

THE MORRIS ALE IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The evidence is that Ales were adopted to raise money for parochial or charitable purposes. Being successful they continued long after the reason had ceased, merely for profit or sport, degenerating into more rollicking and boisterous amusements. They has stopped by the second half of the 19th cent. The loss must have been a factor in the decline of the Morris..

Facilities

The ideal site was central to a village with a barn and a green for a bower and a maypole. The Maypole was set up the day before. It was a bare pole ornamented with ribbons and flowers. The colours were often those of the nobler or leading family of the area. For country dancing there was a bower of boughs or a tent or an empty barn, with benches round the sides and decorated with evergreens, which would be called the "Bowery". Here they assembled to dance and each fellow would treat his girl to a ribbon or favour. A large barn would be named "The Lord's Mansion or Hall" and fitted with seats for the company. "My Lord's Buttery" would have several barrels of specially brewed ale. "My Lady's Bower" was dressed with branches and flowers and used for the sale of confectionary and newly baked cakes. A neighbouring oven was engaged for a daily supply.

Economics

The Ales were planned by the sons of wealthy farmers who took the risk if it ran at a loss. It would be announced by the Morris on its rounds and at the markets in local towns. Dancers visited the neighbouring gentry for contributions. The Maypole and boughs for the bower were commonly given. The sale of ale, cakes and confectionary and large quantities of ribbons usually saved the promoters from loss.

The Lord and Lady

Two persons were chosen as "Lord " and "Lady". A smart, handsome villager was selected as Lord. It was doubtful whether he gained financially from the money raised. The organisers or the Lord's friends picked the Lady, ideally a lively, pretty woman, daughter of some respectable farmer. She was paid, being allowed daily new shoes and some 20 yds of ribbon and a guinea or so at the end. They were dressed in character and bedecked with ribbons. With their attendants, they offered flowers or cakes for a fee. Both carried as badge of office a "Mace", made of a short stick stuck into a small square of board, from the four corners of which hoops crossed diagonally. The whole would be covered with plaited silk ribbons and filled with spices and perfumes or a small cake, like a Banbury cake, called the "Whit-cake". These were offered to people to smell or taste in return for a small payment. At Kirtlington the maces were decorated as a contrasting pair in the Dashwood colours of pink and blue, with rosettes at intervals and silk streamers from the corners. The Lord might also shoulder a tin money box called the "Treasury".

The Procession

The Ale started with a procession round the village to the Lord's Hall led by the Lord and Lady, on foot or carried on the wooden horse. Their attendants might be a steward, a sword-bearer, a purse-bearer and a mace-bearer. "My Lord's Footman or Waiting

"Man" would also carry a basket of cakes for sale. "My Lady's Maid" helped sell the ribbons, but also carried a "Mischief Mace" - the flowers were enwoven with pins as well as briars to tickle the noses of her admirers. Besides a trainbearer or page there was a fool or jester, called "The Squire" dressed in motley. His ribaldry and gesticulations were thought very funny by some. He had a stick about 3 ft long with a calf or ox tail at one end and an inflated bladder or a narrow round sand bag sewed in tan leather at the other. The fool cleared a path or a dancing spot and those on whom the bladder had fallen repeatedly without effect seldom wanted a second from the tail. He was expected to have a wise or foolish remark for every occasion, for he was judged by the laughter his nonsense produced. He would try to take a man's hat off by a mere whisk of the tail, or bonnet another by bringing his hat down over his eyes by a blow from the bladder. He had full immunity in the general privilege of the clown for such tricks, rough as they were. The procession was completed by the morris with a "Pipe and Taborer." At Kirtlington they went around the spectators each carrying a "Crown-cake" on the top of their hat - about 9 ins across with rich currant and plum dough outer crust and a minced meat and batter centre. Money was expected just for looking. A whole cake could be bought for half a crown. As it was to bring good luck, a piece was often kept throughout the year.

The Curiosities

In the morning the procession waited by the Maypole for visitors. The morris dancers came in sets from far and near often with a goodly number of their village. The procession led them to the bower and then to the mansion to be shown the "Curiosities". The regulations and forfeits of the establishments were explained and the party invited to buy refreshments. The Lord and Lady then returned to the Maypole.

The Curiosities were hung about one of the buildings. A live or stuffed owl or a portrait of one was placed in a cage and called "My Lady's Parrot or Canary Bird". Other songless birds such as a rook, jackdaw or raven were called "My Lady's Nightingales". A portrait of a lion was called "My Lady's Lapdog" and one or two threshing flails were called "My Lady's Nut Crackers" or "My Lord's Organ". Anyone using a name for these or other such objects other than that prescribed became liable to a fine, perhaps up to a shilling. Much good humour and mirth arose from the non-payment of forfeits. Refusers were forced to ride on a wooden horse or "My Lord's Charger, Palfrey or Gelding." The Cotswold Hobbyhorse was not a tourney horse or stick animal as in the rest of Britain, but similar in structure to the Gymnastic Vaulting Horse. The wooden machine stood about 4 ft high on four legs. It could be carried around the green shoulder high on one or two stout poles that stuck out in front and behind. It might be painted and have a dummy horse's head with bridle. There was a chair for the Lady, usually mounted sideways such that she held the reins. The man sat behind her, astride the pole, balancing as best he could.

The Penalties

Every man who paid the fine was allowed a ride with the Lady and unlimited kisses and whether bashful or forward the process always provided merriment. A fine was often

willingly incurred as men and mere boys wished to boast of their ride and of kissing the Lady. Many females would follow suit for mere frolic. She took the Lady's place and the Lord did the kissing. If a man would not pay he was mounted alone by force and rough-riden. This was akin to use of the horse as a punishment in the Army in the 17th cent. If he still refused to pay, his hat was taken in lieu. Many University men would come to Ales 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.

There were other indignities - for example being forced to jump over a muddy pond or stream that was far too wide. Or her Ladyship's Maids of Honour would bring out "Her Ladyship's Cook", a fat ugly wench, with nose and cheeks reddened with brick dust and carrying a toasting fork and dish-clout. There would be a mock marriage in the course of which he would receive three pricks with the fork on each buttock and have his nose wiped with the greasy clout.

Comment

With such boisterous and unsophisticated humour it is easy to see how it offended Victorian sensibilities. It is suggestive that the morris may have obtained its stock of characters from the Ales and not vice versa. People can be assumed to be more likely to dress up and fool around for the equivalent of a Carnival than to be just attached to a specialist activity like the morris.

R L Donnett ©1982

Set of quotes relevant to the Colswold Ales
prepared for Halsway Manor Morris weekend.

HALSWAY MORRIS

So long as Morris dancing was kept up with spirit i.e. 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 i.e. 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 crossings 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 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 Marian in connection with the Morris dance; and I see no grounds for mixing up this dance with the Robin 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 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 would 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.

G. A. ROWELL.

Notes on Some Old-Fashioned English Customs, Folk Lore Vol. 4. Pt. 2
p. 102-4. 1886

3.
WHITSUN-ALES

G.A. Rowell, *ibid.* 1886, wrote,

The evidence from churchwardens' 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 Douce, 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 as 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 up with seats to accommodate 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 ribbons 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, dressed 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, degenerating 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 a Whitsun-ale 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 parrots; 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 attendants, 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.

This and the following extracts show the origin and the nature of the fool, the sword and cake-bearer, the money collecting, the lord and lady and the Cotswold Hobby Horse (neither Kentish, Cornish or Betley Window) all of which are still associated with the morris.

LONGCOMBE, OXON circa 1774 from WALEFORD'S ANTI-QUARIAN May 1886, p195
Longcombe is presumably Combe near Woodstock.

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 made 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 oven 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 had 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 around,
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 a 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 & 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 are 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.

One must realise that the stock characters reflect a common impulse to dramatise life and will appear in various guises in popular entertainments. A similar impulse produced the Robin Hood games, the Morriscos, the mummers, the very common giving of outlandish names to members of a party (eg. Padstow). Some characters, eg. man-woman who appears in carnival processions are often the public expression of ideas that would otherwise be beyond the bounds of propriety. The stock characters will occur in various combinations in any ceremonial or gratuity-gathering activity; individual characters appearing and disappearing over the years (again cf. man-woman which usually depends on finding someone prepared to be it). The actual existence of such stock characters show both a lack of imagination and a persistence of certain "acceptable" ideas within our culture. We all "know" how a man-woman should behave. The attitudes, which define the stock character, are not consciously derived and are therefore Jung "archetypes" in our cultural heritage. The ramifications of these ideas are obvious.

CHALGROVE - a SKETCH by Laura Gammon in "Pelican", vol. V. no. 25. Feb. 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 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.

7
WOODSTOCK

P. Manning MSS. Bodleian Library, Oxford. F.S. Top. Oxon. d. 200

The boundaries of Wychwood Forest did not come within six miles of Woodstock either when it was disafforested in 1853 or in the time of Charles I (1625-1649). In 1617 (James I, 1603-25) the inhabitants were still subject to forest law and nominally considered so as late as 1704 (Queen Anne, 1702-14). Blenheim Park was within the ancient limits of the forest. Woodstock Ale was held every 7 years when the inhabitants claimed the right to wood from the Wychwood Forest to assist in celebrations of the season. At Woodstock and Longcombe, the maypole etc. was usually obtained by the gift of the Duke of Marlborough.

The following account was obtained by T.C. Carter, 11, New St., St. Clements, Oxford, a scruffy little geologists assistant, for Manning from W. Newport (aged 78), a shoemaker of Woodstock, in July 1897 (Newport had married one of the Ladies of 50 years before) and from George Nevill (aged 73) of Yarnton in March 1901. The material was used for Mannings paper in Folk Lore vol. 8. p. 314.

The Woodstock Whitsun-ale was held every 7 years; it began on Holy Thursday and was carried on the whole of Whitsun week. It was held at the entrance to Woodstock on the Oxford road, opposite the present Railway Station. The day before, a Maypole was set up, provided by the Duke of Marlborough, which remained up for the rest of the feast. It was a bare pole ornamented with ribbons and flowers. Near it was a drinking booth and opposite this a shed, some 50 ft. long, with benches round the sides, decorated with evergreens, also provided by the Duke, known as the "Bowery". A "Lord" and "Lady" were chosen, who were attended by a "Waiting Man" and "Waiting Maid". Both Lord and Lady carried Maces, which were short sticks stuck into small squares of board, from the four corners of which semi-circular hoops crossed diagonally the whole being covered with ribbons. The Lord and Lady were also attended by two men carrying a painted wooden horse, to which were fastened two stout poles that stuck out in front and behind. This was followed by a band of morris dancers. The procession would then go round the town, the Lord and Lady carrying in the centre of their "maces" a small cake, like the modern Banbury cake, called the "Whit-cake", and these were offered to people to taste in return for a small payment. A man carrying a basket of these cakes for sale also followed. In front of the "Bowery" were hung up an owl and a hawk in cages and two threshing flails which went by the names of "The Lady's Parrot" and "The Lady's Nut Cracker". Anyone who misnamed them (ie. called them by their real names) had to forfeit 1s. or else be carried behind the lady shoulder high on the wooden horse round the Maypole. If they still refused to pay the forfeit, their hats were taken in lieu of payment.

Many University men would come over 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.

The great day of the feast was Whit-Sunday, when crowds would come into Woodstock from the villages round about. It was said that if the feast were not kept up, a turnpike could be put up across the road from Woodstock to Bladon and this, so I'm told, was done when the feast was discontinued. The last Maypole was put up some 55 years

ago and after remaining up for 12 months or more was bought by a Mr. Holloway of Woodstock as a relic: but the yeomanry being in the town, pulled it down one night and destroyed it.

"CHRONICLES OF THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WOODSTOCK" p.80
by A. Ballard. pub. Oxford 1896.

Short account agrees almost exactly with the foregoing. Adds that the wooden horse was known as "My Lord's Palfrey" and the same penalty was inflicted on anyone who miscalled it as on those who miscalled the "parrot" or the "nut-cracker".

"CONFESSIONS OF AN OXONIAN" 3 vols. 1826. Vol. 1. pp. 169-173
by Thomas Little.

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 7 long years; that the period of its 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 4 or 5 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 int'reble, 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 a fat 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.

HISTORY OF KIDLINGTON YARNTON AND BEGBROKE, by Stapleton.

The Whitsun ales were kept up at Hampton Poyle until 1841,
 by which time they had sunk to a drunken revel in which a hired
 person from Oxford was carried about upon a wooden horse.

The unique feature of the Ales was the horse & curiosities. Other
 aspects are related to the May-day festivities, May-Queen, garlands,
 and Jack-in-the-Green. For example in 1894 the procession of sweeps
 in Oxford consisted of:-

1. Jack in the Green.
 2. Lord and Lady, dressed in white, decorated with ribbons. Lady
 carried a ladle, Lord a frying pan (cf. Beelzebub in mummers)
 3. A fool, dressed as fantastically as possible with bladder on a
 string to belabour bystanders.
 4. Fiddler.
 5. 2 or 3 men carrying money boxes.
 6. Man with shovel and poker as a "musical instrument".
- A photo of the party in 1911 appeared in Oxford Journal, 3.5.11.
 They sang,

"Please to remember the chimney sweep,
 Please kind sir, dont pass us by.
 We're old sweeps and want a living;
 Spare a copper, as in olden time."

SHARP MSS. F.D. vol. 1. p. 44

From Mss of Mr. Horne of Chipping Campden, who died 1898

About the year 1780 a Jubilee (or Club) was held at Milton-under-
 Wychwood where morris dancing was carried on and two people carried
 round the village dressed up for the occasion and called the
 Lord and Lady.

10
KIDDLINGTON

ANCIENT TENURES by T. Blount, 1679 p.149

At Kiddington in Oxfordshire the custom is, that on Monday after Whitsun week, there is a fat live lamb provided, and the maids of the town, having their thumbs ty'd behind them, run after it, and she that with her mouth takes and holds the lamb, is declared "Lady of the Lamb", which, being dress'd with the skin hanging on, is carried on a long pole before the Lady and her companions to the green, attended with music and a Morisco dance of men, and another of women, where the rest of the day is spent in dancing, mirth and merry glee. The next day the lamb is part bak'd, boyl'd and rost for the ladies feast, where she sits majestically at the upper end of the table and her companions with her with music and other attendants, which ends the solemnity.

This statement was repeated with trifling variations in several works up to Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes" (1867) and Brand's "Popular Antiquities" (1873). An engraving of the maidens chasing the lamb is on p.601 of "The Book of Curiosities of the Great World" by Rev. T. Platts, London 1822-5.

RELIQUIAE HEARNIANAE by Hearne vol.2.p.158. (1723)

Mr. Blount does not tell us the reason of this custom, but I am told 'tis upon account of the inhabitants being toll free in Oxford and other places. I was told yesterday (19.4.1723) that the same custom belonged formerly to Wightham in Berks..... What is said about Lamb Day in p.149 of Blount's "Tenures", as belonging to Kiddington in Oxfordshire, is a mistake for Kirtleton; unless the same custom also belonged to Kiddington formerly, and is discontinued since.

ROWELL, *ibid.* p.107 said:-

This statement is altogether a mis-statement. The name of Kiddington is given for Kirtlington, the two villages being about 4 miles apart: the story of the maidens catching the lamb with their teeth is doubtless a mere made-up tale, and I can only account for its having passed so long without contradiction from its apparent absurdity rendering it unnecessary for those of the neighbourhood. However, a description of the Kirtlington Lamb-ale, and how it was conducted, may be interesting and set this question in a proper light. This I hope to do fairly, as my remembrance will go back over 70 years; and I am kindly assisted by a native, and a long-resident of the village, an observer, and well qualified to aid in the task.

The "Lamb-ale" was held in a large barn, with a grass field contiguous for public dancing etc.; this was fitted up with great pains as a refreshment-room for company (generally numerous), and was called "My Lord's Hall." The lord and lady, being the ruling powers, attending with their mace-bearers, or pages, and other officers the lord, acting as master of ceremonies, strictly keeping order. All were gaily and suitably dressed, with a preponderance of light blue and pink, the colours of the Dashwood family, the lady appearing in white only, with light-blue or pink ribbons on alternate days.

The lamb-ale began on Trinity Monday, when - and on each day at 11 am. - the lady was brought in state from her home, and at 9 pm. was in like manner conducted home again; the sports were

continued during the week, but Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday were the especial days.

The refreshments, as served, were not charged for; but a plate was afterwards handed round for each to give his donation. This seems strikingly to accord with Aubrey's account of the Whitsun Ales of his grandfather's time. (An Introduction to the Survey & Natural History of the North Division of the County of Wiltshire)

The Morisco dance was not only a principal feature in the lamb-ale, but one for which Kirtlington was noted. No expense was spared in the getting up, as described before; and, with the linen of the whitest and ribands of the best, the display of the Dashwoods' colours was the pride of the parish, and in my early time it was generally understood that the farmers' sons did not decline joining the dancers, but rather prided themselves on being selected as one of them. The simple tabor and pipe was their only music; but by degrees other instruments came into use in the private balls and dancing on the green, and besides these the surroundings of stalls made up a sort of fair.

On opening the lamb-ale a procession was formed to take the lamb around the town and to the principal houses. It was carried on a man's shoulders or rather on the back of his neck with two legs on each side of it: the lamb being decorated with blue or pink ribands in accordance with the lady's colour for the day. The great house was the first visited, where, after a few Morisco dances (as generally supposed), two guineas were given, and thus within the week every farm or other house of importance within the parish was visited. During the week there were various amusements; many hundreds visited the place from all sides, with a very general display of generosity and goodwill amongst all.

From about 60 or 70 years ago, the lamb used in the lamb-ale has been borrowed and returned; but previous to that time - for how long I cannot say - the lamb was slaughtered within the week, made into pies and distributed, but in what way is uncertain. It would be interesting if some light could be thrown on the origin of the lamb-ale.....an examination of the parish registers might be interesting and throw some light on the subject.

KIRTLINGTON - TRINITY MONDAY. Account by R. Pearman and his wife of Kirtlington given to T.C. Carter for Percy Manning

The village of Kirtlington is about 9 miles north of Oxford on the right bank of the Cherwell. Here, on the Monday after Trinity Sunday was held, up to 1858, the "Lamb Ale." (J. Dunkin, "History of Bicola", 1816, p. 268. says the feast was held on Lamas Day - whence its name). This feast is said to have been originally kept up by the proceeds of certain lands belonging to the parish, but where or of what size these lands were, no one knows. It is said that the barley grown on these lands was used for brewing ale to be consumed at the feast, and that a small quantity of wheat was grown for making into "Crown-cakes." Of later years however the Lord of the Manor had provided the ale at his own cost, and for a few years after the feast was discontinued he paid the sum of £2.12.0 yearly to the poor of the village on the feast-day. This payment has long since been dropped.

The centre of the festivities was the "Bowery", a shed made of green boughs set up on the village green, where the ale previously brewed, was sold during the wine days of the feast without a license, the proceeds going towards the expenses incurred.

One of the villagers was chosen "Lord" of the feast, and with his mates picked out a "Lady" who was paid for her services. At 11. on the Monday morning the "Lord" started from the "Bowery" to the "Lady's" house, whence a procession marched round the village. First came a man carrying a live lamb on his shoulders, which was, if possible, the first-born of the season and the finest of the flock. Its legs were tied together with blue and pink ribbons and blue ribbons were hung round its neck. Next came the "Lord" and "Lady" gaily dressed and decked with pink and blue ribbons. (On alternate days the "Lady" wore pink and white, and blue and white). The "Lord" carried slung over his shoulder a tin money box, called the "Treasury". Both he and his consort held in their hands badges of office known as "Maces". These maces are short staves, on the top of which is fastened a square horizontal board. To each corner of this square is attached the end of a semi-circular hoop which intersects in the middle. The whole "mace" is covered with pink and blue silk, with rosettes at intervals, and from the four corners hang silk streamers the colours of the two "maces" are counter-changed.

Following the "Lord" and "Lady" came the Fool, known as the "Squire", who wore a dress of motley, and carried a long staff with a bladder and a cow's tail at either end. His duties were to belabour the bystanders and to clear a ring for the dancers. Next came 6 Morris Dancers, who were dressed in beaver hats, finely pleated white shirts, crossed with blue and pink ribbons, and rosettes, and white moleskin trousers with bells at the knees. Their music was supplied by a fiddler, and a "Whittle and Dub" man, as the man was called who played the pipe and tabour. At the end of the procession were two men carrying "Forest Feathers", which were wooden clubs about 3 feet long, covered with leaves, flowers, rushes, and blue and pink ribbons. At stated times in the day, the Morris Dancers would give an exhibition of their skill; before dancing they and the "Lord" went round the spectators carrying each a "crown-cake" on the top of his hat. These cakes were about 9 inches across and were made of an outer crust of rich currant and plum dough, with a centre of minced meat and batter. Contributions in money were given by the spectators for looking at them. For half a crown, a whole cake could be bought, and this was supposed to bring good luck to the buyer, who often kept a piece of it throughout the year. Any cakes not sold at the end of the feast were divided among the "Lamb Ale Boys."

The lamb was carried in procession on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, when it - or rather a less valuable lamb - (the original being returned to the fold unhurt) - was killed, and made into pies. Into one pie, called the "Head-pie", was put the head with the wool on it. The other pies were then cut up and distributed to all who wanted a piece, but the "Head-pie" could only be bought for a shilling. For the remaining days of the feast were spent in drinking at the "Bowery", whither the Morris Dancers returned every night from visits to neighbouring villages to collect money. At the end of each day, the money collected was given to the head Morris Dancer,

who was responsible for the safe-keeping of the apparatus used - the "Maces" and "Treasury" were last held by Thomas Hawkes of Kirtlington, now dead, and from his brother, John Hawkes, they were bought for Lanning by Carter in June 1894.

Of late years the ale was brewed by Sir George Dashwood, Lord of the Manor, at his house at Northbrook, now pulled down.

Sir, my wife's sister tells me that the Forest Feathers, which were made of flowers and ribbons, were carried at the close of the day and placed or held as an arch over the door of the Bowery for the Lord and Lady to pass under first and then the guests to follow.

T.C. Carter.

Many battles between the above villagers and Bletchington, Weston and other places took place here.

T.C. Carter.

There is still a feast at Kirtlington, on the Monday after Whit-Monday. Since the war the O.U.M. have danced there, outside the pub, recently reviving the Kirtlington dance "Trunkles" from the Sharp MSS.

"A lamb would be led about by a shepherd & behind this lamb they danced. At night the lamb was killed & the joints distributed. Most was eaten, but portions were buried in the fields. Why, the old men had no notion; they had never heard."

E.V. Lucas. "London Lavender". 1912.

Butterworth MSS:-

William Pearman's father called "Buttery" Pearman - his mother's name was Caroline, (aged 83 in 1912)

"the dancers were preceded by a "Lord" & "Lady", the former carrying the "Forest Feather", a framework of sticks decorated with ribbons, which were detachable & afterwards used by the girls in a 'set dance' ".