

**SOME DANCES FOR A BORDER MORRIS  
WORKSHOP**

compiled  
by  
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# BORDER MORRIS WORKSHOP

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### THE VALIANT SOLDIER or UNCLE NED

**Source** : a Border Morris side, The Paradise Islanders based near Redditch, Worcestershire, use this dance to end their local mummer's play. The play was called "The Valiant Soldier" when I saw it many years ago, the tune is called "Uncle Ned".

**Music** : "Yankee Doodle" does well.

**Sticks** : each dancer has a short stick. The sticking is done hitting tips at head level, moving right to left but more forward than across the body, the stick at a slant, and with the body turned a little to the left.

**Set** : four dancers, facing across set towards opposite.

2 4

m

1 3

A1 1-4 : face opposite and hit sticks eight times, while single stepping on the spot.

5-8 : dance forward to pass right shoulders and turn a quarter to the right to go into a Reel of Four along the centre line of the set,

B1 1-4 : continue the Reel of Four to end facing along the centre line,

m 1> <2 3> <4

5-8 : clash opposite in this new position, eight times, as in A 1-4.

A2/B2 : pairs link right arms, being careful not to jam the sticks into each other, and swing round twice or so, then release and dance off to their opposite's side and turn and face back. Approach and swing right again, then release and move back to starting position.

Repeat entire sequence a few times.

## THE CIRCLE DANCE

**Source** : Paradise Islanders, a Border side from Redditch, Worcs, as taught at their 10th anniversary instructional in February 1990 at Stoke Works near Bromsgrove.

**Sticks** : short sticks

**Music** : Three Hand Reel tune.

**Set** : four dancers, two with a stick each and two with tambourines.

All the figures are repeated but the second time is in reverse order.

O2YS Close in, turn outwards and make a circle of it.

- A1 1-8 Spiral out to the right and dance round clockwise to original places.
- B1 1-4 The middles with the sticks stay in original places and step and clash across the set. The tambourineers dance all the way round the outside clockwise to end in their place. The tambourines are played and the sticks are hit from right to left with the rhythm / x - x - / x x x - /.
- 5-8 Opposites back-to-back, tambourineers followed by the stick men, timing is essential, each crossing takes only one bar. Bar 5 instruments cross going into it straightaway and crossing as quickly as possible, bar 6 hitters cross, bar 7 instruments back etc keeping it flowing.
- A2 1-8 Rounds as in A1, keep going.
- B2 1-4 Clash and Circling as B1.
- 5-8 Reel of Four along the centre line of the set. Stick hitters cross passing by the right shoulder, turning to their left into a reel with the person on their left. The stick hitters break out first and the instrumentalists follow them into the rounds.
- A3 1-8 as A2.
- B3 1-4 Clash and Circling as B1.
- 5-8 Dance four steps moving slowly outwards and backwards, then all cross over simultaneously in a rush on two steps, all passing right shoulders in the centre, then all turn in and back out to opposite's place on the last two steps.
- A4 1-8 as A2.
- B4 1-4 Clash and Circling as B1.
- 5-8 All cross back as in B3.
- A5 1-8 as A2.
- B5 1-4 Clash and Circling as B1.
- 5-8 Reel of Four along the centre line as B2.
- A6 1-8 as A2.
- B6 1-4 Clash and Circling as B1.
- 5-8 Opposites back-to-back as B1.
- A7 1-8 as A2.
- B7 1-4 Sticks clash for all the eight bars, 16 hits, while tambourineers circle round the outside twice, and all all-in on the 16th.

## SHOT GUN WEDDING

**Source** : Mary Rose Street Dancers at Sidmouth, from video made locally.  
**Steps** : Mary Rose sequence, two doubles, two stephops and a double.  
**Hands** : long ribbons tied to wrist bell strap.  
**Set** : five dancers arranged 3 v 2 with the leader in the centre of the 3.

```

5      L      1
                m
4      2
  
```

Once to Yourself - stamp right foot on the strong beats, hands on hips.

### CHORUS

Dance into one line on a double step, 5 4 L 2 1 and turn to face neighbour, leaving top free, 5> <4 L> <2 1, who dances to the bottom of the line and joins it, travelling on a single double step. The pairs start a clap and turn sequence. Each pair claps both hands on own thighs and then rights with the other (r+r), clap both thighs again and clap lefts (l+l). As doing this, all dancers are turning clockwise onto two stephops to face the other way to clap with person behind them, so that the left hand clap is done as turned away. As the dancer at the top turns to face up and be neutral they peel off down the "even" side of the set to the bottom, taking one bar, and join the line facing up the set. The sequence ends when No 1 has reached the top again and is neutral for a bar, turning on the spot. Fall out backwards to place in the last bar of 8.

### FIGURE ONE

Clockwise circles of three, each taking two bars, the leader first with 5&4, then 4&2, finally 2&1, then all dance into the centre and back to place.

### FIGURE TWO

Clockwise rounds for all. Each come in to centre, one bar, raises right arm nearly vertically and turns  $\frac{1}{2}$  on spot to face round clockwise in one bar, go round set for two bars, with arms into the centre, then all peel off to left and make a very large loop anti-clockwise for three bars, and back out to own place on the last bar.

### FIGURE THREE

Join hands, all except between 5&4, and form a U shape with No 1's back to the music,

```

5      L
        1      m
4      2
  
```

The dancers do "arches" twice in eight bars. Nos 4&5 lead under the arches between 2&1 and 1&L respectively and cast back to place, pulling 2&L through after them. No.1 does not rotate. Do one more going half way & turning No 1 so that all facing in with hands crossed. End in a tight bunch, as below.

### EXIT

L 3 With the set as shown, 1 leads off up through the centre, 3&4  
 1 . cast back to the bottom, and as filmed, L&2 come up behind No. 1.  
 2 4 At a workshop it was found that the star could circle clock with  
 double steps before breaking off. Apparently end still mutating.

## ROYAL GEORGE THREE HANDED STICK DANCE or HELLO AUNTIE MAUREEN

**Source** : Filmed at Waterloo Festival and at Sidmouth. The detail has been developed over the years. There is a problem in describing the dance.

**Music** : "The King of the Fairies".

**Stick** : each has one medium length stick.

**Steps** : usual Royal George sequence of three stephops and two running steps or "rushes".

**Set** : three dancers in a circle facing in.

Some terminology :

**Hold** : hold the stick with both hands on the butt, in front of the groin, with the stick pointing forward and slanting up at 20° to 40°.

**Gesture**: an upward rotation of the stick from in front of the legs up to the hold position. Can also be just a small rotation.

**Posture**: during a hold the dancer can stand feet apart, legs bent with knees forward and leaning back a little. Amount of posture varies with the individual.

**ONCE TO SELF** - stand close together, shoulder to shoulder facing in, with the three sticks vertical and together in the centre.

**ROUNDS** - back out and clash on the first beat, turning clockwise into clockwise rounds. Go round twice, taking eight bars in all. Twirl the stick over head, clockwise looking up, on the hops, and lower onto right shoulder for the rushes. Turn out to the left on the last 2 bars and face in making a gesture.

**BATTER** - No 1 adopts the posture and hold and the other two strike down on the tip of the stick alternately, seven hits in all. They all then dance a small circle clockwise on their own with two stephops, twirling overhead, and face in with a gesture. This is then repeated with the other striker leading.

**STAR** - form a three handed right hand star by resting the wrist of the arm holding the stick on the forearm of the person in front so that the sticks are vertical. Go round for one step sequence, two bars, turn out to left in a small circle clockwise, two bars, carry on with a right hand star, and turn out again, two bars, and face in and gesture.

**BATTER** - No 2 is hit.

**HEY** - Reel of Three twice/three through. 1

On one performance this was not a reel

but dancing round in a circle with two 2

of them working as a pair around the other. 3

**BATTER** - No 3 is hit.

**ROUNDS** - as before but in reverse direction, anti-clockwise.

**BATTER** - strikes passed round, each in turn hits their right hand neighbour's stick so the hit goes round anti-clockwise. In the repeat hit the other neighbour so that the hit goes clockwise.

**EXIT** - instead of the last small circle, the dancers move off towards the crowd, turn to face the centre and posture and gesture.

## REJJIES REEL

**Source** : film of Rogue Morris of Oxford in Old Windsor during a Windsor Morris tour. Title short for "Rogue's Emergency Jig". Rogue Morris are a women's side that have found a satisfactory solution to the problem of a Border costume for women. A tee-shirt and matching colour tights, and a skirt covered with rag strips.

**Step** : skip.

**Set** : four dancers in a square, two facing two. Could be eight in two sets of four.

**Sticks** : short, usually carried on right shoulder when not in use. All clashes are right to left. A handkerchief is carried in the free hand and waved in the figures only as indicated.

**CHORUS** - before each figure.

While skipping, hit opposite low twice, neighbours high twice, on the strong beats, repeated four times in all. The handk in the left hand hangs down during the clashing.

### FIGURES

1. All face up, cast from the top and into a complete Reel of Four across the set, the tops passing right shoulder for the first passing, and back to place in eight bars. The last passing may be abbreviated to get to place in time. The handk is swung with the arm every bar.

2. All face centre, dance to middle, one bar, and back, one bar, and then cross over on the diagonal passing right shoulders in the middle simultaneously, one bar, and turn having passed and retire backwards to opposite diagonal place, one bar. Repeat to place, passing same shoulders. The handk is waved or flourished at the start of every second bar.

3. Dance around the square clockwise. Move one place at a time, in one bar, and stand still for a bar for stick clashing, each hitting their left hand neighbour once in turn, the hit going round clockwise in one bar. The hitting is always started by the original No 1 where ever they are.

4. Diagonals cross in sequence, one bar each and two altogether, opposites cross together, and turn to face back, two bars altogether, diagonals cross in sequence, partners cross together, and turn right to face front. Original first corners cross first every time. All turns are to the right. Wave on the first beat of every bar.

5. Start a cross over, passing right shoulders and turn  $\frac{1}{2}$  right into a Half Reel of Four along the centre line and lead off by No 4 when at the top. Wave handk first beat of every bar in the Reel.

## MR DOLLY

Source : South Downs Morris in their Border Morris mode. Filmed at Lewis.  
 Step : stephops. (Half started on left and half on the right!)  
 Stick : one long stick each. On right shoulder in figures. Hold stick in both hands on butt for clashing in chorus.  
 Set : four dancers in a square, two facing two.

O2YS - stand in square and jump and clash opposite at end.

CHORUS - after each figure.

On the first strong beat strike the ground in front with the stick tip. On the middle beat and the two strong beats of the second bar hit opposite with tips, right to left, left to right, and right to left. Then every one dance a small circle outwards with 3 stephops and a jump. Repeat it all exactly.

2 4

1 3

## FIGURES

1. Dance whole rounds clockwise twice in 6 bars, with stick pointing horizontally into centre waist level, end facing opposite, stick on right shoulder for one bar and then clash..
2. All  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn to left and dance to the left for two bars. Two stephops moving forward, turn outwards on the second hop to face back, but continue travel with two backsteps. Change direction of travel without turning body and return to place, without any further turns, clashing with opposite when back. Repeat all, going to the right.
3. Clockwise ring, holding tip of stick of dancer in front as is comes back over the right shoulder with the left hand, like rapper or long sword. Turn in to come back without letting go, sticks now over left shoulder. Eight skips clockwise, six back and end with jump and clash with opposite.
4. Diagonal turn the easy way to face out along their diagonal and dance out, turning out at the end of bar 2 and backstepping out further, dance forward back to the centre and all clash together in the middle. All pass in the centre simultaneously right shoulders, turning inwards as they do, clockwise, sort of rolling round, and backstep along the other end of their diagonal, with no further turn, then forward to face opposite, jump and clash.
5. Repeat 4 to place.
6. Cross over passing right shoulders and turning to right to face back, cross back, again passing right shoulders, passing starting place, and turn right and approach, 4 bars in all, and waist swing opposite twice round, for 4 bars. This figure could be danced on the pattern of fig 2 and others.
7. Opposites 1&2 face up and 3&4 face down in pairs and the pairs dance away from each other, turning out at the end of bar 2 and backstepping as in fig 2. Return to place without turning and clash original neighbour. Then 1&3, 2&4 face out away from their opposites and dance out, turn, backstep and return and clash with opposite as before.
8. Whole Rounds as figure one. End dance on a chorus.



## MAIDEN'S PRAYER

**Source** : film of Shropshire Bedlams on a number of occasions 1977-81.

**Music** : Bromsberrow "Three Hand Reel".

**Steps** : used a sequence of two stephops and a double, ad lib.

**Sticks** : medium length, carried over right shoulder when not in use.

**Set** : six dancers in one line, facing in pairs, > < > < > <.

**ORDER OF MOVEMENTS** - each takes eight bars.

1. **Reel of Six**, once round in eight bars.
2. **Odds Stick**. Evens 'hold and posture'. Odds strike tips with vigour, right to left, left to right, four times a bar, 31 hits in all, while stepping. The swings are long, starting from out to the side of their body, with a good shoulder twist. Both stand still, not stepping.
3. **Odds Circle**. Evens stand still retaining their posture. Odds move to their left, pass their opposite by the right shoulder, and dance right round all the line of evens clockwise, until back by their starting position into which they turn clockwise.

> < > < > <

4. **Evens Stick**. Odds take up the 'hold and posture' and evens strike.
5. **Evens Circle**. Odds stand still retaining posture. Evens move to their left and dance right round the line of odds clockwise back to the start
6. **Odds Stick**. As 2.
7. **Both Circle**. All move to their left and dance a circle, more of an ellipse, round to place clockwise.
8. **Evens Stick**. As 4.
9. **Reel of Six**, passing right shoulders first.
10. **Odds Stick**. As 2, but after the 31st strike, end standing to attention, stick sloped over right shoulder.

## STEEPLE CLAYDON - ROGUE MORRIS

**Source** : film of Rogue Morris of Oxford dancing as various times.

**Music** : "Old Mother Oxford".

**Sticks** : two sticks used.

**Clash** : b = clash both own sticks together in front of chest,

r+r = pairs clash right hand sticks together,

l+l = pairs clash lefts,

beh = clash own behind body at waist level,

un = clash under a raised leg.

The following sequences are done twice through. If dancer at end of set is neutral then they wave in the air instead of hitting.

**STICKS I** / b - r+r - / b beh b - / b - l+l - / b beh b -/

**STICKS II** / b - r+r r+r / b - l+l l+l / b un.r b un.l / b beh b -/

**Step** : stephops.

**Set** : six dancers in a long line facing in pairs. 1> <2 3> <4 5> <6.

1. Half Reel of Six. Start passing right shoulders with the one facing.
2. Sticks I
3. Half Reel of Six.
4. Sticks I
5. Half Reel of Six but end facing other way, <1 2> <3 4> <5 6>.
6. Sticks I
7. Half Reel of Six ending as 5.
8. Sticks I
9. Half Reel of Six, end as at start, as 1. 1> <2 3> <4 5> <6.
10. Sticks II
11. Half Reel of Six.
12. Sticks II
13. Half Reel of Six but end facing other way, <1 2> <3 4> <5 6>.
14. Sticks II
15. Half Reel of Six ending as 13.
16. Sticks II and ½ turn to face other way,
17. Sticks II and end.