much more like my own folk back at Southampton and it was easy to accept an invitation to attend practices, even though it was a 40 mile journey each way by bus and train. I began to take my second son, Simon, to practices from the age of 8, where he was always welcomed and often was the sixth dancer needed to make up a set, and this continued until he was 13 or 14. Two others turned out very occasionally, and the entire family, including a daughter, would dance in the yard of the Swan on Mayors Day. Simon went on to Warwick University near Coventry and danced with Coventry and then was a founder member of Gibbet Morris at the university. After graduation he went to work at Bedford and joined that side, eventually marrying the daughter of the bagman.

My eldest son Michael met Eric Reynolds at Bath University whilst on a four year Civil Engineering course and became a morris dancer. He continued an interest when working in London, married a morris dancer, and still occasionally turns out for Alton Morris. Stephen got involved with long sword at junior school and practiced two different dances, but then learnt to play the guitar and became a singer in his late teens. None of the other boys danced the morris, but all came out and performed with the local traditional mummers on Boxing Day once old enough to drink in the pubs. These public performances are quite a local institution, it tends to be the village's day at home, with large crowds at each stop, and used by many people to keep in touch with friends in these busy days. Thomas was the effective organiser for some years when Stan Knight the captain got rather old. Thomas and his wife have workshopped modern mumming with a repertoire of the seasonal plays. At major family events the family will stand up and do the local play, and a number of the grandchildren know it and participate.

It was great surprise to be given the EFDSS Jubilee medal and then its Gold Badge.

Some may wonder what I did between morris activities. The short CV that I use is,

Born in 1933, educated at Itchen Grammar School, Southampton, Royal Aeronautical Society Student Prize and First Class Honours in Aeronautical Engineering at Bristol University in 1954. Joined Guided Weapons Department of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, Space Department 1960-67, Weapons Department and its sub-divisions until retirement. Worked until retirement mostly on ballistic missile delivery systems and associated topics such as sounding rockets, space launchers, and anti-ballistic missile studies, for which awarded the Royal Aeronautical Society's Silver Medal in 1991 and made a CBE in 1993. The projects included Blue Streak, Black Knight, Europa, Polaris, Chevaline and Trident as well as supporting SDI and its successors. Promoted SPSO project division superintendent in 1973, Special Merit DCSO in 1980, and became Special Adviser, Chief Scientist and finally Principal Consultant on Ballistic Missiles within a specialist group through the various changes of organisations until retirement, working part time during 1997-2000. Researching the project histories since. Member of the British Interplanetary Society's History Committee. One of the founders of the British Rocketry Oral History Project which

held an annual three day conference and dinner at Charterhouse School, Godalming. Contributor to the Royal Aeronautical Society's Symposium on the Strategic Deterrent and to its 2004 Symposium on Chevaline.

As a Scientific Officer/Senior Scientific Officer had a staff of three to work on aerodynamics, heat transfer, heat shield materials and packaging on the Blue Streak reentry vehicle. Was a consultant on Skybolt and Polaris reentry vehicles and the HR 169 programme whilst supporting the ELDO Aerodynamics Committee. Was transferred to Weapons Department with a core team of 5 for initial work on Polaris Improvements, and then at the start of KH793 was deputy superintendent and then superintendent of We8 division. As the project activity grew first the flight trials and then the engineering was divided off into separate divisions, so that I had on average about 20 staff. As the project ran down I established a long term research programme for the department. Although promoted in 1980 I did not lose the division until 1982 and from then onwards had an immediate staff of 1 or 2 but a strong influence on the work of the department. When the ARL buildings closed I had offices in various out buildings at Ball Hill, working on my own as a consultant for the Weapons Group, involved with SDI, AGARD, etc. The succession of Ministries, Establishment title changes, Departments, etc, is confusing, but it was all to me developments of the same job.