

THE EYNESHAM MORRIS

EYNESHAM STYLE

Over the last 50 years a way of performing the Eynsham Morris has developed which surprises many in the Oxford area who knew the Eynsham sides. Although the dancing of morris clubs is entirely their own concern it is worth recording what audiences in S.W. Oxfordshire will expect to see. The information has been gleaned and confirmed from persons too numerous to mention but I must record my thanks to Major. F. Fryer whose assistance proved crucial.

Order of Figures:- the present practice of doing the whole dance in effect twice through is not the traditional way; before the first World War the dance was lengthened by repeating each figure as it occurred, up to Whole Rounds. This was in fact how Cecil Sharp noted it (Shaf) but he wrote it up ambiguously (Shaf) and misinterpreted his notes when publishing Morris Book III, 1st edition. This volume was the first attempt to publish collected dances as distinct from publishing instructions for dances already in the Esperance Club repertoire. It is significant that the Eynsham dance was the only one not to be recollected and extensively revised in a later edition of the Morris Book. In the two revivals, 1922-27 and 1937-9, and possibly before, it was more usual to interpolate stationary figures. Because these were to some extent optional and because each dance was done to several tunes there has been some confusion as to the number of Eynsham dances and their structure. There were two regularly danced, one more remembered and a double jig.

During 1937-9 the dances were commonly done in extenso as follows:-

"THE EYNESHAM MORRIS" (nothing we will go)

Foot-up twice	16 bars	A ²
Foot-down twice	16 bars	A ²
Dance facing twice	16 bars	B ²
Corners	24 bars	B ³
Dance facing twice	16 bars	B ²
Back-to-Back	8 bars	A
Dance facing twice	16 bars	B ²
Walk rounds c.cl.	8 bars	A
Walk rounds cl.	8 bars	A
Ring dance in position	16 bars	B ²

"FIGURE EIGHT"

Foot-up	8 bars	A
Morris-hey	8 bars	B
Foot-up	8 bars	A
Dance facing	8 bars	A
Back-to-back	8 bars	B
Foot-up	8 bars	A
Cast	24 bars	B ³
Dance facing	8 bars	A
Line facing up	16 bars	B ²

In "Eynsham Morris" the first and third "Dance facing" twice might be omitted. In "Figure Eight" the "Foot-ups" may be doubled.

* = as seen by Sharp

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The origin of "Figure Eight" is obscure; it may have first appeared in 1937 but no one would swear to it. Its special movements, Morris-hoy Cast, etc. were in use before 1937 so the dance may have been a repository for remembered movements. I did gather the impression from one dancer that there had been a pool of figures which at various times crystallised into particular sequences, rather like the rapper dances.

The nearest that I have got to the double jig is that it was two men doing the "Eynsham Morris" on their own. I have seen Chipping Campden men treat their "Stick Dance" in similar fashion.

Track of the Figures:-

1. FOOT-UP:- in position facing up. Turn after the "kick-up" in the "break".
2. FOOT-DOWN:- ditto down.
3. DANCE FACING:- ditto facing partner. By the revivals the approach and retire movement seems to have been lost.
4. CORNERS:- a back-to-back movement done by corners in turn. Three "sidesteps" forward passing left shoulders (not right) & three sidesteps backwards to place (facing forward throughout). All six do the "break" in place. The actual back-to-back is done in bars 3 and 4. Nos. 2 & 5 go first, then Nos. 1 & 6 and finally the middles. The inactive men stand still for the sidesteps. NB, never turn sideways to return.
5. BACK-TO-BACK:- as corners. Forward passing left shoulders & retiring backwards, not sideways.
6. WALK ROUND:- whole rounds counter-clockwise first, not clockwise. Swagger step with almost straight legs.
7. RING DANCE:- ends with first half of the "break" and lift spare man or caskot instead of "kick-up".
8. MORRIS-HEY:- known as "figure eight". Usual morris hoy with the ends turning out but continuous without a pause halfway and completed in 6 sidesteps. Break done facing up.
9. CAST:- set dances throughout, facing up. Top couple cast out & down to bottom and face up, the others moving up one place (4 bars) then two sidesteps and break facing up (4 bars) Repeated, second & then third couple casting.
10. LINE FACING UP:- move up into single line, facing up, in order
5 3 1 2 4 6 (16 bars)

The Stepping:- the first thing that struck Cecil Sharp when he saw the Eynsham men was their "extraordinary and persistent vigour" while dancing. This has been echoed by everyone who has seen any Eynsham side, and the feature most looked for in doing the Eynsham dance. This is the major deficiency in present day performance. The second feature widely remembered is the "step". Sid Russell said of visiting sides "to start with they didn't have the step right somehow!" The dances were constructed on a phrase of 6 sidesteps followed by a two bar "break", but the sidesteps are very distinctive (they are not a sidestep at all) although obviously related to that elsewhere.

* = as seen by Sharp

Dr. Lionel Bacon wrote " a most vigorous tradition, with large arm & leg movements. All the 1937 team seemed to be very tall & long limbed or was it their Anzac type costume?"

Dr. Arthur Peck wrote " the dancing was an extremely exhilarating sight & the step most vigorous. There is no feeling of decadence about the Eynsham dancing."

The step was technically a "closed sidestep" but the forward foot was seldom crossed. After the hop the free foot is swung slightly out then in & forward and landed with some vigour about 15" to 20" in front of the other foot. A considerable portion of the weight is taken on the forward foot but there is very little or no turn of the body. The body rocks forward & back in each bar. The hop is small & at times negligible. The step reminds of a travelling chasse step when moving. There was plenty of vigour & speed but not much rising from the ground

The old man in 1937 was William Charles Russell, then aged 74, father of Sidney the then Captain, & Cecil and Bert also dancers. William was called "Buff" from having been in the army. William had danced for Carter & Manning in 1902 and for Sharp in 1910 & 1914. His brother Edward had been the squire or "feathers" on these occasions. Ed appears on Nicholson's paintings at Cecil Sharp House & the Southampton Public Gallery & in the drawing illustrating Max Beerholm's article "A Morris for May-Day" in Harpers Monthly Magazine Oct. 1907. William often danced a more open step approaching the normal morris step - this may have been through age but it was though in the village that this might have been an older form of the step.

One persistent characteristic of the Eynsham morris was the idiosyncratic behaviour of the dancers. Douglas Kennedy, who remembers seeing the side in 1914 and remembers not being impressed by the divergences, has said that the old men were individual in their dancing even then. One, he remembered, did the corner movement by charging across aggressively & returning cowering, with hands covering face, every time. Douglas considered that the dance as derived from Sharp had the emphases all wrong when compared to the traditional side of 1914 - particularly the corner movement was completely different. The step and phrase ending struck him as the same in 1937 as in 1914. In 1937 Lionel Bacon's film shows that No. 5 habitually deleted the hops & No. 3 used a simple hopstep in moving figures.

The Break:- film of the Eynsham side suggests that it could have been very difficult for Sharp to decide what the dancers were doing let alone what was intended. Sharp decided that "rb.f.a.lb.L." was best, his principle being to select from what he saw not to generalise (Morris Book I p.44). However his Field notes (ShaF.1910.I) refer several times to "f.a. etc. in last two bars" and this was as it turned out the "rainstream" of the tradition. A phrase of stepping starts with left foot forward, so that at the end of bar 6 there is a hop on the right foot. The break starts by putting weight on left foot, with right foot out to the side on the first beat, then with slight hop on left foot, bring right foot behind left (or feet together). On the first beat of the last bar, make another slight hop on the left and "kick-up" the right leg. On the middle beat step onto the right foot, ready to start the next phrase with the left. A hop

Eye-shin' Style 4.

on the right foot is often interpolated on the final off-beat to help the dancer into the next phrase. In the "kick-up" the free leg was kept fairly straight & raised till almost horizontal. However the phrase was begun, the kick-up at the end was always the same & always the right foot. Sometimes the men did not do the "right to side" but preceded the kick-up with a feet together only - especially in Once to Self. Dr. Peck recorded that some dancers on occasion would make the fourth movement of the phrase ending the beginning of a r.l.r.l.r. sequence, which resulted in their dancing "off the beat" but it did not seem to have any ill effect in practice.

Arms (not hands):- they danced with coloured handks red, white or blue, each pair matched. In 1937 they were quite certain that there were no fixed hand movements - so each man did as he liked with his arms, mainly movements above shoulder level, not necessarily the same with each arm. In particular;

Sidney Russell - swing down from "up" & out to side, then swing across body till wrists about crossed (1 bar). This reversed to "up". (1 bar)

William Russell - from in front of chest swing out & a little down till behind body & back (1 bar) small wave out & in (1 bar)

No 3 - both arms together make big circles as in over-arm bowling.

No. 4 - when dancing facing partner would alternately raise one arm & wave the other across & back in front of him at head level.

In the break the hands, if they do anything at all, are crossed in front of face not over head. The hands are thrown up on the kick-up.

This does not provide a clear guide as to what to do. I have been told & shown that the proper arms should be a sort of double-dip-in but on a much grander scale - certainly not a cissy dancing of handks. I would suggest one either follows this or the movements of the Captain. He has complained that he could never get the men to dance together nor could he get them to do anything definite with the arms so presumably he danced as he thought it should be done. He has run several boys sides at the local school which used to be very keen. He had a team at the Oxford Festival 5th. March 1938 at which there was also a Quarry boys team with Kimber playing and an Abingdon boys team with Major Fryer playing.

Other Dances:- there were supposed to have been other dances and these had been talked about by William Russell as far as could be gathered none of them were in the Cotswold pattern but on the lines of the two above. There was a fragment of a dance in ShaF. 1914. I which led me to enquire about the dance Constant Billy and much to my surprise I was given a dance more or less as Sharp had it.

"CONSTANT BILLY" or "JOCKEY TO THE FAIR"

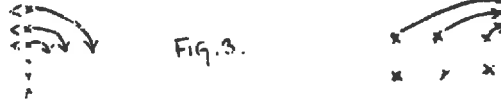
1. Once to self - stand in line in order 6 4 2 1 3 5 facing music.

1 think at end of tune all do ft. caper.

2. Foot-up, still in this line, ending with the break. (8 bars)

3. Cast-back, all team turning outwards & moving to form a set facing partner, ending with the break (8 bars)

4. Foot-down (8 bars)
5. Foot-up (8 bars)
6. Cast-back, Fig. 3 in reverse, turning out to start & ending in a line
2 4 6 5 3 1 facing down. Break. (8 bars)



7. all turn left & go into "walk round" c.cl. Do break in a circle.
8. walk-round clockwise (8 bars)
9. Ring facing centre - each man, starting with the Captain, takes a phrase in the middle, dancing a sort of double caper while rest join hands & dance quietly round him to left & right.

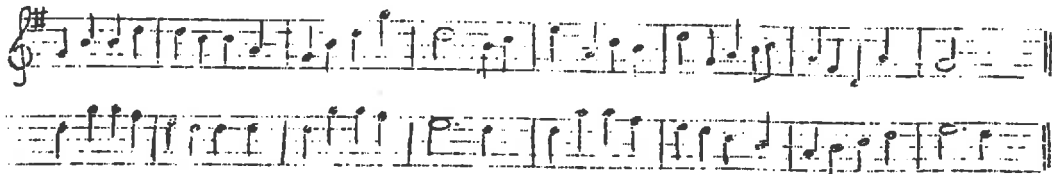
The chances of getting more dances seemed to depend on having some idea that might jog the memories - however I think the chances now are small as the men alive now have only heard of the dances or seen them when boys & never danced them themselves. Also the dancers are about 70 and memories are fading.

Max Beerbohm referred to a first dance for 6 men which was danced 3 v. 3 and a second that was "a circular dance"; it might have been the above. The processional was in single file to a steady double step.

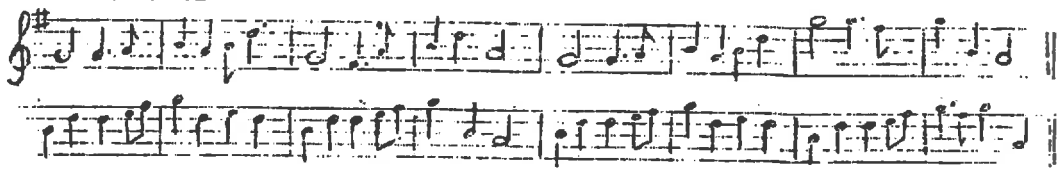
Tunes:- in last century had a piper but since usually a mouthorgan although Ern Edwards often played a melodeon 1937-53. The Eynshar Morris was usually danced to "Nutting We Will Go" and "March Past" and Figure Eight to "Cock O'the North" and "March Past". March Past appears to be "Wha Wadna Fecht for Charlie", a scotish schotrische played as a march. I imagine this was a regimental march. "Brighton Camp", according to Sharp's MSS, was last used about 1880 - and in any case Sharp published the Barton tune for the dance. In recent years several tunes such as "Jockey to the Fair", "The Fairie" & "Clare's Dragoon's" have been mentioned. This is one aspect that could be followed up with a tape-recorder.

Schofield Collection:-

NUTTING



MARCH PAST



Eynsham Style 6.

Background:- Manning MSS - from T.J.Carter Nov.1902.

Side still dancing at Whitsun & Xmas. Side:- Edward Russell (foreman) William Russell, Horace Belcher, Ernest May, Charles Masters, Henry Hedges, George Masters, Fred Harwood & Ben Hares.

Sharp MSS - Sam Moulder leader when seen on 26.1.10

Team in 1914 was Hedges, Ed & William Russell, Evans (player - father & grandfather danced before him), Ayers (Hares?), Aylward (Harwood?), Watkins & George James. Seen on 3rd July 1914.

Sam Moulder was interviewed about 1908 for Oxford Times & said that Cock O'the North & Constant Billy were Eynsham tunes

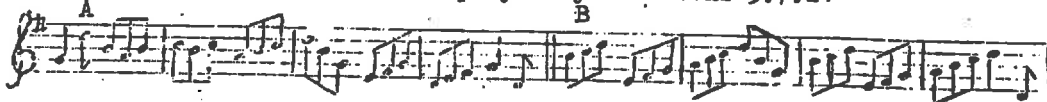
Sidney Russell was born about 1897 and first went round with the side about 1906 when aged 9 to collect pennies thrown into the road for the dancers in a big red handkerchief. At that time they regularly visited Oxford & the neighbouring towns. The side Sharp saw was of old dancers assembled for the purpose, there being a young side in existence which he was not interested in. The side got together after WW I in 1924, two years after Sidney married, but this only lasted till 1927. Because of the lack of interest the stocks were sold in 1930.

Six weeks before the coronation in 1937 Lady Evelyn Mason at Eynsham Hall persuaded the Russells to get a side for the celebrations. Lady Mason had been involved in the folk revival pre-WW I. Plays had been organised at what was her town house in March 1912 (27, Grosvenor Sq.) by Mrs Alfred Lyttelton with dances by the EFDS.

The side was "Buff" Russell & his 3 sons & three brothers Arthur, Percy & Phil Lambourne, Jack Drewitt & Ern Edwards. Of this side it was the old man & the musician who were a constant source of embarrassment to the rest as they kept on wanting to change things - it was an argument about altering the dances that led to the break up of the team in 1939. The two were responsible for the costume. Sidney said that the tunes used to be played slower but in 1937 they insisted in speeding up the step till they were doing it "as fast as humanly possible" - "Buff" always looked forward to his morris but he could not keep up with all the stepping. The side was invited up to London in 1938. They danced twice with Abingdon at the Abbey Park, Abingdon & once in Eynsham. The Travelling Morris danced with them in Eynsham in 1937 as did Rolf Gardiner's side from Springhead, Dorset.

The Mummers play was revived in 1937 having last been performed before WW I. Sidney Russell had been in this & got the text again from an old mummer, had it typed & taught to the team. The normal show in the last revival was the play "St. George & the Dragon" with a dance before and after. Before WW I the morris men had gone round with the dance during the day at Whitsun till about 5 or 6, had tea and then went out as Mummers about the village "saying the play". The mummers used to wear long coats covered with paper streamers.

CONSTANT WILL - Sham 2977 - played by Joe Evans 3.7.14



EYNHAM in 1982

BRIGHTON CAMP - for 8 dancers

- AAEB Foot-up, Foot-up, Foot-down, Foot-down
- AAEB Corners in 4's, 2nd corner then 1st, back to back passing left shoulder first. Twice through
- AA Spots - 3 x 4/3 on spot then forward on ft.j, to end right shoulder to right shoulder, retire and repeat same shoulder.
- BB Back to back with partner twice, left shoulder first
- AA All walk round anticlockwise and then clockwise with breaks
- BB Dance facing into centre, moving in and out and in and lift mascot.

HIGHLAND MARY

- AA Foot-up, Foot-down - called "face up, face down"
- BBB Corners, 2nd, 1st, 3rd in turn, cross to opposite corner's place and retire on same track, 2 bars to cross, 2 bars on spot, 2 bars to retire & all Kick Up. Left shoulder going and retiring so it is a half gip track not a back to back.
- AAA Repeat corners
- BB A left shoulder half gip done twice with partner
- AA Foot-up, Foot-down
- B Dance whole rounds anticlockwise and all in on ft.tog at end.

MAID OF THE MILL - around victim in centre of set

- AA All face in in circle, and dance foot-in, on spot, twice
- BBB 2nd corner back to back round person in centre of set, then 1st, 3rd etc
- AAA Repeat
- BB all to middle and back twice - 3 x 4/3 on spot and forward on ft.tog.j.
- AAA Corners in same order swop places - somewhat larger travel than Back to Back
- BBB Corners back
- A Whole rounds dance anticlockwise & all in and lift centre person

COCK O'NORTH

- (AB)³ Cast figure, 2 at time, done twice through, 4 bars backing down outside of set, 2 bars on spot and break.
- AB Spots - into line right shoulder but in: repeat left shoulder
- ABA Corners cross, 2nd, 1st, 3rd to opposite corner's place
- BAB Corners back
- B Whole Rounds anticlockwise and all-in

FIGURE EIGHT

- A Foot-up
- BB Whole Hey twice through, top cast out rest wait till reached
- A Foot-up
- BB Partners back to back twice, each time left shoulder

- A ,Foot-up
- BBB Cast,2 at a time,
- B Up in line of 6 - tops in centre

CONSTANT BILLY

- 1 Start line of 6 across facing up,dance on spot,
- 2 Cast back into column facing in,ends of line now at bottom,
- 3 Sidesteps - slip steps like Abingdon Princess Royal,long open sidestep down,long open sidestep up,short sidesteps down and up,break
- 4 Repeat.
- 5 Cast from top to form a line of 6 at bottom facing down
- 6,7 Walk round anti clock and clockwise
- 8 Circles - each in turn dances in centre for 6 bars doing what they like, rest join hands and circle with slip step to left and right,4 each way, 2 bars on spot of 4/3 and kick up.
- 9 Last time clown goes into centre,ring of 6 and end lifting him

JOCKEY OFF - for all dancers

- A Line of all dancers facing up,dance on spot,
- B Cast back to face in in column
- C Foot-down
- A Foot-up
- B Cast back to line facing down at bottom,
- C All turn 180 deg to right and come up to top in one line shoulder to shoulder All turn to right and dance off in single file,possibly serpentine or figure eights as well.

EYNSHAM FOACHER

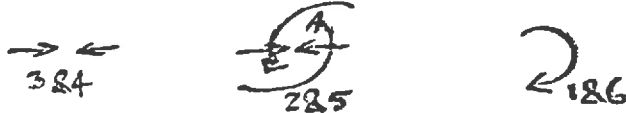
- A Sing
 - AB Foot-up,Foot-down
 - AB Back to back both ways
- | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----|------|-----|
| A | 1 2 | 3 1 | 2 to | 3 5 |
| | 3 4 to | 5 | 4 | 1 6 |
| | 5 6 | 6 | 2 4 | |
-
- | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| B | 3 5 | 3 4 | 5 6 | 4 6 |
| | 1 6 to | 1 2 | to | 2 5 |
| | 2 4 | 2 | 1 3 | |
-
- | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|-----|
| A | 4 6 | 2 4 | 2 1 |
| | 2 5 to | 1 6 to | 4 3 |
| | 1 3 | 3 5 | 6 5 |

2 bars into diagonal pattern,2 bars heavy step on spot,2 bars to cross to new order,turn to face front & break.

- B Cross Over - 2 bar to face, 2 on spot, 2 to pass left shoulders & turn left to face front, break
- ABAB Repeat special movements and the cross over,
- AB Walk rounds anti clock and clock
- AB Dance in and out twice, 4 bar in, 2 out and break, repeat, lift dancer at end

FEATHERS - tune the Fairie

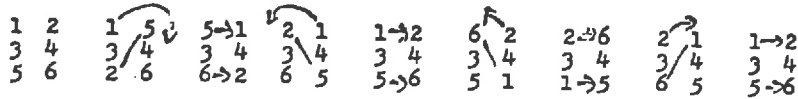
- A Dance in line of 6 at top facing music
- B Cast back from ends & face in
- A Centres go forward to meet face to face, 2nd corner passes & holds back to back while 1st corner dances round . . clockwise, all the way. 2 bars into position, 2 bars hold on the spot, 2 bars out & kick-up. Middles fall back to starting place, 2nd corner carries on and changes corner, 1st corner ends in own corner.



- B Into one line down centre of set 5 1 4 3 6 2, left shoulders, top and bottom pairs change sides but centres retire again to starting place. Cross left shoulder, turn to left to face front.

ABABAB Repeat 3 more times,

- 2nd - 2nd corner (2&5) go back to back & 1st corner goes round anticlock
- 3rd - 1st corner (1&6) go back to back & 2nd corner goes round anticlock
- 4th - 1st etc



- A from face down cast back to line of 6 at top facing up
- B On spot in line of 6 facing up at the top.