

TRAVELLING MORRICE AND THE FOREST OF DEAN MORRIS

The article by Mike Heaney in Morris Dancer no.12 sweeps up much of what else is known about the morris in the Forest but there are a few items in the logs of the Travelling Morrice.

I saw Rolf Gardiner's copy of the 2nd log for 29 June- 4 July 1925.

RAGLAN - Old Mrs Jones at Raglan Post Office remembered morris at Raglan but long dead.

RUARDEN-Mr Claude Farnell introduced Mrs Watkins who remembered dancing in Ruarden and possessed a real Forest of Dean coat as well as a letter from Sharp about it.

CHEPSTOW-Mr Hughes, the vicar, took them to see an old gentleman. Without hesitation he sang Shepherd's Hey (Bampton!) though he had not thought about it for nigh on 40 years. It appeared that in the 1880's a great pageant was given in Chepstow Castle and some 20 people processed onto the stage to the morris 4/3 step. He demonstrated the step quite successfully. The dancers wore bells, ribbons and carried sticks. More he could not remember but promised to look out some old photographs.

It suggests to me that someone should look for newspaper accounts and the photos.

I later saw Lionel Bacon's copies of the 24th and 28th tour logs for 1946 and 1948

WOOLASTON-ALVINGTON - at Longhope, Mr Roy Workman, his wife's grandfather had been a morris dancer at Woolaston and that they used to dance about Xmas time and had a man dressed as a woman. On one occasion the dancers were putting up at a pub for the night; the landlady said she could just squeeze them in if they didn't mind sharing beds and if the lady would share with the maidservants; as the time passed the uproar was more than the landlady had bargained for !

Later in the summer Mrs Workman herself told Russell something of what her grandfather, who died in 1913 aged 86, used to relate about the morris. He and his brother had taken part in the Woolaston-Alvington team, one of them being the "Mad Moll"; bells and ribbons were worn and Mrs Workman was fairly certain the dancing took place in the summer and not at Xmas time.

Other entries are adequately covered by Russell Wortley's article EDS 1980.

With reference to Mike's comment on my article in Morris Matters, it had been produced a long time before for the Forest of Dean side, and also sent to Russell to jog him into writing an article based on his experiences, the possibilities for which we discussed at a meeting at Cecil Sharp House once. Its value is that it sticks closely to Sharp's own words in his Field Notes.

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