

SKIT "MORRIS" DANCES AS SEEN ON TV SHOWS & AT FESTIVALS

compiled

by

ROY DOMMETT

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OR AT FESTIVALS

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1. EAST ACTON STICK DANCE

From : A Hancock TV show of about 1955, as performed by Tony Hancock, Bill Keer, and Sid James, dressed in Top Hat, Forest of Dean shirt (like Beaux) and britches and each carrying a long stick.

Steps : single steps.

Set : three dancers in one line facing to the side (to audience).

Suggest make it a set of six in two rows of three.

A1 : Foot-up twice to the audience.

B1 : Middle dancer sticks with the right hand dancer, then repeats with the left hand dancer : (suggest, hit tips right to left and butts left to right while plain capering, 4 bars with each dancer).

A2 : Reel of Three, the middle going to the right first.

B2 : Middle elbow swings the right hand and then the left hand dancer.

A3 : Foot-up twice as A1 - but in a different direction, *say to the right.*

B3 : as B1.

A4 : as A2.

B4 : Middle man do-si-do's the right hand and then the left hand dancer. ad lib to this pattern, *introducing new figures at B6 (star or hands across, B8 etc (rounds for 6 and off) and foot-down on A5, foot-to-the-left on A7, and perhaps foot-up again on A9.*

ALTERNATE FIGURES

Star, but at half way and at end reverse direction by casting out, all following No.1, so that the order is reversed, and forming a circle a little to the side of the original star. No.1 followed by the others traces a near figure of eight path that is not a hey.

Star, right handed, and each dancer in turn pops under the arch made by the other two (without letting go of the star at the ends of bars 2, 4 and 6. The first two can turn the easy way going under but the last has to do a reverse direction of turn to avoid twisting an arm). Turn out (alone) to come back and repeat it all left handed.

EAST ACTON HANDCLAPPING DANCE

From : Denise Upton based on the above without sticks.

As above, but handclapping instead of sticking in B1, B3 etc. Stay with something simple like r+r, r+r, r+r - / l+l, l+l, l+l - / etc for 4 bars with each end dancer.

ALTERNATE LAST FIGURE

Ring, No.1 pops under at start without letting go, turns to face centre so that all have hands crossed in a clover leaf and "basket" round to the left to end the dance.

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2. CITY MEN'S DANCE

Source : film of EFDSS Albert Hall Show 1965.

Kit : City Dress with bowler hat, rolled umbrella carried in the right hand and folded newspaper under the left arm (unless otherwise stated)

Extra : a bus stop sign at the top of the set.

Music : various Longborough morris and sword tunes.

Set : six dancers, standing in a ring off from the dance area.

ENTRY "Belle Island March" A

Dancers advance in two lines with "Monks March" Heel-&-Toe step, facing across till they make a single line down the centre, swinging their umbrellas through a large arc, about 200°, and turning the easy way face up at the end for the "break", which is dibbing the bottom of the umbrella on the ground twice, bending forward a little, and putting the handle over the left elbow to let it hang down on the 1 2 3 of the end of the hornpipe music phrase.

GREETING "Belle Island March" B

The top man, No 1, turns half round clockwise to face the next, No 2, and both step to their right, and greet each other by raising their hat up to the right by the brim with their right hand in a wide sweeping gesture, weight on the right foot and leaning to the right. Nos 3&4, then Nos 5&6 ditto. *[Then all do it again, moving out further to form a normal morris set]*

HEY "Belle Island March" A

Half Hey with the normal morris track using a Heel-&-Toe step. Unbutton the umbrella and shake it loose, start to raise it in bar four and have it fully open and up vertical held by one hand by the end of the phrase, when the dancers have moved into a single file again facing in pairs.

PROGRESSION "Saturday Night" AB

With the umbrella still vertical, all dance two double steps, galley on the right foot, moving out to the right, turning on the hops, and making the feet-together-&-jump and sideways movement back into the file.

All dance two furies and then four plain capers to pass by the right shoulders to change places but still facing the same directions. As they pass they tilt the umbrellas to to left and spin them about the stem in their hands.

Repeat all a turn *[or two]*, to end in pairs back to back, ie ends facing out.

ROUNDS "Travel By Steam" (Swaggering Boney) A

Stand in this line and fully open, rhythmically and all in the same manner, the newspapers, holding them with hands at head level to obscure vision.

Move into half rounds, clockwise and galley outwards to face back and dance back ending in a circle, while reading their newspapers.

CORNERS "Travel By Steam" BB

The top and bottom pairs face, up and down the set, while the middles, having moved out a little, stand facing across and read their newspapers.

The ends, still with newspapers up in front and umbrellas hanging from the left eibow, simultaneously dance a long open sidestep to the right and a short open sidestep to the left, to approach their other end along the set, and jump to land feet together, so that they are face to face (except for

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back towards the centre, so that they remain facing. The springs are off both feet and the landings are on both feet. They then half lower their newspapers and walk past each other, passing right shoulders, acknowledging each other, changing ends. They fold the newspapers during the next phrase.

The middles stroll forward, No 4 engrossed in the newspaper, the other with it folded as a baton. No 4 stops at the end of bar 4 and lowers the newspaper, while No 3 does the jump. In bar 5, No 4 raises their hat and holds it up during bar 5 when No 3 hits his bare head with the rolled up newspaper. They then walk across to change places and turn and face across. All put newspapers into their left side jacket pocket.

ARCH "Lass O'Dallowgill" etc

The top pair make an arch by crossing the point ends of their umbrellas high in the middle of the set between them. The other pairs face down with umbrellas sloped over the right shoulder, and walking, cast up the outsides of the set and cast back down the middle under the arch.

DOUBLE UNDER

Form a ring using the umbrellas, handle in right hand, point held by right hand neighbour. *[Circle and stop in starting position, top pair at the top.]* Bottom pair lift the umbrella between them to above head height and the top pair move down the centre to pass under it, with the umbrella between them in front and held horizontal, while the bottom pair carries this umbrella over the heads going up the middle. At the bottom the top pair turn away from each other, casting out and going up the outside, lifting their umbrella over the heads. Carry on till reach starting place.

THREES

Still maintaining the hilt-&-point links, the middle pair approach closely and exchange handles while everyone brings the two ends their are holding in different hands together into their right hand. The umbrellas are then lifted horizontally to show two separate rings of three with the umbrellas forming triangles. The triangles walk around anticlockwise, with the two sets rotating to keep the former middles close together in the centre.

[THE ENDING

Final movement not filmed. Could continue the "Threes" by one of the triangle ducking through as in the Ampleforth and Ryedale sword dances. If the umbrellas are flexible enough an attempt could be made at a lock or the tips of the umbrellas could be released, dancers face their opposites, link up in pairs and do a roll.]

For the purposes of the show the number of repeats of any movement was minimised. For other performances repeats are desirable as the audience will not recognise the movements quickly in the way that a folk one would do.

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3. THE DUSTMEN'S DANCE

Source : filmed at EFDSS Albert Hall Show 1966.
Steps : walk, plain capers, stephops.
Music : includes Headington "Beansetting".
Set : six dancers, one of whom is the "foreman".

ENTRY

Simulation of travel by Dustcart - Foreman leads with a steering wheel in their hands, followed by a line abreast of five dancers with hands joined and raised to head height. All take many quick, short steps to represent travel by lorry.

THE CALL

All stand in a circle facing out and call!

Bring on six metal dustbins with metal lids. (Before the days of plastic!) Stand them in two rows of three.

SOME FIGURES

1. Each dancer pick up a lid. Dance into the center forming a tight bunch. Dance two loops, the first anticlockwise and the second clockwise, inside the lines of dustbins, clashing the lid down onto the dancer's own dustbin when passing. Stepping two capers per bar.
2. From facing in two lines inside the lines of dustbins, each starting in front of their own dustbin, dance a loop behind that position around the dustbin, clashing the lid down on it as they pass, and meet the opposite dancer in the middle and clash the lids together. Then dance a small circle nearly on the spot, rotating the same way as the first part of the figure, and clash lids together again. Presumably can repeat with loops etc the other way. Stepping two capers per bar.
3. Chorus I - dancers face in two rows and clash lids together. First with opposite, then diagonally to right and then left and partner again. Repeat this twice more but leaning on the last clash with opposite and holding this position for some time.
4. Cross Over. Using stephops, starting from behind own dustbin go round the opposite one and back to place. In place, bow to the opposite.
5. Chorus II - "Beansetting" tune, pick up the dustbin and bang the bottom on the ground twice, then hit the bottom edge forward against opposite's dustbin. Repeat. Pass the dustbins half way round the set by banging the bottom on the ground and passing the dustbin to the next dancer around the set anticlockwise, three times. Repeat it all to get the dustbin back to place.

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4. DAD'S ARMY MORRIS DANCE

- From** : Dad's Army series on BBC TV, the episode "Godiva Affair" first broadcast 3.11.74 and repeated early in 1991. Supposedly to be danced at the end of the Warmington-on-Sea "Spitfire Week" procession, and based on an Instruction Book. One of the scenes in the stage musical of "Dad's Army" in 1975-6 was called "Morris Dance" but it is not known if there is any connection with the choreography.
- Stick** : about 22-24 inch long, normally held in the right hand near the bottom and upright during the dance but resting on the right shoulder when stationary or processing. Called "whiffing sticks".
- Music** : non-Cotswold 6/8 jig rather like the alternative "Maid of the Mill". Played on a large concertina and accompanied by a side drum.
- Step** : walk step and hop step. Because of the age of the performers they appeared to walk where a springy hop would be more likely.
- Set** : six dancers arranged as a normal Cotswold set, three versus three. They also had the Capt as an extra and Sarg Wilson in a rather large tourney hobby horse. The dancers wore a rosette on the front crossing of the baldrick but not the back, but had another on the back of their straw hats where the ribbons hung down.

The final practice performance was preceeded by the statement from Captain Mainwaring, "Now where did we get to last time?", implying that we saw only the final part of the dance. It is proposed that the dance be extended to the same pattern, preceeding the observed part with sequences including alternative figures such as back to back, cross over and whole hey, to be used in place of half rounds.

Fig 1. Dance Facing : 8 steps marking time on the spot facing across the set, bouncing the body up and down. Sticks held vertically.

Retire four steps, then approach four steps and clash tips on the last.

Fig 2. Half Rounds : Turn easy way into clockwise round for 8 hops, all turn inwards and come back to place anticlockwise, turning the easy way to face front and clash tips.

Fig 3. Sticking : holding stick near bottom, stand still and hit tips, alternately right to left and left to right, for 4 bars, 8 hits.

Dib & Shout : holding stick in the middle, bend knees and dib butts 2 times in the first bar, straighten up and raise both hands to head height shouting "wow!" on the middle beat of the second bar. Repeat 3 more times making 8 bars in all.

Sticking : repeat sticking above for 4 bars.

End the dance by all turning to face up on the last clash.

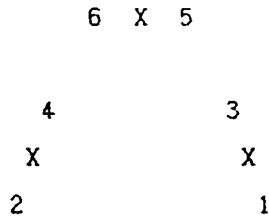
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5. BRUCE FORSYTH'S GENERATION GAME
"Morris Dance"

From : TV programme September 1976 using the boys of the Royal Ballet School. Danced in the Adderbury style and with long sticks.

Music : "Blue Bells of Scotland", and its usual Adderbury sticking.

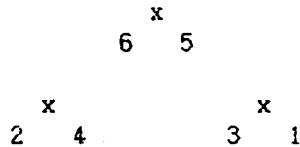
Set : six dancers, but not in the usual morris formation. The active pairs were the neighbours at the top and the opposites at the bottom, but the sides were not parallel, being much wider at the top, presumably for the convenience of the staged performance.



The "X's" indicate the persons who clash and dance the figures together.

Chorus : as normal Adderbury "Blue Bells of Scotland".

Figures : start with Whole Rounds for all, then half-gip, back-to-back and hands-round with indicated person. Mirror image Adderbury like reels along the sides and end the dance all facing up as below.



Clearly the set could be turned the other way and then repeat the entire dance with 1&2, 3&5, 4&6 working together.

Processional Down could be included but it would require the dancers to go down the outside, in contrast to Processional Up where they would have to come up the middle, but they could exploit forming lines of four and six.

In principle a similar dance could be constructed for eight standing in pairs in a square, but it would be getting complex and rather un-Cotswold.

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6. THE TWO RONNIES MORRIS DANCE

- From** : The "Two Ronnies" Show on TV about August 1977. They wore whites, hats and baldricks. The two women in the set wore brief shorts.
- Stick** : Each started with a long stick held Adderbury fashion, and during the dance swapped it for a bladder.
- Step** : stephops.
- Set** : two lines of three, starting by facing across towards opposite.

A Casts -

- a) bottom pair - cast up the outside to the top, clash sticks in the middle at the top and dance down the centre to places.
- b) middle pair - cast up the outside to the top, clash sticks in the middles at the top and dance down the centre to their place.
- c) top pair - dance a small circle around their place, clash and then dance another circle in the other direction.

B Swops -

- a) bottom pair - repeat A but when back in place swop their sticks for a bladder from a pile at the bottom of the set.
- b) middle pair - like A but taking a longer path, cast up the outside to the top, down the middle and cast up again to starting place, swapping sticks for bladders at the bottom.
- c) top pair - clash at the top then down the centre, swap, up outside.

C Waggon Wheel - whole rounds each way but putting both hands on the shoulders of the dancer in front.

- D Cross Over** - pairs cross over the middle. Two dancers in turn, cross to meet face to face, dance a step on the spot, then sidestep, moving a little to the right side so that they can lean both forward and round the other dancer and smack the other dancer's bottom with their bladder. The order appeared to be the bottom pair first, then alternate ones from each side so that each dancer has two goes in succession. The pairs were never corners.

E Whole Rounds.

- F Leapfrog** - face up to the top in two lines. All dance a pas de basque step while dancing on the spot.

- a) bottom pair - balance then two leapfrogs up to the top, and dance back down the outside to place.
- b) middle pair - balance then leapfrog over top pair, cast to the bottom and leapfrog up to place.
- c) top pair - dance down the outside of the set and leapfrog to the top.

- G Cast** - Cast out from the top, lead by the first pair, and come up the middle, forming a line of six across the set facing the top.

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7. RUSS ABBOT MORRIS DANCE

From : BBC1 TV 25.5 89 Russ Abbot Show. Comic intent in the programme but with novel ideas making it worth considering.
Music : "Come Lasses and Lads".
Steps : on the show they used a very springy walk, two to a bar, but real dancers would stephop.
Stick : two 30 inch long sticks with spiral stripe and hanging tassels.
Set : six men in a single line, facing in pairs.

STICKS : two dancers face and hit both sticks with opposite right with left etc on the first strong beat of each bar, while "stepping" without any jumps. Lasts for 8 bars.

FIGURES : all consist of an eight bar "movement" followed by an eight bar "sticking", except the last figure which is twice as long.

1. Step on the spot facing in pairs along the line. 1) <2 3> <4 5> <6.
2. Change places with partner, 1&2, 3&4, 5&6, going anti-clockwise and facing throughout, hold for a little in partner's place, then carry on the same way onto to starting place.
3. Back-to backs along the line. The first moving forward and passing partner by the right shoulder and back to place. The second moving backwards to start with the dancer behind, 2&3, 4&5, passing left shoulders and moving forward by the right shoulder to place.
4. Ends change places with middles, 1&3, 4&6. Move round anti-clockwise but end facing the same way as the dancer replaced was facing.
5. Repeat figure 4 to place.
6. Clockwise rounds in threes, 1&2&3, 4&5&6. No. 3 quarter turns to their right and No. 2 three quarter turns to their right to follow No. 3 and No. 1 moves off to their left. The other three go round in the opposite direction. The rounds take 16 steps and is then repeated immediately.

The whole sequence is repeated.

8. RIBBON DANCE

- From** : TV broadcast of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" produced by Jonathan Miller for the English National Opera in modern dress (20's style). It included a short dance for six persons with wide ribbons.
- Music** : the starting tune of ACT II with chorus of sopranos singing "Braid the Raven Hair.." and danced to the reprise after Pitti-Sing's solo.
- Step** : running step forward, and quick little slip steps to move sideways.
- Set** : six persons, linked in pairs with long wide ribbons, like scarves, about 10 ft long by 18 in wide. The ribbons were in a light weight material, and three of the dancers had them wound around their waist at the start. There is a seventh solo dancer who participates at appropriate times by posing, making gestures, or "stepping".

ENTRY - come on, one standing still and the other of each pair unwinding the ribbon as they came twirling down the dance area, the start of the movement for each dancer being staggered in time, ending with the ribbon held taut overhead with arms upstretched, the rear dancer standing upright and the front down on one knee. Pose, then rotate the set to form a set of three facing three across, with ribbon with only a little slackness. Pose again, ribbons horizontal but front pair holding it lower than the middles and back pair higher than the middles and canting the ribbons sideways towards the audience. The solo dancer is at the back.

FIGURES

1. Stand on spot and wave ribbon up and down four times, the middle one out of phase with the others and going down and up, and all avoiding producing additional waves along the ribbon. The dancers raise the ribbon to be at a full upward stretch and lower them till it is on the ground and they are kneeling or crouching. The ribbon is horizontal only when at head level.
- 2(a). All float the ribbons up so that the centre is high, well above head level between the pairs, twice up and down from touching the ground at the start, the dancers moving a little inwards when ribbons are high.
- 2(b). Float the ribbon high enough that there is time for the pairs to run on four steps to meet and touch both hands r+l/l+r and retire on four steps to place before the ribbon falls. Repeat once. End as at start of figure 1.
3. Dip-&-Dive Reel or Roll, in two halves, danced slowly, all facing across and using many fast but little sidesteps. The bottom pair move to the top during this half figure while the other two pairs keep to their relative positions. The ribbons are slackened or floated as necessary to allow the pairs to pass. The third ribbon goes over the second while the first is floated up, then under then first while the second goes over the 7th dancer with ribbon at full stretch. The seventh dancer, who had been standing at the back, walks through the set under the ribbons at this halfway point through the figure, such that they pass under all the ribbons. The first goes over the 7th at full stretch while the third is making a big swing at the top, then the third goes over the 7th. The second half of the dip-&-dive returns the bottom pair back to place. Second over first as third is going over 7th, then third over second while first floats up, then first over third and second over first. Third ribbon over the first and then under the second. End as start of figure one again.

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4. Form a star slowly, one pair moving at a time, and taking eight running steps for each position change. The forming of the central knot should make the ribbons appear more ray like.

METHOD ONE as deduced from a video recording.

- a. 2&6 change places, 2 goes inside 4 and under ribbons, and 6 outside 4.
- b. 5&6 (from 6's new position) change under the ribbons, passing by right.
- c. 2&1 (from 2's new position) change places under the ribbons, passing by right shoulders and turning to the right to face back.
- d. 3&4 change places under the ribbons, so that all end on the opposite side to which they started and the odd side only is in reverse order.

METHOD TWO suggested manner more consistent with traditional ribbon dances.

- a. 3&4 change with 5&6, 4 goes outside 6 and 3 inside 5 so that ribbons are bent and folded and forming a cross,
- b. 1&2 go between 6&5, 2 continuing to the bottom outside 4 and ending on centreline, 1 turning back around 5 to end at the top on the centreline,
- c. 3&4 and 5&6 change back, 4 going inside 6 and 3 outside 5.
- d. 1&2 dance to other end, 1 passes inside 4 and outside 6 and 2 inside 5 and outside 3.

5. Tilt star to form a background to the seventh dancer with their head near the centre and the rays radiating away!

Suggest adding a movement with the star rotating in the tilted position rather than horizontally. This can be done either separately or in sequence with the dancers holding their ribbon ends at the same height as they go round, or with them raising and lowering their ends so that the tilt stays in the same position on the dance area.