

SKITS, STUNTS AND INVENTION

INTRODUCTION

The morris never took itself too seriously. However dancers can not always bring themselves to think of themselves as entertainers, street theatre, or just to be larger than life, in other words they would not make a fool of themselves. But personal experience suggests that morris dancers are more prone than most of society to do anything that is suggested and to think about it afterwards. Within my own experience a team has danced in the empty excavated ampitheatre at Silchester, another team to one man and a dog at the Rollright stones, every year a busking side danced in the sea at Sidmouth or on the shingle bank at the river mouth, a set did Bonny Green Garters over the river wall into the mud at Ross on Wye at a Ring Meeting, another regularly danced in a hotel swimming pool for guests at Bournemouth, and one was known to dance in two layers, both inside and on top of a flat roofed bus shelter. It is not suprising that there are a number of common comic ideas, routines or stunts in circulation. Some have become well loved classics, like some clown routines.

Silly or fun dances have their place, often late in the day, as it gets dark. Perhaps responsive to an established audience for the 2nd or 3rd outside show at a pub evening with indoor sessions, assuming the team is not on a Monte Carlo motoring tour.

SPONTANEITY

It is not uncommon within any social organisation to present skits and stunts on party nights, and in this respect the morris is no different. They are usually ephemeral ideas, specific to the occasion, such as ales and end of tour parties, which often do not bear much repetition. This is probably because they are not normal 'dance' concepts but pantomimic, ludicrous, or even vulgar, and, like all fooling for fun associated with the morris, needing an element of spontaneity. An example of near unrepeatability was the use of a supply of sparklers instead of handkerchiefs on a November 5th outing. It's like all joking about in the morris dance, rehearsal can make it look more professional, as long as you do not see it a second time done in exactly the same way. I once toured with the Albion Morris who did a wonderful Upton on Severn Stick Dance but the gags repeated almost exactly. It always loses its impact if having been seen before. Humour today is expected to appear spontaneous, although hoary chestnuts can be greeted with delighted groans! But an important point is the value of passing good ideas on, without widely broadcasting them. Some clubs have a tradition of creating them, like Great Western who have printed volume one of a book about their attempts.

DANCE INSPIRATION

Good yet simple dance ideas are hard to come by. Small variations on existing movements are produced all the time, but they seldom catch the imagination of other teams as a preferred alternative. Dorset Knobs and Knockers created a Badby "Beansetting" combining ideas from the Brackley and Headington "Beansetting" dances. Then Oyster doubled the active sticking to make an even better dance. Too often "new" dances are complicated. A good

judge of quality is whether the idea appears to another side worth stealing. It is just as well that good ideas are rare, with the number of sides in the world we could be swamped by them.

There is always the problem of judging what is not "morris". At Bampton Jinky Wells introduced dances such as "Under the Old Myrtle Tree" which did not catch on in the village or elsewhere since because it included elements that were too much of the country dance.

Good dances are based on movement, "neat" or "vigorous" are the sort of terms that should spring to mind. They are very seldom based on dramatisation or representation and the collectors did a disservice to the morris in relating some movements to agricultural actions, when all are very abstract, even Kemps' "Beet-topping". What dances can have is a structure and a climax, eg "Anstey Mill" by Minden Rose.

The older tradition had the "Buffoon". Not just the Adderbury one but the Ilmington dance with the physical assault associated with the "Three Old Men's" Dance from Lancashire. Another is "Old Marlborough" from Fieldtown to the "White Joke" tune, and "Jug by the Ear", possibly to the tune "Jockey to the Fair", with a chorus of rounds with the dancers grasping their neighbour's nearest ear. Physical actions fit with the 19th century lack of sophistication in its humour. The Longborough fool would wear a padlock and chain instead of a watch and when asked what was the time would hit the enquirer and say "Just Struck One!". Abingdon dance "Jockey to the Fair" with a jump forward at one point in which they attempt to or give the impression of attempting to land on their opposite's toes. Headington have "How Do You Do" and "Willow Tree" which are amusing played straight.

It is a pity that the collectors and revivalists largely ignored the performance and entertainment of the morris in seeking authenticity and the recovery of an old art.

The problem with comic ideas built into dances is that the performers often want to ham it up to restore spontaneity after constant repetition, forgetting that the audience may then miss the inherent funny part all together. In the dance the audience has to know what is properly intended before they see the humour, otherwise it is all just mucking about. It is not the place of the ordinary dancers to clown, such action should be left say to the middle pair. An example is the Farnborough morris "Banbury Bill" corner dance in which the middles dance around each other an increasing number of turns at each repetition of the chorus. The team should leave it to one person or a pair, letting the laughs arise from the action, eg as in the Shropshire Bedlams dances "Buffoon" or "Maiden's Prayer".

In physical comedy, for example the pie in the face, the trip over nothing, and the foot stuck in the bucket, one can watch the routines repeatedly because everytime those involved react differently and there is a newness that makes it funny time and time again. One thing that can often be exploited is the dancers' desire to keep the dance moving along, which makes them captive victims. The fool at Wheatley used to have a sack of old and odd hats which he swopped for the dancers' proper ones during a dance. This is like the Betty for the Rapper using a broom to clean the dancers' teeth when they are dancing in a straight line showing the rappers in a tangle!

278.

SOURCES

Stunt ideas can come accidentally. Pilgrim were dancing a Ducklington "Arran Sweater", really a Fieldtown "Balance the Straw" to the Bucknell "Room for the Cuckoo" tune, when the landlord shouted "Keep dancing while I get my camera!" So they kept on, adding more rounds and starting to invent new versions of this figure with different pantomimic actions until they had done 21 all different. Now it is used to bring members of the public into a dance, and, because of its length, people can change in and out, while the foreman tries to be creative in suggesting fresh actions.

Having the audience join in is always a temptation and some sides have a simple dance for this purpose. The crowd usually enjoys having some of them actively joining in the fun. Minden Rose have a simple quadrille garland dance called "Jane Austen" which because it is worked in pairs can be danced with half of each pair of dancers drawn from the crowd. Fleur de Lys would use a simple stave dance. Farnborough would use a "Bromsberrow Heath" stick dance, but in a continuous circle formation. Rather than have problems with the turning round at the ends of a reel, it works well in a circle as the volunteers can keep weaving in the same direction.

Some ideas come on the spur of the moment. Hobbies Bobbies were asked to do something at a social dance after a tour on the day of the 1990 World Cup Third place play-off, when they not prepared anything beforehand. After a few moments thought outside in the passage they danced "Vandals" with the 13½ extra beer cans, instead of sticks, as football supporters. After the chorus clashing, the first time they took a long swig from the can and the second time they simulated the action and noises of being sick. At the end of the dance they all collapsed onto the floor. Once Ron Cross organised a scratch morris side drawn from friends in different teams, they all knew Trunkles but not the same one, and the audience was hysterical.

People can be encouraged to produce ideas. At the Halsway Advanced Morris Weekends in the 1960's organised by Bob Bradbury, it was difficult to follow the Saturday evening party with something serious first thing on Sunday morning so the attendees were divided into teams and given a task based on mss, a tune or just an idea. Bath City created a blacksmith's dance as they just happened to have a croquet set and a log with them. Moulton did the Battle of Waterloo to the "1812" complete with paper canon and final heap of dead. Jim Reynolds got a group to be very non-Puritan using wallpaper rolls in a number of suprising ways. Mind you Jim could be persuaded to jump through a paper covered hoop. A Nine Men's Morris was good enough to be danced by clubs afterwards. A twelve person dance produced at a similar session at a Broadwood Itchingfield weekend was very clever, but who ever has twelve dancers? Tune titles can be suggestive. Jinky Wells' tune "Polly Put the Kettle On" led one group to teapot gestures and using cups and saucers.

Typically stunts need some preparation, special equipment to be provided, and sometimes even a practice! Grand Union did rapper with those long thin balloons used by conjurers and clowns to make dogs etc. The squeaking as the balloons rubbed was hilarious. Another time a Ladies team danced Adderbury "Lads a Bunchum" padded to all appear heavily pregnant.

279.

NATURALLY FUN

The fun in a dance can be inherent in the movements used. There are a number of stick dances that exploit the Brimfield napping, with one side holding their stick still and slanting upwards from about waist level while their opposites belabour them, dances often called "Much Wenlock". How the receiver responds is part of the act. Some dances when done without their music can be amusing. It is not unusual to find sides dancing one stick chorus during a dance unaccompanied. There was possibly a serious Midland tradition which was without musical instruments except that the dancers movements, steps and sticks provided a rhythmic complexity to compensate.

The Seven Champions once found themselves a dancer short, but instead of adjusting the dances, proceeded as if the person was there, pantomiming his presence, rather like Mr Pastry's solo presentation of the "Lancers Quadrille". It was so effective that it was often repeated. They also have a Five Hand Dance in which two dancers double stick tap, then rest on chairs, with 'seconds' fanning them, while the three musicians dance a reel of three.

The traditional pub dance of the various Four Hand Reels were frequently done in order to tread on toes in the stepping or to fling dancers off balance in the swings, both to embarrass and to force the loser to buy the next drinks. There was a similar objective in "Three Jolly Sheepskins" danced purely as a continuous sheepskin hey around three hats, glasses or similar objects till one of the performers made the inevitable mistake. In Dorset there is the tradition that a group starts with an Eight Hand Reel and carried on till persons started to drop out and the dance progressively became a Seven, Six, Five, Four and Three Hand Reel. Changing in and out, especially pushing in inexperienced people, can be enjoyable to watch.

Dances are supposed to be interesting for their skill element, but with a little encouragement they can be fun as well. The jig "Ladies of Pleasure" includes a hockle-back step which can be more exaggerated in each repetition. Basically the same dance can be performed to "Widdicombe Fair" with the chorus mostly hockles allowing the dancer(s) to disappear into the audience before capering forward.

Morris clowning can interact with the dances. The Farnborough Morris fool will form a crocodile of both spare dancers and audience members, each bent forward like old men and using a morris stick like a walking stick and then lead them through, back and forward and around the set during a dance. A particular target dance is their Beansetting dance called "The Old Mens's Dance" based on the Brackley version. The crossings are done like old men and they end facing out leaning on the top of their stick and then spring to life with all dancing two doubles and hooking to face front.

Some fun elements are introduced under the guise of ritual. How else can one explain the dances with a woman placed unsuspecting in the middle and lifted high at the end? This is a feature of Maid of the Mill at Abingdon and several of the Eynsham dances. Another idea is dancing around the morris cake and its holder or other personality in basically circular dances as The Rose, Fieldtown, or Bonny Green, Ducklington and their derivatives such as The Spittoon by the Farnborough Morris.

280.

Unusual tunes can be used for particular occasions. Hammersmith Morris danced Bampton to "When the Red, Red Robin, Went Bob, Bob, Bobbing Along" and I have often tried to persuade dancers to use ragtime for that same tradition. It is interesting that the traditions that continued into the 20th century developed stepping styles with an emphasis on the off-beat in sympathy with current social dance, whereas the classical morris step from the late 19th century used in the revival kept the strong leading beats. Thus it has been difficult to find good danceable modern tunes, despite the large outpouring.

FAINTLY RIDICULOUS

The Cotswold morris does not lend itself to the sort of parody in which something outrageous is foisted on the public as serious and accepted by them because it is good entertainment. The psuedo Molly had examples from The Seven Champions to Paddington Pandemonium Express, and Jolly Holly Molly to the Wally Molly. There are ridiculous "Cotswold" dances such as Hammersmith's "Jockey to the Zoo", in which during each corner crossing the dancers imitate an animal nominated by the foreman, such as crocodile, gorilla, snake, three toed sloth, stork, and has elephant rounds, in which the dancers link hands between their legs. Other examples are the "Hartley Laying Down Dance", the Victory Morris "Four Old Men's" stick dance and versions of the Scandinavian two man "Ox Dance". A mixture of silliness and a physical feat is the double deck, ie piggyback, "Blue Bells of Scotland", with both having sticks and doing the tapping. There is a US dance with its choruses drawn from actions that appear in well known American TV adverts.

The morris occasionally appears on TV or in the cinema, although seldom in a serious role. I once helped a performance of Abbots Bromley in a children's play called "Shadows", and a realistic ribbon dance appeared in the Mikado. Better remembered are the real sides in "Dr Who" and the "Great St Trinians Train Robbery". But from the time of early Tony Hancock TV with the "East Acton Stick Dance" inventive psuedo dances have been used for fun on the Russ Abbott, Bruce Forsyth, and Two Ronnies shows, following in the path of a tradition of skit dances in the EFDSS Albert Hall Shows.

The serious dancers sense of fun comes out in dances with leapfrog movements, the throwing of sticks from dancer to dancer, using funny or silly words and calls in the dances and even in dancing "Bonny Green" off into a telephone box. Even the dancing with friable lathes or sticks of lettered confectionary rock or even sticks of rhubarb can be amusing. Bath City used to morris off out of pubs to "Heigh Ho!", the Disney tune from Snow White, by putting on long coats and dancing on their knees. I have seen teams use kolas as a way of processing out of a pub. Frequently met is the stunt of a dancer who pretends to be hit and falls and an appeal is made for a woman to give a restoring kiss. When this happens all the rest of the team fall down. William Webb Ellis Morris Men have elevated this sort of behaviour into an art form. They also dance Brackley "Jockey to the Fair" with the men going off in the corner crossings to kiss women in the audience. At first the women are annoyed at being chosen but then they become annoyed at being missed. The audience attention to this aspect completely clouds the standard of performance of the rest of the dance.

281.

The "Coronation Morris" (tune - "Here's a Heath unto His Majesty") is believed to come from Ravensbourne in 1953, although claimed by others since. The figures are anything called by the foreman, not necessarily consistently from one tradition, and the choruses requires each dancer in turn to perform a short 4 bar solo sequence, then quickly drink a pint, the two bars of music being often drawn out, then all dance two double steps and a break on the spot.

Thanking someone who has bought a round can be done publically with a suitable dance. Using the tune "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow", allows the dancing of ordinary figures, with a chorus where all face up towards the Good Fellow, and first one side and then the other sings "And so say all of us" while taking off and waving hats, and then all go into the next figure.

Sometimes ideas are suggested by the availability of suitable props. What is the minimum number of logs needed to be able to do a dance without the dancers having to touch the ground? Many dancers have tried non-moving stick or clapping dances in confined spaces such as in cafes and railway carriages. Bath City created "Ring O'Bells" using eight chairs in two rows, in which everyone had to touch "bottom" on reaching or passing the position in which a chair is sited. Heading-Up of course ends with everyone on someone's lap!

ONE OFFS

Some teams are always seeking opportunities for "fun". Victory enter the adult morris sections of the Portsmouth Arts Festival every year. Once they towed on a barrel of beer as part of the show, claiming that it was traditional, the poor innocent adjudicator. Another year they put their blow-up pig mascot on the adjudicators' table to "have someone on their side". They dance on the large map of the Isle of Wight made in concrete on the front at Ventnor so that they can claim "to have danced all over the island".

At a weekend workshop at Timsbury organised by Tubby Reynolds one of the musicians restrung Tubby's fiddle in reverse order. We then asked him to play for a jig. Of course he noticed the change but, as expected, he felt he should be able to cope, which he could almost, but not well enough for dancing. The one who made the change spent a considerable part of the day trying the challenge of playing the restrung fiddle. Another experience at Halsway was starting to play for a dance and finding that Dave Robinson had removed a reed block from my accordion. In retaliation I later removed the pins that held his bellows into his melodian.

NEEDING SETTING UP

Some ideas have to be "introduced" to be effective or meaningful. One gag starts by explaining that one met an old dancer in a Bampton pub who was keen to dance a double jig, but when he stood up was discovered to have only one leg. He then proceeded to dance "Old Tom of Oxford" on one leg which you then proceed to show how to the audience. Sometimes people actually believe the story. Even the shortest jig seems long when you are dancing it off only one foot! You have to wrap the other one around the supporting leg, it helps to have a baggy costume.

282.

Bath City once had a Squire who turned out in Judo kit and yellow face makeup so that he could perform stick dances with his bare hands. However it needed some explanation to the crowd to avoid it just appearing stupid. There are "dances" which are no longer a part of our islands' cultures, for example recovered or recreated Highland, Manx and Welsh dances, which are representational in the manner of dances from more primitive cultures elsewhere in the world, that need setting up if the audience is not to be puzzled or turned off. Competitive dances can be easier to work in although they must still be justified if not to appear alien. "The Monkey" dance exists in several forms. The common feature is that the dancers squat and kick alternate legs forward, somewhat like Russian dancers, with their arms out at the sides balancing, or folded over the chest, or with arms bent so that the hands are under the armpits and the arms waggled like chicken wings. The competitors squat in a line and continue till only one is left upright and dancing, or they work in pairs and have a knockout tournament, or they hold one hand with the opposite and in addition attempt to pull, push or twist the other over while still continuing themselves.

Athletic feats more like gymnastics to music are a part of most cultures from the Caucasus to the American West. They are often included in the climax of Russian Folk Dance performances. One such feat was recorded by Cecil Sharp at Adderbury. Although one would not ignore any talent in this direction, it is difficult to have only one person who can "tumble", and as an attraction it should be supported by several dancers, each of whom has his own trick.

Singing can be an integral part of a dance. It was common as an introduction to dances at Adderbury, as well as having some things that are best described as songs that have a stick tapping chorus. The North Leigh side used to stop just before the end of a dance and sing a chorus (probably breathlessly). Dances can be choreographed to sea shanties. "South Australia" is a common dance the other side of the world, and it can be made to go with a swing if the dancers sing without a musical accompaniment. An extension of the idea was to make the figures representational as well, for example illustrating typical mechanical movements of a steam driven engine.

TALKING

As an illustration of there being two motivations in a show, consider announcements to the crowd, either with meaning or as nonsense.

Remarks to the audience have to be intelligible. This particularly applies to comments about the sources of the dances. Those present will not have heard of folklorists who collected the dances and may not even have thought of the concept, nor will they have heard of many the places. However they could be related to nearby places or to the various roads from Oxford. People may recognise Oxford, Northampton, Banbury, Blenheim Palace and perhaps Stow on the Wold and Witney. Some teams can not be bothered to find out even this detail. It should be remembered that the geologist's and tourist's Cotswolds are not geographically the same as the Morris, and the listeners will not immediately think of Northamptonshire. Similarly the term "Border" does not conjure up the West Midlands or the Welsh Marches but where England meets Scotland.

283.

There is a long tradition of the fool's licence to say what they like, critical, embarrassing, or revealing, but nowadays they do not have that sort of knowledge about members of the audience. However they or the squire can have a spiel which could be nonsense, about as reliable as the begging speeches for largesse. Cock and bull stories can be part of the fun. At one time Abingdon would justify the name Morris on the basis that a Farmer John Morris had built the first bridge over the river at Abingdon. The Farnborough men claimed that their dances came from the bargees who brought salt up the local canal at Christmas.

OTHER NON DANCE FOOLING

A competitive stunt has two dancers standing back to back, each with a banana held at the end in their right hand, which they have to peel completely by just using their teeth. The objective is to be first so that one can swing round and squash the peeled banana into the face of the loser.

For a while Bruce Tofield and I did a silly joke, to set the tone.

"I say!, I say!, I say!". "Yes! Yes! Yes!".

"A funny thing happened to me on the way to the morris". "A funny thing happened to you on the way to the morris?"

"Yes, a woman with a wooden leg gave me ten shillings." "A woman with a wooden leg gave you ten shillings?"

"Yes! Half a nicker!" How some jokes date, especially if not very good!

The classic verbal joke for two has these three parts. The opening and middle being echoed, but not the punch line.

Some teams have things that can be done inside pubs where dancing is often difficult. In its early days the Farnborough Morris did "The Mortgage on the Cow". The first person came on with their handkerchief draped over their head as the "Girl" saying,

"Where is the money for the mortgage on the cow?

I havn't got the money for the mortgage on the cow,

Why havn't I got the money for the mortgage on the cow?

Caus' I ain't got the money for the mortgage on the cow."

During this speech that person is bobbing down and up, by bending and straightening at their knees. The next person comes on representing a "Parent" but bobbing up and down out of phase with the first, saying,

"Where is the money for the mortgage on the cow?"

She replies,

"I havn't got the money for the mortgage on the cow."

The parent again asks,

"Why havn't you got the money for the mortgage on the cow?"

To which the answer is,

"Caus' I ain't got the money for the mortgage on the cow."

Next to come on is another "Relative" who does the same routine but bobs in phase with the first character. Then the fourth person comes on representing the Squire, bobbing in phase with the second person and the wording of the replies slightly changed in that all the first three speak together and say "We" instead of "I". Finally on comes the sweetheart Jack

284.

bobbing in phase with the first entrant and the speeches become,

All but the Squire and Jack say,

"Have you got the money for the mortgage on the cow?"

Jack replies,

"Yes I've got the money for the mortgage on the cow."

All but the Squire and Jack say,

"He's got the money for the mortgage on the cow."

All but the Squire say,

"So We've got the money for the mortgage on the cow!"

And the Squire says,

"Foiled Again!"

It is the keeping of the alternate bobbing going that causes most of the merriment.

It is possible to use other stunts that just need a leader. My one involves everyone in using a handkerchief to represent the various characters and they are asked to mimic the leader's actions. These are the "Girl", handkerchief folded in half and placed over the top of one's head and down over the ears, the "Squire", handkerchief held on a diagonal and rolled so that it can be held horizontally under one's nose as a moustache, and "Jack" from the sea, the handkerchief opened out and placed hanging down one's back from the shoulders to represent a sailor. The speeches should be silly and short so that it is the frequent changes of character and handkerchief manipulation while trying for dramatic gestures that cause the confusion and hence the laughter. It goes something like, "Here comes the Squire", "Where is the rent?", "I have not got the rent", "I shall evict you, out into the snow", "No not that", "There is The Other", "I'm not sure about That either. I wish Jack was here", "Here's Jack fresh from the sea", "Have you got it?", "Not yet", "Money I mean", "Yes", "My hero", "My love", "Curses", "Go", "Come".

Other ideas can be culled from books of party participation activities, stunts and skits not games. The good ones always appear to be slightly outrageous. A classic is the standing of a blindfolded person on a piece of wood holding onto the shoulders of two lifters and lifting them so that they think their head has touched the ceiling, whereas the lifters have actually bent down and someone else has used another flat piece to touch their head. The person is then dropped or made to jump. Another is to blindfold a person after showing them eggs placed all over the floor and give them a fresh egg to hold in their right hand then getting them to walk across the eggs. Of course the eggs are picked up and replaced with crunchy cornflakes which make a very satisfying noise when walked upon. At the end the relieved person is congratulated by shaking their hand, and crushing the egg. In a wider context of ideas, there is a published short version of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" which needed only a cast of three people with all the others being taken from the audience.

The pub session is an important part of the morris as an occasion. The power of a shared activity such as singing should be used, but not with the unfamiliar folk material that is at best suitable for solo or group performance, but that which all will know, especially the old cumulative songs such as "The Twelve Days of Christmas", "I'll Sing You One Oh!", "Tree in the Bog", "Old Macdonald had a Farm" or action songs such as "I am a Bold Musician and this is what I Play" or even "Underneath the Spreading Chestnut

Tree". A participation gag is to sing "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean" and every time one comes to a word that starts with the letter "B" everyone either stands up if sitting or sits if already standing. There are a number of such participation activities which must be familiar as for example used in pantomimes. Familiarity is an important tool in audience relating and should be remembered even in the music sessions.

Some stunts can be set up inside a pub. Tubby Reynolds used to have a school bell which held inverted about 1½ pints of guinness which he challenged persons in the bar to beat him in drinking. What the competition did not know was that the clapper was set for them on the other side so that during the drinking it fell onto their nose! It not much different from yards of ale and special mugs that either drain the liquid away from the mouth or leak it out over the clothes.

OPPORTUNITIES

The different traditional forms called "Morris" all have their own magic. The character of the dance traditions affects the quality and acceptability of any forms of associated clowning. Most of this article has been about activities associated with performances of the Cotswold morris.

Cotswold, a small scale show appropriate to pub fronts and gardens and associated with the spring and summer months. Its characteristics depends on body control, dance ability and the integration of music and movement. It is best as a stand alone show. Having a mass of dancers degrades its impact even if the crowds like it.

North West, shoe or clog, a large scale show grown out of street processions which improves with numbers of dancers and emphasises precision and group cohesion. It is still the only form compatible with Carnival processions. Parody and comedy is more difficult because it is less pretentious but strange implements such as black puddings have been used for "Ecce Thump" (sic) derived from a Northern English martial art (so said the Goodies). The processional format had gangs of collectors, whifflers clearing the way etc and clowns would have been of the "walk-on" form like are now familiar in carnival processions depending mostly on appearance and props.

Garland, at its best pretty patterns, gracefully danced. There are good dances for from 4 to 16 performers and they can have more sophisticated figures than any other form. There are several distinct forms of garland. True garland dances exploit the implement rather than have it carried as a mere decoration. Obviously the dances are going to be ladylike and difficult to accomodate a traditional fool or comic capers, although I have found that some of Minden Rose's dances allow of clowning. The English culture does not make public fun of women in the same way that it tolerates doing it to men. Forms of fool for womens' groups are very difficult to define. One traditional bit of behaviour was the use of a handfull of long straw instead of a fool's bladder which was used to give embarrassment by catching in the dancers' hair.

Border, a boisterous, exhibitionist, clattering stick style, giving the impression of undiscipline. Another somewhat anarchaic dance form is the East Anglian Molly with an association with the plough and strawmen etc.

Long Sword and Rapper, linked dancers with movements that can be astonishing or hypnotic but with negligible opportunity for self expression. The associated characters have more formal roles, and when joining in the form of the figures would actually change. Some performances were with a dramatic play and even a plough.

NEAR FUN

Most sides do not indulge in the behaviours described, but would add to established dances, or accept them in sillier forms. Examples are,

- Adderbury Black Joke - going as far as possible in the sidestep movement of the chorus.
- Sweet Jenny Jones - the hesitation step causes problems of interpretation, in New Zealand they use an arabesque.
- Bampton Glorishears - instead of clapping in front of the chest, they are made rising then falling, or vice versa, covering three or more feet.
- Bampton Fram Pushing - after WWII Bampton affected a style of sidestep with rather low twist arm movements which have been exaggerated in the revival to almost sweeping the ground.
- Oxford Badby - in the early 1960's the Oxford sides did very exaggerated intermediate Badby figures going as far as possible in 4 bars and retiring in the next 4.
- Eynsham dances - fun is extracted in several dances, eg with the person put in the centre of Maid of the Mill.
- How Do You Do - several traditions have a corner dance with the pattern of challenge, fight, kick and reconciliation. Sometimes they sing, often they ham the fighting etc. With the Longborough Swaggering Boney there are often excesses such as jumping too far. Others are Headington How Do You Do and Bidford We Wont Go Home Till Morning.

Some dances are borderline comic or farcical such as the fighting Three Musketeers, the Stanton Harcourt Brighton Camp and Oddington Old Frog. Dances can be funny just through choice of a tune with comic associations such as Liberty Bell, the Monty Python signature tune. This is used in a good dance by Sweet Coppin.

OVER THE TOP

Sometimes teams behave in excess, almost going too far. Great Western dance occasionally on stilts. It is said that Bath City did a stick dance using deck chairs. Bath also provided a gang of fools and descended on Gloucester when they danced outside Bath Abbey. Blackheath borrowed officers black mess kit including the long boots and danced at C Sharp House. They also kidnapped the organisers of a Meridian Morris workshop. Earls of Essex pretended to be Hammersmith in dancing around Hammersmith. There is the story of why Bath were suspended (rightly) from the Morris Ring for a while.

OUTSIDE THE ENGLISH TRADITION

One constraint on the revival has been trying to keep within what was perceived to be the tradition. Of course our growing knowledge has widened what is acceptable as more surprises have been found and new ideas evolved. Today the morris is mature enough to make any source its own and it should be possible to absorb almost any dance concept as it will enrich rather than deflect what is being done. The Swedish students' Ox Dance is fairly well known. Other inspirations could be the Guam two person two stick dance, the Phillipine two bamboo poles dance, the Indonesian Umbrella dance, the Hungarian Axe dances, the Chinese elastic band dance (recently a children's craze) and the various Maori stick games.

FEED BACK

As was pointed out near the start it is important that other people's ideas and/or experiences are tapped.

Notes to add

Kirkpatrick's views

phallic dances - embarrassment

stick dance - odds give their to evens who clash both and then hand both back for odds to clash etc

Monks March - Colchester, fall, miss, onto hands on ground

Great Western - jig upside down on ceiling

grockle dance.

Wheatsheaf Trunkles

"AMANDA Business" : Fool claimed that there was a magic word that went with the good luck of the morris, which for centuries was known by the dancers, and it happened to be a young girl's name, and if anyone of that name was in the audience they should come forward. The name being of someone already known to be there! They were then put in the centre of the set and danced around.

Dance the jig or set dance Bampton Flowers of Edinburgh in pairs with common leg tied together, "three-legged".

Seven Champions Baccapipes jig over two men.

OX DANCE - German figures from Jockey Morris at Sidmouth.

1. Bend round each other, left side of waists in contact, so that can reach backsides to slap in turn.

2. One goes upside down and wraps legs around supporters torso so head between legs and buttocks are accessed by both like bongo drums.

3. Start by knocking each other over and lay on backs on ground, raise head and chest in turn as if in last gasps.

4. Winner carries off the other in a firemen's lift.

288.