

TRANSCRIPTION OF TONY BARRAND INTERVIEW 8.2.21
NARRATUS INTERVIEW WITH TONY BARRAND
August 2, 2021

Pat MacPherson (PM):

It's August 2, at the home of Tony Barrand in Brattleboro, Vermont. We're talking today about various Morris topics, including big questions, like "why do they call it an Ale?" for instance; maybe we'll talk about that.

Susan Creighton and I (Pat MacPherson) are here today on behalf of the Marlboro Morris Ale Committee. We're creating an archive of the Ale as it approaches its 50th anniversary. Alright. Let's go.

I think rather than do dates and names and stuff like that, which we already have from Andra (*aka "Andy" Horton*) and from Julie (*Juliana Brown*), let's talk about what you want to talk about, related to the Ale.

Tony Barrand (TB):

OK. Well, it must have been 1975 and I think I went to Pinewoods (*i.e. Pinewoods Dance Camp in Plymouth, MA where CDSS has run dance and music programs since the 1930s*) first in (19)74, and discovered Arthur Cornelius and some people who'd been teaching something that a number of years at Pinewoods and in one of the evening dances, there was a group of men who turned out later to be the Greenwich Morris Men with Jim Morrison, who was then the Director of the Society (*i.e., Country Dance and Song Society*). and he was one of the men. He may have been playing fiddle, at that time, but he had definitely taught the group. And, I had to do it! I saw Morris dancing and it was a group of -- I'm a former Rugby player, and so here were these strong men, doing physically demanding things, jumping up in the air and being graceful in their dancing. And, I discovered when I started asking people about it, that it had something to do with time, and place, and it mattered where you were doing it, and it mattered when you were doing it. And in addition to that, it was that men were doing the dancing, which was remarkable to me. And, it was attractive to me as, I suppose, what Americans would call a jock. But I was a rugby player, and the dancing looked challenging, physically challenging.

I'm going to flip forward to a piece of this story which I think connects -- it didn't happen for a few more years -- and it was that I was in England visiting in 1979, some English Morris teams, one of which was the Headington Quarry Morris Men. You know, we knew about Mr. Sharp -- you can't go to Pinewoods and not hear the name Cecil Sharp -- and, so these were the men that had been taught either by William Kimber or by people that he had taught to do dancing.

SC:

Can you say again who William Kimber was?

TB:

Oh, I slipped in an important name there without saying who he was! Mr. Sharp's first musician for Morris dancing was a man called William Kimber of a Cotswold village called Headington Quarry, because it was a quarry and a lot of stone used for the building of Oxford University buildings came from the quarry in Headington. And basically that was the work in the village. They were quarry workers. And you can still see a lot of that stone throughout Oxford. They used stone from the quarry.

Anyway, I being an academic, needed to know everything about the Morris dancing, so I got the names from -- and here's another name I'm going to give you -- Roy Dommett -- who you can look at elsewhere on the CDSS website because that wonderful Society has really allowed me to publish the whole of Roy Dommett's papers.

Anyway, one of the teams that I went to visit on my field trip into England in 1979 was to go and visit the current Headington Quarry Morris men. What was interesting to me watching them dance, they all looked like arm wrestlers. They had strong arm movements, waving handkerchiefs, and it's like -- whoa! So this phrase came to me, this was "power and grace." So this strange combination that was visible with these men who looked like they were arm wrestlers and yet they were waving handkerchiefs in a graceful fashion that was also strong and powerful, and it was like -- whoa! Where else are you going to see that?

So that was astonishing to me, there it was then.

I'm also a perception psychologist. That's my formal academic training, that's what I studied in graduate school. And, that's what I went on to teach. So, for me, I needed to explain why they looked like that. Why did they look strong and graceful and powerful, and all of that? So that became what I had to do with the rest of my academic career.

I forgot where I started in that story.

PM:

You were at Pinewoods.

TB:

I was at Pinewoods so then I saw a group of men, dancing, and that was the first time I saw it [Morris dancing] which is always amusing to me since I'm English but I had never seen Morris dancing in England. Here was this fascinating thing with these men who had learned to dance and the physicality of the dancing came through but also with seeming grace that came with that, which was a remarkable combination to me.

It was something I had to do. So I was at Pinewoods Camp -- here was I, this Englishman, never seen this at all in England, and here I was catching it at this Pinewoods Camp.

PM:

Was John Roberts then as well, at that time?

TB:

Probably had to be, because we did everything together.

PM:

That's what I thought. There's a photograph of you, a very famous photograph, of you and John and Genny Shimer (*i.e. Genevieve Shimer, English dance teacher, artist, and former President of CDSS*). And she is looking like a mother, with her hands on her hips, and I a "well, I don't know" kind of look on her face and the two of you are dressed as, you know, young men of the time, with striped trousers.

TB:

Stripes! And maybe even stripes going the other way! I remember those pants from John and I remember my striped shirt. Stripes were in at the time. (laughing)

PM:

What can I say -- they still are. (laughing)

TB:

But these were big, broad stripes.

PM:

They were very flashy. So, they two of you were, I guess, co-teaching at Marlboro College and you were also experiencing Morris dancing for the first time.

TB:

For me, as a perception psychologist, it became what I had to do. I had already realized that I had something as a singer that I had to try and explain for myself, as in the field of perception, how it is to tell a story with a song. It was like, how does that happen? And why are some people better at it than others? And, it was not just the singing that I had to explain, that we were both involved with, but it was also the dancing.

PM:

And, you saw the power and you saw the grace, and you saw men, who are often loath to dance. You saw them dancing, right? (TB: Yeah.) Was there a story going along with the dancing?

TB:

Well that's where I got to eventually.

PM:

Oh, you did!

TB:

There are four words in the phrase that I got involved with. So, "power and grace" I've got, but as I got involved in trying to understand it more, I had to get "time" and "place." So, people danced like the time of who they were at the time, and they danced according to their place, i.e. where they grew up and where they were actually dancing. Because it was clear that the dancing *belonged* to a particular village in England, or a town. As it turned out, there were all kinds of aspects to the story that I got involved with.

So, time and place; power and grace. What a great story. It is complicated to try and explain why people move the way they do, and why they dance the way they do, and sing the way they do. So that was what my academic career turned out to be about.

PM:

That is so fascinating.

TB:

Fascinating, it WAS fascinating. And I was like, I don't know if I could ever explain any of that. But I didn't really like explanations as much as I liked the questions. The questions were so exciting to me to try to understand why they look the way they do, you need to know how they grew up, what songs were involved, what work did everybody do around them, what was the place and the time, what was it about. So there was plenty to do trying to figure that out.

SC:

Quick question. This is reminding me of parts of things that Andy was talking about in her interview. That initially there was no image of Morris in the U.S. and so the four of you that had founded the Ale, part of what was behind that, in her words, was trying to put out there an image of Morris could be at its best. Would you speak to that?

TB:

That was the whole point of gathering different groups of people doing it together. It clearly was something that had to happen in a place and in a time. People were going to bring who they were and their bodies and how they moved doing work, especially for example. Here were these quarry workers who were doing this wonderfully smooth kind of dancing that had been seen by Mr. Sharp and clearly there was something attractive about the dancing, not just that there were men doing it but the sort of qualities that I saw when I first saw it at Pinewoods and then saw when I went to visit these teams on their home grounds, practicing, and saw how they ended up dancing.

It was visually very attractive as well as physically attractive. To me, there was clearly an aesthetic that was involved in it. This wasn't just going to be something that would happen in classes. And so people had to see each other dancing and inspire each other to do dancing. The first thing that happened after we got the team started here, it was clearly something that had to happen *where* we were living. Given that at that time Andy and I were in Marlboro (*Vermont*), so we had to have something going on in the place where we were living. And in

order to get a sense of the time, as well as the place in which we were living, we needed to get a bunch of people together. In learning this, we needed to get – to see other people dancing. So there needed to be a gathering of some sort.

In 1976, the first Morris Ale happened, because in 1975 Andy and I had gotten married and had brought teams together. So we gathered a bunch of men together that I had seen at Greenwich and that I had danced with at Pinewoods. Also, the first year that I was at Pinewoods, I not only saw the men dancing, but a group called Ring o' Bells, who were women from New York City that started their team at the same time. At our wedding, not only did we get a bunch of men that I knew from Pinewoods together to be part of the dancing, but invited Ring o' Bells. In some ways, in funny ways, this may come up, if you ever interview -- unfortunately, you can't interview Jody McGeen (NB: does he mean Jody Evans?). This was a wonderful thing having another group there to see dancing and how they operated as a team. And it was like, OK!

I know what I was going to say. In some ways, I think, Ring o' Bells still think of almost the first Morris Ale really as being a wedding. Because, that was when teams in this country first got together. Other teams from different towns and cities that showed up to dance together. That was the first occasion for that. And that was, to me, so exciting. That's why I had to do the next thing. We tried to repeat it the same year. And then, I had discovered that here in Windham Country and in Marlboro specifically there was an event that went on locally in the town, on the first weekend going into summer, or Memorial Day weekend, at the end of May and that was clearly a time to do some gathering of people together because there was a local history of gathering together on Memorial Day weekend.

PM:

So, that was your time.

TB:

That was the time. Exactly. That was the time. And the place was because of where we were living. So that was the time, and we had the place. And we clearly needed the teams starting together. And because it was clear looking at what had happened for the growth of teams in England, that the men in England really had some bizarre way of thinking about whether women should do it at all. And because the first event had had a women's team and a men's team at it, that's what we did. Because, CDSS through Pinewoods, women were just as much a part of the growth of the dancing that was happening, at least through camp. And CDSS camp was where we all learned. So, it was like, OK - that's just the way it is. Then, because Andy and I were involved together in getting the groups together, it was going to be men's and women's teams. That's simply the way it was.

PM: So, in effect, you were creating a new tradition in a new place, which included women and men. This was the American story of Morris. And, it reflected who you were.

TB:

But that's how we dance and how we sing. You can only be who you are. And so that's what we did.

PM:

You didn't have to be constrained, or you chose not to be constrained, by what was happening in England.

TB:

Well, it wasn't relevant. A lot of Americans when they first started it was like they needed approval from England and English Morris dancers, but given that they had taken off on this bizarre track of rejecting having women doing it, in this country, clearly wasn't relevant because women had been doing the teaching and the playing.

SC:

I've always been fascinated by what feels to me like the tug-of-war between the urge to Morris dance for the purpose of keeping a tradition alive—being part of the history, valuing the history of it and the connection to what's come before and what led to this form of dancing—and the urge to Morris dance just for the love of dancing, and people going ahead and changing traditions and inventing new traditions, I suppose that's all part of the development of a tradition. But for those for whom the history is very, very important, I've seen some resistance to change. There are those who feel strongly about maintaining the tradition, and those who say it's its own dance form, it's a living dance form, it's going to evolve, it's going to take on...

TB:

For me, what needs to be answered there is: what do you mean by "the tradition"? Who defines what the tradition is? In early days, women were completely a part of the Morris dancing, because Mr. Sharp ran it that way. He could get people to dance because the women could do it. And, very early on in his teaching the dancing at the school that he started for teaching Morris dancing, there were women's teams and women doing it as much as there were men. So it seemed bizarre to me that people would bring something out of the history of doing it in England, into America. Do we need that? No, because that isn't going to fit here.

SC:

A different place and time.

TB:

It was a different place and time.

For me also, being a jock.... Well, women didn't play rugby in England, that was something that American colleges started. That was happening here. I mean, they were running around smashing their bodies into each other, why shouldn't they be Morris dancing?

PM:

Field hockey, whap!

TB:

Well, I remember my school where I was taught rugby and learned to do rugby, the fiercest games we ever played were against the women's hockey team. And, they were skilled at using hockey sticks and so we rugby players were amateurs at using hockey sticks and the women were just good at it. It was a physically violent encounter. (laughing)

PM:

OMG. I quickly refused to play field hockey when I was young, because I was not aggressive enough. I just got hit trying to run away from the sticks. (laughing)

You mentioned when we were just starting to speak, you were curious why they call it an "ale." What have you decided?

TB:

Well, being an academic, doing whatever reading I could about the Morris and about the Cotswolds—I grew up on the edge of the Cotswolds, the town in which I lived, you have to excuse the name of the town here because a lot of the Americans here just find it funny. Bletchley (*constituent town of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire*), which is just on the north edge of the Cotswolds, the north end, the west edge - not the west, the east.... I still get confused over east and west because in England, we look downhill on Europe, and so I get my right and left confused in terms of east and west. So depending where I'm standing, if I'm in England, it feels funny to have west on my right hand.

PM:

So, we're talking about "ale."

TB:

What I encountered was that part of the Cotswolds, which I knew from basically growing up on their edge, was that they called, in the Cotswolds, a country village event an 'ale' as in a similar way to what in Europe, where they would grow a vintage of wine for a particular year or for a festival, in the Cotswolds country practice was that you could have a local event in which you brewed an ale. You could have a church ale; it didn't matter what it was. An ale was simply an announcement of some event happening with some focus around it. So it can be the church ale. Interesting about that, basically the safe liquid to drink was an ale. Children consumed ale as a safe liquid to drink, because water wasn't safe. So ale was something basically that everybody drank.

PM:

As in France, or any other wine-producing region, you would have children drinking the wine.

TB:

Exactly that. It was interesting to me that the English did that with ale. Having an event, a local event like a local feast, at which you brewed a special ale which you would then sell at the

event. And it happened as I said with churches, with any kind of... and the most famous of which was a "lamb ale" in the Cotswolds at a village called Kirtlington (*Oxfordshire*), which was a Morris village in which the event was about the unmarried women running and catching a lamb. (laughing) It was physically demanding. They would actually have to go running after, and catch, lambs, which you can imagine the lambs didn't especially like (laughing). So, they were running from them. The Kirtlington Lamb Ale was famous on its own-- so that was an "Ale." They brewed an ale to have and sell at the Lamb Ale.

PM:

I can just imagine this somewhat raucous event.

TB: (laughing and exclaiming)

Oh, great! I love this thing! It was a matter of a thing to boast about that you actually caught the lamb.

SC:

Was it significant that it was unmarried women? If you caught the lamb, were you going to get married in the next year, or something like that?

TB:

Sort of like that. And a woman who caught the lamb has a social status. (laughing). You didn't have to do it, Pat it's OK! (laughing)

SC:

It makes me think of American traditions of chasing greased pigs.

TB:

Same thing.

PM:

And where does that happen?

TB:

Throughout the South? It's exactly the same thing.

PM:

Because Susan is from Iowa, whether that happened where you grew up?

SC:

My parents were from Iowa, and I never heard about that from them.

TB:

The Iowa Pig Ale!

SC:

Ale to me then also suggests that it's for all ages. A town event to which everyone is welcome.

TB:

That's exactly right. It was there for everybody to drink. Like, you would sell lemonade. (SC: It was not an adults-only event.) It was *not* an adults-only event.

So, I loved that idea of calling something an ale, because it was a local event.

PM:

And the brewing part of the Ale was not part of the North American event, ever?

TB:

No. I was thinking about that recently. It had become not an American thing to have ale as something that was a part of an all-community family event. Basically, that was ruined by Prohibition. It didn't make it into this country.

PM:

And also the sense of having a local brewery -- that didn't happen because it was happening in a much more corporate way. You would get your ale from over there, you didn't have to produce it on your own. Eventually that's what happened. And it is only in the last 30 years that local breweries are a thing again.

TB:

Coming back.

PM:

In the North American tradition you have the word "ale" but it's not associated with that drink.

TB:

And it was different from beer, which is a different product. It's made differently. And the two words, "beer" and "ale" -- an ale was a word and a drink associated with country living. Beer became associated with the city. And that was true in London, you would drink beer. In the Cotswolds, you would drink ale because that was what -- the way that it was produced was on an optimal local basis, and anybody could make ale whereas I think beer, fairly quickly, became something that could be commercialized.

PM:

There are so many questions about, you know, creating a tradition, you know, in a totally different country, adopting certain aspects of a historical activity from a whole other culture and bringing it to this new country. You know, the English --

TB:

Well, the Puritans and the whole way of how this country started, cause it was --

PM:

There was no dancing!

TB:

Well, the dancing and drinking – it was made separate.

PM:

Go ahead, Susan.

SC:

So, I'm really intrigued by your phrase "Power, grace, time and place." (Tony: Mmm.) It's getting me to think about Morris differently. And my question about the history, I think your point is well taken. Whose history? Who's defining it? But that's making me think that there is at least, we talked about an aesthetic of Morris that you were trying to capture, power and grace being part of that. Are there other elements of the esthetic that you would describe that you felt were really important to capturing what Morris was?

TB:

Well, (pause), that was real -- using the power and grace, time and place thing really reinforced for me when we were getting started that not only came from the sort of mixture that happened at our wedding, but then it naturally happened the next year when we first put together an Ale. An aspect of that that's really interesting to me: everybody naturally picked up on calling a Morris gathering an "Ale." There's the Midwest Ale, there is a West coast Ale, you know, so ...

SC:

The Canadian Ales – the London Ale, the Toronto Ale

TB:

Everybody. what it is! A gathering of Morris dancers is now an Ale. And it's fascinating to me, it doesn't get used in England that way.

SC:

Wow!

TB:

Like the Morris Ring events, nobody ever called it an Ale.

PM:

What word do they use?

TB:

A Ring meeting.

PM:

That sounds so much less fun. (chuckles)

TB:

Well, I think in England, part of what is important to recognize, given the antagonistic attitude towards having women, some of that – the wives of the Morris dancers were supportive of that way of thinking about the event because they didn't want their husbands going off to gatherings with single women available. And so I think right from the early days, women being involved in it, it was supported by the other women who were involved in it, including the wives – especially the wives. Didn't want young single women showing up at these things.

PM:

And very attractively dancing.

TB:

Very attractively. Yeah, showing off their bodies, dancing.

PM:

Yeah! And needless to say, that is what happened here. I mean the social aspect of the Ale, the social aspect of young people who were totally committed to this beautiful dancing, being together -- it was incredibly interesting to both the men and the women to get to know one another. How many people met their spouses, right? Those wives were right.

(chuckles)

PM:

In a funny way.

TB:

Well, wives usually are. (All laugh.)

SC:

Words of a wise man! (Laughing) That's your story, and you're sticking to it?

PM:

I'm sticking to it!

TB:

Well, and you learn it right away. (all laugh)

SC:

Well, the wise husbands do.

TB:

If they're smart, they do.

PM:

As women, we just know we're always right. (Laughing)

TB:

Well, completely!

SC:

So Canadian teams have been part of the Ale for a long time.

TB: Yes.

SC:

Do you know when they started becoming part of what was happening?

PM:

In Marlboro. Who were the contacts there?

SC:

Yeah. How did they get connected to the Ale?

TB:

Hmm.

SC:

Would they have been teams that somebody saw dance somewhere and say "Hey, let's invite them?"

TB:

You know, the (pause) there are Canadian folk clubs that were very British-oriented. And so those folk clubs, like – I'm thinking in Toronto of, particularly...

PM:

Fiddler's Green?

TB:

Well, particularly I was thinking of Fiddler's Green. They did everything that went along with being British. And so they had a Fiddler's Green (Folk Club) in Toronto. And they behaved like American women, rather than like British women, with regard to their menfolk.

TB:

Well, because John and I sang.

PM:
(gasp) That's why!

TB:
Early on at Fiddler's Green.

SC:
Oh, OK! That's making me wonder if the Canadian folk revival is sort of happening at the same time the American is. Because I'm thinking that Doug (Creighton) first saw Morris dancing when he was 18 or 19, so (19)78 or '79, and he very shortly joined Green Fiddle Morris, some of which then splintered off and became the Toronto Morris Men so they were born ...

TB:
Which was an aesthetic decision, by the way.

SC:
Yes. Yes, it was!

PM:
So where did he see them?

SC:
Well, I'm trying to remember whether he saw them in Toronto, or whether he saw them at an annual summer music festival up in Owen Sound, which is what I want to say, but I'm not sure if that's right.

PM:
So we're talking about Doug Creighton here, a dancer and musician, and Susan's husband.

SC:
So he would have seen Morris dancing in Canada in the late 1970's.

TB:
Right.

SC:
It sounds like it was also then catching on, and I don't know if Morris had been alive and well in Canada before that. (TB: No!) Or if it was also being revived around the same time.

TB:
I think it happened about the same time. You know, it was like an infection. (Laughter.)

PM:
(Laughing) Like a fungus!

TB:

I hope an image other than fungus would probably be good.

PM:

OK (laughing). Well, we'll work on that, come up with a different word.

TB:

Well, nowadays you could probably use virus because it would act like that.

PM:

Everybody would have a picture in their head, wouldn't they?

TB:

(laughing) Everybody would.

SC:

There was just enough cross-pollination, it sounds like, between Toronto, New York, Boston, ...

TB:

Yeah.

PM:

And the singing -- and you and John singing and traveling and telling stories and bringing -- you know, obviously when you visit another place, you're talking about what is important to you and at this time, your research -- Morris and music -- was important to you.

TB:

It was everything.

PM:

So you're the, you know -- you're the vector -- is that the right word? I don't know. You're the pollinator, there you go.

TB:

Whew!

PM:

Or maybe you're the honeybee, I don't know. (laughing)

PM:

Tony, how are you doing?

SC:

We are just at about an hour here, that we've been chatting.

TB:

Wow, that's amazing! Well, it's interesting.

PM:

Yeah, it's fascinating, isn't it? I mean, as you bring up all of these connections that you felt at that time, how alive it was in your mind academically, which would not have been the perception of everyone else. And yet, you were trying to -- that was your motivating force.

TB:

Yeah!

PM:

And by having that intellectual motivating force, you were spreading an activity which was not necessarily having that same force in anyone else.

SC:

But people were getting the bug.

PM:

They were getting the vibe.

TB:

That's because of the Morris dancing itself. It affected other people like it affected me.

PM:

Exactly.

TB:

I mean, it was something I had to do.

PM:

Yeah. Like the first time I heard English dance music, it was like...

TB:

Oooo!

PM:

To me, it was "how do you move to that music?" because I heard it without ever having seen an English dance. So what is that music? How does that ask you to move? Right?

TB:

That's a good perceptual question!

PM:
That's the question.

TB:
That is!

PM:
And that was my question.

TB:
Yeah. It's exactly the same sort of question that inspired me.

PM:
Mind meld!

TB:
Mind meld.

SC:
So do you have time for just a couple more questions?

TB:
I do! Are we OK on time?

SC:
Yeah, we're fine. As long as you're good to talk.

TB:
I am. Try and stop me.

SC:
So I have two questions – you can start on either one of them. They're completely different. One question I wondered about is -- it's really interesting to me to hear that you were a perceptual psychologist in particular, knowing that you're bringing that filter to seeing this Morris dancing thing happen. And have you ever written and published about a perceptual psychologist's take on this type of dance?

TB:
Well, I think there's quite a lot in my *Six Fools and a Dancer* book.

SC:
It has that filter, that perspective?

TB:

The way -- what I tried to write in the book, was "here we be, masters, six fools and one dancer" is in itself an amazing perceptual statement. You know, the wonderful use of bringing the word "fool" in as an inversion of what most people thought it meant, or continue to think it now means. This country has had a hard time making good fools for the Morris.

SC:

Yes!

TB:

And it's not just been Morris dancers that have had a hard time with fooling, but it's very much part of an English way of being, I think.

(Pause)

PM:

What do you mean by that?

(Long pause)

TB:

Hmm. Well, I think of -- I'm trying to find an easy way of talking about what in England we call Pantomime.

SC:

Oh, yes! Yeah.

TB:

Everybody in England grows up with, at Christmas, one of the things, one of the entertainments that people do at Christmas is go to what they call a "panto," which was a pantomime in which there are some characters -- and this is part of what, for me, explains why fooling is a part of what -- is part of English life that isn't part of American life. There's always, in a pantomime, the active hero is a young woman but not a heroine. She is actually a -- in the plays, playing the character of a young male. But played by an attractive young woman. Like Julie Andrews, for example, was the first sort of ... what's the word we call it when ... I mean, so here's this attractive young woman who's playing the young male lead.

SC:

Are you thinking of *Victor, Victoria*? That movie? With Julie Andrews?

TB:

Well, I think it's connected.

SC:

Yeah. I'm thinking of how young women always have ...

TB:

Ingenue!

SC:

I'm thinking of who played Peter Pan on Broadway ... like Cathy Rigby playing Peter Pan on Broadway.

TB:

Exactly!

PM:

Mary Martin.

SC:

Yes, also played Peter Pan.

TB:

And her -- meaning "his" -- mother is always played by a male character. The hit comedian of the time. Whoever the sort of big comic, the famous funny man of the time in the country would play the mother of this young "man" -- who is a woman.

SC:

Is that what inspired your Mother character?

TB:

Yes.

SC:

Oh! It's a Panto character!

TB:

It's a Panto character.

SC:

Oh! That's great!

TB:

Well... that was obvious to me. (Laughter.)

SC:

Just the connections I'm making! It all makes more sense now!

PM:

Right! And I'm playing one of the characters in an Abbots [Bromley dance], you know, the little boy with the triangle, because I fit into the costume, or something. I have no idea why I'm doing what I'm doing, someone just tells me. And there's someone in--the man in the woman's clothing, and there's the ... and there are all those characters.

TB:

Yeah. It's a panto. And EVERYbody in England would recognize it as a panto.

SC:

And are pantos kind of an audience-participation thing?

TB:

Oh, YES!

PM:

A lot of back and forth, and heckling, right?

SC:

Or cheering or booing.

PM:

So a lot of these cultural things, you know, are here in the kind of audience member you are for a Morris team, sometimes, or the way you react to what a fool is doing. And you learn that by watching other audience members, or the members of the other Morris teams, you learn how to react and you learn how to take part.

TB:

Because you have a role.

PM:

You have a role as an audience member.

SC:

And a really good fool tells you what you're supposed to do as an audience member.

TB:

Yeah. But how do you make that up, if it's not something that you acquire from seeing that kind of theater?

SC:

You have no context for it.

TB:

You have no context.

SC:

Are Mummings plays trying to mimic pantos? Or are they a different thing?

TB:

Different thing, I think.

SC:

Because I see lots of parallels.

TB:

Well, there ARE parallels, I think.

SC:

So that gives more of an English cultural context for fooling (TB: Yes!) which Americans just don't have, and so kind of scratch their heads.

PM:

"Okay, while everyone else is doing this, I'll take part -- it looks like more fun if I take part."

SC:

And a really good fool needs to be one of the better dancers ...

TB:

WeeeIIII, there we go, you see. That's, for me (SC: Is that true?) Yes! Yes. Because the Six Fools and One Dancer, is to me, to explain why that phrase is important and is almost for the whole of Morris dancing for me, you have to understand why he would talk about the dancers as fools and himself the Fool as the one dancer. And that's what I – that to me is what my book was trying to be about.

SC:

I was thinking more in terms of a fool needing to be able to move well in and out of the set without disrupting and hurting anybody ...

TB:

So needs to be the best dancer.

SC:

Needs to really understand the dancing well. I think yours is going much deeper than that.

TB:

Gosh, this is interesting.

SC:

Alright, I have one more question.

TB:

OK!

SC:

Going in a totally different direction here. You've been coming to the Ale for many years and videoing and capturing / archiving / logging what's happening. In all the years you've been part of this, how have you seen it evolve?

TB:

Whoa. (Pause)

SC:

What are some big things that stand out for you for how it's different now than when it began?

(Long pause)

TB:

Well, one thing that is, I think, a very modern American thing -- talking about time and place -- is how important children have been in the dancing, and to some extent, it has to do with Tom Kruskal.

S/PM:

Yes!!

TB:

But Tom -- that it was an aesthetic thing that for Tom, if children were going to do it, they had to do it well. They had to dance well. So it was not just going to be "a children's Morris," they had to do Morris. They had to -- the physical part had to -- and his children's teams have always been fools. So they've always been able to be fools as well as dancers. But anybody going to fool in Morris had also to be a dancer, had really to be a good dancer. And I love that conjunction of the fool and the dancer.

SC:

You're also making me think of 1996, Longwood Rapper goes to England (TB: Wow) thanks to Rhett (TB: yeah), dances in big sword festival that's hosted largely by the Goathland Plough Stots, (TB: yup) and we hung out with them for bit and got to know them as a team. And there was the Men's side and there was the Boy's side, and they were just learning the dance, and when Goathland came to the Ale some years later, lo and behold, this little guy I remember as a 7 year old is now a strapping 20-something who's a major member of the Men's team. And I

thought, "If it's your village and your people doing it, then there was that natural way to learn it." In the US, we didn't have that. And Tom created a way for kids to have that pipeline to Morris.

PM:
Yeah.

SC:
Super important.

PM:
Oh my god, yeah. We don't have....

SC:
Any other things that come to mind for you about ways in which the Ale, you've seen the Ale evolve?

TB:
Oh, I know one thing I did want to talk about, that was involved when the Ale first started. There were two time-and-place things that didn't fit with it being an American time-and-place, which was (long pause). Hmm. I'm needing Pat to remind me what I was saying here, but she didn't know what I was going to say. (PM: Yeah!)

SC:
Early on at the start of the Ale, two American time-and-place ...

TB:
Oh, I know! One was that I tried to pick up on what I, as an Englishman, didn't actually understand was that having a pig roast was not something that was going to be welcome. At the Ale the very first year, we tried to – we did roast a pig, actually. But that was at the time that there was an emerging, completely different, I suppose, aesthetic about food. It was offensive to a lot of – there were Morris dancers clearly who associated Morris dancing with a whole way of being that didn't include pig meat.

PM:
Yes! Yeah.

TB:
So, there was a joke around the Marlboro team that what we needed to do was, that what we could do next year was roast a turnip or something. (SC laughing: Roast some kale!) (Laughing) Kale wasn't yet part of the whole thing! But that definitely is; that would be part of the joke now. It's gone to something – kale now becomes the thing, it would be a joke to roast.

PM:
So you said there were two things.

TB:

Yeah.

PM:

The pig roast.

SC:

Which I think of a southern U.S. thing. The southern U.S. might not have blinked twice at that.

PM:

Oh, it depends on where you are, and who your friends are. Because Phil Watson, one of our good friends, definitely roasts pigs. (Laughs.) He's unusual.

TB:

Yeah, but for a lot of people, the pig roast was offensive.

PM:

It was all part of coming from the 1960s – are we vegetarians? Do we honor animals? All of that, which you wouldn't necessarily take into account when you were bringing an English tradition or an English cultural habit over.

TB:

Well, I think the second thing probably has to do with the video, which was ... (phone ringing) I had ... (phone ringing) I had been given, I had asked for and then been given (phone message loudly in the background). I had anticipated that as part of my way of doing experiments, as it were, would be to create visual images out of the video to see how, in order to sort of build or develop a way of doing an analysis of what you could see in terms of how it contributed to what was going on. And when we (*NB: Tony and John Roberts shared a job at Marlboro College*) got the job here, at Marlboro College, my – one of my requests was to get given a video tape recorder. So I actually had as part of the equipment of being at Marlboro College, and so it was natural for me to want to make an archive of what was going on in Morris dancing at the Ale. Because what could then actually be available; there was basically ... There was very little film of Morris dancing that you could see so it was hard to create a visual impression of what Morris dancing was. And so assuming that part of what was going on at the Ale was creating opportunities for people to shape their dancing to be better than it was to have video of what it was like and then those videos could be used as teaching devices. And how does that relate to the second thing?

SC:

Well I was wondering how you've seen the Ale evolve over time, and I guess just with increasing numbers of visual images of Morris available to people, it's been more accessible to a wider range of people.

PM:

Were you thinking that ... hmm. Was that actually fulfilled? That intention?
That people would use...

TB:

Oh, I know what the other thing was! That helped, thank you. (PM: OK - laughing.) The Brits are competitive about everything. (PM: There you go!) So part of what I intended with creating the Morris Ale was I was hoping to have a competition being part of what was at the Morris Ale. And I was shot down heartily at the very first gathering of squires or whoever – leaders of Morris teams – when we had a meeting at the very first Morris Ale and I raised that idea. People were horrified at the idea of having a competition. People thought that -- in England, people can be over-growing turnips and leeks, literally – you have people at a local event, people would show up with their prize rabbit. You could, you know ... my rabbit could beat out your rabbit at the competition. And just the way I think it would be OK here to compete over, for example, a flower arrangement. EVERYthing is open for competition like that in England, and I think you could do that here over a flower arrangement even women don't mind being the best, having the best flower arrangement.

PM:

Or turnip.

TB:

Or turnip.

PM:

So this was something that --

TB:

I was expecting that, and it was shocking to me that Americans -- competing was about winning and losing, particularly about losing, I think. People didn't want to have a structure in which, in the structure, somebody would get to be said that they were better than you. Which meant you were worse than them. That would be a loss.

PM:

So did you manage to let go of that?

TB:

I had to.

PM:

Yeah.

TB:

And I tried to bring it up again and Andy and Julie may have mentioned this at some point, you know, my – it's funny, you talk about being two books later, cause I'm now on another book of trying to write up my work with Anna Marley teaching me clog dancing. That needs to happen too. So I've basically got a draft of the book done but because I ran a video tape at all of my meetings with Anna, it clearly has to have -- it needs to be somewhere where you can incorporate video. So it's going to have to be an online book. (PM: Yes!) Which you can now do. (PM: Yes!)

PM:

So you gave up on the competition?

TB:

Yes. Once I started with clog dancing, I tried to have a clog competition, which in England (PM: happens all the time) all the time! With clog dancers, it has a kind of formal structure within it in terms of the number of steps you have to dance, and you have to dance on your toe, or you have to incorporate heel beats, so you have these things that you can use as competitive items that can be done quantitatively and not just qualitatively. You know, people for example used to, judges used to compete from under the stage so they could hear the beats more clearly. So you could be, and in clog competition for example, a heel beat has to sound the same as toes clicking together on clogs, so you could hear that and separate those better if you didn't have to watch the person dancing. So the judges at clog dancing competitions were under the stage. But clearly that wasn't going to work here. People really didn't -- it's interesting because in Southern clogging, they do compete.

PM:

I was just going to say that! Or fiddle contests.

TB:

Well, certain things you can specify that have to be done. You have to have a certain kind of tune, you have to change from this kind of tune to another kind of tune so you've got items you can do.

PM:

Well, this also happens in the Scottish dance and music scene here which is very very strongly tied to what is going on in Scotland. That kind of competition -- fiddle champion, the dancing -- and I did it myself with Highland dancing -- you know, well, of COURSE you're working towards a competition. Of course!

TB:

Yeah.

PM:

So culturally it may have been that you are just in this place, this particular place in Vermont that it was shut down -- that competitive thing. Or maybe it was more widely American.

TB:

I think it was, like with the stuff with the food, that competition was something that wasn't consistent with what was culturally evolving.

PM:

Right. So true.

SC:

The people that were drawn to doing this...

TB:

It's not part of that.

PM:

Exactly. I think ...

TB:

Can we meet again at some point?

S / PM:

Yes! I was going to say that because of what else I have to do, I'm going farther north today that we need to stop now.

TB:

OK, this is Tony Barrand signing off.

PM:

This is "Roger and out" signing off.