

BIDFORD MORRIS

A new morris was raised at Bidford-on-Avon, warwks. in 1886 and revived in 1904. It stopped with WW I but the dances had been collected and some published by both Graham and Sharp. Then a boys side was raised in 1955 use was made of the published notations to stimulate local memories. Local knowledge mostly confirms Graham but with some significant deviations. Only 4 dances have been revived recently. The following is based mostly on Graham & the local team but use is made of Ferris MSS, Sharp MSS and Neal MSS.

GENERAL - the tradition seems to have been very flexible.

1. Both double and single stepping was customary (cf Bampton) depending more on the dancer & the foreman on each day rather than any fixed rule.
2. The opening figure could be (i) dance facing partner (ii) dance facing up (iii) hey (iv) rounds.
The final figure could be (i) spiral (ii) rounds (iii) dance facing up quickening the pace.
3. The intermediate figures were half-gip & back-to-back done ad lib.
4. The "sidestep" and "stick" dances were not associated with any particular tunes. A wide variety of stick tapping movements were used interchangeably. (cf Ilmington)
5. At the recent revival several local people have insisted that the distinctive chorus movement came before and between the halves of the conventional figures half-gip and back-to-back as well as the heys. This may be a confused memory of chorus and half-hey dances. The problem is confused by the fact that the repeats indicated by Sharp cannot be fitted consistently to any pattern. This may be due to non-standard dance structures, each dance having a different structure as often happens at a revival.
6. There are two forms of the hey, both of which could be used in the same dance. The hey starts from the top each time, not the bottom 2nd.
 - (i) morris hey - usual path - ends turn outwards in bar 4. (like Bledington hey without the "hook")
 - (ii) in & out hey - topmove in a little, turning to face down, then swing out going behind middles, swinging in again to bottom place then turn outwards $\frac{3}{4}$ round on spot to face front. Middles step quickly into middle to allow tops to pass behind and step back to allow bottoms to pass in front, then step forward to place & dance on spot. Bottoms take a wide sweep in turning outwards to start hey, then pass quickly between middles & take $\frac{3}{4}$ turn outwards at top. Hey starts from top again in repeat.
7. End each 4 bar figure phrase with a jump. Jumps at end of half-heys very vigorous.
8. Start every movement with right foot. Single or Hopstep throughout is current team's practice. MSS implies really left foot start
9. SPIRAL & BACK (as Shepherd's Hey description in Graham)
Odds move forward & cast sharply to left & dance down side of set followed by evens. The line swings across behind evens line & makes a large circle to right coming back to place. Evens step on spot till no. 5 reaches top at start and odds step on spot at end till evens have come up alongside.
SPIRAL & MORRIS OFF (as Constant Billy)
Start as above but only $\frac{3}{4}$ circle, then follow path of overlapping figure eights slowly receding from dancing pitch. If audience reaction is good enough there is the option to come back to the pitch for another dance.
All make a complete right turn on spot in bars 7 & 8 with a jump.



This figure is confirmed by a photo in the Stone collection in Birmingham Central Ref. Lib. The circumference of the circle must be much longer than the line of dancers.

Eidford 2

SHEPHERD'S AYE

Once to self - face up & jump at end.

Foot-up - face up stepping on spot (4 bars) jump & straight into

- 1/2 hey (i) - sticks or handclapping (4 bars)
- 1/2 hey (i) - " "
- 1/2 hey (ii) - " "
- 1/2 hey (ii) - " "

back-to-back to left (4 bars) - sticks or handclapping (4 bars)

back-to-back to right(4 bars) -

spiral to place OR after a figure jump to face up and dance 8 bars at a quickened pace ending with a jump and throwing up hands.

Half half-gips can be inserted before the back-to-backs

Handclapping:-

b. rkn. b. -./b. lkn. b. -.'b. unr. b. unl./b. beh. b. -./

CONSTANT BILLY - usually used to lead into morris off.

Once to self - facing partner, jump at end.

Foot-up - step on spot facing partner (4 bars) clapping (4 bars)

1/2 hey - clapping

1/2 hey - clapping

(lengthened by including back-to-backs and half-gips)

spiral-off if used as a morris-off OR rounds and all up.

Handclapping:-

b. - . rkn. -./b. - . l+l. -./b. - . beh. - . . b. - . r+l l+r. -./

STICK DANCES - Shepherd's Aye & other tunes

Sticks when not used held more or less upright in fists. Stick 18" long, one end having a knob turned & ribbons tied to it round waist of knob. Held at plain end.

A. Sharp & Neal (they had this done twice)

x. x. x. -./x. x. x. -./- . - . - . /- . - . x. -./

clash tips..... hold sticks tog. in arch

stationary..... stepping.....

Clash tips right to left and left to right alternately.

B. Present side - hit tips - no stepping.

x. x. x. -./x. x. x. -./x. - . x. -./x. x. x. -./

rtol ltor rtol ltor rtol ltor rtol ltor rtol ltor rtol

C. Simple rhythm - rhythm pattern used varied considerably from that used by present side, depending on the occasion, down to

- . - . x. -./- . - . x. -./- . - . x. -./- . - . x. -./

however the 3 taps in bar 4 were done more often than not.

D. Hit ground 3 times/3 low clashes of tips/hit ground 3 more times/ then 3 high chashes.

No two-handed grip movements are remembered.

A, B probably Shepherd's Aye : C probably Constant Billy : D possibly Young Collins

SIDESTEP DANCES

Sidestep movement - no sideways travel - long sidestep right foot forward then long sidestep left foot forward, holding up right then left hand, waving handk, while resting other hand on hip. Stone's photos show (i) no turn of body (ii) handk swung towards partner - therefore a sort of countertwist at about head height (iii) forward foot straight forward, but not crossed sufficiently to be in line with rear foot.

Order:- as Shepherd's Aye with following variations,

A. Old Woman Tossed Up in a Blanket. Young Collins. Play AABB(A, B=8 bars)

Foot-up : step facing partner 8 bars.

Order as Shepherd's Aye but including rounds.

End - face up & quicken pace.

B. Brighton Camp, Billy and Nancy. Play ABB(A, B= 8 bars)

Start face partner (Graham) or half rounds (Sharp)

End with rounds

Sharp collected a normal figure, chorus & 1/2 hey twice structure.

C. Abraham Brown Most reasonable interpretation of Graham is complete figures(8 bars) interspersed with 8 bars of sidestep.

WE WANT GO HOME TILL MORNIN

Bidford 3

This dance is in two parts which follow without pause - each part can be repeated several times although present side does not. The second part uses a Cuckoo's Nest tune. Play $(A_2 B_2)_3 C_8$ according to Sharp, who has $B = 12$ bars but this is far too long. Graham does not have B at all and requires $(A)_6 C_4$. However in reading and interpreting Graham one must remember that he never indicated repeats of a movement.

First Part - Conflict

- A1 - once to self - face partner & jump at end.
- A2 - Step facing partner (8 bars) jump at end.
- A3 - bars 1-4 : 1st corners approach (1 bar) fight by slapping hands first r+r then l+l (1 bar) retire backwards to place still challenging (2 bars)
- bars 5-8 : 2nd corners ditto - all 6 step throughout A3.
- A4 - Whole Hey - r. Salisbury did not think there was one here, as indicated by Graham, so at present it is optional.
- A5 - bars 1-4 : middles as A3.
- bars 5-8 : all dance whole gip going round to left only
- A6 - Whole rounds clockwise ending with vigorous jump.

Second Part - Reconciliation

- C1 - face partner & shake right hands (1 bar) stamp left foot (1 bar) shake left hands (1 bar) and stamp right feet (1 bar) 3 times each. Half Hey.
- C2 - repeat to place.
- C3 - half-rounds with large jump turning outwards to face back at half way and a large jump at end to face up.
- C4 - optional - step facing up with quickened pace.

Sharp's longer B music can be fitted in by putting A2's after the halves of A3 and A5. This would be consistent with Graham. It makes the dance like Campden's Country Dance, with spells of stepping on spot between everything.

PRINCESS ROYAL

Music: play $A_0 (A_1 B (A_2)^4 A_3)^3 A_4$ as per Sharp. The slow music is unusual in that the slow part starts in bar 3 (following Graham) rather than bar 1 as is more customary and continues till bar 6.

- A_0 - after once to self facing partner step on spot (8 bars) as Ferris says "upright jiggling to opposite".
- A_1 - whole hey.
- B - sidestep - 4 long sidesteps alternately to right and left as described before (8 bars) then long slips to right and left (4 bars) as at Abinndon. Ferris says dance with twist of foot. This and other indications suggest the following method - for sidestep to right - right foot forward and a little to right side heel on ground, and twist foot clockwise about heel while bringing left foot across behind right foot. This produces a certain amount of travel. (Suggest a similar movement in Abraham Brown) Ferris says hand waved at side; other hand on hip.
- A_2 - capers - Graham's "4 jumps" = 4 slow capers, each with a jump like the Fieldtown slow capers. The rhythm is as at Fieldtown with the jump as the 3rd movement of the caper. In the capers the hands are vaguely out and flapped. The caper is given as "hop forward with one foot, then touch ground lightly with the toe and then the heel of the other foot, and jump with both feet." The hop actually comes at the end. The movement is thus:-

ordinary speed /half speed
 r. hr. 1 hl./r. hr. 1. hl /.....j. hr./.....rj.l./
 r toe. r heel. ft. tog. ltoe lheel
 in position /cross.....
 rtoe r heelj. hr./ltoe l heelj. hl./r. hr. 1 hl./r. l j. -./
 /a tempo
 /opposite corner...turn & face back.

Bidford 4.

WB - weight on other foot while "touching" toe & heel. Spring off (this supporting foot to land on both feet and then hop on the opposite foot to that used to support before.
Dance first 2 bars in place facing across the diagonal - travel across on the 4 capers with most of the movement on the jumps - step the end facing out & turn to face back across the diagonal on the jump.

(A₂)¹ = 1st corner cross over (A₂)² = 1st corner cross back 2nd corner joining in at end.
(A₂)³ = 2nd corner cross over (A₂)⁴ = 2nd corner back and all join in last 2 bars.

Middles do not cross over.

A₃ - Spiral

A₄ - all face up & step at quickened pace.

BLUFF KING HAL - files 12 ft apart.

Step: - Graham "step slowly"; Sharp "dance soberly"; Present side dance with same step, hands and spirit as other Bidford dances. This is best. Graham says "when arms not linked, hands held up and hands waved". Extant side do a swing back and forward of both arms in each bar for every dance. Feet together at end of every phrase.

Sequence :- Sharp has (A,B,C= 4 bars)

A - advance; A - retire; B - mark time; B - advance; C - retire;
C - mark time & change formation if necessary.

Graham has

A - advance; A - retire; B - mark time; B - advance; C - retire and change formation.

The dance as it stands is not very exciting - it is slow, repetitive and very long. Yet it is valuable as one of the few dances which rely on pattern for their effect. The following improvements are recommended.

1. Dance with vigour (as extant side does)
2. Eliminate repeats (as extant side does)
3. For consistency make the pattern throughout (rationalising joins 2)

A - advance, A - retire, B - advance with linked arms, B - retire with linked arms, C - change formation

4. Musically it is much better to play AACCB

1. Once to self - face up - turn to face in on last beat.
2. Lines advance, nod, retire, link arms, advance, nod, retire & turn to face out, letting go of arms.
3. Lines advance backwards till backs almost touching, nod, retire, link arms and repeat form into one line facing up in order 1 3 5 6 4 2.
4. Single line advance, nod, retire, link arms, repeat and form one ring by 1 linking with 2 and rest holding hands.
5. Complete circle to right (8 bars) and circle back (8 bars) and form into two smaller circles odds and evens.
6. The 2 rings holding hands circle twice round to right (8 bars) and back to left (8 bars) breaking hands to form the single line facing up again.
7. Single line advance, nod, retire, link arms, advance, nod, retire and release arms and form a normal set at right angles to original direction - still in normal order, but facing outwards.
8. as 3.
9. as 2. End dance with a bow.

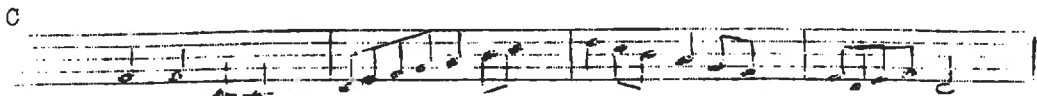
WB - nod not bow in bar 4 of advance and retire.

The above is the Sharp/Graham order - if one wants to rationalise further one could make the 2nd half of the dance more the mirror of the first half by for example -

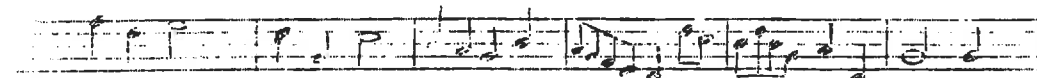
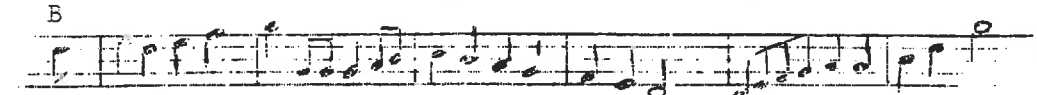
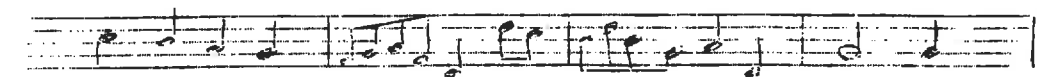
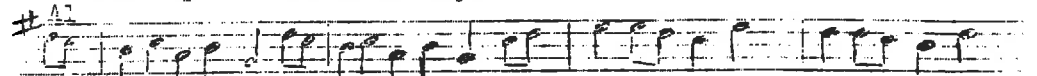
- a. in 7 have line face away from top
- b. in 7 to 9 have the linked arms movement before the free one.

BIDFORD TUNES

A Buff King Hal

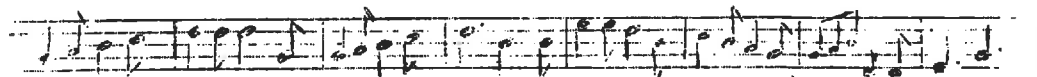
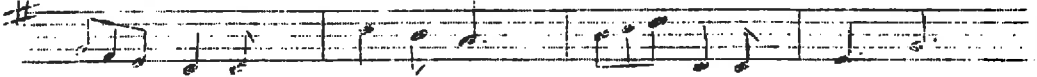


Cross Capor or Princess Royal

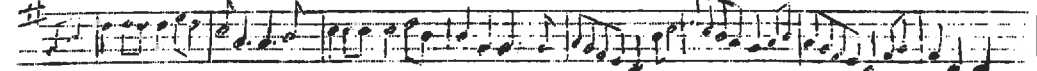


The following tunes were written down by Ferris in 1885

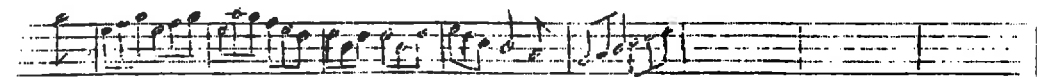
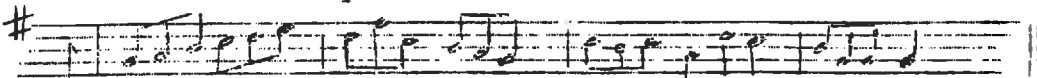
Abraham Brown the Sailor



Cuckoo's Nest



Old Woman Tossed Up in a Blanket



Bidford Town Morris - processional in single file.



Sharp & Graham have different versions of above tunes