

FURTHER NOTES ON ABINGDON

Copy of material given to Lincol Bann

The team dances with 4 when forced. It often dances with 8. It is uncommon to dance two sets facing, it is more usual to dance in one long set, I have seen up to 14 in Princess Royal. Some dances such as Squire's Dance can not be done by more than 8, others such as Constant Billy and Maid of the Mill degenerate into a scramble even with only 8.

Step:- In the hop the free foot is raised up along the other till the heel is just below the knee, thus the thigh is quite high. Naturally the men normally do not put this amount of effort in. Of recent dancery some were brought up under the influence of Bampton and others of Oxford City and these relapse into the more usual morris step.

At one time the men practiced the step along a line on the floor such as a floorboard making the step and hop ahead of the line and the other steps behind. This is another feature often forgotten in performance. During the step the body should rock naturally about a line through the waist.

Hands:- The swing of the arms used to be taught by Jack Hyde as a full swing. He himself danced with a straight back and fairly straight arms, probably influenced by Kimber. Ray Hemmings went to the other extreme always dancing as in Jockey with the hands going up close to the shoulders, arms very bent at elbows. In the last few years (*late 60's*) under the influence of those brought up near Bampton the swing has become not very far back, but forward till hands vertical, palms forward, arms well raised.

Figures:-

Once to Self:- hands down at side, it is difficult to avoid making a preparatory swing back of the hands on the last beat as the men are insistent on a good strong first movement to the dance.

Foot-up:- add to 5) Duke of Marlborough

All-in:- 4) Maid of the Mill - dance into middle with 2 bars of step not a run-in, back to place with 2 bars, into middle with step again.

Between dances it was the custom to stand still, men changed places etc. as quickly as possible after a dance. Now it is the custom to walk round in a circle at end of dance, anti-clockwise, once only, with hat off and raised in right hand.

Traditionally, when visiting big houses etc., the show started by the Mayor saying "The fool shall show the dancers their steps & my son shall dance over my sword". The fool then danced broomstick steps over the sword. The team started with Nutting Girl. In their final dance the men began by pretending to dance as if very tired until called to life by the fool or other character.

Dance:-

PROCESSIONAL

Traditional order - Horns, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Fool, Music, Team (2 by 2)

CONSTANT BILLY

This dance is as recovered by Jack Hyde from Tom Hemmings one day when Tom was rapping in the dried-up Ock river.

In sidestep leading foot forward a little, trailing foot brought up behind it - the direction of travel being sideways always facing ones partner. Hands circle in same direction and about same diameter as Headington. Sidestep ends with ft. tog in place to ease turn into the cast. Music hesitates slightly here to help men into the turn to face up which would otherwise be rushed and untidy.

Recently the sidestep has become a slip step and the circles are both at the same level. The difficulty during performance is getting the lines parallel at the end of the cast. The jump half way through back-to-back has become exaggerated as in Princess Royal. The hand clapping mentioned before on p.4 was discussed by Jack Hyde at Marlow some years ago before it came into the side's repertoire.

CURLY HEADED PLOUGHBOY

Hands thrown up palm to palm. Distinctive movement often done only 3 times in a dance. The "run-in" step is danced with free foot lifted

up a little behind - as if one has been tripped.

All-in after a back-to-back. Previous note p.2 is wrong. The form of all-in used to be called "The Rose"

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Len Bardwell and now John White frequently get the repeats of the music of this dance wrong so that the men have to get the back-to-back over in 8 instead of 12 bars. It has put the dance into disfavour with the team. Because the dance consists of forward and back movements only there has been serious discussion on the possibility of bringing in the 4 bar hey of the Cecil Sharp notation to replace the 3rd run-in - the middles would not turn.

GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME — ~~remembered by Tom~~

In Hey - "wave left & pass by right". The middles wave right hands when dancing on spot & wave left hand when turning opposite. Ends should take the full 8 bars in changing ends so that all turn front together. We still often see the ends changing in 4 bars and marking time for the other 4 bars, facing up or down while middles turn. Although the ends only waved the left hand, while the middles waved right while stationary and left when turning, it was agreed for the Albert Hall and subsequent that all should wave left throughout. The older men still follow the older rule. Note that one passes opposite side to that which is waving to avoid being slapped in the face! The middles are supposed to move apart a little to let the ends pass but they often do not. The ends should pass in bar 4. The wave is from the wrist, palm facing forward, it is not a circular movement.

MAID OF THE MILL

At present done as Foot-up(4), Cast, Foot-up, corners, Foot-up, Whole Rounds, Foot-up, Cross-over, Foot-up, All-in; representing Pillars, Spokes, Rim, Iron Straps, Blades & Hub.

Cross-over - being danced as a cross & turn ie. half a whole gyp but possibly is a back-to-back.

Whole-rounds - at end, odds turn out, ie to their right, to face up.

All-in - dance into middle & back, not run-in.

Charlie would like to put the final figure of "into Mayor & back twice" between "Cast" and "Spokes" & then use All-in(1) at end. "Order of movements represent parts of Mill & the order they are put together".

The dance is easier if Mayor stands in middle as he should.

Percy Hemmings still maintains dance should end on whole rounds. Dance is now performed both in 6/8 which is way the dancers prefer, and in 3/4 which was the way the side used to try and practice it. In 3/4 the music is not played to emphasise the waltz but played very evenly. The men still dance the normal 4 beat step so the stepping goes across the rhythm of the tune as the rule of "one step to each note" is applied. The tune is played quite slowly to allow the men to get the step in tidily. The ft. tog becomes a mild jump throughout.

The dance was recovered from an old dancer in 1937-8 who had learnt it from Tom Hemmings father in an elaborate version as one of the 7 dances of the "Royal Morris" danced before the Prince of Wales (Edward VII). The arguments over the structure of the dance prevented the recovery of other dances from Tom. The form of the dance was not settled till some time after the deaths of Tom and James Hemmings and Major Fryer, after the first notes were published.

In this dance the break, which was ft. tog, occurred every 4 bars throughout but recently this has dropped, keeping only the jump at the end of each figure, but not face-up-and-face-in, to honour the horns.

Cross-over:-now dances cross over 3 bars and all turn clockwise to face back in bar 4, even if have to mark time in bar 3 facing out. In the return, turn the short way, a 1/4 turn, to face up.

Cast:-all facing down in column at end of bar 4. Cast in on bar 5. Each couple moves to end of set before casting out.

Corners:-return to place passing Mayor right shoulders again. At end of bar 4 all jump to face partner, at end of bar 8 all turn to face up.

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Although often the men turn the longer way, especially 4 & 6.
Rounds:-the rounds should be done wide and therefore fast. The older
men have always been insistent on keeping it open. Very recently it
has been decided that the odds should turn inwards to face up at the
end rather than outwards. We had a period in which no rule was applied.
Recently no singing.

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applied. Recently no singing.
All-in:- "In-and-out" - open out as far as possible when retiring in bars 3 and 4.

PUTTING WE WILL GO

In this dance the rocking of the body in the step is emphasised rather than allowed to be the natural consequence of the placing of the feet. ~~Recently~~ It has been the practice to gradually accelerate the dance till as fast as possible.

This has proved quite convenient for a dance in a crowded public bar.

In the last decade there have been attempts to use Nutting as a set dance by working in back-to-back as in Constant Billy or the cross-ove as in Maid of the Mill. The sequence most used however was

Face-up(8), Face-in(8), Face-down(8), Face-in(8), Cast as in Maid of Mill
Face-up, in, down, in again and Corners and All-in.

This had led to NUTTING-OFF, the current processional off dance, which was danced to the Maid of the Mill tune at the Albert Hall to avoid appearing to extend the programme! This dance is as above to the cast, the men dancing up the middle in pairs but not stopping in place continue off in pairs following the horns, each with hat raised in right hands. *Before this was what they* Sometimes ^{do} a round of Nutting & then walk off as a set. Before the last war the team used "We are the Boys of the Old Brigade" for their processional-on tune. A natural choice for the early days of the revival.

As the original "leg-stracher" the dance ended with All-in after face-up and face-in. It should be noticed that in several dances the all-in does not occur when the dance has been done symmetrically but after an extra foot-up and in etc. At least it always occurs when the dancers are back in their starting places in the set. It follows back-to-back if there is one in general.

PRINCESS ROYAL

The sidestep is more of a slip-step than an open sidestep as in Constant Billy. Free hand in side-step should be naturally at side.

In slip step leading hand up at shoulder height at side of body, arm not very bent. On the 4th beat of the bars of clapping a hand is waved or "tossed-up". In bar 9 the hand used is that that leads the 1st slip step of the B music, in bar 10 the other, and in bar 11 both.

Hand in leading hand is allowed to hand down although sometimes men are carried away and gently wave it. Jack Hyde was the only one of the older dancers to do so and this is confirmed by the old photographs in the scrapbook.

When the younger men came into the side the slip step became very springy but this is disappearing again. It went naturally with hand on hip and waving the leading hand, the older men frowned on these ideas.

"Old Mother Harvey she got drunk, She went to Nuneham in a punt,
The punt pole broke and she fell in, & she never got to Nuneham."
(alternative words from Tom Hemmings).

SALLY LUKER - remembered by Tom

All-in after back-to-back after Foot-up and foot-in. It is now the habit to always sing the first line of the words to the first half of back-to-back and to make the jump at the end of bar 4 more emphatic.

SQUIRE'S DANCE - produced by Percy Hemmings

We were told once that only middles cross feet at the All-in but we normally do it with all doing so.

The ends used to end with feet together.
The run-ins in this dance and Curly Headed Ploughboy, as well as All-in of Ploughboy and Princess Royal all start with left foot every time contrary to what was said before.
This dance was known as "The Aeroplane Dance" because the run-in reminds of propellers and was a favourite when raising money for the War Effort.
The usual dance done immediately the election results are given.

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JOCKEY TO THE FAIR

Half way through corner movement men should jump with hands up. Step should be done on toes. On hop some tap free foot a little to the side.

Rounds should be kept a large circle so that one only gets around to opposite corners place.

Tom had all sorts of touches in the dances eg. in corners crossing in J2TF, he kept his hands rather low except when passing the other man when he raised them high in a sort of salute. On arrival back he nodded to his partner not his corner. Tom wasn't sure or consistent in his "touches" so had to be stopped for the sake of uniformity.

Between the ~~max~~ up and down hand movements Tom would sometimes insert small circular waves ie, up, high circle, down, low circle. It is thought in the side that this might have been a memory of the Sharp movement.

It is quite common for the men to try and tread on their partner's feet in the jump-in, "for the laugh" they say!

Fryer and Bardwell both played the dance very fast but White has gradually slowed it down to the speed of the other dances, killing the life. However he now speeds up the last 10 bars of all-in. In this dance as in others the music and the fool walk forward and join in the all-in without stepping or caper. The horns do not move and any attempt to join in with them, even to have them in the middle of the set in Maid of the Mill is severely criticised.

The consensus is that the step was a sidestep rather than a heel and toe.

DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH (Old Marlborough" or "Marmalade" ~~is~~). Jack Hyde's Source of material was E.M. Matthews a concertina player in an Ock St. pub who played a lot of morris tunes from Abingdon & other traditions such as Headington.

Once to self - last 4 bars of B music.

Foot-up (5) "processional" as in Sally Luker. Partners face, stamp right foot three times, clap r+r 3 times, stamp left foot 3 times, clap l+l 3 times & turn partners by right hand waving left hand as middles do in 2nd half of hey (see GILBAM) Half Hey. Stamp & clap & turn. Foot-down as Sally Luker... ad lib... Ending All-in(1) after foot-up, stamp & clap & turn.

All-in after second foot-up ie. hey down & hey up once only.

IN GENERAL

Break(2) in middle of foot-up-&-in in SL, MofM & DofM.

Break in middle of back-to-back, and at end. These breaks are found to be ignored recently

The missing dances are Shepherd's Hey & Greensleeves. There is now no one from whom to recover them.

MODIFICATIONS FOR 8 OR MORE MEN.

As need arises all the dances have been adapted for 8, 10 or 12 men, particularly recently with the influx of new dancers. The following changes have been taught.

ALL-IN :- for those dances where preceded by dance facing partner, ie. GILEM, Nutting, Jockey, all-in in one group. Dances with a "run-in" at end, ie. CHPB & PR run-in in 4's if possible. Other dances in 4's for preference.

Some dances can not be done with more than 8, ie. Constant Billy, Maid of the Mill, Squire's Dance, because dance degenerates into a scramble.

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Squire's dance - work in 4's not 3's otherwise as for 6.

When more than 6 in dances where middles do something different from ends then all the middles are middles, eg. GILBM and Jockey.

Abingdon

STICK DANCES

One of the Mayors of Abingdon (as distinct from the Mayors of Ock ST) suggested that the side have a stick dance and as the Town has adopted the club and sends it abroad it was taken seriously. The dance as practiced was

Title:- Beansetting

Tune:- Buttercup Joe in the version that Johnny Grimsdale of the old dancers sings.

Dance:- Foot-up-and-in, 5) as in Sally Luker and Marlborough ~~sticks~~
~~sticks~~

Back-to-back as in Sally Luker

Sticks and turn partner as in Marlborough.

Foot-down-and -in back-to-back, sticks-and-turn; ad lib.

End with all-in after foot-up etc.

Sticks:- short sticks - hit right to left on 1st beat, left to right on 2nd, right to left on 3rd, pause on 4th. Repeat 3 times.

The signs are that this year the team has rejected the dance.

Leslie Argyll was the driving force in getting the dance going. There was discussion only of another dance that might use the Jockey step.

THE OCK ST HORNS

The dance I invented I mention in case it is come across. A handk dance.

Foot-up:- long as 1)

"Horns":- 1st corners (1&6) pass giving left hands and then turn opposite middle with right hand (1&4, 6&3). 1&6 thus passing between the other 2 & through opposite corners place. Return to place giving left hand in centre again & right to own middle. Wave free hand as in GILEM. 2nd corner repeat giving opposite hands.

"Ribbons":- reels of 3 on tops - 1, 2&4; 3, 5&6; 1&2, 5&6 passing right shoulder first.

"Pole":- dance facing partner 8 bars.

Repeat these 3 with the "Horns" being replaced with "Head" and "Flowers" which are slight variations on the same movement. End with

"The Cup":- all-in as in Maid of the Mill

JIGS

Leslie Argyll dances his version of Princess Royal jig. I dance a jig of Abingdon steps to Month of May. Normally the men dance Bampton jigs. There is one distinctive Abingdon dance derived from one of the old dancers.

SHEPHERD'S HEY - jig - as taught by Jack Hyde.

Foot-up (twice) - Three bars of Abingdon step starting left foot & moving a little forward then in 4th bar 2 quick swing-back steps and feet together, hands up with little twists.

Clapping - b.b. touch. - / b.b. touch. - / b.b. un right thigh. - /

un left. behind. b. - / (twice)

In successive movements touch feet, knees, thighs, chest, head.

Always done by two men dancing side by side at the same time.

The Foot-up have evolved a little and the back step starts on the last beat of bar 3, thus:

1 h r l/r h l r/l h r | l/r l tog. -/
forward..... back....

Note no hops in backstep.

End on a foot-up.

BROOMSTICK

One movement remembered by Jack Hyde from dancing of Percy Hemmings who learnt it from his father Henry Hemmings, a step dancer and one time Mayor of Ock St.

Lay sword on ground and stand on right side of point facing guard. Dance up & down right hand side of sword with weight on left foot & tapping right foot across, and back.

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Starting from this it has been established from the older men that the full dance was:-

Foot-up: facing point, dance with Jockey or Heel-and-Toe step to "Pop Goes the Weasel" for 8 bars.

Tap across from right side:- move up right side of sword 4 bars and back for 4 bars. Weight on left foot. Tap across sword twice in bar 1, tap on near side of sword twice in bar 2, while hopping on supporting foot. Repeat for bars 3 to 6. In bars 7 and 8 tap across, apart, across and spring to change to new position.

Tap across from left side:- move up other side, weight on right foot etc.

Tap across alternately:- bar 1, hopping on left foot, tap right foot across, bar 2 hopping on right foot on left side of sword tap left foot across etc. Dance ends with three crosses in bars 7&8. This changing weight from side to side of the sword is difficult, and Percy was supposed never to get it right.

THE REPERTOIRE

The 4 old dances were,

Curly Headed Ploughboy, Princess Royal, Nutting Girl and Jockey. These were not forgotten and therefore were never revived.

The dances produced by the 1937 revival were,

Girl I Left, Sally Luker, Squire's Dance and Maid of the Mill

Jack Hyde, who was the antiquarian of the club, extracted Constant Billy and Duke of Marlborough but these have only been worked out in the last few years.

The missing dances are Shepherd's Hey and Greensleeves. The side has danced Shepherd's Hey jig as a set dance with the same dance structure as Girl I Left Behind Me or Squire's Dance, which could well have been the form of the dance, but it was not liked.

When more of the older dancers were alive only 5 dances were regularly done in public. Ploughboy was not done because of the musicians fouling up the tune. Nutting Girl was considered too simple, Maid of the Mill was the cause of arguments on the "right" way to do it.