

# INNOVATIVE ILMINGTON

## Background

The Ilmington tradition is valuable for the modern morris world because of the insights derivable from its many stops and starts and the changes to the dances that have been documented. For most of the nineteenth century the local morris was danced to a pipe and tabor, three generations of the same family, from the founder George Arthur (769-1836) from Snowhill, Warwickshire, through his son Tom (1802-1890), a mason and grandson James (1828-1906), a carpenter. Most of the historical facts published by Sharp in his Morris Book are wrong and the details should be sought in Keith Chandler's two books.

The dancing traces back to the beginning of the 19th century, perhaps 1805, when George Arthur came to the village and set up a workshop. The morris probably stopped first about the time of the end of Dover's Games in 1852, and then again a little later, 1858-1861. It was revived from 1886 to 1888/9 stimulated by the local interest in the Bidford team, in 1897 for Queen Victoria's second Jubilee and again in 1906 because of the growing wider interest in morris. Sam Bennett revived the morris in a fashion with women after WWI and again after WWII using children.

There is an indication that Ilmington was danced with galleys in its early days and this thought has been inspirational to several modern sides in England and the USA. It is particularly attractive in the hey where each pair galleys at different times. Cecil Sharp collected dances from those who had been in the 1886 and 1897 revivals. He even recorded the dances of the early 20th century side when it was dancing at a Stretton-on-Fosse Flower Show, and these notations and an interpretation have been published by the Morris Ring under that village's name. Sharp realised that he could recover older forms of the dances from the senior dancers in the village and his reconstruction was published in his revised edition of the Morris Book. Because of Sharp's public condemnation of the then active Ilmington side, for which Bennett was playing although he was not responsible for the dances, Sam recollected the dances himself and produced a version which was seen and recorded by Kenworthy Schofield. This form was taught to Oxford City MM when Schofield moved to the city. He had never taught Ilmington to his previous side at St Albans.

Ilmington was one place where beginners were taught to morris step by supporting their weight on the backs of two chairs, on the bars of a sheep dip, or hanging from a beam. They also each supplied their own sticks, 23 inch long and double tapered like chair legs, and the dancers were fined if they forget them.

The current village side started in the 1970's with the intention of avoiding both the Sharp and Bennett influences. They have had the joy of some local inputs on the dances, once they were established and accepted.

## Pipe and Tabor or Whittle and Dub

This was once the only instrument used for the morris and it should be more widely adopted again. It is easy to learn and only requires one hand to play. One friend practised while driving. The three hole pipe, two holes are on the front and one behind, is played in the first overblow octave as the fundamental notes are weak. This ensures that it high pitched and shrill, more of a rhythm

instrument than a melody one. They are made for particular keys. They can still be obtained made in metal. The accuracy of hole positioning is critical, which ensures that hand manufacture is difficult, and probably explains why the art died amongst players in the 19th century. An instrument maker who is a supplier in Brasstown, NC, USA, has them made in the keys of C and D by the company who manufactures his CDs. G pipes are much larger. Major Fryer of Wargrave used to make large pipes from bamboo which he could tune using match sticks and plastic wood.

There are actually two forms of three hole pipe available, called here the Basque and the English, which differ in playing by a tone, which ensures that transferring from one to the other is very hard. Joseph Powell at Bucknell had a commercially available Basque pipe. When Helen Kennedy gave him a copy by Dolmetsch of the John Potter of Stanton Harcourt damaged pipe owned by Jinky Wells, he could not get on with it at all.

Musicians played their own versions of the tunes, suited to the instrument. It is thought that it should be possible to tell from the tune collected with which instrument the informant was familiar.

The tabor can vary from a very deep side drum to a small tambourine sized one suspended vertically from the little finger of the hand playing the pipe. Usually the drum is played with a single headed stick, but some players had a short double headed stick which could be "rolled" for excitement. Although the pipe could not provide much sound colour the pair were rhythmically independent and hence very flexible.

### **Style**

The dances considered are those used in the late revivals as they are described in Lionel Bacon's Handbook, but which are usually ignored by morris clubs.

**Stepping** : This was single stepping, Cotswold, not any other form.

**Hand Movements** : The arms are swung down and up, not a large swing, not up very high, and up on any jump. One source describes a "sailor's roll with alternate arm swings" but this does not look well unless it is done in the Chipping Campden style.

**Jumps** : jumps were not used consistently during the dances, and should be kept for the finishes of movements.

**Slow Capers** : During the period of interest these were only performed in jigs. Sam Bennett told Schofield that each involved three movements rather than the more normal four, as had become common at Bampton, for one of whose sides Sam was playing, and he showed a cross-apart step and a clapping set.

Because of the Darcy Ferris contacts with various dancers to help his Bidford team dance, it has long been thought that their dances were influenced by Ilmington ones. However the Ilmington dances of that period seem to reflect the reverse!

## Figures

**Once to Yourself** : a jump. Start on to left foot unless other consideration.

**Foot Up** : This could be danced on the spot, facing up and then down, turning first outwards to face down and then inwards to face across. It could also be danced moving up and back, turning in to face across and dancing on the spot still facing across.

**Cross Over** : not a whole or half gyp. Two bars across, passing right shoulder, turning right to face back, two bars back on the same track passing left shoulders, turning left to face front..

**Cross and Turn** : Normally done as a whole gyp movement, except in *Maid of the Mill*, and else when where it suited to have such a movement.

**Half Heys** : These were "Country Dance" like with the top pair going between the middles and the bottom waiting, not turning out to start, no extra loops.

**Whole Rounds** : This was the normal, not half rounds, and probably not with a pause facing across at half way, ending capering up. Facing across half way and turning out to carry on looks much better.

## DANCES

The choruses tended to stay the same or be simpler than Sharp reconstructed but the figure order was rather variable from dance to dance.

### *Shepherd's Hey* - hand clapping

Chorus :

b rk r+r - / b lk l+l - / b unr b unl/ b beh r+l,l+r - / plus a half hey.

b = dancer claps both hands together at chin level,  
rk, lk = slap top of right or left knee, which is not raised, with right or left hand,  
r+r, l+l = opposites clap right or left hands together,  
un r, unl = dancers clap both their hands together under right or left thigh,  
beh = clap both hands behind back,  
r+l, l+r = opposites clap both hands with each other.

*Figure Order* : Foot-up, chorus, (back-to-back, chorus, whole-gyp or half-gyp, chorus) *ad lib*, whole rounds to end. Or as *Molly Oxford* version 2.

Clap hands above head at each jump.

### *Cuckoo's Nest* - stick tapping

The stickings appear to include a number of small variations on a single concept.

Odds hold their stick by the butt and hit their opposites stick, held horizontally at chin level by both ends, in the middle three times, while the odds tap their right toes and the evens their left in front three times. Next the evens do the same to the odds and tap opposite toes to before. All hold sticks by the middle vertically

and clash the ends, tips right to left and butts left to right, seven times in all, while dancing single step and jump on the final clash.

Half hey and repeat all to place. *Figure Order* as above.

**Black Joke (1)** - with a stick held by the butt.

On the tune extension all the dancers do four plain capers on the spot. There is no specific sticking in this dance but at the usual place for clashes the evens hold their stick out to the side and the odds hit down on the tips with their tips.

*Figure Order* : (Foot-up and down, chorus)<sup>ad lib</sup> , whole rounds to end.

Foot-up (2 x 6 bars) could be alternately up or down to start.

*Chorus* : half back-to-back (4 bars), half half-gyp ending with four plain capers (6 bars), both passing right shoulders and then repeat dancing the other halves, passing left shoulders.

**Black Joke (2)** - with handkerchiefs

*Figure Order* : Dance facing ending with four plain capers (6 bars), cross over and back ending with four plain capers (6 bars). Chorus. Foot-down (6 bars) etc

*Cross-Over* : end turning left to face front for four plain capers.

*Chorus* : dance first half of a half-gyp, dance in position and end with four plain capers. Dance first half of back-to-back, dance in position and end with four plain capers. In repeats dance the other halves.

**Molly Oxford (1)**

*Figure Order* : (Foot-up, chorus, whole gyp, chorus) <sup>ad lib</sup>, whole rounds to end.

*Chorus* : All sidestep to left, so that lines uncover, and side step back to right, without a jump, and half hey. Repeat all this to place.

**Molly Oxford (2)**

*Figure Order* : Foot-up and retire and dance facing, forward and back to meet opposite (not a half gyp) and then first half of a **figure**. Sidestep to left and right and half hey, sidestep to left and right and dance the second half of the **figure**. Repeat all but start sequence dancing foot-down and use another figure in two parts such as half-gyp, whole-gyp, back-to-back, cross-over, cross and turn and half rounds.

At Bidford I was told by the two sons of the old foreman that they had two dances known as the handkerchief and the stick dance. The former was the common sidestep and half hey dance which could be done to a variety of tunes, but for the latter the stick tapping was at the foreman's discretion and may not be known by the rest of the team until they saw what the foreman did!

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From: SHAKESPEAR'S GARLAND or the Warwickshire Jubilee; Being  
a Collection of Ballads, Catches and Glees as performed in the  
Great Booth at Stratford upon Avon. Composed by Mr. DIBDIN.

THE WARWICKSHIRE LAD.

Ye Warwickshire Lads and ye Lasses,  
See what at our Jubilee passes;  
Come revel away, rejoice and be glad,  
Come revel away, rejoice and be glad,  
For the Lad of all Lads was a Warwickshire Lad.  
    Warwickshire Lad,  
        All be glad,  
For the Lad of all Lads was a Warwickshire Lad.

Be proud of the charms of your County,  
Where Nature has lavish'd her Bounty;  
Where much has been given, and some to be spar'd,  
Where much has been given, and some to be spar'd,  
For the Bard of all Bards was a Warwickshire Bard.  
    Warwickshire Bard,  
        Never pair'd,  
For the Bard of all Bards was a Warwickshire Bard.

Our Shakespeare compar'd is to no Man,  
Nor Frenchman, nor Grecian, nor Roman;  
Their Swans are all Geese to the Avon's sweet Swan,  
TXheir Swans are all Geese to the Avon's sweet Swan,  
For the Man of all Men was a Warwickshire Man.  
    Warwickshire Man,  
        Avon's Swan,  
For the Man of all Men was a Warwickshire Man.

Old Ben Thomas, Otway, John Dryden,  
And half a score more we take Pride in;  
Of famous Will Congreve we boast too the Skill,  
Of famous Will Congreve we boast too the Skill,  
But the Will of all Wills was a Warwickshire Will.  
    Warwickshire Will,  
        Matchless still,  
But the Will of all Wills was a Warwickshire Will.

There never was sure such a Creature,  
Of all She was worth he robb'd Nature;  
He took all her Smiles, and he took all her grief,  
He took all her smiles, and he took all her grief,  
For the Thief of all Thieves was a Warwickshire Thief.  
    A Warwickshire Thief,  
        He's the Chief,  
For the Thief of all Thieves was a Warwickshire Thief.

-o-oOo-o-

94.  
London. Printed and Sold by John Johnson, at No.11, York Street,  
Covent Garden. (1769)

LILLY DALE.

Music and, presumably, words by H.S.THOMPSON. Published by Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston, 1852.\*

'Twas a calm, still night, and the moon's pale light  
Shone soft o'er hill and vale;  
When friends met with grief, stood around the death bed,  
Of my poor, lost Lilly Dale.

Cho: Oh! Lilly, sweet Lilly,  
Dear Lilly Dale;  
Now the wild rose blossoms o'er her little green grave,  
'Neath the trees in the flow'ry vale.

The cheeks that once glow'd with the rose tint of health,  
By the hand of disease had turn'd pale,  
And the death damp was on the pure white brow  
Of my poor, lost Lilly Dale.

Cho: Oh! Lilly, etc.

"I go", she said, "to the land of rest,  
And e'er my strength shall fail,  
I must tell you where near my own lov'd home,  
You must lay poor Lilly Dale".

Cho: Oh! Lilly, etc.

"'Neath the chestnut tree, where the wild flowers grow,  
And the stream ripples forth through the vale,  
Where the birds shall warble their songs in Spring,  
There lay poor Lilly Dale".

Cho: Oh! Lilly, etc.

-o-oOo-o-

In the same city, and in the same year, that Jenny  
Lind married her pianist and conductor, Otto Goldschmidt.

\*

JACK'S THE LAD.

Written by George Horncastle. Composed and Sung by Miss Nellie L'Estrange. London. Hopwood & Crew, 42, New Bond Street, W. (1892)

There is a man we all admire,  
So tarry and so greasy oh!  
Who never has a thought or care,  
He takes his life so easy oh!  
And as he saild across the seas,  
Enjoys his salt junk daily oh!  
And thouth he never has a "brown",  
Can turn up his "quids" so gaily oh!

Cho: Jack's the lad. Jack's the lad,  
Always gay and frisky oh!  
Jack's the lad, Jack's the lad,  
To lower the rum and the whisky oh!  
At keeping his feet he's handy oh!  
His legs are rather bancy oh!  
A rollicking, frolicking so of the sea,  
Is sailor Jack the Dandy oh!

Who stows away his tot of rum,  
And of it ne'er grows weary oh!  
And though he's very often "tight",  
Can hoist his "slacks" so cheery oh!  
Who's been wrecked twenty times at least,  
But doesn't seem to care a bit,  
Who at the Skipper and the Mate  
Was never known to swear a bit.

Who is it takes the lassies on?  
Of every size and sort you know,  
Who is it boasts that he has got,  
A wife in every port you know?  
Who vows he loves them one and all,  
And ever faithful he will be,  
But when he's out of sight of land,  
Goes tickling mermaids in the sea.

-o-oOo-o-

Handwritten musical notation for the first piece, consisting of three staves of music in a single system.

THE WARWICKSHIRE LAD

CHAS. DIDDIN (1769)

Handwritten musical notation for 'THE WARWICKSHIRE LAD', consisting of two staves of music.

JACK'S THE LAD.

(1892)

NELLIE L'ESTRANGE

Handwritten musical notation for 'JACK'S THE LAD.', consisting of five staves of music.