

OTHER MORRIS" & ADDED COMMENT

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*This is a retype of my original dance mss but without the tunes or the abbreviations and made more readable. These notes were made available in the mid 60's before the term "Border Morris" was coined by Dr Cawte, when it still appeared that there were simple dances involving heys which were more widespread than the Cotswold Morris and possibly older in concept. Sharp saw a relationship but also thought its **performance** style degenerate. Some of my subsequent notes and comments have been added and are distinguished by being like this, in italics. Each of the basic "traditional" dances has inspired numerous interpretations and some are mentioned.*

One must not judge all morris by the yardstick of the Cotswold dance which after all is only one flower on the folk tree. Any custom is only as elaborate as is necessary to fill the need which occasions it in its community. The emphases may be different. A simplicity of step may be compensated for by a variety of figure from dance to dance, or by an elaboration of costume, even to the point of fancy dress, or by an increase in the impressiveness of the noise, either by using a band or percussion instruments such as tambourines and bones. This balancing should be borne in mind when presenting "Other Morris" to the morris world or to the public.

The intrusion of country dance elements into the morris outside of the Cotswolds is largely a myth. Molly dancing includes triple minor longways dances as whole sets, and two of the Winster dances are recognisably community dances, but in general the morris lacks the physical contact, the partner response and the figure movements, particularly the progression, of the social dance. It is the experience of most collectors that ordinary people equate morris and country dance music and movements. This and an ignorance of the existing traditions probably led to this widespread misapprehension.

THE MORRIS REELS

HEADINGTON QUARRY - Oxfordshire. col. C Sharp and R. Kenworthy Schofield.

Music : Kimber's tune for the Morris Reel he called "The Bold Huzzar". He also used a version of "Soldier's Joy". No handkerchiefs were used in this dance.

Travelling Step - this was a quiet morris step based on 3 running steps and a hop. He used the ordinary hand movements, without handkerchiefs, but rather milder in effort than was usual for Headington Quarry.

Reel Step - it is similar to the stationary "polka" step of Merpeth Rant and similar country dances. On the first beat of a bar the ball (or heel) of the free foot is tapped on the ground in front of the other foot. Schofield remarked that the toe was well turned out as it is tapped. Sharp noted that the legs were well crossed and the toe of the front foot well pointed. In the reel part the arms are "a Kimbo" (but not in the Swedish fashion) with the hands on hips, and the fingers pointing to the front. "For you see you dance with your waist, not anything else".

Reel for Six :- stand with all six facing up. There is no once-to-yourself.

A continuous reel is danced twice through (16 bars). started progressively, the tops casting out and going behind the 2nd couple and between the 3rd. Partners face and "reel-step-with-toes" (8 bars). Partners change places across the set passing by the right, using the same reel step (8 bars). Hey as before, twice through, now on the other side of the set (16 bars). Partners face and reel step with toes again (8 bars). Partners change back as before using the reel-step-with-toes (8 bars)

Repeat all, but using the heel in the reel stepping.

End with a final hey done once through and finish with an "all-up".

Reel for Four :- stand in a line facing up.

When the music starts Nos. 1 and 3 cast to their left and start the hey-for-four by passing Nos. 2 and 4 by the left. Dance two complete heys to get back to places and end with Nos. 1 facing 2, 3 facing 4. (16 bars) Dance reel-step-with-toes on the spot (8 bars), and in the 8th bar Nos. 2 and 3 change places by casting to their right. The next 8 bars start with No. 1 facing No. 3 etc.

The next hey is started by Nos. 1 and 3, 2 and 4 passing by the right. In the next reel-step-with-toes Nos. 2 and 3 again cast to their right in bar 8 to go back to their original places.

Then repeat the heys and the reel but with the reel-step-with-heels. End with single hey and a jump to finish all facing up.

Reel for Three :- stand in a line of three facing up.

A hey for three, No. 1 casts to the left and passes No. 2 by the left. No. 1 faces down and No. 3 faces up throughout the reel stepping, while No. 2 first faces No. 1 and then in bar 8 turns to face No. 3. The second hey starts by No. 2 passing No. 3 by the right. In the next reel stepping No. 2 faces No. 3 first and then No. 1, and the next hey starts by Nos. 1 and 2 passing by the right. The dance ends with a single hey and finishes with all facing up.

I am not aware of this dance being regularly performed by any modern morris side except Mary Ineson's team at Farnham/Alton in the early 1960s.

UPTON SNODSBURY - Worcestershire. col. M Karpeles.

This is a three handed reel with heys and stick tapping. They did some kind of stepping throughout the dance. In the stick tapping the middle man tapped alternately with the men on either side of him.

Three handed dances are a challenge to make them interesting to watch. The Paradise Islanders and Shropshire Fedlams have such dances. The latter's has been developed further into 5 and 9 men reels. Elsewhere the performance of versions of the dance appear to have been influenced by the various step dance reels. Another source version, this time collected off a TV show in the mid 1950's, was the so called "East Acton Stick Dance" as danced by the Cheam Morris from Railway Cuttings.

BROMSBERROW HEATH/MITCHELDEAN - Gloucestershire. col. TM.

Music : at Mitcheldean - "Cock O'the North", "Flowers of Edinburgh".
 at Bromsberrow - "Three Handed Reel" (ED&S Sept 1959 p 94) and a version of the Evesham stick dance tune.

Sticks : about 30" long and stout.

Called the **THREE HANDED REEL** as performed by three pairs of dancers.

Stick Dance - start in one line of six facing in pairs 1-2, 3-4, 5-6.

All shoulder sticks and walk or "march" a complete reel to the first part of the tune played twice (16 bars). End facing in pairs as at the start.

Then caper vigorously on alternate feet on the spot, clashing the stick tips alternately forehand and backhand on each caper for the second part of the tune played once through only (8 bars).

This sequence is done ad lib with the tempo getting faster at each repeat. The leader called "Off!" for the reel and "Set!" for the clashing.

Note that there are 12 passings in 32 steps for the reel, including the turns at the ends on ones own, and the phrasing gives difficulties to dancers who would expect either 2 or 4 steps per passing, not 2½!

Stepping Dance - this is as the stick dance in the hey. At Mitcheldean the stepping just replaced the sticking. At Bromsberrow the stepping was done facing the partner for 8 bars and then repeated by the partners with their backs to each other for 8 bars.

This has proved to some sides to be a great getting the audience to join in dance. To avoid the problem of what happens when reaching the end of the line in the reel, the Farnborough Morris have had it danced in a circle so that there is no end to confuse the newcomers, nor anything magical about the numbers able to join in! Other teams have developed the six hand reel format by adding other figures and examples have been recorded from Alton Morris and Hook Eagles.

STEEPLE CLAYDON - Buckinghamshire. col. C Sharp

Music : Only one tune was played by Inwood - "Old Mother Oxford"

Clapping Dance - start in a line, facing in pairs 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6.

Dance a straight hey, called a "double", ending up as at the start.

The normal morris step - Inwood danced with great vitality and spring for a man of 77, throwing his legs further and therefore higher than morris men are normally used to doing and keeping them very nearly straight, though his hip joints were wonderfully loose and flexible.

Then they clapped in the usual manner as in "Shepherd's Hey" or "None So Pretty". After the second "double" they ended facing thus, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6, Nos. 1 and 6 now being neutral.

The dance continues ad lib.

Stick Dance - they sometimes used sticks instead of clapping.

Sharp remarked that it was apparently very like the morris at Ludlow and White Ladies Aston. *This must be in terms of style, not choreography!*

I have not seen anyone dance in the style described. The handclapping could include touching the partner or clapping movements from children's games, see the Opie's books, eg "The Singing Game". Rogue Morris have developed a two stick dance with two varieties of tapping. Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish have used a handclapping development for their joint show finishing dance called "Old Mother Oxford".

BRIMFIELD - Herefordshire. col. C Sharp and Leather.

Music : they used any polka, but sometimes schottiches played rather slow.

Sticks : short, about 6 to 8" long x 1½" diameter.

Start with four men in a line facing in pairs 1-2, 3-4. Nos. 2 and 3 hold their sticks at the bottom in both hands, resting their hands on the midriff. Nos. 1 and 4 strike these thus held sticks from side to side as in single stick in rhythm with the music for 8 bars. This is "napping".

Then Nos. 1 and 4 dance a "figure eight", not a hey, around Nos. 2 and 3 who remain in their place marking time. No. 1 passes his partner first by the right and then No. 1 passes before No. 4 in going between Nos. 2 and 3. All call "Ho!" before the start of the figure eight and use plain steps or hopsteps. They follow the same path, 180° out of phase.

Instead of the "figure eight" the dancers can,

- i. swing in pairs with an arm around the front of the partner's waist.
- ii. do continuous setting to right and left.

This figure is not usually liked today, although some teams have used some alternative steppings.

- iii. link arms to swing, first with the right and then the left.

I suggested the following order of movements :

Nap/figure 8/nap/set/ /nap/figure 8/nap/arm/ /nap/figure 8/nap/swing/ /.

Dr Cawte says that there was as well a four-hands-across, 4 bars each way, and most teams include this movement today. Typically the ends move in and the middles move out sideways to form the star. With more dancers they danced in a longways formation and the leader called the figures.

The tapping with one stick held stationary at Brimfield and Much Wenlock has become a characteristic feature of modern Border Morris. The vulgar possibilities inherent in the pose are being exploited in dances such as Shropshire Bedlam's "Maiden's Prayer". Sometimes the two middle dancers can bend backwards and lean on each other for support.

Most Border Morris sides have a variant of the Brimfield dance.

Developments are "The Big Ship" danced by Shropshire Bedlams, dancing with two sets making a cross as danced by Rogue Morris, and using stepping instead of sticking as danced by Martha Rhodens.

I suggested that the dancers change places with their partners in one of the turning figures so as to share the battering.

The most extreme development of the Erimfield dance was a conversion to a dance for six from the Paradise Islanders.

THE WORCESTERSHIRE MORRIS

THE WORCESTERSHITE HEY FOR EIGHT

Not suprisingly there is more than one way to dance a reel or hey for eight. The interpretation of collected dance material often depends on nuances of the wording on the assumption that the author actually meant it precisely. The possibilities to be considered are :

- a). *reel of four, starting facing in pairs, > < > < and passing right shoulders first.*
- b). *reel of four, starting by all facing up, < < < <, and Nos. 1 and 3 cast back to their right to pass the dancer behind by the right shoulders.*
- c). *complete progressive reel of four, starting with the top dancer facing down, > < < <, where dancers join in as they are first reached, and the set changes from the order 1 2 3 4 to 4 3 2 1 and back again.*
- d). *incomplete progressive reel of four, where the bottom two dancers do not dance the full path, the set changing from the order 1 2 3 4 to 3 4 2 1 and back again.*
- e). *all the above are reels with three loop figures of eight. It can also be danced as a two looped hey, like a three hand reel. The hey starts with the ends turning in and the middles moving out to go round their nearest end, and dancers pass the centre in turn.*

UPTON ON SEVERN col. M Karpeles and R Kenworthy Schofield.

These two dances have been danced quite widely, and frequently by the Cotswold sides. Some clubs have developed a whole Cotswold like tradition, eg Chingford, and, so I am told, have Stroud women.

Stick Dance

Music : hornpipes, "Brighton Camp, Yankee Doodle, Keel Row" played in 1925.
M. Karpeles chose to publish a Newfoundland jig tune for the dance.

Step : only Joe Griffen of the side did anything like a systematic footing. He did something approaching a morris step. He held his feet a little distance apart and had his legs very bowed. In the 4/3 step he would swing the free foot across the supporting leg on the 4th.

Figures :

MORRIS - a whole rounds clockwise.

BACK-TO-BACK PASSING RIGHT (or LEFT) - partners dance a single back-to-

(c) *hitting tips alternately high and low swinging the stick around anticlockwise, like a windmill.*

The newer versions also make the sticking and the loop last 4 bars each and repeat it through again for 16 bars in all.

Emily who had danced in the side, insisted that they had danced with eight. It does not present a problem except for THREE TOPS which become FOUR TOPS, where the upper middles dance a reel of four with the top couple and the lower middles dance with the bottom couple.

Shropshire Eedlams dance their version as "Half a Farthing Candle". A development for eight has been danced as "Barley Bree" by the West Somerset Morris Men.

Handkerchief Dance

Music : jigs - "Bonnets So Blue" was used in 1925.

Step : a sort of running step except when dancing in position when 4/3, 4/2 or "change, change" was used indiscriminately.

I recommend hopsteps.

Hands : very indefinite, mostly a swing back and forward with a marked upward flick, but other variants were,

- i. arms swung alternately,
- ii. a circular movement in the vertical plane in front of the body made alternately with right hand anticlockwise and left hand clockwise noticeably in the heys,
- iii. a figure of eight with both hands moving in parallel directions,
- iv. a "dip-down-and-together" as at Adderbury.

A form of the dances with specific hand movements has now got currency but it owes little to what has been collected. One problem is that it uses hand or arm movements that were not current when the dance was collected!

Order of Movements :-

Once-to-yourself - no movement.

Morris.

Back-to-back passing right.

Back-to-back passing left.

Three Top - done twice through.

Sides - done twice through.

Corners.

Nos. 1 and 6 move toward each other and face whilst Nos. 2 and 4 face and 3 and 5 face. This turns the set through 45 deg. Standing thus dance in position for 8 bars. Now with Nos. 2 and 4 as leaders,

Back-to-back passing right.

Back-to-back passing left.

Three Top - done twice through.

Sides - done twice through.

Morris and All-in. facing the centre.