

SHROPSHIRE BEDLAMs

At the Morris Federation "Border Morris - Roots and Revival Conference" at the West Malvern Village Hall on the 29th February 1992, John Kirkpatrick spoke on the origins, development and current state of the associated Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish teams which danced in the modern "Border Morris" style.

He started the Bedlams in 1975 and wrote an article about them in the EFDSS Magazine in 1979 which he still supports.

John met the morris at the age of 12 in 1959 with Hammersmith Morris under Hugh Rippon who was then in his mid-20's. When he moved to Shropshire he looked for something on which to base a morris. He had seen Chingford dance their development of Upton on Severn created by Geoff Hughes. There was the Dr Cawte article in the Journal of the EFDSS defining the Welsh Border Morris in 1963 and wonderful danceable sets of tunes from local fiddlers that he had found in the Sharp Mss.

The first step was to impose a style on the generally unrelated material, for example to find a standard step. The less that dancers have to think about the mechanics of what they are doing, the better the dance and the more they can think about what really matters. This was novel thought for its time. The inspiration was Hugh Rippon who had been happy to adjust the source for the sake of the dance. To be flamboyant it was necessary to slow down the music to gain the time, eg like Chipping Campden who are open and spacious but whose dances were not available for general consumption. Bampton just got on with it, nothing pretty or pretentious. The morris does not need words, there should be a magic and mystery about it. The more that you tell beforehand, the more seems to be taken away from it. He thought that there were very few successful morris fools and his solution was that all the side is the fool and any one can fool at any time, but they do not say anything.

The sequence found was 1 hop 2 hop, 1 2 3 hop ad lib. The emphasis is a drop down and kick up behind, not at all like the Cotswold Morris, but with no traditional authority either. The bells were on a string at the knee not in bellpads so that could not shake the legs to make them ring as in the Cotswold Morris. It was also the time of the first wave of interest in English Country Music which showed how to sustain rhythm with simple melodies at slow speeds.

The costume included top hats and long feathers, no flowers, to give height. There are no badges or stickers as these are cheap and demystify what is being done. They do not wear anything that gives away what it is. The "Tattered" jackets used a folk skill and made interesting movements possible. The blacking covers the face and the neck down to the collar and the backs of the hands. Being a little frightening is part of it all. They have a rule never to take their hats off because it detracts from what they are doing. The blue denim jeans and white pumos or trainers provide a modern bottom to a traditional top. They never appear in public in half dress as this then leaves them guessing. There are bells on the jacket arms.

The rest position is with the stick on the shoulder but plenty of

uncoordinated waving is encouraged. They do it all at "full tilt" with nothing polite about the sticking.

The two sides developed in parallel. It was an early decision for the men to have the sticks dances and the women to have the handkerchiefs. It was surprising to him that few womens sides had followed Martha Rhodens style.

In the early days they had some dances in common and two versions of the same dance. The processional was worked up to be fancied in pairs and it allows of much improvisation. Steeple Claydon was one of the first dances done and to the local "Old Molly Oxford" tune and quickly became the final dance and is the only one now for as many as are available. Brimfield was the first dance in two versions. The men did it with sticks. The women used a 6/8 tune and introduced two balance steps, a "heel-&-toe" (with the heel out first) and a "balance-&-kick" turning clockwise. They called it the "Three Handed Reel" even though it was for four dancers by analogy with another traditional dance.

Sheepskins was developed using the sheepskin hey and figures loosely adapted from the Leominster dance. The hey was done around three people rather than hats. So it became "Three Jolly Black Sheepskins" for the men who made it slower and took 24 bars for the hey and "Three Jolly Sheepskins" for the women who took it faster, 16 bars for the hey. They used the tune "All A Siden" from a local song book which introduced the phrase Martha Rhoden Tuppenny Dish and the tune title has become the dance's name.

The men did the Upton on Severn stick dance and invented some words to "Brighton Camp" which led to the dance being called "Half a Farthing Candle". It was written for six dancers but can now be done for ten. Most dances have a verse to sing and the men often write another. The Three-Tops figure lead to ideas for rotating the sets and a Three Reel was developed with this feature and called "Speed the Plough". Bromsberrow Heath was developed with its particular exaggerated Brimfield like sticking using the tune "Rickett's Hornpipe" and it was called "Maiden's Prayer" after a remark from one of the team. Leaning back for 16 bars is quite a strain, so is standing there while the other dancer beats the shit out of the stick.

The dances are not derived from pagan or primitive times but they try to get at the pagan and primitive side of human nature, the uncivilised part of all of us. The morris is almost socially acceptable, because one can get your local morris to express these feelings for you.

"Mad Moll of the Cheshire Hunt" was inspired by the Headington Morris Reels. "The Big Ship" from Brimfield and the "Blue Eyed Stranger" from White Ladies Aston. The Evesham Stick dance sticking developed from the composed Bledington Black Joke sticking bringing in the concept of tapping with a neighbour, which is now exploited in several dances. Pershore was danced to a version of the "Staffordshire Hornpipe" now called "Toddly Hill" (not sure). The women used "Bonnets So Blue" for its handkerchief dance. The women developed versions of what were at that time acceptable dances for women such as Abram, Bluff King Hal, Hindley, and the Ilmington dance "Lively Jig". The men did the Ilmington "Buffoon" but added to it. After trying simulated smacks and backside kneeling it was found that it did not have the desired effect, it looked pathetic, one should not pretend, now they actually do the

slapping etc.

Following the visit to Sidmouth in 1977 John received a letter from Roy Dommett including other exploitable dance bits. The Oldbury U-hey figure was worked into a dance to "Morning Star" and the Peopleton "Pop Goes the Weasel" was developed into "Three Penny Halfpenny Treacle" using a made up tune "Tuppenny Rice". They dropped the Three Hand Reel and developed a version for five with a 4/4 tune. This became part of a growing interest in dances for odd numbers. There is a dance for nine in a square where all but the centre dancer does something different in each repeat. The Figure Eight movement reminded of the crossings in motor cycle displays so it was called the "Triumph" to the tune "Shreds and Patches". It was the only dance that was done to a single step throughout. A seven in line dance was done to "Hunt the Squirrel" and a five in a Cross dance to "Getting Up Stairs" with its hey up the middle and the outsides going round. Both were local tunes from Sharp's collection. A dance for nine women was done called "Churning Butter" and a dance for four to a version of "Greensleeves" from Herefordshire called "Green and Yellow Handkerchief". "Boyne Water" was used for "Last Night with Archie" and this introduced the idea of taps on the women's soles and heels for the effect. More recent have been "Old Towler Eightsome Reel" and "Over the Moon" a square for eight.

All the teams have contributed ideas, words etc. "Beating the Oak" had napping with either hand. "There's No Doubt About It" was a circle dance for 10 dancers. As Sue has not danced regularly for 2 or 3 years some of the women make up dances. Creation is part of the life of morris.

It all feels very organic to him still. He still has ideas for dances but there is no rush as there is still a lot of material to get on top of.

"Each team makes up its own atmosphere and energy."

Notes taken by R L Dommett
Video was made by Sue Swift
© 1992 R L Dommett

"SHEEPSKINS" by John Kirkpatrick

Cassette SQZ 125, pub by Sqweezer © 1988, marketed by Topic Records Ltd.

Other Kirkpatrick writings are more accessible but this was interesting in its own right.

The tunes on this cassette are among those used by the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish. From their inception in 1975, these two teams of morris dancers have tried to be as original as possible in every way, not least, as they were started by musicians, in their music. So, while a few of the tunes we use coincide with the ones you can find in morris dance instruction books, most of them don't.

Being original in the field of morris dancing doesn't go down too well in some quarters. The dances of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire are generally known collectively as 'Border Morris', because of the proximity of the Welsh Border. While there is a good handful of complete dances, there are lots of vague and incomplete details which could be interpreted any number of ways. There is no doubt in my mind that Cecil Sharp and the other great collectors and preservers of English folk dancing and music were faced with no end of choices as to which steps and movements were the correct ones. If a team of dancers are all doing slightly different things, is there any reason to suppose that what one outside observer takes to be the most interesting performer may not in fact be making the rest of the team cringe by his eccentric behaviour? Or could it be that the unity imposed by geographic location, and a shared general attitude, was more important than uniformity in the dancing?

Whatever your feelings about the point, the pre-video age proved the colossal difficulties of trying to write down dances. Any two readers can reach quite different conclusions from the same description. Your own interpretation has begun as soon as you pick up the book.

In our teams, we have never claimed to be an authentic representation of traditional Border Morris. We have used the bare bones of Border Morris Dances and clothed them with our own flesh. When we had used up what acknowledged sources we could find, we just made dances up, and, often, the tunes to go with them.

Nowadays this approach is fairly widespread. At the time we were very much aware of being pioneers at every stage. I personally became violently incensed at the battery of cameras, tape recorders, and notebooks that were blatantly ripping off our dances when we first appeared at folk festivals. I couldn't understand why people did not want to go back to the sources and formulate their own ideas. I was appalled by their laziness and lack of imagination. The whole thing was so precious to me, I was deeply hurt that people did not have more discretion and respect for what we were trying to do.

I was younger then. Now, after dancing out for over twelve years, the teams are popular and admired, and if they are much copied, then it is gratifying to have caused a few ripples on the morris millpond. We hear that the world's expert on morris dancing has been teaching our material all round the world and back again. The point has been made. Now we can relax and get on with the pure pleasure of dancing it.

SOURCES....

...Since we began, quite a lot of new information has turned up, and continues to do so, so that it is now possible to paint a much more detailed picture of real Border Morris Dancing than was available when we got going. At the same time, there are many groups doing dances from the area, so that there must now be more versions of Border morris than was remotely conceivable when the phrase was coined in the early 1960's.

An article describing in detail the origin and philosophy of the Shropshire Bedlams - "Bordering on the Insane" - appeared in the EFDSS magazine English Dance and Song, Volume 41, No. 3, in 1979. This has been reprinted in one of the Morris Ring's booklets on Border Morris.

MARTHA RHODEN'S TUPPENNY DISH a note by Sue Harris

During the early 1970's there was an upsurge of interest in women's ritual dancing. Instruction days were held in many parts of the country, and my own interest came out of that early need to find a form of dance for women. With our move to Shropshire in 1973 we wanted to find out as much as we could of the music, song, and dancing that was traditional to the area. We came across all sorts of material, and some of it lay in wait for the right time. Hence when that time arrived in 1975, I had the chance to start using ideas that had been rumbling around for some time.

Although there was no tradition of women's dancing in South Shropshire, I wanted to use as a basis for our dancing something that came out of the Border Morris traditions. There were no written notation of the stepping used, so we were free to devise our own, and from there we started using figures noted in Border Morris Dances with our own stepping. I adapted some traditional dances to suit or developing style, and then went on to make up more, which consolidated our own brand of women's ritual dancing. We have gone from strength to strength, and I believe have found an essentially feminine form of ritual dance which satisfies the need to find expression through creative movement.

SOURCES OF THE TUNES

Some of the tunes are the ones specified for the dance. Some of them are a mixture of the more unusual versions of well known traditional tunes. We have used many of the tunes collected from John Locke by Cecil Sharp. These are housed in Cecil Sharp House. And one or two tunes come from old printed collections. Many of them were specially composed, and most of them can be found in print in 'OFUS FOCUS', the music of John Kirkpatrick and Sue Harris, published by Dragonfly Music, 44 Durban Street, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 1PT.

STYLE AND SPEED

While these tunes are all in regular use to accompany dancing, they are not necessarily played here exactly as we would in performance. All the dances of The Bedlams are essentially done at the same very slow speed, in 4/4 time. Martha Rhoden's dance more quickly, and have a few danced in 6/8. To avoid tortuous monotony, different speeds, instruments and keys are used to present the tunes in a more acceptable format.

from 5 Mill Street, Aston on Clun, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 8EN.

MORRIS JOHN

Just why is John Kirkpatrick proud to be a Morris dancer? Ex-Morris person Colin Irwin hears all.

Morris dancing, eh? Come on now, *no sniggering!* Burning questions of our time; why is it that whenever any body mentions morris, everyone titters and makes embarrassed gurgling noises... and yet they cheer and clap like lunatics when confronted by a good morris team outside the pub on a Sunday lunchtime. Such are the mysteries of life.

John Kirkpatrick doesn't understand it either and if anyone should, then it is he. John is currently celebrating 30 years as a morris dancer, man and boy. It was his first love, and while he's done a few other things on the way - like become one of the finest squeezebox players in Christendom, an outstanding singer, a notable songwriter and Richard Thompson band stalwart - it remains his most consuming passion.

"It's the most exhilarating thing I could ever imagine. I'd say it's given me more pleasure than anything I've ever done..."

Blimey! He means it as well. So you really had better stop that sniggering.

"It's a very powerful, magical thing with a tangible electric atmosphere. People who do it a lot get whipped up into this frenzy and it does create very high feelings. When everything's going right you can really fly - it's sensational!

"See, you have to really work hard physically and mentally to overcome all the learning stuff. And once you've got over all the thinking about what you have to do and you just get right on and do it, then it's a bit like meditation with the constant repetition and chanting. It switches off your brain and you start operating on a different level. You don't dance around worrying about the mortgage or whether you've cancelled the milk... it's an enormously liberating thing, it's very powerful..."

So why do people deride it and take the piss out of it all the time? Why is there such a stigma about morris?

"I don't know. There's a stigma about almost any form of folk music. I think it was George Bernard Shaw who said 'All English folk music is either bad or Irish'. People get embarrassed about it. Maybe it's the stiff upper lip thing about English people... they tend to be very restrained and undemonstrative in large areas of their lives and because folk music is a very emotional thing quite often, English people can tend to be embarrassed about it.

"There's also this thing about English people knowing their place - they are not used to expecting anything, or deserving anything. It's very frustrating being English!"

Some people feel it's very unnatural for a load of blokes to be leaping around waving hankies in the air with bells on their ankles...

"Well, it's very difficult for a man in England to admit to doing dancing of any kind. If you admit to being a ballet dancer people pass you on the other side of the street. It's this butch image you must have all the time. Yet when you see morris dancing being done well it's such a sturdy, masculine thing. It's incredibly sexy. You do get some teams that mince around a bit, you know, the old Morris Ring type of clubs who don't have much imagination and just churn it out, but good morris is very sexy and powerful."

It all started for John Kirkpatrick when he was a mere lad of 12 years old. He used to sing in a local church choir, and a country dance club was affiliated to it. John didn't fancy country dancing ("well, at that age I didn't want to hold girls' hands") and to get out of it he went along to its offshoot - the Hammersmith Morris Men - instead.

"The teacher was Hugh Rippon who was full of missionary zeal. He got me playing as well. He stuck a melodeon in my hand and said 'learn to play that'. I couldn't have asked for a better teacher - he wasn't afraid to bend the rules a bit and it was all very exciting. A complete explosion happened in my life. I tried to find out everything I could about it - I went to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library every spare second I could and I remained with Hammersmith Morris men for 12 or 13 years until I left London."

It beggars wonderment to consider the general attitude towards morris in those days. If, in these times of so-called enlightenment the very thought of morris dancing inspires guffaws, it makes you wonder what on earth it all inspired in the early '60s.

"Actually, this was at the beginning of a kind of re-thinking of morris things. When I first started doing it there were lots of terribly well-spoken chaps in sports jackets. It was all done just the way Cecil Sharp said it was done - they believed that the way he noted it down 80 years ago was the only way it should be done. And we all used to go to those Morris Ring weekends. Dreadful things. There weren't too many women's teams around then, I can tell you. Now there's as many women dancing as men.

"People now realise it's a living tradition. Cecil Sharp himself said he took those he considered to be the best dancers in the team and only noted the way they did it and not the others. He also said that once you've mastered

it correctly you can use your discretion... but people forget that side of his teaching."

It's an important point. Morris controversies are legendary. To dance the Cotswold way or not. To allow ladies to dance the morris or not. To wear hats or not. Blood has been spilled over such matters and there was almost a civil war in the Oxfordshire village of Bampton (one of morris dancing's most revered centres) over the way the morris should be performed.

John K. laughs wryly when asked about the Bampton splits and other life-and-death matters. "Yes, it does inspire high passions... it's like in *Gulliver's Travels* they had a war over which end to open an egg."

An advocate of a modernistic approach to morris himself, he nevertheless adheres to certain principles. He doesn't, for example, like the idea of teams dancing without hats (because hats were always an integral part of individual anonymity within a team). Equally, while he's enthusiastic about the upsurge of women's teams, he's against the idea of the mixed morris teams which are beginning to emerge. Yet he laughs like a drain at the old habit of teams slavishly copying the steps of their forefathers to create a replica of a certain tradition.

His approach became focussed firmly when he finally left Hammersmith morris and moved to Wolverhampton with his wife, Sue Harris. He joined the local team, but felt uncomfortable with them without knowing why. When they moved to Shropshire some time after, the same thing happened. After being asked by a local teacher to show some kids how to dance, he decided the only solution to his dilemma about finding a suitable team to dance with was to form his own. And so began the Shropshire Bedlams - now acknowledged as one of the finest dance teams in the land.

"One thing I always felt was that a lot of dancing was done too quickly. If you dance too fast you can lose a lot of the power. I wanted to

The Shropshire Bedlams



Photo: Brian Shuel

dance more slowly than most of the Cotswold teams were doing it, so I looked at the information on border morris and imposed a style on it based on a slow speed with a loping step. There's no justification for it whatsoever in traditional terms, but it's just how I wanted to do it at the time.

"It's not so athletic as Cotswold morris with all these big leaps – but it's not the kind of thing you have to give up when you're 30 and your leg muscles give out. Cotswold morris is very much a young man's thing whereas as a Bedlam it's possible to appear energetic without doing it very much! No, we do work hard... it's just a different way of doing it."

Did you get flak from the purists?

"Oh yes. I was very anxious for it to be known that we weren't trying to be a representation of anything traditional. Some of the people who claim to be experts were appalled and rightly pointed out that it's nothing to do with the true roots of the stuff. Fair enough. Either you like it or you don't. I thought it was an interesting opportunity to put something new into morris dancing."

Sue, meanwhile, was taking charge of a ladies' team, Martha Rhodens, who – John considers – were taking even greater liberties. "Sue was very brave with Martha Rhodens. They decided they wouldn't dance with sticks and she worked out this very feminine style that is still extremely lively with lots of energy. They don't try and dance like men, which makes it more interesting."

John and Sue also have four sons and the eldest two (14 and 12) have both become members of the Bedlams – something John describes as "the proudest thing that's ever happened to me".

How hard do you have to practise?

"We practise every week. I can't imagine a morris team would be much good if they didn't. To do it automatically you need constant repetition. It's very hard work – it's not just mincing about. You need to be totally confident in the other people in the team as well – if you only dance together now and then, you can't really work together as a team."

But surely most audiences can't distinguish between good and bad morris dancing?

"Oh, you can always tell a bad morris team because the audience gets bored and starts to drift away. It's important you should enjoy yourself when you're dancing – people can usually tell if you're not. The way we dance is

John K.



Photo: Brian Shuel



Morris dancing at Richmond in the 1620s

Photo: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

very free so yes, we get away with a lot of mistakes, but the better you do it the more you enjoy it. When I run a practise I like it to be fun, but I'm pretty strict as well."

During my own woefully brief career as a morris dancer before I was banned for threatening grievous harm to the limbs of various innocent bystanders, I nurtured some romantic notion about maintaining some sacred ancient tradition. This, apparently, is no longer a popular motivation for the art.

Yes, we all know about the myths of morris as a fertility rite and a plea to the gods to make the crops grow, but it seems that these hazy theories are not only becoming considered irrelevant, they are being re-examined completely. In the last ten years there's been a growth in scholarship on the subject that considers the evidence about pagan ritual has been chosen to fit the theory rather than the other way about.

"The evidence itself is very scanty. You see, morris appeals to a very primitive part in people which is difficult to express; and when you have this powerful energy going on, it's easier to give it some ancient origin rather than admit that it's part of you inside that is uncivilised. I'm not saying that these theories are without substance, but it's interesting how scholarship is now taking a different angle on it and maybe we should own up more about what we're like rather than blame it on the past."

Be that as it may, there are certain burning questions about which the world deserves an answer. Like what's the story about the sticks? Are they phallic or what?

"They could be! Nobody knows any more because everything is being reassessed. Sometimes they're used like agricultural implements, sometimes they're used like guns. I must say that one of the dances that we do enhances the suggestion that they're phallic!"

And what about the bells?

"The old theory goes that the more noise you make you drive away the evil spirits, and the higher you jump and the higher you throw your hankies, the higher the crops will grow, and you're cleansing the community for the crops to grow. The more noise, the more powerful the magic – that's the theory."

Young Master Kirkpatrick has also had a significant role (with and without Young Master Ashley Hutchings) in propagating morris dance music. This was done initially with the Albion Country Dance Band, who carted with them their own dance team, Albion Morris (a breakaway from Chingford Morris Men) and, in particular, a celebrated LP of the

day, titled *Morris On*. Oddly enough, John is now slightly iffy about both projects...

"*Morris On* actually confused me. I loved folk-rock. *Liege & Lief* just blew me away and I thought *Steeleye Span* were fantastic. People started saying to me 'Come on, let's do some morris music' and I thought 'Why?' because I'd been doing it for ten years anyway. *Morris On* was Ashley Hutchings' idea and I couldn't see the value of it, although I was delighted to be playing with the people who were on the album. I felt at the time that it just wasn't good dance music. It was fun doing it, but from my point of view as a morris dancer it was too fast. But as a career move it was fantastic..."

He was even more baffled by the idea of the Albions taking a morris team on the road with them.

"I felt it was a rip-off. I felt that the Albion Country Band should have got by on their own merits. And while the Albion Morris put on a very good show, they irritated me. Not because they weren't good, but because it was a very different style to what I was used to and I'd worked out my own ideas about it all.

"It's also very difficult to be a good fool [the chap in the team who dances round in a frock whacking people on the backside with a balloon or something]. When I see a team with a fool it usually irritates me because few do it well. It often coarsens things and tends to turn into a comedy routine. It's very easy to go over the top and end up like Tommy Cooper. We don't have a fool in Shropshire Bedlams."

So what's the best team you've ever seen?

"Oh, that's a horrible question! The best teams are the ones who've decided what they're going to do and do something slightly different to other people, but do it with complete conviction and grace. When I started there were the Westminster Morris Men who looked different to everyone else and danced beautifully and did what they did 100 percent. I felt the same the first time I saw Gloucestershire: Old Spot. I think Martha Rhodens are very good. Also I'm very happy with what we're doing with the Bedlams. I get so much pleasure from it – doubly so now that our two kids are doing it as well."

So there you have it. Next time you meet somebody in the street wearing bells and hankies, don't you dare snigger, OK?

[John K's recently issued cassette album of the tunes used for dancing by Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens, incorporating copious notes, is called *Sheepskins* (Squeezer SQZ 125) and is distributed by Topic. See review in F.R.68 for more details.]

BIG SHIP

- Source** : recorded from the dancing of Shropshire Bedlams at Sidmouth, 1977, and at Bracknell in 1981. Their interpretation of the Brimfield stick dance.
- Music** : "The Big Ship Sails on the Alley, Alley, Oh!" played (ABABB)³ABA.
- Sticks** : medium length.
- Hits** : using a one handed hold on the stick, strike tips, right to left, left to right, in each bar, horizontally with rather wide swings, while both are stephopping on the spot.
- Set** : four dancers in a line, facing in pairs. 1) <2 3> <4. At the start and end of the dance the dancers stand upright, feet together, stick sloped over right shoulder.

The Sequence of Movements is the following done four times, except the final time where there is no figure.

- A1 Napping** - ends hit the centres who "hold & posture", 16 hits in all.
- B1 Figure of Eight** - they start with shouting "Ho!" The inactives dance stephops on the spot. The Bedlams track of the Figure has the ends going opposite ways around the figure eight. They pass their opposite by the right shoulder. The ends pass in the centre by the left shoulder first and by the right in coming back.
- A2 Napping** as A1.
- B2-B3 Figure.**

The Figures are,

1. **Swing opposites.** Transfer stick to left hand and waist swing, right arm around the front of opposite's waist, turn in at halfway and transfer stick to right hand, waist swing with left arm in the other direction, eight bars each way. The pairs rotated between 5 to 7 times each way. At the end of the movement the two dancers have changed places. 2) <1 4> <3.
2. **Star.** The middle two dancers, 1&4, turn quickly to their right, clockwise, to face the other way, and all transfer the stick to the left hand and shoulder at the same time. Then the two pairs dance forward to be alongside each other and forming a right hand star, the middle two taking hands as soon as they are within reach and the others joining in as they come within reach. They jump to turn out, to the left, anticlockwise, to come back, and they transfer the stick to the right hand and shoulder at the same time. The pairs change places again during this movement to end 1) <2 3> <4. To come out, the end two, 1&4, break from the star and dance a loop to their right, clockwise, to end in their starting place. The middle two, now 2&3, do a further half left hand turn in the centre to reach their starting places. The movement takes eight bars each way.
3. **Rounds.** Sticks down together, like a low basket, in the middle.

HUNT THE SQUIRREL

Source : interpreted from a film of Shropshire Bedlams at Sidmouth Festival.
Music : "Hunt the Squirrel".
Steps : normal Bedlams stepping.
Set : seven dancers in one line, facing in pairs with the odd dancer facing up towards the music. m <1 2> <3 4> <5 6> <7
Stick : each has a medium length stick.
Facing pairs strike / b - f - / b f b - //,
b=backhand, f=forehand

There were probably other movements but they would detract from the basic dance.

OTYS : No.1 casts to the left and reaches the middle of the set, between Nos. 4 and 5, at the end of the musical phrase.

FIGURE EIGHT (1) : 8 bars : two pairs, Nos. 2 and 3 and Nos. 6 and 7, dance on the spot facing and stick tapping without turning. The third pair, Nos. 3 and 4, follow No. 1, without stick tapping, along a figure eight around the other two pairs, travelling anticlockwise around the top pair and clockwise around the bottom pair, and with the middle pair getting back to place by the end of the musical phrase ready for the next movement. No. 1 need not be back to place till the middle/end of bar 1 of the next phrase.

REEL OF SEVEN : 8 bars : facing pairs start a reel of seven and No 1 joins to pass No. 3 when No. 3 comes to the top. Dance a full reel.

STICKING : 16 bars : pairs stick for two bars, then all turn 180° clockwise to face the other way and stick with the dancer behind, the turn taking the dancers easily into the first backhander. Keep repeating this movement while the dancers progress up the set, one place per two bars. At the start, No. 1, with no one to clash with immediately, casts to the left from the end of the reel and dances to the bottom of the line in two bars and faces up to face No. 7 as they turn. Each dancer at the top of the set casts to the bottom in turn during the two bars that they do not have someone to strike. This continues till No. 1 is back at the top, and No. 1 has the last two bars spare during which they cast to the middle of the set as in Once-to-Yourself.

This sequence is repeated a number of times. The Figure Eight is varied in alternate repeats.

FIGURE EIGHT (2) : as above but the two dancers of each pair that is stepping and striking on the spot, move together around a small square anticlockwise moving to the next side on the last beat of the second bar when not striking. As they move place they spin clockwise a turn and a quarter into the first backhander. The dancers have to be careful with the stick as they turn and I have found it best to let the turn take it round and not to have a striking action.

MAIDEN'S PRAYER

From : 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.
Stick : 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.

MORNING STAR

Source : film of Shropshire Bedlams on tour at a Bracknell Folk Festival.
Music : tune of that name from J Locke collected by C Sharp.
Steps : standard Bedlams step sequence of 1 h 2 h, 1 2 3 h.
Set : 8 dancers in two lines, each with a medium length stick.

Order of Movements :

A1 U-Hey top
B1 Chorus 1
A2 U-Hey bottom
B2 Chorus 1
A3 Waist Reel up
B3 Chorus 2
A4 Waist Reel down
B4 Chorus 2
A5 U-Hey top
B5 Chorus 1
A6 U-Hey bottom
B6 Chorus 2
A7 Chorus 1
B7 Chorus 2.

FIGURES :

U-HEY TOP : Progressive Reel of 8, both columns face up and start reel by the top pair, 1 and 2 crossing over at the top. It is not helpful to think of it as a circular hey without crossings at the bottom, but it is helpful to take it as a long reel of eight that has been bent at the middle into a U shape. The reel continues all the way round, so that every dancer works to both ends of the "U", passing their starting place, and back to place again finally. No sticking in the U-Hey.

U-HEY BOTTOM : Ditto but start facing down and cross only at the bottom.

WAIST REEL UP : All face up and link with opposites by putting inner arms around opposite's waist. Hey for four in pairs, with two loops only, the top pair starting it progressively by casting to their left.

WAIST REEL DOWN : Ditto but start by all facing down.

CHORUS :

1. Work in units of four : sticking for 8 bars. 2 bars repeated four times.

/ n p diag diag / p n diag diag /

n = strike neighbour, p = strike opposite, diag = diagonals class, in the first bar the first corner both times over the second corner sticks and in the second bar the first corner both times under the second corner sticks.

2. In two lines, the following four bars repeated.

r diag l to r, l diag r to l, p l to r 2x / l diag, r diag, p r to l 2x /
r diag l to r, p r to l, p l to r, l diag r to l / l diag l to r, p l to r, r
diag l to r pause //

SPEED THE PLOUGH

Source : recorded from Shropshire Bedlams at Sidmouth 1977. An interpretation of the Upton Snodsbury dance. Developed into a Five Hand and then a Nine Hand Reel concept.
Music : country dance version of "Speed the Plough" tune played AB.
Sticks : medium length. Sloped over right shoulder when not hitting.
Step : usual Shropshire Bedlams sequence.
Set : three dancers in one line all facing up towards the music.

m <1 <2 <3

O2YS - stationary facing up with sloped sticks.

Dance - there are two alternating movements, repeated six times in all.

1. REEL - A music

The Reel of Three path is a very wide Figure of Eight, the dancers going far out to the side. The first Reel starts progressively from the top with No 1 turning to their left. Other Reels start with the striker in the middle turning away from the last person hit. In both cases the third dancer does not move off until the dancer from the other end of the line of three has entered the third dancer's loop.

2. STICKING & CIRCLING - B music

Sticking : the pair that face clash every hit from right to left in the rhythm, / x - x - / x x x - / four times through.

First time : 2&3 stick, No 1 dances anticlockwise $\frac{1}{2}$ round, moving in to face No 2 who turns on the spot $\frac{1}{2}$ anticlockwise to face No 1. 2&1 stick while No 3 turns to their left, the long way, into dancing round the strikers anticlockwise to end behind No 2. No 2 turns to their left and passes No 3 by the left shoulder to start a Reel of Three across the set, which ends with No 3 in the centre facing No 1 who is where they were when clashing with No 2.

Second Time : 3&1 stick, No 2 dances anticlockwise $\frac{1}{2}$ round, moving into face No 3 who turns on the spot $\frac{1}{2}$ anticlockwise to face No 2. 3&2 stick while No 1 turns to their left and dances anticlockwise round to end behind No 3, who then turns to their left, that is away from the person last clashed, and they dance a Reel of Three along the set, ending with No 1 in the centre facing No 2.

Third Time : 1&2 sticks, No 3 circles, then 1&3 stick and No 2 circles, going into a Reel across the set which ends with No 2 in the centre.

Fourth Time etc, follow the same pattern.

Note that the direction of the first clash after a Reel is the same as the last before it.

ENDING - sticks on shoulders

A. Rounds - instead of a Reel

The last one hit casts to their left into a circle, followed by the one who had last been circling round and finally the one in the middle who casts to their left.

B. Turn out from the rounds and form a line facing to the left, dance forward, shaking the free hand vigorously, turn to the left and dance to place, turning left to face in the starting direction. Then each does this, dancing out one at a time, while the others dance on the spot. Then all do it together again. End feet together, sticks on shoulders. Each forward and back movement takes two bars, so probably the first is done on the end bars of the music for the rounds.

TEN REEL

Source : simplified version of Bedlams Dance "Raddled Tup"
Music : a standard tune like "Brighton Camp".
Set : 10 dancers in two files, each with a small stick.
Step : hopsteps.

CHORUS - E music - stick tapping after each figure.

partner r to l, diag right l to r, partner r to l, partner l to r
diag left r to l, partner l to r, partner r to l, diag right l to r
partner r to l, partner l to r, diag left r to l, partner l to r
partner r to l, diag right l to r, partner r to l, pause.
diag right l to r, diag left r to l,
diag right l to r, diag left r to l
diag right l to r, diag left r to l
partner r to l, partner l to r, partner r to l, pause.

FIGURE 1 - all loop to left around to place counterclockwise on own, and cross over passing right shoulders and turn clockwise to right to face back. All half rounds clockwise to starting place turning a loop counterclockwise when there. Sticks. Repeat but half rounds counterclockwise and loop clockwise at place.

FIGURE 2 - All face up, cast from top and leaders cut across set behind the bottom pair, lines passing diagonally forward to change sides, passing alternately, and cast down the outside of the opposite side. Turn in at the bottom and come up centre in single file. Turn outwards to end on opposite side to start. Repeat to place.

FIGURE 3 - whole reel of 5 across ends - middles go to their right into centre of ends, the pair next to the ends come in, starting a reel of three, then the end pair join in to make it a reel of 5. End in lines of 5 across the set for the sticks. Repeat with middles going to their left and reel of 5 along the sides.

FIGURE 4 - top pairs face along sides (up & down) and move down the centre of the set to the bottom hitting sticks 8 times. Rest turn downwards and out on their own to move up the outside towards the top, turning inwards there, keeping their relative positions. The new top two pairs go down the middle etc. The pair originally at the bottom become the middle and then the top, then stick down to end fourth and finally become second and stick down again to end in place. Every pair goes twice.

THE TRIUMPH

Source : film of Shropshire Bedlams on tour at Bracknell Folk Festival.
The team made mistakes so intended version unknown.
Music : presumably "The Triumph"
Step : Bedlams sequence (can use hopsteps)
Set : 9 dancers in a square 3 x 3, each with a short stick. The leader of this dance is best in the middle position.

FIGURE 1 - 8 bars - foot up on spot.

FIGURE 2 - "The Figure Eight"

The left hand file cast to left, the centre file waits and joins on the end of the left file, while the right hand file casts to their right. These two lines turn in and cross the centre of the set diagonally going into a figure eight but the leader of the shorter file does not cross behind the other leader but behind the second in that group, to get a more balanced number of dancers in each loop. The figure eight goes around three times before breaking off as original leaders go down outside then come up in the three original lines to place, the middle file come up the centre without following left file round, so get to place first.

FIGURE 3 - "Sticks and Go"

The two left hand files face and stick 12 times right to left while hopping. The other file dances completely around these counterclockwise on 12 hops. When they are back the bottom two rows face and stick and the top row goes round counterclockwise. Then the right hand files face, then the top two rows etc. The key person should be the one in the very middle who does not round round in any of the outside files/rows and turns 90° counterclockwise each change.

FIGURE 4 etc - repeat of figure 2 etc but start all facing to left, ie set orientation rotated 90°.

Sequence done four times in all. End on the Figure Eight and lead off.

OLD MOLLY OXFORD

- Source** : interpretation of Steeple Claydon Six Hand Reel with handclapping danced jointly by Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish as recorded at Sidmouth in 1977 and 1981.
- Music** : related to the Steeple Claydon tune, which had an A music only, and with some similarity to the Headington Quarry tune B music. (AB)⁵.
- Steps** : the teams usual stepping sequence.
- Set** : six dancers in a file, facing in pairs, > < > < > <.

The dance is alternating Reels of Six (A musics) and Handclapping (B musics) as at Steeple Claydon.

HANDCLAPPING

- Bar 1 both, both, touch the outside of right ankle with right hand twice,
 Bar 2 both, both, touch the top of right knee twice,
 Bar 3 both, both, touch the outside of left ankle with left hand twice,
 Bar 4 both, both, touch the top of left knee twice,
 Bar 5 both, both, clap right hands with opposite twice,
 Bar 6 both, both, clap left hands with opposite twice,
 Bar 7 both, clap right hands with opposite, both, clap left hands,
 Bar 8 both, clap own hands behind back, both in front, pause.

'both' = clap both own hands together in front of own chest.
 To touch ankles the appropriate foot is lifted, leg bent at knee, with little bend forward of the body to reach the ankle.
 To touch the knee, the knee is raised towards having the thigh horizontal.
 On the same beat as the touch the free arm is near shoulder level and out to the side and the hand flicked outwards. On the final pause in bar 8 both hands are flicked outwards.

THE PERFORMANCE

The manner of presentation was of considerable interest. The dance was used as a finish, at Sidmouth with two lines of women between lines of men. The sequence of reel and clapping was done several times, ending with clapping. The dancers, especially the men, inserted extra rotations during the reels, particularly when going round the ends of the set. At the end of the dance all stood still for a while, women with arms outstretched, then the women jumped, turned and ran off, a little while later the men chased after them.

LAST NIGHT WITH ARCHIE

Source : film of Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish at a Bracknell Folk Festival Tour.

Music : Boyne Water from J Locke collected by C Sharp.

Steps : usual for the team, 1 h 2 h, 1 2 3 h.

Set : 8 dancers in two lines, set changes direction during the dance.

CHORUS - hand clapping. In bars 3 & 4 clap and stamp three times.

b r+r b l+l / r+l 3x - / l+l stamp l 3x - / r+r stamp r 3x - /
l+r

b r+r b l+l / b b r+l - / b r+r b l+l / r+l - r+l - /
l+r stamp l r l r l+r l+r

FIGURES

1. WHOLE ROUNDS : dance whole rounds clockwise, ending in two lines facing up, then turn to face across.
2. CAST-&-HALF-GIP : the dancers cast around their nearest ends to form a set across, 2 bars to cast, 2 bars on the spot.

1	2		1	3	4	2
3	4	to	7	5	6	3
5	6					
7	8					

Then half gip, right shoulders with current opposite, 4 bars, and then other half gip, left shoulders, all cast back to place, 2 bars, dance facing 2 bars.

3. CAST-&-STARS : as 2, but star right and left in fours, turn out at half way. Usually take 1 to 2 bars to form star and 1 to 2 to turn back at halfway.
4. CAST-&-CIRCLE : join hands and circle to the left and back to the right.
5. REELS : unlike previous figures. All face up and dance a progressive reel of 4 along each side twice through.

End the dance with the chorus done twice.