

SOURCE MATERIAL for the BORDER MORRIS TRADITION

assembled by

ROY DOMMETT

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10, ATTLEE GARDENS, CHURCH CROOKHAM  
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## INTERPRETATIONS & EXTENSIONS

Astwood Bank Long Ho! (mix Brimfield & Upton)	Paradise Is	1
Barley Bree (Upton for 8)	West Somerset	2-3
East Acton Stick Dance (Three Reel)	TV Show	4
Leominster	D Robinson	5
Shropshire Morris	Abercorn	6
Steeple Claydon	Rogue Morris	7
"Persnore", a Wenlock variant	Iron Men	8
Wenlock	Thames Valley "Border" Dance	9
Wenlock	?	10

## SHROPSHIRE BEDLAMs

"Shropshire Bedlams"	John Kirkpatrick	
paper at Roots & Revival of Border Morris Conference 1992		1-3
"Sheepskins" - from a cassette sleeve	John Kirkpatrick	4-6
"Morris John" - magazine article about	John Kirkpatrick	7-8
Big Ship	Shropshire Bedlams	9
Hunt the Squirrel		10
Maidens Prayer		11
Morning Star		12
Speed the Plough		13-14
Ten Reel - simplified Raddled Tup		15
The Triumph		16
Old Molly Oxford	with Martha Rhodens	17
Last Night with Archie	Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish	18

## INVENTIONS

Six Handed Stick Dance	Barley Morris	1
Competition Dance	Broughton Monchelsea	2
Six Hand Peel	Broughton Monchelsea	3
Sheepskin Jig	Broughton Monchelsea	4
Bledlow Cross		5
The Old Mill		6
Universal Competition Dance		7
Journey's End	English Miscellany	8
Three Jolly Sheepskins	Fleur de Lys	9
Old Brossley	Iron Men	10
Three handed Circle Dance	Knockhundred Shuttle	11
Market Day or Charlotte St Market	Mary Rose & Royal George	12
The Circle Dance	Paradise Islanders	13
Monkey	Paradise Islanders	14
The Valiant Soldier or Uncle Ned	Paradise Islanders	15
Dyk Jewell's Delight	PoHS NZ	16
Lillibulero	PoHS NZ	17
Cheshire Rounds	Dave Robinson	18
Three Sheepskins	Rogue Morris	19
Mr Dolly	South Downs	20
Six Handed Stick Dance	South Downs	21
Progressive Six Reel	Sweet Coppin	22
Hay on Wye	West Somerset	23
White Rose of Wellington	White Rose NZ	24

## BORDER MORRIS

The term was coined by Dr Cawte in an article for JEFDSS to cover the seasonal performance in the Welsh Border counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire, in England and not Wales, but extended to cover the non-Marches, the non-Cotswold county of Worcestershire and even the dance from Steeple Claydon in Buckinghamshire. The tradition should include the dances mentioned elsewhere in the West Midlands, indeed the Lichfield dances could be considered a collection of pairs of dances like the Border tradition rather than a consistent set as in a Cotswold village. The available dance material is very limited and there is no consistency in style or movements. The team should be thought of as existing for the particular occasion with an absolute minimum of practice, rudimentary costume and compensating for these deficiencies in artistic content by noise from the performers, a large band of percussion instruments and as many dancers as can be mustered. It is a classic example of a custom that is only as elaborate as is needed to be acceptable to its community.

Dances exist for from three to twelve dancers. The dance depends on the numbers available, as at Brimfield. The dances collected from a particular place sometimes differ quite markedly between informants, as at White Ladies Aston, reflecting the flexibility from year to year. Sometimes a gang would only have one dance, sometimes two, or as at Malvern and Pershore Not for Joes an indeterminate set of figures. The common features are the rather short sticks and sometimes a stick and handkerchief version of the same dance, also usually a high single step akin to the local country dance step. Such detail as starting foot rules and phrase endings are notable for their apparent absence.

The Silurian MM had interpreted the material and this is reflected in print. They have sought to preserve the traditional style and features as far as they can be deduced. An alternative image has been promoted by the Kirkpatricks with the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish where the material has been consolidated and systematised, extended and new ideas developed using all the local tidbits. Through them there is an image of the Border Morris - boisterous, more than usually exhibitionist, noisy dancers, men with rag covered jackets, all of which seems to owe a lot to the spirit of the past but not to the substance. The interpretation today is an artifact of the last 20 years, filling a niche in performance that the other traditions have left.

The limited dance material collected has led to such invention and to teams that are in the "style" but having entirely recently composed repertoires, some of which are very successful as dances. However it would be wrong to count all such as "Border". Alternative descriptions are "Street Dancers", as used by Mary Rose and the teams from the Maidstone area, or "Dance Troupes" where they are more refined and artistic. Both extremes tap different elements in the English culture. Early groups known personally were South Downs, Paradise Islanders, ISCA, Rogue Morris, Lord Pagets and Barley Morris from Penn, showing that the idiom translates to men, women and mixed teams. Many teams have a few Border or Border like dances to broaden their repertoire and exploit the contrast with the Cotswold jumps and capers.

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## BACKGROUND STATEMENT

When I became involved with the morris the only dance from the counties beyond the Cotswold Edge widely known was the Upton on Severn stick dance which had been published by the EFDSS in a booklet. One of the sides that I was in about 1960 did the handkerchief dance based on Miss Karpeles article in the EFDSS Journal. Nearly all the other dances were inaccessible in mss, especially Miss Karpeles', but I was fortunate to visit her about that time and she allowed me to copy several dance notations and she also talked to me about them.

Dissemination started in the mid 1960's through reconstructing and teaching the dances at the annual Advanced Morris Weekends at Halsway Manor arranged by Bob Bradbury for which one year a stencilled set of notes were prepared entitled "Other Morris". This document had a major effect on John Kirkpatrick later. This paper has now been retyped into my word processor and made far more intelligible. All this activity led to Tubby Reynolds and myself running a workshop at Ledbury Town Hall in January 1972 to introduce the dances for the first time to the west midland sides, whilst my wife was actually having my youngest son.

At that time it was still possible to find old dancers as well as observers and Dr Cawte first and Dave Jones later did so. I was working with RSRE at Malvern and would look for contacts with just a little success by stopping at pubs while passing through the Worcestershire villages. I also met the surviving collectors to try and interview them about their experiences, such as Mrs Kenworthy Schofield and J Hargreaves. But no one was working the territory over thoroughly. There were children's teams as well as out of work men performing in the 1930's of which members might still be around even now.

For a while one saw the occasional, usually unimpressive, performance of a dance by a local side, then there suddenly appeared the rag jacket teams. The impact of the Shropshire Bedlams on their first visit to the Sidmouth Folk Festival cannot be exaggerated. The tremendous showmanship and sense of fun, elements largely missing from Festival Morris, grabbed the attention and suddenly the dances made sense. At the time the vast majority of the morris had neither access to such material or even any real knowledge of the traditions involved, so no wonder the Bedlams were the centre of attention. I for one tried to beat the general ignorance by teaching such dances and emphasising the freedom that ignorance of detail could give to dancers with some experience. Despite what is believed, I have taught very few of the collected dances in their Bedlams form, and many of the composed dances are just too complex for club usage, although they are fun in a workshop situation. However many dancers like to attempt a dance that comes from the Bedlams, such is their fame!

The Ring Archivist issued a book of Border material with Dave Jones' original interpretations, quite a bit of which had to be challenged, but which has been largely corrected in the latest booklet. Dave's large overall contribution to the topic includes both realising that different notations from one place probably actually are different dances and illustrating the various collected costume descriptions.

## THIS BOOKLET

I have used the promise to circulate workshop notations to include all the material I had prepared but not necessarily used, plus a writing up the notations still in mss and to complete some long standing tasks. But neither is it anything like a full set of the Border like dances that I have on film or in notebooks. I have to retire to undertake that task!

The booklet starts with some historical material about old teams and the revival, which I hope is of interest as there is so little of it around. In particular there is included a copy of my original "Other Morris" mss, annotated with later knowledge to cover the collected traditional material and how it has been developed over the last two decades in the teams that I have seen. It also includes a write up of my paper for the Border Roots Conference where I was honoured by being asked to substitute for the late Dave Jones.

There follows a selection of dance notations drawn from all over, the only criterion being that I thought them worth borrowing and teaching at sometime. Public performance puts such dances in the public domain. It is a reasonable assumption that only the better dances get done regularly. Many notations were prepared in rough mss for my annual Border Workshops which are aimed at having fun for a day rather than teaching Border teams new dances. Although I confess I cannot readily find most of that material!

There is a fine line between dances in the Border style and Street Dances in general, meaning dances that cannot be classified as something else, and sometimes it is difficult to decide what class a particular dance should be placed in. An example of this is Bledlow Cross which was intended as a NW dance but when I tried it thus at a workshop I was strongly advised that it was too Border like. However the intention is not to teach dances but to pass on ideas for dances. Most teams already have a repertoire and are looking for movements that are different, to expand and not duplicate that repertoire. One problem with creating dances is that the inspiration is often padded out to produce a full dance quickly whereas the good bits should be accumulated into fewer really good dances. Alternatively like the Cotswold Morris and Dorset Stave dances the good ideas should be embedded into a common satisfying dance structure.

A departure now that I have a video recorder is to try and record a team in depth including the close variants of common dances rather than the unusual dances which is all I could film before. I enclose a few note sets for teams local to me as examples of how all sides should perhaps be recorded. This document is also a continuing appeal for material, either of particular dances or comments on interpretations of dances. One outstanding need is for some idea from other teams of what problems or insights they have had and how this affects their dances. I am also happy to come and help any side.

There is a fascinating amount of black face out there, enough for another lifetime!

I have to write this as it has become fashionable for the less knowledgeable to knock the efforts of those known only to them as names.

For over 30 years I have been making notations available for morris dancers from manuscript and performance gained from all over the world as well as some own compositions. In this time I have seen and been to some extent involved with the doubling of the number of available Cotswold traditions and the creation of the modern traditions for NW, Garland, Border and Stave dancing, and all through this I have endeavored to pass on the material that comes my way because of the need and without profit so that all may benefit.

I have not normally sought formal publication as I recognise that most of them are not my dances. I have been seriously criticised in the past for not indicating who generated the notes and also recently for liberally using copyright on notations produced from my word processor. The UK law is that copyright exists in a written description independent of what exists in its performance. Copyright is the only way of preventing exploitation by other people when I would want the dance notations to be freely available. Most notations were intended to stand alone and the collections are just bundles. Of course full copying permission exists for reproduction for workshops, courses and teams' usage. However realise that the original choreographer or team might have reservations on public performance, especially if constraints had been placed on them when a particular dance was collected or taught. I know of examples where such warnings have been ignored. However their own public performance compromises their legal position and only courtesy protects them. But most teams would like exclusive use of their new material for a while. Unfortunately there always seems to be sides so insensitive that they would dance somebody's dance in front of them. The trick is to develop the dance so that the source does not recognise it!

There was a move in the 1960's to restrict knowledge of dances to their traditional territory but history has shown that to be unrealistic. Also some early collectors wanted to screen who was suitable to receive the information. It may have been laudable but the type of people from whom the dances derived were not interested in their revival. It was also made difficult because the remaining sources had often been children or out of work when performers, and the revival was definitely not aimed at young people or the disadvantaged!

There is a realisation that being a replica of some other team is being second best, and that the desirable objective ought be the development of a teams own character and performance. However bootstrapping is not easy and being satisfactorily creative does not happen overnight. Hence the notations. Remember that they do not go down to the detail of movements, stresses, style etc, that is where the new team or leader has to contribute.

These are not intended as academic records, nor have I fussed too much about their appearance. Most had been produced originally for some other reason and I have kept such material together even though it appears repetitious. It allows it to be conveniently broken out again when it is desirable. The objective is to convey the idea of dances to act as a quarry for dance elements or as a starting point for new developments. They are not the dances as originally collected or composed, their publication is the collectors or choreographers responsibility, but as performed and mostly recorded at one single performance from one angle on film or video.