

JINKY WELLS, MASTER POOL AND SELF TAUGHT FIDDLER

William Wells, like William Kimber, played a key role in bringing a breath of the tradition into the revival of the Cotswold Morris. His life spanned from the last pipe and taborer playing at Bampton, through the rediscovery of the morris, to its post WW II rehabilitation. He was brought up and taught by his grandfather and uncles. He was a famous clown between Queen Victoria's two Jubilees - "so funny often put out fiddler and dancers, reduced them once to a standstill". He danced in a very exaggerated manner. Clive Carey wrote "almost like a Russian grotesque (in the ballet). Legs very bent and lifted very high - body very much ^{bent} in sidestep and show - in straddle, feet very far apart and knees bent right down". The style could still be seen on Lionel Bacon's films of 1936.

The public interest generated by the Esperance Club displays encouraged Wells to advertise the Bampton Morris and his energetic promotion started the annual Whit-Monday pilgrimages. It led to Sharp inviting him over to Stow in August 1908 to teach the dances, for which he received £5, not shared amongst the dancers, so grew an accusation of "selling the Morris". A side and Jinky were invited by Mary Neal to dance in London and teach at the Esperance Club. Although he was the fiddler, he was not the acknowledged leader or secretary and disputes arose over bookings. In 1926 he formed his own youths side, the "Young Uns" and this ran in parallel with the "Old Uns" till WW II. Wells did little teaching and many dancers had to pick it up as best they could from older men. But then, Bampton had a living tradition. Nowhere else had the morris permeated the life of the village to such an extent. Wells had periods of blindness but he did not drop his connection with the morris and went with the side to an International Folklore meeting in London, to Ring Meetings and actually taught at Ring Instructionals.

Wells cared for the past, "they used to play much slower on the whistle and dub, but it was very beautiful and you could grasp every movement" and again in 1912 he said, "the music is most of it too quick and the old graceful movements are slurred to keep pace with it". Wells was not considered highly as a fiddler at first in contrast with Arnold Woodley's great uncle, Dick Butler, who had followed his father not only as musician for the morris but also for social dancing for miles around. Jinky had not played initially all the tunes but later he not only reminded the side of old forgotten dances but he constantly exercised the fiddler's privilege of introducing new tunes and dances. He would play tunes like Polly Put the Kettle On walking between gardens, and some others with the flavour of songs were Forestry Keeper's Daughter, Tinker's Hoard, Dear Old Home, Harvest Home, Wait for the Waggon and When the Sun Goes Down. His inspiring playing can be heard on Folktracks FSA-90-084.

Jinky kept alive several odd jigs. He had a reputation around the Clubs for dancing his version of the Sherborne Jig whilst playing the fiddle.

THE FIDDLER'S JIG

Music - Flowers of Edinburgh.

Dance - Once to Self - jump in last bar.

Foot-up	- r.l.r.hr/l.r.l.hl/r.hr.l.hl/r.-.l.-/	bs=back-step
	r.l.r.hr/l.r.l.hl/bs. bs./r. L. //	L=plain caper
Jig	- kneel on right leg, kneel on left leg, 4 plain capers, followed by 3 sidesteps and a spring caper on the spot.	

Jinky 2.

Spring Capers- circle round doing r. l.hl/r. l.hl/R. L. /R. L. /twice over.

Jig - as before

Straddle Capers.

Jig and caper out.

A letter to Douglas Kennedy, 2.12.37, shed a new light on another jig widely known in the form published by Cecil Sharp.

THE POOL'S JIG

Music - "The Bold Hussar". Wells wrote "The Keel Row dance tune and time does quite well as it's a heel and toe dance

First part - foot-up keeping time once over.

Second part - holding the stick in the right hand, you pass over, under the left leg, reverse over and under the right, reverse passes.

Third part - cross over right foot, reverse over three times then passes round back and front of body and over head.

Fourth part - stoop body with stick in both hands, at the ends leaving place between, low down till the hands and stick nearly touch the ground. Left leg through and back, then right ditto.

Fifth part - the tricky bit then comes, to get first left through then right, the two feet are then through; then get them back into position, right back, left back, the stick still in both hands behind your back.

Sixth part - then do heel and toe as half round and finish.

The performers can put a lot of extra changes to suit taste. I used to forty years ago."

Jinky Wells had two sons in the morris. He was a great influence on the recent leaders of the sides in the village. He had a greater impact on the leaders of the revival. In Hampton he is remembered as a little odd-job man with a hand-cart.

R.L. DOMNETT.