

Blennerhasset Garland Dance

Additional Information collected by Sue Mycock of Throstles Nest Morris, 1 East Court, Blennerhasset, Aspatria, Cumbria.

" I collected the dance from two informants in the Village of Blennerhasset, Mrs Sally Rawlinson and Miss Hilda Lawson, both of whom had performed the dance in Blennerhasset Carnival in the period 1910 - 1925 approximately. There were in fact two dances one called a "Morris Dance", performed with handkerchiefs (with bells at each corner) and the other a "Garland Dance". There was also a Maypole Dance performed.

The performers were the young girls of the Village and were taught by a number of older people, one, a man who was almost certainly a School-teacher.

The girls wore white knee-length dresses, 2 tiered, with bells at waist, on frills around wrists and sometimes on a garter around the ankle. The hankies for the morris dance were white and had a bell at each corner, being suspended from a finger by means of a loop in the centre of each hankie. The garlands were hoops covered with flowers and/or ribbons. In earlier days (c.1910) the girls wore a single ribbon baldrick tied at the waist and also some of the dancers in the garland dance used tambourines instead of garlands. The tune was always "100 Pipers" and the local Brass Band played it.

The Morris handkerchief dance has only 2 figures - at least as remembered by the informants (a crossing figure and a star).

The Garland Dance had 3 figures:-

1. As in R.D.'s notation minus last sidestep
2. As in R.D.'s notation
3. As in R.D.'s notation minus last sidestep

In the third figure it is not clear whether you are supposed to sidestep at all as the instructions originally were to "pause and sway".

The Chorus was a processional originally with 4 steps forward and 2 back."