

“It’s street theatre really!”

A history of Cotswold Morris Dancing

in the twentieth century.



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ABSTRACT.

This study investigates the history of Morris Dancing in the twentieth century through written sources detailing the development of the dance, but more importantly, through the oral testimony of some of those dancers who began their dancing careers after the second world war. Three particular questions were identified, firstly concerning the way in which ancient dance forms are generally linked, perhaps incorrectly, with place; secondly, the way in which the part that women played in the development of the dance has been written out of the popular modern view of the Morris; and finally, the part that Morris Dancing has played in the production of an invented myth of English history and English tradition.

These, and further questions raised during the interviews, forced the study to take a wider view of the history of the dance. Looking back towards the earliest records became important because of the apparent changes that have affected Morris Dancing throughout the centuries, a dance form that is assumed to have been firmly established as an unchanging ritual, but in fact, it would seem, has always been prepared to follow whatever alterations have been demanded by society. Looking forward also became important, because as the dance has clearly changed dramatically during its history, interviewees were keen to explore the ways in which the dance could continue to develop. To follow this final area interviews were conducted with a few of those young dancers who are taking the dance forward.

Sections have also been included which will try to explain some of the mysteries of the Morris for those readers who come to the dance as observers rather than performers. Through these sections further areas of study have been identified that cannot be followed in this present work but should be noted for further investigation.

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not to forget the other female members of the family who have shown great interest and provide enormous support for the rest who indulge in this ancient art of the Morris.

I could not finish these acknowledgements without paying my respects to those dancers who either died before I could interview them or have died since their interview. Roy Dommett said to me at the beginning of the project that someone needed to talk to the oldest dancers and, on being approached, a number have asked if it was “their turn”, likening me to The Grim Reaper. It has not been pleasant to find that in a few cases this prophecy has come to pass. I would particularly mention Irvine Reid, for many years the ‘father’ of East Suffolk MM and a great friend of my family. My sincere thanks to his family.

[Photograph on front cover – East Suffolk Morris Men dancing at Pin Mill,
Boxing Day, 2008. Photograph taken by the author.]

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ABBREVIATIONS

EFDS	English Folk Dance Society
EFDSS	English Folk Dance and Song Society
MR	The Morris Ring

PREFACE.

In 1967 I was living in Worcester at a time when there were Folk Clubs being held in the area every night of the week. As the same enthusiasts regularly supported all of the clubs a few of the men suggested that we should form a Morris Side. We knew that a dancer from the Green Man's Morris Club lived in Worcester and was prepared to help teach the dance, so having gathered together a number of interested men in the spring of 1968 the Faithful City Morris Men was formally instituted, the club being named after the city that had been "faithful" to King Charles. We were also joined by David Chaundy, the son of Theo Chaundy of Oxford University, who had been involved with the first Morris revival in the early years of the twentieth-century. David was an excellent pipe and tabor player, and a great teacher.

After two years with Faithful City I moved to Ipswich and joined the East Suffolk Morris Men. Over the next six years I served the club both as Squire and Bagman, and so got to know other clubs and men on the national scene, in particular Ewart Russell of Colchester Morris men, who had been Bagman of the Morris Ring, the national organisation of men's Morris Clubs.

In 1977 the Morris Ring was in some difficulty as John Wells, the Bagman, was unable to continue and there were no candidates for the post. At a meeting in Newcastle I suggested that I might consider standing as Bagman, and after hasty discussions it was agreed that I should take over as Bagman of the Morris Ring at the final meeting in 1977. I continued in that post for seven years, and after a gap of four years was elected as Squire of the Morris Ring. It is a two-year term of office, as it is sensibly assumed that any more would put too great a strain on the incumbent, but being Squire of the Ring

can confer a status that lasts a lifetime and I greatly value the friendships that I made during my years in office and I have continued many of the connections with clubs and individuals from that time.

My time as Bagman and Squire marked a period of great change within the Morris world. The Morris Ring was a men's club, the Women's Morris Federation had been formed in 1975 and there was an Open Morris organisation for clubs that wanted to have men and women dancing together. Some young Morris Sides considered the Ring to be a dinosaur within the dance world, while others still regarded it as the senior service. The body that had been regarded as the over-arching national organisation, The English Folk Dance and Song Society, was in financial trouble, and involved in much discussion about the future of their Headquarters building, Cecil Sharp House in London. My task as Bagman and then Squire I felt was to ensure that the Ring clubs were seen on the streets, seen to be dancing well, and were enjoying the fellowship within the Ring. Since standing down I have had chance to consider the changes that I experienced, and the place that Morris Dancing occupies within society. I was particularly interested in the fact that the modern forms of the dance are still called 'traditional' although they have no connection with the old dances, and in many cases no connection with one community. In the early years of the twentieth century dances were found in villages in the Cotswold Hills and this led people to believe that Morris Dancing should be regarded as the property of small, rural communities, yet records from the fifteenth century show the dance as a court entertainment in major cities. These were the issues that led to this study, a study that at its heart asks the simple question 'what was happening to Morris Dancing during the twentieth century?'

INTRODUCTION

Before we sit down I am going to ask you to drink to the memory of the one man above all others to whom we owe our knowledge of the English Morris. Cecil Sharp, through a chance meeting with the Headington dancers, perceived the full beauty of the English Folk Tradition, at a time when it was either unknown or despised in the wider world. By his delight in all that is strong and vigorous in art; his love and respect for humanity, and his boundless enthusiasm, he was able, in spite of physical illness, to collect and preserve the great tradition of the English Morris and to hand it on to us who are here today. Many of you knew and loved him, all of us have delighted in his work. Let us drink to his immortal memory.

This toast was proposed by Alec Hunter at the inaugural meeting of the Morris Ring in Cecil Sharp House on 20 October 1934.¹ The organisation had been set up by members of the Cambridge Morris Men during 1933 and had been formally instituted in May 1934 during a meeting of representatives from six Morris Sides in Thaxted. By October of that year thirteen clubs met in London and their guest of honour was William Kimber of the Headington Quarry Morris Men, the man who had been instrumental in passing on the Headington dances to the early collectors at the beginning of the century. The Morris Ring grew quickly, and at the Annual Meeting in 1936 the guests of honour were William “Jingy” Wells of the Bampton Morris Men, and the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.² In their various ways all of these men were involved in inventing a tradition.

I would argue that Sharp did not ‘perceive the full beauty’ of the Folk Tradition on that Boxing Day in Headington, as he was only interested in the tunes that Kimber played. There are those who would also question his “love and respect for humanity” as the evidence suggests that his undoubted “boundless enthusiasm” was concerned as much with personal aggrandizement as with preserving folk traditions. “Criticism of Sharp was levelled at his self-promotion and personal lionisation, and Sharp’s principal biographer,

¹ Walter Abson, *The First Log Book* (1991), p.7.

² Keith Chandler notes that William Nathan Wells was referred to as ‘Jingy’, ‘Jinky’, ‘Jink’ or ‘Dinky’. *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (1993), p.238.

A H Fox Strangways, was critical of his autocratic relationships with his peers and associates.”³ And many would ask about the woman left out of this brief profile, Mary Neal, the person who brought Kimber and the dance into London society. But what cannot be denied is that, for whatever reasons, those men joined an elite group of anthropologists and folklorists in creating a national mythology that has continued to this day, and is firmly fixed in the national psyche.

The Morris world in the late 1960s was youthful, energetic, and full of great optimism. New Sides were appearing across the country and the membership of The Morris Ring, at that time the only organisation dedicated solely to Morris Dancing, was growing rapidly. Few of the new Morris men stopped to consider the history of the dance or the reasons for dancing; we were having fun, and our audiences loved it. When young dancers did consider the past, they were happy to accept the established mythology as set down by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, a mythology that was to be found in any published work describing the ‘folk history’ of England, and was regularly repeated at Morris Ring feasts. The meetings of Morris clubs organised under the auspices of The Morris Ring grew enormously, and to see three hundred dancers was not unusual.

This surge of men’s Morris that swept across the dance did not last. As women’s and mixed Sides grew, the number of men’s Sides began to fall, and so the character of the Morris gatherings changed. The men’s teams suffered for various reasons, partly because young people could now go with their parents to dance in the mixed sides, partly because the dancers who had started to dance in the 1960s were now coming to the end of their dancing careers, and partly because there appeared to be a decline in the national will to go out to join a club. Circumstantial evidence from many areas suggested

³ Robert G H Burns, *Transforming Folk: Innovation and tradition in English folk-rock music* (Manchester, 2012), p.19.

that this change was affecting all clubs, not only those concerned with Morris Dancing.⁴ There was also a change in society that was very clear to East Suffolk Morris Men. In the 1970s we would dance to over one hundred people in the small Suffolk village of Kersey; by the beginning of the twenty-first century we would dance to ourselves, a pattern repeated across Suffolk. This great change led me to consider the place of Morris Dancing in English Society and to question what had happened to the dance during the twentieth century. I thought it might be interesting to ask if the nature of the dance was changing, or if changes in society were allowing a national traditional dance to be ignored. While these were possibilities, two conversations served to change the direction of this study.

The first was a conversation with Roy Dommett, an acknowledged expert on the Morris and its history. He pointed to the fact that the opportunity to question the old dancers was being lost as those dancers who began their careers either before or immediately after the second world war were coming to the end of their dancing lives. At the beginning of his dancing career Dommett had tracked down as many of the people who had been in contact with Sharp and the early collectors as he could find; now he was concerned that the people who had experienced the inter-war revival in the dance were dying before anyone had recorded their memories. Sadly, his words were all too prophetic, and indeed, personal, as Roy died in 2015. Dommett's words were echoed during a second conversation with Malcolm Taylor who, at that time was the Librarian at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in Cecil Sharp House. Following their suggestions, through already established connections within the Morris Dance world, it was possible to track down and interview some of the longest serving dancers, and some of the people who

⁴ During the interviews, and during conversations with friends and associates, reference would be made to other clubs that were experiencing problems with recruitment, particularly in the model railway world. Further investigation would be needed to verify the truth of these assumptions, but the assertions were strongly made.

had been instrumental in guiding the development of the dance in the years that have become associated with a second folk revival.⁵ Through the initial interviews, and a close reading of modern texts relating to the dance, three areas appeared to assume importance, and they were followed and investigated in all subsequent interviews.

Being Inside the Morris.

There is a fine line between the ethnographer as insider and as outsider. As an outsider, it would suggest that the ethnographer would not be privy to the same level of understanding as the true insider. However, in line with classic ethnography, the suggestion persists from some authors that the ethnographer maintains a different position to the sample of the population under examination. I argue that, in reflexive ethnography, the insider position of the ethnographer is paramount in finding out as much as possible about the sample in question.⁶

I was an insider, involved with Morris Dancing at the national level for many years, which has been a great help with this study. The request for contact with long-serving dancers was circulated to clubs through the Morris Ring web site, and when individuals were approached it meant they knew and, hopefully, respected the person asking for help, and were therefore keen to provide support to the project. The fact that the majority of the respondents were approached as friends saw the interviews develop into conversations for formulating and discussing ideas, and having a detailed knowledge of the Morris world also helped when talking to other dancers, as there was a common platform from which to start any discussion. In all of these ways being an insider, a Morris dancer of many years' experience, was a great help with the work; as Crowley-Henry explained, being an insider has been vital.

⁵ The early years of the twentieth century have been known as a period of Folk Revival because of the way that people began to rescue dances and songs that were in danger of being lost, but during the 1960s, when folk music entered the modern age, and many new Morris Sides were formed, people also spoke of a Folk Revival. Recently, therefore, this later period has sometimes been referred to as the Second Folk Revival.

⁶ Marian Crowley-Henry, 'Ethnography: Visions and Versions', in John Hogan, Paddy Dolan and Paul Donnelly (ed.) *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, (Cork, 2009), p.53.

However, being a past officer of the Morris Ring also brought certain disadvantages. Of the three Morris organisations, the Morris Ring, the Federation and the Open Morris, the Ring is the one group that has insisted on excluding women dancers, and until very recently, musicians, and therefore the organisation has a strong identity within the Morris community. It is assumed that officers of the Ring will follow this strong male-only stance, and because of this some women dancers are reluctant to talk to members of the Ring.⁷ It is unfortunately true that insulting behaviour towards other teams is still occasionally exhibited by both men and women dancers, although most teams have now settled into amicable acceptance.⁸ As this study will show, women have given much to the dance, and their voice deserves to be heard.

The question could be asked – would more have been learned about the dance if I had known nothing about Morris Dancing? To approach the study in that way might, perhaps, have been more in keeping with the approach that Crowley-Henry calls classical ethnography, where anthropologists have been into a community with no previous knowledge, but simply to find answers to an historical question. If the study had concentrated on one team, it could be argued that the investigator would need no previous knowledge of the dance. However, there would then be a risk that the resulting study could be totally subjective, unless the kind of checks envisaged by Thompson in his work on oral history were put in place, and also a risk that the details and facts provided by the dancers could be false, given that the interviewer would have no way of

⁷ One dancer questioned for this study had strongly-held anti-Ring views, which were based on this view of the organisation.

⁸ A story was related by a member of a Morris Ring Side who had been asked to run an instructional meeting for a number of clubs. One was a team of young women and during the morning session they changed one of the dances so that it exhibited a sexual movement. As the day progressed they continued to dance in the same way, and it became obvious that they were not joking but making an anti-Ring statement. The instructor and all other clubs present, male and female, were embarrassed by the exhibition, and surprised that in the twenty-first century a group of young women should still consider it appropriate to act in that way. This story was repeated at a private event in Nuneaton during 2013 and the reporter was concerned to point out that he, and others at the event, considered it unusual, given the way in which the Morris world has changed in recent years.

knowing if they were true.⁹ However, in the case of this study, having a background knowledge of the dance was an advantage. It meant that there was a shared understanding on which to build a discussion, and the interviewees knew that complex issues could be addressed. There were two occasions where the knowledge of the interviewer was not recognised during the interview, the first being completely understandable as the person being interviewed was a new dancer who had no knowledge of anyone's background.¹⁰ The second occasion was interesting for the way in which the man being interviewed was totally immersed in a form of 'collective memory' from his years with the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Tony Foxworthy, who otherwise provided a clear story of his time within the dance world, suggested that all Morris dancers at one time in the past would black their faces.¹¹ This is not true, and can be shown to be false by looking at the few illustrations of the dance from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it is completely in keeping with the mythology of the dance that is still sometimes suggested by older dancers who came to the dance at a time when it was guided by the ways of the early English Folk Dance Society. Anyone conducting the interview without that background knowledge of the history of the dance would have assumed that they had heard a true statement, although the fact that it was made is valuable in itself for it shows that the ideas developed by the early twentieth century collectors of the dance can still be heard today.

What is Morris? The Terminology.

Certain terms and conventions will be used in this study that may be clear to dancers but confusing to a lay audience. Russell Wortley used the phrase "What is Morris?" as a heading at the beginning of his 1978 paper in which he set down some of his thoughts

⁹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000).

¹⁰ The first dancer interviewed from the Wicket Brood team, 10/05/2014.

¹¹ Tony Foxworthy, interviewed 19/09/2012.

on the dance.¹² Although most audiences seem to regard dancers dressed in white trousers and white shirts, waving handkerchiefs, as being Morris Dancers, Wortley used Cecil Sharp's definition which included other forms of dance seen on the streets of Britain. In his two works *The Morris Book* and *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, Sharp brought together all of the English dance forms under the umbrella of Morris, including Sword Dancing and Mumming, and in the introductions to these books Sharp proposed a very clear theory for the origins of the dance:

Shortly, however, we may explain that it was one of the seasonal pagan observances prevalent amongst primitive communities, and associated in some occult way with the fertilization of all living things, animal and vegetable.¹³

In this, Sharp was following the ideas laid down by Tylor and Frazer.¹⁴ He was insistent that the dances are linked to ancient, religious practices and his views became the accepted history of the dance, actively promulgated by the national folk-dance societies. "Originally expressions of religious belief, in which the idea was as essential as the form, they have passed by various stages and along devious paths into the inspiring dances and quaint dramas with which we are so familiar."¹⁵ These ideas are still found in recent literature relating to the dance, but Roy Dommett, one of the greatest modern scholars of the dance, was insistent that the word ritual should never be used for the Morris.¹⁶ His view was that it was an entertainment, unconnected with any religious context, a view echoed by two interviewees for this study. When asked for their views on what they thought the dance was they replied immediately that they thought it was street theatre. Norris Winstone was in his nineties at the time of the interview and had been dancing for

¹² Russell Wortley, *The XYZ of Morris* (1978).

¹³ Cecil J Sharp and Herbert C Macilwaine, *The Morris Book, Volume 1* (London, 1911), p.11.

¹⁴ Edward B Tylor, *Primitive Culture, Volume 1* (London, 1873). Sir J G Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, 1925).

¹⁵ Sharp, *The Morris Book*, p.13,

¹⁶ For example, in Hugh Rippon, "The whiteness of the handkerchiefs and shirts in the morris could symbolise purity; the stick dances which sometimes characterise a fight could symbolise a struggle between the forces of good and evil or sometimes when banging the ground they could be stirring mother earth into action." *Discovering English Folk Dance* (1981), p.19. Roy Dommett interviewed 21/06/2011: "All the harm that Sharp did. They invented an origin."

over seventy years, so his view of the dance had been considered at length. “People were always interested to see it because it’s street theatre really.”¹⁷ Desmond Herring was in his eighties and he had the same view: “I’m saying the same thing, it’s street theatre.”¹⁸ Here were two elder statesmen of the Morris world quite clear about why people dance. They had no hesitation in linking Morris Dancing to entertainment while at the same time placing it in the context of the streets. These men began their dancing at a time when Morris was re-appearing on the streets after a period when it had been briefly confined to the stage or the hall, but they felt that its natural habitat today is the street, and while it is clear that this has been the case for some hundreds of years, the records would suggest that at various points in history Morris has been appropriated by all levels of society.¹⁹ The dancers may have been paid entertainers, or they may have been members of a household, helping a family to celebrate, but it can be safely assumed that when looking for an element of continuity within Morris Dancing, it has always been a dance that will help to entertain a community, or help that community to celebrate an event.²⁰

At the Morris Ring Annual Meeting in March 1979 a wide-ranging discussion considered the question of entertainment.²¹ Although there was some variance in the views expressed, the majority considered the Morris a form of entertainment. Early in the discussion Paul Davenport from Green Oak Morris Men said “dances are not primarily for entertainment”, but as he came from a theatrical background he later suggested a style of performance for the dance that was highly stylised, and based firmly on an entertainment principle. Father Kenneth Loveless, later to become Squire of the Morris

¹⁷ Norris Winstone, interviewed 02/09/2009.

¹⁸ Des Herring, interviewed 09/09/2009.

¹⁹ Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *Annals of Early Morris* (1991).

²⁰ For example, at Harleston, Suffolk, 16 July 1814, to celebrate the end of the war with France. *Ipswich Journal*, 16 July 1814, p.2, column 4.

²¹ A discussion session on The Dignity of the Morris, held on 18 March 1979 during the Morris Ring Annual Meeting. Papers from the Morris Ring archive.

Ring, said simply “we are an entertainment organisation”, an idea that Bob Ross, the second Bagman of the Morris Ring, expanded in his contribution. He said:

We are dancing in public for entertainment. We must remember when dancing in public that we are giving an entertainment and ought to learn from the professionals. ‘The Show must go on.’ Once we start we have a responsibility to put on a show that the audience will be glad they came to see.

Roy Dommett also referred to the audience: “Morris men are on the streets on sufferance and have to establish the right to dance by establishing good will with the audience. Too many Morris men nowadays drift around as though being traditional, they own the countryside. It is essential to have interaction with an audience.”²²

In his interview for this study, John Jenner of Cambridge Morris Men related the story of their revival of the Balsham Plough Monday dancing.²³ One of their team, Cyril Papworth, had been instrumental in recovering the Molly dances from the village, and Cambridge MM had taken them back to the village on Plough Monday.²⁴ After two years of performing the original dances with the Plough, the villagers asked why the Morris men did not perform their usual (Cotswold) dances. They said that they would rather have the Cotswold dances “because it was more of a show and livened up the village and their plough.” In the face of this cry for entertainment Cambridge reverted to their more normal style.

If it is accepted that the dance is an entertainment, the work of van Gennep and Turner serves to add a new level to the discussion, and in certain ways brings the dance back to the area of rites and rituals.²⁵ Clearly, Morris Dancing is not related to the entirety of

²² The Dignity of the Morris, 18 March 1979 during the Morris Ring Annual Meeting.

²³ John Jenner interviewed 01/11/2012.

²⁴ Russell Wortley, “Molly Dancing in South-West Cambridgeshire” in *Russell Wortley* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.35,36.

²⁵ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London 1960), trans. M Vizedom and G Caffee. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York, 1982), and *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York, 1992).

the rites of passage rituals that these anthropologists examine; Morris Dancers are not separated from society before undergoing a 'rite of passage', and there is no 'life-crisis' to accompany the performance of the dance.²⁶ However, there are elements of transition, of liminality, evident in the performance, and some of the interviewees have referred to that state in their discussions. Putting Morris costume on can change the dancer's outlook on life, and give them a different status to the one they would assume in daily life. During the meeting of the Morris Ring noted earlier, Paul Davenport said,

What you wear identifies you as a Morris Dancer, but the whole thing is a ritual and costume is representative of something, therefore the man who puts it on is choosing to represent something which may be connected with fertility or museum pieces, but when he does so he ceases to be himself and becomes part of the ritual."²⁷

As Turner notes: "...some seasonal rites tend to 'set people up'..." "...elevate those of low status transiently before returning them to their permanent humbleness."²⁸ Roy Dommett said that the dancers first seen in the Cotswold villages were highly regarded for the period of time that they were performing. "The sides belonged to the places where they lived; the dignity was not just a pompous middle-class attitude – they got this respect by belonging." As will be noted by John Jenner later, dancers from all walks of life were regarded as equal once they were in the Cambridge Morris Men, a situation that Jenner suggests is true for all dance teams.²⁹ The idea of setting up is not only related to status in society, but it can also refer to personal image. One recent interviewee, Simon Tarrant, explained that he was a quiet, reserved individual in everyday life, but once he had his Morris costume on he became a different person, capable of dancing and singing in public, of become much more assertive.³⁰ This trait has been noted as both a positive, and once as a negative, by other interviewees (see page 76).

²⁶ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p.24.

²⁷ Paul Davenport of Green Oak Morris Men, 18 March 1979. Papers from the Ring archive.

²⁸ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p.25.

²⁹ Roy Dommett, speaking at a meeting in Moulton, 18 March 1979. John Jenner, interviewed 01/11/ 2012.

³⁰ Simon Tarrant, in discussion during a Morris trip to Sicily, March 2016.

Turner writes that: "Liminality itself is a complex phase or condition."³¹ Much of his writing links the idea of liminality to ritual, and Morris dancing may not be included in this if Dommett's insistence is accepted that it was not ritual. However, from the evidence quoted above, it is clear that some dancers do see that the act of putting on a costume enables them to step outside for a while. Outside of what exactly is explored by Tinsley and Matheson in relation to the Beltane Fire Festival, and while some of their respondents note that the costume adds to their whole life experience, others suggest that it provides a portal through which they can leave their everyday existence, giving them a chance to re-evaluate their own life processes.³² Turner's stage of liminality is the central phase in van Gennep's rites of passage, noted by Turner as separation, transition and incorporation.³³ Although van Gennep was again writing about rites and rituals, it would be possible to associate these phases with Morris dancing, even if the dance is considered to be an entertainment, or as Norris Winstone insisted, street theatre.³⁴ The costume may be one way in which dancers can experience a change, with the dressing being the initial separation, dancing the transition and returning to everyday clothes the incorporation, much as is suggested by Tinsley and Matheson for the Beltane Festival. But I might argue that even in a micro-situation the dance itself provides echoes of van Gennep's three stages. The dancers leave the main group and walk out on to the dancing ground – the separation; the dance is performed – the transition; the dancers walk round and return to the main group – the incorporation. If this is considered a ritual, this pattern is understandable, but as entertainment it bears a close relation to any group of actors taking to the stage, and therefore fits within Turner's theories.

³¹ Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, p.102.

³² Catherine M Tinsley and Ross Matheson, 'Layers of Passage' in *Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World* ed. Jennifer Laing and Warwick Frost (London, 2015), pp.141-158, particularly pp.149-151.

³³ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p.24.

³⁴ Interview with Norris Winstone, 12/05/2011.

The term Morris Dancing is often reduced to 'the Morris' suggesting a wider and more inclusive concept than simply the action of a number of dancers.³⁵ When those dancers come together in a group they are often referred to as a Morris Side, sometimes just a team, but 'Side' when used in the Morris context, suggests a different, perhaps deeper, meaning than the word team, which implies no more than any other sports grouping. 'Side' carries with it suggestions of tradition and longevity, appropriate to an ancient dance form. These basic words will be used in turn to avoid repetition. The officers of the teams are The Squire - the leader of the Side, or in the case of a national organisation, the Chairman; The Bagman - the Secretary; and The Foreman - the dance teacher. The public at large will often be heard to refer to 'Morris Men' even when the team is quite clearly a women's Side, and while some women's teams have changed the terminology many have simply stuck to the old ways. However, it is important to note that these labels are not universal. Teams from the north of England, in particular the sword teams, may use Captain, for Squire, and the more obvious Secretary, instead of Bagman.

As noted earlier, Sharp insisted on grouping what he regarded as the national, ritual dance forms under the one umbrella of Morris Dancing. This section will introduce those main styles. It should also be noted that Sharp's two organisations, the English Folk Dance Society, and the English Folk Dance and Song Society, will be abbreviated to the EFDS and the EFDSS respectively.

³⁵ Note, for example, the article by Sally Wearing in the EFDS Magazine, Winter 2006, "Morris Women – not women's morris."

The Cotswold Morris Dance:



Fig. 1: The Cotswold Morris.

*The Headington Quarry Morris Men dancing at the Thaxted Meeting in 2007.
Photograph by the author.*

The Headington Quarry Morris Men (Fig.1) were seen by Sharp and Neal in the early years of the twentieth century. Their style of dress, white shirts and trousers and crossed baldricks, became the standard accepted costume for revival Morris Dancers, although as the number of teams grew, many of them chose to wear black knee breeches rather than white trousers for simple convenience.³⁶ The dance quickly became known as Cotswold Morris Dancing because all of the old dancers at that time were found in the area of the Cotswold Hills between Oxford and Gloucester. In recent years the phrase 'south midlands' Morris' has been used, because it was realised that the dance was found across a much wider area than the confines of the Cotswold hills, and both descriptions will be used in the study, largely to avoid repetition.

The Sword Dances of North-Eastern England:

The early collectors saw and were keen to note down sword dances that they found in the north east of England. They found two distinct styles of dance, the Longsword (Fig.2),

³⁶ There is a precedent for wearing breeches, as the painting known as "The Dixton Harvesters" (Fig.63) shows dancers wearing dark breeches.

danced either with rigid metal 'swords', having a wooden handle on one end, or with wooden equivalent 'swords', and the Rapper Sword (Fig.3), being flexible, and having



Fig. 2: The Longsword Dance.

The North British Sword Team dancing in the square at Dobcross during the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival, August 2013. Photograph by the author.

handles on both ends, enabling five dancers to weave intricate, close patterns.



Fig. 3: The Rapper Sword Dance.

The Monkseaton Rapper Sword Team dancing in Trafalgar Square as part of the Westminster Morris Men's Day of Dance, May 2009. Photograph by the author.

Both dances terminate in a 'sword lock' that is held aloft by the leader of the dance. The Longsword dances from Yorkshire were often performed as part of a play, and Ivor Allsop lists many of these in his book, simply called *Longsword Dances*.³⁷

³⁷ Ivor Allsop, *Longsword Dances from Traditional and Manuscript Sources* (Vermont, 1996).

The North West Clog Morris:



Fig. 4: The North West Morris Dance.

The Saddleworth Morris Men dancing in Uppermill at the start of their Rushcart Festival, August 2010. Photograph by the author.

In the north west of England there is a style of dance that has become known as North West or Clog Morris (Fig.4). It is characterised by long lines of dancers wearing colourful costumes, and highly decorated hats. The dance was connected with a strong tradition of processions in the north west, and many early photographs of the teams show them walking from place to place, rather than performing dances in position. Today most teams dance wearing clogs.

This form of the dance was not studied in depth by the collectors at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some felt that true 'folk' songs and dances must come from rural settings, and they were reluctant to visit the industrial north and note these processional dances, while others noted that these dances were sometimes danced by teams of women, and that went against the all-male hegemony of the south. Sharp, Karpeles, Neal and Carey all made brief visits to Cheshire and Lancashire, but published few of their findings.³⁸ However, earlier nineteenth century folklorists from the Lancashire area, observed and noted the dances, and in particular, their connection with the Rushcart

³⁸ Pruw Boswell, *Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain – The Preston Tradition* (Preston 1981), p.3. Also discussion with Duncan Broomhead regarding the Lower Withington team, 04/10/2012.

Festivals (Fig.40). These were linked with the summer harvest period, when fresh rushes were gathered and spread on the floors of churches.³⁹ A few teams have recreated these celebrations, but the Saddleworth cart is an outstanding example of the type, closely following the style of the old carts.

Border and Molly Dancing:

Two other forms of dance are regularly seen on the streets today that in the early years of the twentieth century were almost unknown, and were only seen in a few small villages. Sharp, and later Maud Karpeles, saw dancing at Brimfield in Herefordshire and at Upton-upon-Severn.



Fig. 5: Border Morris.

Silurian Morris Men dancing the Upton Stick Dance in the village of Upton-upon-Severn, 29 March 2009. Photograph by the author.

The man shown second from the right is Keith Francis, Past Bagman of the Morris Ring, interviewed for this study. Silurian are almost the only team still performing this dance as it was collected by Maud Karpeles.⁴⁰

Dances were later collected from a number of villages in the Welsh Border counties, and they have become known as 'Border' dances. Typically, the dancers wore rag coats and

³⁹ For further details of these early Rushcarts see Peter Ashworth, *Rushcarts in Saddleworth* (1995), and Alfred Burton, *Rush-Bearing* (Manchester, 1891).

⁴⁰ There are many versions of how this dance arrived in its modern format, but certainly Peter Boyce and the Chingford Morris Men were involved. A different version to that devised by Boyce was given to Faithful City Morris Men, and that dance was passed to East Suffolk Morris Men and New Cambridge Morris Men of the USA. The Chingford dance has become the standard version of the Upton dance, but Silurian Morris Men still perform what they believe to be the dance as collected by Karpeles.

often blacked their faces. This was done by the old teams, and was claimed to be a form of disguise. One dance, the Upton-upon-Severn Stick Dance (Fig.5), became popular in the late 1960s, and because that dance was changed dramatically from the collected version, it paved the way for other teams to construct their own dances in the style of the Border dances.⁴¹

From Cambridgeshire a number of dances were collected in the 1930s that were known as Molly Dances. These were categorized by the early collectors as being no more than degenerate 'country dances', or as Bradtke calls them "parodies of ordinary social dances."⁴² The dancers were dressed in a collection of ordinary working clothes, with scraps of ribbons sewn on to them, and their faces were blackened (Fig.6).



Fig. 6: Molly Dancing.

*The Little Downham Molly Dancers, Plough Monday 1932*⁴³.

This study began because of a desire to investigate change in the Morris world, and perhaps the most extreme example of that is seen in the development of Molly Dance Teams (Fig.7). Although there are many teams using that description, most of them dance in a very different style to that seen in The Fens in the 1930s.

⁴¹ "The Upton-on-Severn Morris Dances" by Maud Karpeles appeared in *The Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol1, No.2 (1933). This article was used as the basis for reconstructing the dance. An American tune noted by Karpeles after the main article is now used almost exclusively for this dance.

⁴² Elaine Bradtke, *Truculent Rustics* (1999), p.7.

⁴³ Bradtke, p.24. A photograph of the Little Downham Molly Dancers, Plough Monday 1932. Photograph taken by William Palmer of the Cambridge Morris Men.



Fig. 7: Gog Magog.

*Dancers from the Gog Magog team dancing in Cambridge, 10 May 2014.
Photograph by the author.*

Much of the modern Molly style has been developed from the dancing of The Severn Champions from Kent, and this will be referred to in Chapter 5.

All dance forms listed above have developed and changed during the twentieth century, and the North West, Border and Molly dances have spread far beyond their original dance areas. The one style that has a clear connection to the distant past is the Cotswold Morris Dance, the one form that seems to be regarded by the public in the south of England as Morris Dancing. It is the dance form that came to prominence at the beginning of the twentieth century and fed the resurgence of Morris Dancing in the years before the First World War. Therefore, this study will concentrate on the South Midlands' Morris Dance, the Cotswold Morris.

The Literature of the Morris.

Early histories of Morris dancing tended to concentrate on theories of origin, with, as Keith Chandler wrote, “a near complete disregard for concrete historical data”.⁴⁴ There were two strands to the discussion, one being concerned with a list of references to dancing, from a variety of historical sources; the other, a desire to find a clear origin for

⁴⁴ Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *The Annals of Early Morris* (1991), p.v.

the dance. This element was not based on any historical fact, but used the writings of Tylor and Frazer as a basis for the theories.⁴⁵ This desire to find a reason for the Morris was the driving force behind much of the early-twentieth-century literature.

Writers of the late-nineteenth-century were content to see the dance as part of an imaginary Shakespearean idyll. In 1807 Francis Douce published a book linking the Morris and Shakespeare.⁴⁶ Alfred Burton, following Douce, agreed that the dance may have come to England from Spain, although he favoured France or Holland, but he also connected the Morris and Shakespeare, noting that the dance is mentioned in the plays “Henry V” and “All’s Well that Ends Well”.⁴⁷ His book concentrates on the Lancashire Rushcarts, but a lengthy chapter entitled “The Morris-Dancers” draws together many historical references to the dance, although it makes no mention of the Cotswold Morris.⁴⁸ For Burton it was sufficient to say that there had been examples of Morris dancing noted in the documents. He had little interest in where the dance had come from, or why it was being performed. He made no attempt to track down the remaining teams in the Cotswolds, but concentrated solely on the North West Rushcarts. Yet in those years before Sharp’s work he had no hesitation in labelling the dance the Morris. This listing of historical records is clearly an early version of the work that would later be undertaken by Chandler and Heaney, but in the new century Sharp took a different direction.

The first books to concentrate on a description of Morris dances were the *Espérance Morris Book* of 1910 and *The Morris Book* by Sharp and MacIlwaine, the first edition of

⁴⁵ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*; Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

⁴⁶ Francis Douce, *Illustrations of Shakespeare, and of ancient manners: with dissertations on the clowns and fools of Shakespeare; on the collection of popular tales entitled Gesta Romanorum; and on the English Morris dance* (London, 1807).

⁴⁷ Alfred Burton, *Rushbearing* (1891), p.107.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.95-146.

which was written in 1906.⁴⁹ The second edition of 1911 was the one that became the accepted manual of the Morris, a position it held until the arrival of Bacon's work in the 1970s.⁵⁰ In a second book, *Sword Dances of Northern England*, Sharp set out a history of the dance based on the work of Tylor and Frazer. He dismissed some of the historical record, and instead concentrated on a hypothetical origin:

In Morris, sword-dance, and play we seem to intercept three stages of development, arrested and turned to its own uses by the civilised and social ideas of entertainment: in the Oxford Morris-customs the earliest sacramental rite; in the sword-dance the later human sacrifice; in the mumming play the still later half-magical presentment of nature's annual death and renewal.⁵¹

In a later section Sharp writes of the origin of the word 'Morris', mentioning Frazer directly and taking the discussion further into myth.

We need hardly take a long shot with Dr Frazer and suggest a derivation from the cognate forms Mars, Mamurius, Morrius (the latter that mythical king of Veii who was traditionally the founder of the Salii), even though Mars in his original character was a vegetarian god, and the dance of the Salii, his priests, perhaps a nature-rite parallel to the Morris-dance.⁵²

The attempt to find the origin and purpose of the Morris dance became the driving force for many of the works that followed. A major contribution to these was the article published by Joseph Needham in the EFDSS Journal of 1936.⁵³ In this work Needham lists all of the known sites for Morris Dancing and attempts to link them with the historical divisions of England in order to attribute the dances to ancient tribes or races. "In considering again the boundary between the Danelaw and Saxon Mercia on the map, we see that it does indeed separate the Morris from the Sword traditions with extreme accuracy."⁵⁴ He also followed Sharp's lead by suggesting that the modern version of Morris dancing was a truncated processional dance, where: "... the Morris dancers

⁴⁹ Mary Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book: a manual of morris dances, folksongs and singing games* (London, 1910). Cecil J Sharp, and Herbert C MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book* (London, 1906).

⁵⁰ Lionel Bacon, *A Handbook of Morris Dances* (1974).

⁵¹ Cecil J Sharp, *Sword Dances of Northern England* (reprinted by the EFDSS, 1985), p.32.

⁵² Sharp, *Sword Dances*, p.35.

⁵³ Joseph Needham, 'The Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions.' *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol.III, No.1 (1936), pp.1-45.

⁵⁴ Needham, 'Geographical distribution', p.24.

represented the priestly head of the procession from which all the tail had disappeared.”⁵⁵

Needham’s work followed what had become the general consensus of opinion about the origins of the dance, and in drawing up his map he was trying to support those early theories with concrete evidence. The fact that further research is now available that goes some way to undermining Needham’s basic theories should in no way detract from the value of his work when placed in context. It is now known that Morris Dancing spread far beyond the boundaries of the Cotswold Hills, but Needham did not have that information at the time of writing, and was therefore drawing inferences from the available evidence.⁵⁶ The same could be said about an earlier article in the *Journal* by Rodney Gallop, “The Origins of the Morris Dance.”⁵⁷ Gallop set out some of the theories of the origins of the dance, but drew largely on Sharp. He argued that Sharp was wrong to link Morris and Moors, but then concentrated on dancing from the Iberian Peninsula, introducing the idea of the Morris as a pagan ritual, given a tenuous link between certain words in Portuguese.⁵⁸ Again, within the climate of invention of that time Gallop was trying to find justification for the idea that the dance had its origins in pre-Christian rituals, and although he seems to be making a strong case for the pagan connection, in his final paragraph he suggests that there can be no way of coming to a definitive conclusion, and appears to deconstruct his previous arguments. “Folklore, of course, is not an exact science. The only method of argument is by analogy, always a dangerous one.”⁵⁹ Many dancers at the time ignored his words of warning and concentrated on the apparent evidence linking Morris with the pre-Christian rites.

⁵⁵ Needham, p.27. This idea was also taken up by Russell Wortley, who agreed that the dance may have come from priests’ rites. Wortley, *The XYZ of Morris*.

⁵⁶ References to Morris have been found in East Anglia, but confusions over the exact meaning of the word ‘Morris’ may hide an even wider spread of the dance into northern counties.

⁵⁷ Rodney Gallop, “The Origins of the Morris Dance”, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol.I, No.3 (1934), pp.122-129.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.127. “In this connotation the word ‘Moor’ is clearly no more than a synonym of ‘pagan’”.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

In 1960 Cawte, Helm, Marriott and Peacock updated Needham's earlier work on the geographical distribution of ceremonial dance.⁶⁰ The authors stated that they were adding recent findings from archive collections and records, but the maps and diagrams they drew served to support Needham's original thesis regarding the spread of the dance. They followed the accepted theories of the time and linked the Morris, in all its forms, with supposed ancient rites:

It has become clear as the work on the Index has progressed, that all the different ceremonials which can be labelled 'Morris' have two fundamental characteristics in common, disguise of the performers and the purpose of bringing luck to the places visited.⁶¹

The first of their characteristics is not true, unless the wearing of a costume comprising rosettes and bells is counted as a 'disguise'.⁶² Some nineteenth-century performers did appear to be wearing a disguise, and it has been suggested that this may have been to avoid recognition at a time when the Morris was regarded as no more than begging.⁶³ The bringing of luck is more problematic as it is difficult to identify the particular reasons why a community might ensure that an event is continued, but the Cheshire Morris that will be referred to in a later chapter was not connected with luck-bringing in any mystical sense, and the fact that even the Headington Quarry Morris was stopped and restarted a number of times would suggest that entertainment or the collecting of money for the dancers were the prime reasons for the existence of the team.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ E C Cawte, Alex Helm, R J Marriott, Norman Peacock, "A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain: Part One", *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol.9, No.1 (1960), pp.ii+1-41.

⁶¹ Cawte, Helm, Marriott, and Peacock, "A Geographical Index", p.4.

⁶² See later discussion regarding the work of van Gellop and Turner.

⁶³ It has been suggested that disguise was behind the black faces adopted by the Welsh Border teams: "...it fits in with the general theme of anonymity." Jones, *The Roots of Welsh Border Morris* (1988), p.4.

⁶⁴ For the Cheshire Morris see Chapter 4, and for the Headington discussion see the conversation with David Chaundy in Chapter 2.

In 1957 Barbara Lowe wrote about the earliest references to the Morris.⁶⁵ She noted in her introduction that “There has been no serious study of the early Morris since the days of Francis Douce in 1807” and she then looked in detail at the known records from the Tudor and Stuart periods.⁶⁶ Just as with the earlier works by Needham and Gallop more records have come to light since Lowe undertook her study, but at the end of the piece she made a number of observations that were ahead of their time, signposting some of the later findings of this study. Lowe said that the Morris Dance has been so many things to so many people that trying to find a clear definition, an answer to Wortley’s later question ‘What is Morris?’ is almost impossible.⁶⁷

By the end of the sixteenth century ‘Morris’ was used to denote such a diversity of things that it is useless searching for ‘the traditional Morris’.⁶⁸

She concluded her piece with a statement that could still sum up any study of the Morris dance:

For ‘Morris’ was both a new way of doing old things, and a new invention, and anyone who tries, as I have done, to separate the two will understand the impossibility of defining exactly what the early Morris dance in England meant.⁶⁹

At the time Lowe was writing it might have been possible to define Morris as the dance that had been discovered by the twentieth century collectors, but today that period of calm has ended and the dance is once more embroiled in “such a diversity of things”.

In 1984 John Forrest published a small work, at only sixty-four pages, covering much important material, including a resumé of the literature of the Morris, a historical survey of the dance, and a description of the Cotswold Morris Dance.⁷⁰ In particular, Forrest details the way in which the work of Tylor and Frazer led to the development of the pagan

⁶⁵ Barbara Lowe, “Early Records of the Morris in England”, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol.8, No.2 (1957), pp.61-82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁶⁷ Wortley, Russell, “The XYZ of Morris”.

⁶⁸ Lowe, p.79.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁷⁰ John Forrest, *Morris and Matachin: A Study in Comparative Choreography* (1984).

fertility theory for the origin of the Morris dance, so eagerly grasped by Cecil Sharp.⁷¹ Forrest notes how Sharp developed this theory in the introduction to his book on Sword Dances.⁷² The depth of the scholarship in Forrest's book came at a time when others were also beginning to produce work that was based on detailed examination of records of the Morris, work that was inclined to dismiss vague, Frazerite theory and insist upon evidentially based, concrete ideas. At the very beginning of his book, Forrest lays down the history of Morris scholarship, and in doing so points to the way in which scholars of the late twentieth century began this modern quest for fact, abandoning earlier myths.

The problem of the origins of the English morris dance has held the attention of folklorists and antiquarians for over two hundred years. Their research has centred on two issues: first, whether the dance is the remnant of an ancient fertility ritual, and, second, whether the dance is indigenous to the British Isles or was an early import from Europe. The problem remains largely unsolved.⁷³

Forrest's second work appeared in 1999 and was the first major work to examine the history of the dance, based solely on the available evidence, with no mythical conjecture. "What I really wanted was a great big book that had the whole history of morris dancing laid out in exquisite detail, backed up with copious exotic quotations."⁷⁴ He offers a reason for this lack of any detailed history, suggesting that modern observers have been overawed by the legacy of scholarship left by the early folklorists. He argues that most writers were concerned with discovering the true origins of the dance, hoping to link it with some ancient, pre-Christian religious ceremony, and the fact that Morris Dancing appeared in numerous writings from the fifteenth century onwards was at best belittled and often ignored. "Few modern academics have been willing to undertake a thorough analysis of morris dancing in its historical context because the field has been hopelessly dogged by a series of preconceptions imposed upon it by folklorists of the late nineteenth

⁷¹ Sir Edward B Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (London, 1871). Forrest cites Frazer, "The Scapegoat", volume nine of *The Golden Bough*.

⁷² Sharp, *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, in which the majority of the Introduction is devoted to considering the link that the dances have with pre-Christian animal sacrifice.

⁷³ Forrest, *Morris and Matachin*, p.1.

⁷⁴ John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing; 1458-1750* (Toronto, 1999), p.xv.

and early twentieth centuries.”⁷⁵ Forrest does neither; his work is detailed and complex, and is grounded in primary source material.

In 2005 Cutting published his history of the Morris.⁷⁶ The work does not have the scholarly depth of Forrest’s book, and it has been criticised for that and for inaccuracies in the text, but it does have the benefit of a large number of illustrations, in particular those from early European documents. While it is possible to argue that some of the earliest have a doubtful connection with the Morris, he is at least giving the reader a chance to decide. Cutting is quite clear about his purpose, which is to provide a simple guide to the history of the dance.⁷⁷ He sets out some questions that he knows audiences ask when watching the dance, and he tries to provide documentation that might lead readers to construct their own answers. In one regard he has produced an important ‘simple’ statement that gets to the heart of the vital question that began this chapter, “What is Morris?” Cutting’s answer to the question is: “Morris is what the ordinary people of the time referred to as ‘Morris’.”⁷⁸ It might seem to be a way of avoiding the question, but that answer has a resonance with an equally ‘simple’ answer about the nature of Tradition that will appear later in this study, and it also echoes the comment made by Cawte and others in their Geographical Index:

On the surface these are widely divergent customs which have no common claim to the same family name, and yet the local spectator who has known a performance all his life and accepts it as a normal part of the yearly round, has no hesitation in affixing the label ‘Morris’ to whatever he is accustomed to seeing.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, p.3.

⁷⁶ John Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance: A look at morris dancing from its earliest days until 1850* (Alton, 2005).

⁷⁷ Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance*, p.11. “A few words of caution before I begin: these sketches are not intended to be gems of biographical research, neither are they comprehensive reviews.”

⁷⁸ Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance*, p.8.

⁷⁹ Cawte et al, ‘A geographical Index,’ p.4.

The work that was begun by Needham, Cawte and others was continued and considerably expanded by Heaney and Forrest in their work on the *Annals of Early Morris*.⁸⁰ In the Preface Keith Chandler also reflects on the fact that histories of Morris dancing have tended to concentrate on theories of origin, and he suggests that 'The Annals' should help to encourage a consideration of historical fact rather than romantic theory.⁸¹ Chandler notes that Morris Sides will often suggest in talking to their audience that the dance is based on ancient myth, but his hopes for change have still not come to fruition nearly twenty-five years later. In the Introduction Heaney and Forrest pay due respect to all the authors whose works led up to this point, to Needham, Lowe and Cawte, and say that they have listed over seven hundred references to Morris dancing, noting that Lowe only had some ninety references.⁸² The effort undertaken to produce this work was prodigious, and yet it cannot be said to be the final word as far as historical data is concerned. Other references were available at the time of publication but were held by dancers who knew nothing of the on-going work, and since publication further references have been found by the authors, taking the earliest English references to the Morris back to 1448.⁸³ It is possible that other references to the dance are buried within collections of documents that have yet to be examined, but they are likely to be no more than brief notations, and will therefore not extend the basic knowledge of the reasons for dancing or of the style of the dance.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *The Annals of Early Morris* (1991).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.v.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁸³ E.g. the inventory of John Mauldon, weaver of Bildeston from the Suffolk Record Office, IC 500/3/1 (31). Michael Heaney, *Folk Music Journal* 2004, "The Earliest Reference to the Morris Dance?"; also noted as a Postscript in Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance*, p.196.

⁸⁴ An example of this is the recent discovery of the note in the Oakes Diaries from Bury St Edmunds, which simply says that Morris Dancers were paid for entertaining at an Election Dinner. No other records of Morris Dancers in Bury St Edmunds at this date have yet come to light. Jane Fiske (ed.), *The Oakes Diaries: Business, Politics and the Family in Bury St Edmunds 1778 – 1827* (The Boydell Press).

In 1993 Keith Chandler published *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*, a detailed study of the South Midlands' Morris dancers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸⁵ Where previous works had listed simple references to the Morris, or had tried to link it to ancient ritual, this work focussed on the known dancers, considering the dance within the social conditions of the time. Chandler produced an excellent evocation of the Cotswold dance leading up to the point at which it was seen by Sharp and the early collectors. He was determined to concentrate on the dancers: "One of the most important aims of this work is to re-introduce into the study of morris dancing the participants who have been conspicuously absent from much previous historiography."⁸⁶ Those dancers were placed within their social context, because : "morris dancing never existed in a cultural vacuum."⁸⁷ However, while Chandler notes that the book is a "personal interpretation" of the data, it, as with all works, encourages a personal reaction from the reader. Perhaps because it presents such a compelling history, some writers and commentators have since imagined that all Morris dancers came from rural, labouring stock.⁸⁸ While this is clearly true for the sources examined by Chandler in the Cotswolds, the rural part of the equation is not true for the dancers from the industrial north of England, and may not have been true for the Guild dancers in seventeenth-century London. In this case, the sins of the reader should not be visited upon the author; the book provides a detailed insight into the Cotswold clubs, their dancers and the social background of their communities, in the years leading up to the twentieth century and the first folk revival. Pru Boswell wrote two similar, but much smaller works, about the

⁸⁵ Keith Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (London, 1993).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁸⁸ This difficulty is not confined to the study of the Morris. Denvir says at the beginning of his book about the lives of the French Impressionist painters "One of the problems about history is that it involves the imposition on the past of the ideas of the present." Bernard Denvir, *The Impressionists at First Hand* (London, 1995), p.7. Lowenthal also examines this, 'The past as we know it is partly a product of the present...' David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), p.26.

dances of a part of Lancashire.⁸⁹ She followed the pattern set by Chandler by looking in some depth at the family histories of the dancers, and the social background to the dance. This study has also concentrated on performers, the dancers and musicians from the second revival, whose story has not been told in any detail, other than being mentioned in recent club histories.

As the modern Sides have arrived at significant anniversaries, some have published histories. Thaxted is without doubt the oldest of these, having been formed in 1911, and has published its history; London Pride Morris Men and Cambridge Morris Men, both formed in the early 1920s, have also published histories.⁹⁰ The booklets all follow a similar pattern, having details of the early years of the club, accompanied by photographs from those years, but they all give background social history that throws light on the conditions that led to the clubs being established, and the people who danced.

By 1932 architect Perceval Hornblower joined London Pride. He proved an eccentric, but although some morris men found him a problem Kay Reynolds recalls that they always got on very well and that all the men loved to tell “Percevalian stories”. A conversation about the precise quantity of cornflakes Perceval required for breakfast ended with the hotel manager declaring “Mr Webster-Jones, if I may say so, your friend Mr Hornblower lives in a world of his own”. Webber replied “You know, sir, I don’t think that any of his friends could have put it better.”⁹¹

Small booklets have been published in recent years detailing dances from particular locations – the dances of the Silurian Morris Men, the Ilmington Morris Men, or perhaps the Cambridgeshire Molly Dances.⁹²

⁸⁹ Pru Boswell, *Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain: The Horwich Inquiry* (1981); *Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain: The Preston Tradition* (1981).

⁹⁰ Harry De Caux, *Thaxted: A Desperate Morris Place* (1983). John Hawkins, *London Pride Morris Men and Country Dancers, 1922-present* (2009).

⁹¹ Hawkins, *London Pride Morris Men* (2009), p.12.

⁹² Silurian Morris Men, *The Welsh Border Dances of The Silurian Morris Men* (1994); Paul Bryan, *The Ilmington Dances* (1989).

From the early 1970s the two major Morris organisations, the Morris Ring and the Morris Federation published regular magazines and pamphlets containing scholarly articles about Morris Dancing in all of its forms. 'The Morris Dancer' for the Ring, and 'Morris Matters' for the Federation have served to continue the discussions and debates about the dance, as has The American Morris Newsletter. In the twenty-first century some of this discussion has moved to the internet, and many clubs have put their club histories on the web. The Vaughan Williams Library holds a small collection of published club histories, but these few are overshadowed by the large number of histories not in published form, but only available on the Internet. The Vaughan Williams Library also holds a small number of unpublished degree studies of varying quality.⁹³

Where the major works noted above have discussed historical references to the dance they have generally stopped by the end of the nineteenth century, or earlier. Forrest stops at 1750, Cutting 1850 and Chandler 1900.⁹⁴ Pamphlets and journal articles have explored the history of the first revival of the dance alongside sections within the biographies of the main characters, and the many booklets produced by Morris clubs have set the dance within the social history of the twentieth century. This study will seek to add to the historiography of the twentieth-century Cotswold Morris, by drawing together the historical references to the dance during the twentieth century, adding the testimony of dancers, and examining three major questions that came out of those discussions. It will provide a critical examination of the transformations that the Morris underwent in the twentieth century.

⁹³ Malcolm Taylor found for me an un-named doctoral thesis, containing no footnotes or bibliography, and an incorrect date for Sharp's first meeting with the Headington Quarry team. Taylor's view was that it had been a successful thesis, simply because it had been deposited in the library.

⁹⁴ Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing: 1458-1750* (1999); Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance: A look at morris dancing from its earliest days until 1850* (2005); Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (1993).

The Research Questions:

Place or Person:

Dancers today will often introduce a dance by announcing the name of the dance, followed by the name of a village from where the dance was supposedly collected. When the Travelling Morrice toured the Cotswolds in 1924 they could have danced *Lads a'bunchum* and told the audience that it came from Adderbury. By the 1950s this system was beginning to break down, and although teams still announced that they would perform a dance, for example, "from Fieldtown", this might not have been correct. The figures might have followed the style of those dances said by Sharp to be from Leafield in Oxfordshire, but as new dances were being constructed by modern dancers, linking dances to towns or villages became unnecessary and confusing. The concentration on place has the effect of hiding the men who gave the dances to the collectors, and who may have been responsible for constructing the dances, and it serves to support the 'invented tradition' that links dances with communities. Today this process continues, with many Sides inventing their own dances, yet in many cases the new dances are said to come from a place, while the choreographer remains anonymous.⁹⁵ This study will examine this, and consider the comments of the interviewees alongside the historical evidence for this style of classification of the dances.

Women in the Morris:

When the development of the dance during the twentieth century is considered, it becomes clear that the place of women is of crucial importance. This is particularly pertinent at this point in the history of the Morris as The Morris Ring, the former all-male organisation, has now accepted women musicians into its ranks, and is playing a major

⁹⁵ Faithful City Morris Men have dances that they say are from Knightwick, the village where they practice, while Dave Hislop who made the dances is not mentioned. Dave Hislop, *The Knightwick Dances* (2014).

role in the new Joint Morris Organisation. Ring clubs regularly dance with women's clubs, but the history of the dance in the twentieth-century is still dominated by a male hegemony. Cecil Sharp is regarded by many as the man who brought Morris Dancing back into the English Culture, and most written accounts of the period either ignore the part played by Mary Neal or confine her to a footnote in the history, largely because Sharp, after his initial acceptance of Neal, came out very strongly in favour of a men-only tradition of dance. So strong was his influence that he eventually persuaded Neal and the dancers from the old teams that the Morris should only be danced by men, and that was the dominant culture of Sharp's English Folk Dance Society. Even into the 1950s and 60s, the women of the Society disappeared from any official descriptions, yet from the club histories it is clear that women played a major role in carrying the dance through the war years, and the story of women in the Morris deserves serious consideration.

Change and Tradition:

Morris dancing has changed significantly during the twentieth century. Twentieth and twenty-first century teams are often described as 'traditional dancers' yet it is clear that some dances bear no relation to anything that has been through a lengthy process of development. They could be said, therefore, to be another example of Hobsbawm and Ranger's 'invented traditions'.⁹⁶ Photographs of the dance as performed in the 1920s show close connections with the few surviving illustrations of the dance in the early nineteenth century, and The Travelling Morrice team in 1924, for example, would be immediately identified by the dancers portrayed at Stowe House in the 1830s as Morris Dancers⁹⁷, but it is unlikely that sixteenth-century Guild performers would recognise

⁹⁶ Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (ed.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁹⁷ Keith Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (1993), p.31. 'Morris dancing at Stowe House, Buckinghamshire, 1818.

either of these groups as being from a Morris Tradition. So what do the dancers understand by the simple word 'traditional'? The dance has changed and is changing, and therefore can it still be classed as something that has an unchanging place within society?

1. The Morris Dance Revivals

The Morris is an ancient dance, but as explained in the introduction, its origins and the way that it was performed in the past are now lost to us. While it is hoped that careful study of records may produce something to increase our knowledge, it is clear that a lengthy scrutiny of documents is unlikely to find more than further limited references to a dance being performed. However, while there are many documents detailing the dance and dance clubs in the twentieth century, there has been no attempt to draw the common threads into a coherent pattern, or to question the individual dancers from this period. Although this study seeks to fill that gap, it is nonetheless difficult to totally ignore the past, and so a brief history has been included as an Appendix, and this chapter will begin with a short examination of the work of the late-nineteenth-century folklorists and anthropologists, because it was that movement that was linked to the early collectors' discovery of the dance, and in a crucial way supported their return to the Cotswold hills through the work of Percy Manning.

The origins of the first Revival in the early twentieth century have been examined in detail elsewhere, but they have been included here because of their relevance both to the role of women in the Morris, and to the idea of an invention of a tradition, a tradition that insists that the Morris Dance is firmly rooted in continuity, not change. Modern dancers will tell audiences that the Morris has been danced for at least six hundred years, without stopping to explain that contemporary illustrations of the dance bear no relation to the dance as seen today. They will, by ignoring these changes, leave the audience with the assumption that they are watching an unchanging dance form, something that has been part of a stable, constant national culture for many hundreds of years. Forrest explores this and he proposes two models that he calls the "Genesis" model and the "Evolutionary"

model.⁹⁸ The Genesis model pre-supposes that the dance is all-powerful, dates from some time in the distant, pre-Christian past, and should not be changed. In broad terms Forrest argues that this was the position held by Cecil Sharp once he had begun serious collecting. The Evolutionary model accepts the ancient formation, but allows for gradual change over time and this position was adopted by Mary Neal. The modern argument was therefore developed between Sharp's view of a male-dominated, ritualistic, serious past that must be continued and protected, and Neal's position that the dance was for fun, enjoyment and entertainment and could change over time. The Genesis model for men, and the Evolution model for women. This argument coloured the development of the dance through much of the twentieth century, and as this study will show, while the Cotswold dance has apparently been built largely upon the views of Sharp, the reasons given for dancing by the people interviewed for this study have been simply related to Neal's drive for enjoyment and entertainment.

The Folk Lore Movement.

In the mid-nineteenth-century antiquarians and musicians began to collect the songs and stories that they found in rural England. William John Thoms (1803 –1885) was the writer credited with first using the term 'folklore' in the 1840s, and it was as a result of his work that the Folklore Society was founded in 1878.⁹⁹ Thoms was influenced by Francis Douce who was the only antiquarian of the early-nineteenth-century to consider folk dance, publishing a paper "On the Ancient English Morris Dance."¹⁰⁰ John Roby (1793–1850) from Wigan wrote books on the traditions of Lancashire, and was one of the first to use the term "oral tradition" in his writing.¹⁰¹ Among many others was the Reverend Sabine

⁹⁸ Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing* (1999), pp.10-27.

⁹⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thoms> [accessed 16 August 2011].

¹⁰⁰ Richard M Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (London, 1968), p.57 - "Thoms glows with gratitude to his friend, mentor, and consultant."

¹⁰¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Roby> [accessed 16 August 2011].

Baring-Gould who was not only a writer of hymns, but also a collector of folk songs which he later published alongside the collections of Cecil Sharp.¹⁰² One result of this enthusiasm for folkloric study was that the materials took their place within the medieval recreations of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts Guilds as they sought to make an imagined, mock-Tudor past, a reality. One of those Guilds developed a relationship with Morris Dancing that has survived to this day. Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris formulated artistic ideas that became the Arts and Crafts Movement influencing many other designers and craftsmen, including Charles Robert Ashbee, who in 1888 established the Guild and School of Handicraft in Whitechapel in the East End of London.¹⁰³ In 1902 Ashbee decided to follow the precepts of the Movement by taking the Guild out of London, to workshops in the rural Cotswold town of Chipping Campden.



Fig. 8: David Hart's Workshop in Chipping Campden.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Sabine Baring Gould M.A. and Cecil J. Sharp B.A. *English Folk Songs for Schools* (London) is an example of his work.

¹⁰³ Gillian Naylor, *The arts and crafts movement: a study of its sources, ideals, and influence on design theory*, (Cambridge, 1971). An indication of the lasting success of the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts movements is the number of published works detailing the history of the Brotherhood, and of the William Morris Company. Morris's Kelmscote Press influenced many other small printing ventures, one being The Hive Printers of Letchworth in Hertfordshire, run by Jack Thompson, a Letchworth Morris Man. Fiona McCarthy, *The Simple Life. C R Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (London, 1981).

¹⁰⁴ David Hart standing in his office in the Hart Brothers workshop in Campden. Photo taken May 2012 by a member of Stafford Morris Men.

Although the venture only lasted a few years it provided a lasting link with the modern Morris Dancing world. Two brothers named Hart moved with Ashbee to Campden, and their relation, David Hart, still runs that workshop in the village, turning out high quality silver-ware, and he dances with the current Campden team (Fig.8).¹⁰⁵

Roy Judge has detailed the way in which 'Merrie England' appeared in many aspects of Victorian life.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the century stage productions had Morris dances within the play or as interludes between pieces, but as Judge pointed out, these dances were often invented by dancing masters or producers and had no connection with the Morris dance as practiced in real communities. However, the dance was set firmly within the



Fig. 9: Wolsey Pageant 1930.¹⁰⁷

popular consciousness as being an example of the pastimes found in Shakespearean England (Fig.9).

Two further developments at the end of the nineteenth century served to fix the imagined past of Morris dancing into a cultural niche. In 1890 Sir James Frazer began to publish

¹⁰⁵ David Hart is also an honorary member of Cambridge Morris Men, and has produced a number of works for them and for the Morris Ring, including a mazer used at Cambridge Feasts.

¹⁰⁶ Roy Judge, 'Merrie England and the Morris 1881 – 1910', *Folklore* Vol 104 No.1/2 (1993), pp.124–143.

¹⁰⁷ This photograph of the Ipswich Wolsey Pageant in 1930, from the collection of John Blatchly shows a Morris Dance being performed in Tudor costume, demonstrating the longevity of the Shakespearean myth.

The Golden Bough: A study in Comparative Religion.¹⁰⁸ The twelve volumes were published well into the twentieth century and were continually revised until Frazer's death in 1941. Mary Douglas makes the comment that the work needs to be seen as an example of nineteenth century thinking despite these twentieth century publication dates, and it is clear that the work fits perfectly into the enthusiasm for anthropology and folklore studies.¹⁰⁹ Douglas explains that Frazer developed his theories from reading books and documents about the peoples he described, never visiting any of the sites, possibly not even the ones in Britain, but at the time that he was writing, with the enthusiasms for all things natural, ancient and ritualistic coming from the arts movements of the day, Frazer's work was immediately and unequivocally welcomed.¹¹⁰ His theme in the book was the concept of the Slain God, and local events from across the country, indeed from across the world, were used to explain this theory.

On the surface, *The Golden Bough* represents an attempt to explain the origin and meaning of the slaughter of ancient Italian priest-kings, each by his successor. On a deeper level, it merges myth and history, ethnography and reason, to build a fanciful, poetic overview of the human psyche and social order.¹¹¹

Clearly Sharp was a keen and enthusiastic follower of Frazer, and yet in the twelve volumes of the work Frazer only mentions Morris Dancing once. In Part VI, 'The Scapegoat' Frazer writes:

... the English rites of Plough Monday, in which the dancers, or rather jumpers, who wore bunches of corn in their hats as they leaped into the air, are most naturally interpreted as agents or representations of the corn-spirit. It is, therefore, worth observing that in some places the dancers of Plough Monday, who attended the plough in its peregrinations through the streets and fields, are described as morris-dancers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1890).

¹⁰⁹ Mary Douglas ed. *The Illustrated Golden Bough* (London, 1978), p.9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.12.

¹¹¹ Cecil Sharp, "Now the central act of the original rite, the killing, may be clearly traced in the Mummers'-play and in the Sword dance, of both of which it is the chief incident and climax." *The Morris Book*, p.13. Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge, 2000), p.37.

¹¹² Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Part VI, 'The Scapegoat', (London, 1920), p.250. In a footnote Frazer writes that this information was taken from T. F. Thiselton Dyer, *British Popular Customs* (London, 1876), p.32; and *County Folklore, Printed Extracts, No.3, Leicestershire and Rutlandshire*, collected and edited by C. J. Billson (London, 1895), pp.93 sq.

In this volume Frazer writes at length about European customs that took place around May Day. Yet although he was writing at the time that Sharp, Neal and the other collectors were actively reconstructing the Cotswold Morris dances he does not mention them. He does however, suggest that Morris Dancers would have worn bells, and that those bells were to drive away devils.¹¹³ His thinking became so embedded in the national consciousness that even today in any conversation about the history of the dance there will inevitably be people who will use the ideas of Frazer as a reference point.¹¹⁴ When the Morris Ring attended Selby Abbey on 2 September 2010 for morning service, the Vicar in his address explained that some members of the congregation had asked why he was allowing a pagan ritual to take place in his church.¹¹⁵

A second development as the century drew to a close was the rise in popularity of the Historical Pageant, an outdoor presentation designed to celebrate the history and development of a particular place. One of the first of the Pageant Masters was Ernest Richard D'Arcy Ferris, a musician and teacher from Cheltenham who was also, in the words of Judge, "a full-bloodied, thoroughgoing romantic".¹¹⁶ His first attempts were meticulously researched but they followed the tradition of the stage and included Morris Dances in what Judge called the "Merrie England" style. As Ferris was particularly interested in reviving the dance, he made every effort to track down evidence of the old, true dance, rather than the stage version, and through friends in Bidford on Avon in Warwickshire, he discovered two men who claimed to have danced in village Morris teams. Judge suggests that this was not actually in Bidford, possibly in Bledington or

¹¹³ Noted by Frazer as being from Mrs Lilly Grove (Mrs. J. G. Frazer), *Dancing* (London, 1895), pp.147 sqq. This idea is often repeated by dancers today when explaining the Morris to audiences.

¹¹⁴ Wortley, *The XYZ of Morris*. I would argue that Wortley in writing this piece has been strongly influenced by Frazer. In Section B Wortley claims that Morris Dancers were "... a small group or fraternity of males who, it may be hazarded are the descendants through some 50 or 60 generations ... from a pre-Christian priesthood". Frazer also argues that the ploughs were drawn by gangs of men having "an imagined link to Ancient Rome." 'The Scapegoat', p.239.

¹¹⁵ Personal recollection of the author who was present in this Service. The Vicar gave an excellent defence of the dance and refused to give any credence to the pagan theory.

¹¹⁶ Roy Judge, 'D'Arcy Ferris and the Bidford Morris', *Folk Music Journal* Vol.4 No.5 (1984), pp.443-480.

Bould, but the result was that the troupe trained by these men performed in Bidford in January 1886.¹¹⁷ That team continued to dance throughout the Midlands for the next six months, and although at the end of that time D'Arcy Ferris had moved on to other interests, his work had a lasting impact on the revival of interest in the Morris Dance. Many of the old dancers saw the shows, and in some villages the local team was encouraged to regroup, perhaps because old enthusiasms were renewed, perhaps because they thought they could do it much better than the performance they had seen, or perhaps because they realised that there was money to be made from the dance. Certainly at Brackley and Ilmington, and possibly at Bledington, the events at Bidford did much to help revive interest in their own village dances.

The dance in Bidford was a re-creation or a re-invention rather than a revival. Ferris may have incorporated some of the dance movements from the old dances, but he continued to link his team with the mock Shakespearean world of the stage Morris. In later years the dance at Bidford created some confusion during Sharp's collecting trips, but it may be argued that the work of Sharp and the other collectors of the early-twentieth-century would have been more difficult without the preparatory work undertaken by Ferris. He was eclipsed in the public eye by the work of the later Pageant Master Louis Parker, who arranged the Pageants at Bury St Edmunds and Colchester among many others, but while Parker included forms of Morris Dances in the Tudor sections of his shows, he made no attempt to investigate the old village Morris dances (Fig.10).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Roy Judge, *Folk Music Journal* Vol.4 No.5, p.449.

¹¹⁸ Photos of the Bury Pageant appear in many collections, for example Colin Harrison, *Victorian and Edwardian Suffolk from old Photographs* (London, 1973) and there are web sites dedicated to the pageant, in particular that of the Bury St Edmunds Society – <http://www.burypastandpresent.org.uk/jarman-images/entertainment/pageant.shtml> where the photographs show the Shakespearean basis of these events.



Fig. 10: Bury St Edmunds Pageant.¹¹⁹

Therefore, as the nineteenth century ended, the Morris Dance was used in these pageants as an entertainment in towns across England, and while the old Morris in the Cotswolds may have been dying out, or perhaps was simply dormant, the idea of the dance was being kept alive through the work of folklorists and antiquarians; Morris dances were being used in stage productions, work had been done to recover the old dances by D'Arcy Ferris, and in the final years of the century by Percy Manning at Oxford. Although Sharp's meeting with the Headington Quarry Morris Men is often held to be the beginning of the first folk revival, in his article "The man who made it all possible" John Maher suggested that without the work of Percy Manning the meeting would not have taken place.¹²⁰ Manning of New College, Oxford, had been collecting Oxfordshire folklore for some years, and had published articles on Morris dancing when in 1897 he found an old photograph of the Headington Side.¹²¹ They had stopped dancing in 1888, but in 1898 Manning, with the help of Thomas Carter, persuaded some of the old team to dance again, and –

A public performance of the morris was then given in 15th March 1899, at the Corn Exchange, Oxford. As a result of this, the morris jumped back into favour in Headington and the side gave open-air performances on their own account. One

¹¹⁹ Postcard showing the Morris Dancers at the Bury St Edmunds Pageant, from the collection of Desmond Herring. These may be some of the eighty children trained by Miss Jennings and Miss Tinkler. "Louis Parker and his Pageant Morris Dancers, 1905-1909" *Traditional Dance* Vols. 5/6 pp.207-215.

¹²⁰ John Maher, "The man who made it all possible." *Bristol Folk News*, Autumn 1972, No.10.

¹²¹ Details of Manning's life <<http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Percy-Manning.html>> [accessed 02/12/2014].

of them was seen by Cecil Sharp when he was visiting Sandfield Cottage, Headington, on Boxing Day 1899.¹²²

The first revival.

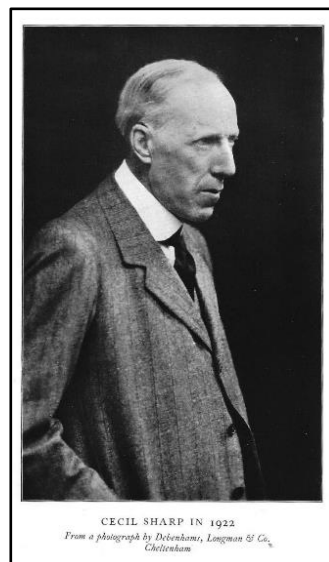


Fig. 11: Cecil Sharp.¹²³

Cecil Sharp was born in London and educated at Uppingham and at Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied mathematics. On leaving Cambridge he emigrated to Australia where he became a director of the Adelaide School of Music. While there he composed two light operas, in which he included a Morris Dance.¹²⁴ It is probable that this dance was in the theatre tradition, but it does suggest that Sharp was at least aware of the Morris, and his meeting with the dancers at Headington Quarry may not have been the great surprise that it was later made out to be. This was a successful time for Sharp and when he decided to leave Australia a petition was raised to try to persuade him to stay, but he returned to England in January 1892 and in August 1893 married Constance Birch. He took a post as a music teacher in London at Ludgrove School, and from 1896

¹²² Maher, "The man who made it all possible."

¹²³ Fox Strangways, *Cecil Sharp*, Plate V. There is a photograph of Sharp on the "Mike Harding Folk Page" <<http://www.mikehardingfolkshow.com>> [accessed 02/12/2014]. The notes on the page also repeat the often-quoted comment "The Headington Quarry Morris Dancers were dancing out of season to turn an honest penny since the hard weather had put many of them out of work." Fox Strangways, 1933, cited in *Russell Wortley* (Cambridge, 1980). The article by Maher suggests that this may not have been the case; the team were possibly making the most of their new-found fame.

¹²⁴ Roy Judge, 'Cecil Sharp and Morris 1906-1909, *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.8, No.2 (2002).

became the Principal of the Hampstead Conservatoire of Music. Constance Sharp's mother Dora moved to Sandfield Cottage at Headington on the outskirts of Oxford and the family gathered there for Christmas in 1899. On Boxing Day the Headington Quarry Morris Men came to dance at the cottage and Sharp invited their concertina player, William Kimber Junior, back to the cottage on the following day, when he wrote down the tunes *Bean Setting*, *Laudnum Bunches*, *Constant Billy*, *Blue-eyed Stranger* and *Rigs o' Marlow*.

Mary Neal had been running her Espérance Club for young working girls in north London since 1895.¹²⁵ Her musical director, Herbert MacIlwaine, began to teach the songs from Sharp's new book of folk songs from Somerset and on being asked if he had any dances they could use, Sharp gave them such information that he could remember about Kimber.¹²⁶ Neal and MacIlwaine went to Oxford, found Kimber, and invited him to come to London to teach his dances to the club members. This led in 1905 to the first national organisation relating to Morris Dancing, the Espérance Guild of Morris Dancing and Neal based it largely around the dances that she had been given by the men of Headington Quarry.¹²⁷ The Guild did not seek to bring together existing Morris Sides, but to encourage others to become involved in a revival of the dance form, and in common with the thinking of Sharp, she aimed much of her work at children.¹²⁸ The Guild was hugely successful, and rapidly spread across England. Charlie Corcoran, the Bagman of the Morris Ring at the time of recording, remembered a Great Aunt who was a member of an Espérance team in Devon: "I didn't know this until she was a very old lady, my Great Aunt actually did Morris, at Tiverton, with an Espérance group. She never danced in

¹²⁵ For details of the way in which this club was established see Chapter 3.

¹²⁶ Many of the characters from this period of the revival had met previously through their connection to the Fabian Society.

¹²⁷ Men from other teams, including Bampton and Abingdon also taught at the club.

¹²⁸ Mary Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book, Part 1* (London, 1910), The Preface. "All men and women of good will who wish to see a fairer and a happier life for the people of England are eligible for membership."

public.”¹²⁹ One group performed in Essex around 1908 and was seen by Miriam Noel, the wife of Conrad Noel, the vicar of Thaxted. Miriam Noel invited Neal to send someone to teach Morris Dancing to the young people of the village. Blanche Payling was sent from London and her very successful work led to the formation of the Thaxted Morris Men in 1911 (Fig.12).



Fig. 12: Thaxted Morris 1911.

*“Thaxted Morris, circa 1911, on the Vicarage lawn. Alfred Bishop, fiddler, in centre.”*¹³⁰

The Espérance boys all wore top hats and rosettes presumably copied from teams that Neal might have seen (Fig. 13), and her girls wore white dresses with an English bonnet (Fig.14).



Fig. 13: Espérance Club boys.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Interview with Charlie Corcoran at his home in Leicester, 15/05/2013. Tony Foxworthy also remembered his school days in Devon and Cornwall, being taught by women who possibly began their dancing lives with Esperance groups. Interviewed 19/09/2012.

¹³⁰ Harry de Caux, *Thaxted: A Desperate Morris Place* (1983).

¹³¹ Russell Wortley, “An Esperance Club meeting at the Red House, Ascot, c.1910.” ‘The Cotswold Morris – Hey-Day, Decline and Revival’, *Russell Wortley* (1980), p.17.



Fig. 14: Espérance Club girls.¹³²

The influence that the teams had on English cultural life in the comparatively short time that they were in operation, from around 1908 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, was considerable and can be seen in other photographs, unrelated to Esperance groups (Fig.15).



Fig. 15: Ipswich Peace Parade 1919.

*In this photograph of the pupils of Springfield Road School in Ipswich, they are shown taking part in a Peace Parade in 1919, with the children, particularly the boys, quite clearly dressed in Esperance costumes.*¹³³

¹³² Photograph of Espérance dancers taken from the New Esperance web site – <<http://www.newesp.org.uk/espstory.html>> [accessed 16 June 2014].

¹³³ David Kindred, *Britain in Old Photographs: Ipswich* (Stroud, 1999), p.42. In 1911 the Lyceum theatre in Ipswich put on two Suffragette plays, 'An Englishwoman's Home' and 'The Apple'. Pethwick Lawrence attended, the theatre was decorated in Suffragette colours, and children danced, presumably having been trained in the Esperance style, as suggested by the children in this photograph.

Neal was asked to take dancers to the Stratford on Avon Festival in 1910, she was in discussion with the Education authorities, she was running Morris Dance classes in London and the work of the guild was spreading to the northern industrial cities:

Meanwhile the movement in England grows apace. An experiment is being made of starting classes directly under the management of the Guild in the big manufacturing centres, and at the first centre, in Manchester, 162 pupils have joined a class in the first week. Leeds is following suit, and before long I hope to establish many centres in direct communication with our centre in London.¹³⁴

Her aims for the Guild were quite clear, and were simply to bring back into English life a gaiety and sense of fun that were once present in the days of "Merry England". In the Introduction to the *Espérance Morris Book* E. V. Lucas wrote:

These morrice dances alone would draw me by invisible threads to any hall where they were given - not only for their own unusual alluringness and gaiety, but for their essential merrie Englandism. Merrie!¹³⁵

In this way Neal not only placed Morris Dancing in an imagined historical progression from a pre-Christian rural society, but she was acting completely within the cultural ethos of the Edwardian era, looking back to a mythical golden age when England was truly "Merry". The difference in Neal's vision was that she was actively helping the most disadvantaged in society to make the myth a reality. Young people from the London slums were being introduced to a life of productive work and recreation, and being given opportunities to travel the country, demonstrating the enjoyment to be had through song and dance. Her clear statements on education fit confidently within a small but growing movement in the education establishment towards freedom of expression and an understanding that education must be enjoyable in order to be truly effective.

Certain it is that if the learning and teaching of these dances is to be to either teacher or pupil an added burden, merely an extra school task, it had been better that these dances had never been re-discovered.

On the contrary, there should be in these dances something which sets free the spirit, something which so adds to the joy of life, so energizes and vitalizes, that every other part of the school work will be more easily and better done.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book, Part 2*.

¹³⁵ Neal, *The Espérance Morris Book, Part 1*, p.vii.

¹³⁶ Neal, *The Esperance Morris Book, Part 2*.



Fig. 16: Dancers at Dennington, Suffolk.

Espérance dancers at Dennington, Suffolk. Photograph from the Morris Ring Archive.

It is not clear how Neal managed the Guild, or how they could arrange to travel so widely: “The young men and young women and small children of the Guild travel much about the country, and all over England youth is dancing as they have taught it to dance.”¹³⁷ In Suffolk alone there are photographs of dancers in the small village of Dennington (Fig.16) and in the town of Bildeston, and from the photograph above (Fig. 15) it is clear that they must have been seen in the immediate vicinity of Ipswich. Blanche Payling was sent to Thaxted, and Florrie Warren, Neal’s chief dance adviser, to America.¹³⁸ The onset of war brought the experiment to an end, but perhaps neither the Edwardian education system, nor Cecil Sharp, were prepared to accept the fun that Neal’s young people were bringing to the dance.

Writing in the Journal of the EFDSS, T W Chaundy, the father of David Chaundy, interviewed for this study, summed up this period:

The revival first ‘took the floor’ when Mary Neal, seeking exercise and entertainment for the factory girls in her *Espérance* club, commissioned Kimber to come up to London and teach Headington dances to her girls at Cumberland Market. Though always a stout defender of tradition he had no hesitation, then or

¹³⁷ Philip Macer-Wright in the Introduction to *The Espérance Morris Book*.

¹³⁸ Macer-Wright, “And yet these children are not angels. They are not even the babies of duchesses. They are common children, from mean streets. And they seem to confront you as small prophets, telling of a promised land in which the child shall be paramount, a land in which the lives of children shall be singing games. When they grow up, of course, they will dance the morris.” *The Espérance Morris Book*.

later, in teaching the Morris to women. It perhaps was an odd beginning to the revival – from the Quarry side to London factory girls, but it prospered: shows were held, lectures given, teachers taught, and Headington dances published under Espérance auspices.¹³⁹

Following the approach from Mary Neal, Sharp's interests had turned to folk dance generally as well as the Morris and in 1911 he founded the English Folk Dance Society. Here again, the intention was not to bring together the existing Morris Sides, but to draw in a new generation to the dance, and those new dancers had to follow Sharp's instructions. When Neal began her work she invited many of the dancers from the old teams to teach in London, but Sharp taught his way, what at least one observer called "Mr. Sharp's Tradition".¹⁴⁰ The Society grew rapidly, and it is clear from surviving letters and articles that Sharp was a very determined self-publicist and not above using some extremely underhand tricks to get his own way. Once he had begun to argue with Neal about the future direction that the dance movement should take he took every opportunity to use his position of power and influence to overcome the popularity of the Espérance Guild. In essence the arguments came down to the fact that Neal wanted to encourage dancers through the enjoyment of dance, but Sharp felt that there needed to be order and control. His demonstration team was not founded on the work of one enthusiastic young woman, supported by children's groups, but a 'Headquarters' Team' comprising highly placed, influential young men (See Fig.17).

When Neal went to America, Sharp stepped in to the education debate and persuaded the authorities to accept his way forward. With hindsight it is obvious that the Edwardian education system would never have tolerated a programme of instruction based solely on enjoyment and a sense of 'merry England', but the way in which Sharp manipulated

¹³⁹ Theo W Chaundy, "William Kimber (1872-1961)", *The Journal of the EFDSS*, Vol.IX, No.3 (1962), pp.115-118.

¹⁴⁰ Fox-Strangways, *Music and Letters*, No.4, Vol.IV (1923), p.323.



Fig. 17: Sharp's Morris Team.

*The English Folk Dance Society's First Men's Morris Side ca. 1911.
Left to Right: D. N. Kennedy, G. K. Butterworth, James Patterson,
Perceval Lucas, A. Claud Wright, G. J. Wilkinson¹⁴¹*

the authorities is hardly seen today as playing fair. "The trip [to America] was not a great success, in some measure, she felt, because of the pro-Sharp intrigue against her..."¹⁴² All of these arguments and discussions were brought to an end by the start of the war. Neal stopped all *Espérance* activities and went into war work, becoming a secretary in the Pensions Ministry, and Sharp's Team lost half of its dancers on the Somme, including the young composer, George Butterworth. After the war the Folk Dance Society continued, and according to Helen Kennedy, it grew considerably.¹⁴³ However, now it was overburdened with women dancing, not, it has been suggested, for the pure enjoyment of dance, but to remember their men lost in the war.¹⁴⁴ Sharp established rules for progression through the intricacies of the Morris steps – certain dances for

¹⁴¹ Photograph of the EFDS Team from the American Morris Newsletter web site, <<http://www.americanmorrisnews.org/tonybarrandv28n3reprintsfromEDSSpart2.html>> [accessed 21 June 2014]. Butterworth, Lucas and Wilkinson were all killed on the Somme.

¹⁴² Roy Judge, "Mary Neal and the *Espérance* Morris", *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.5, No.5 (1989), p.567.

¹⁴³ Helen Kennedy wrote of these early days in the first EFDS News Sheets, May 1924 and May 1925. Her writing has been republished by Tony Barrand in the American Morris Newsletter - <<http://www.americanmorrisnews.org/tonybarrandv28n3reprintsfromEDSSpart2.html>> [accessed 24 November 2013].

¹⁴⁴ This may be yet another example of the myths that surround Morris Dancing. The modern song "Dancing at Whitsun", written by Austin John Marshall, was instrumental in spreading the idea of the women remembering their menfolk through the dance:

There's a straight row of houses in these latter days
All covering the downs where the sheep used to graze.
There's a field of red poppies (a gift from the Queen)
But the ladies remember at Whitsun,
And the ladies go dancing at Whitsun.

beginners, 'simple' steps that must be mastered before galleys could be attempted, and a badge system to control progress.¹⁴⁵ There was still no direct connection with the old teams; Headington, Bampton and Abingdon may have been dancing on the streets, but the dancers of the Society were confined to concert halls. At this difficult time, when Morris Dancing could easily have become a cultural dinosaur, confined to the concert platform, a group of young men arrived who brought not only physical enthusiasm to the dance but also an intellectual rigour, and, just as had happened with the Espérance Guild, they actively sought out the old dancers from the Cotswold villages. Unlike the Guild, instead of bringing the dancers to the group in London, they took their group back to the dancers in the Cotswolds.

There had been dancing at schools in Cambridge since 1911, and following a demonstration by a men's team in 1913 the Cambridge Folk Dance group was formed.¹⁴⁶ Wells from Bampton came to a Garden Party in Cambridge, and Sharp lectured in the city in 1919. After the war, practices were resumed and public shows began in 1921. Rolf Gardiner, a Cambridge University student, had taken a party of dancers to tour Germany in 1922 and it is generally believed that he wanted to repeat the tour in 1924, but there was some concern about this trip¹⁴⁷. Gardiner spoke to Sharp, who was against the idea, and to Neal who was very supportive. Eventually it was agreed that the tour should visit the Cotswolds, and Gardiner, with Arthur Heffer, who had been dancing since the beginning of the team in Cambridge, arranged to visit as many of the Morris villages as possible.¹⁴⁸ "... I get the impression that Gardiner, together with Arthur Heffer, was

¹⁴⁵ Irvine Reid and others said in interview that this system was still prevalent after the Second World War.

¹⁴⁶ Details from the Cambridge Morris Men's Web Site, <<http://www.cambridgemorrismen.org.uk/history>> and from the interview with John Jenner at his home, 01/11/2012.

¹⁴⁷ Ivor Allsop, "Rolf Gardiner", *The Morris Dancer*, Vol. 3, No.11, pp.345-354.

¹⁴⁸ Simons, in his study of Gardiner, suggests that the group understood the difficulties surrounding his character, and sought to minimise them. "Heffer took on the full onus of responsibility for organising the Travelling Morrice, whilst ensuring, by the meticulousness of his plans, that Gardiner's influence remained marginal." Matthew Simons, "Understanding 'Rolfery': Rolf Gardiner and the Travelling Morrice, a study of a

responsible for the Morris now being danced on the streets and village greens of this country and abroad and not being confined to academia.”¹⁴⁹ They called themselves The Travelling Morrice, and it could be argued that Sharp was against the tour because he did not want the young men to discover how many of the dances he had re-invented, although he relented before they left and gave them his blessing.¹⁵⁰ Even if that were true the young men seem not to have realised at the time, possibly because in the event the old dancers they met were just pleased to see them.

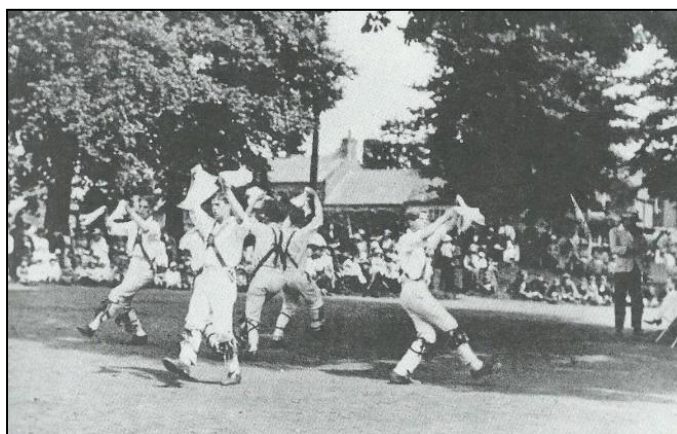


Fig. 18: The Travelling Morrice in Adderbury.
The final show of the First Tour of the Travelling Morrice.
 Adderbury, 23 June 1924, the day of Cecil Sharp's death.¹⁵¹

Sharp died on the last day of the tour, which was taken as sign that the circle was complete and the challenge of preserving the dance had been passed to the younger men (Fig.18). The Travelling Morrice was an important group, because whereas Sharp and the other collectors had spoken to the old dancers, they had not gone with a complete Side to recreate the dances as they were being described. Therefore, the groups trained by Sharp were getting the dances at second hand, dances changed by the ability of the collector to recreate the description given by the old dancer. The young

Patriotic Young Man caught between Eccentricity and Obstinacy.” Unpublished B A Essay, De Montford University, 02/05/2014, p.27.

¹⁴⁹ Allsop, *The Morris Dancer*, p.347.

¹⁵⁰ Sharp points to this possibility in the Morris Book. “...we have in certain cases found it necessary to vary in our instructions what we have seen and noted down.” *The Morris Book, Pt. 1* p.45. Geoffrey Metcalf: “...and for many years Sharp (I believe) had actively discouraged people from going to Bampton – of course, it didn't bear any resemblance to what was being taught.” *The Morris Dancer*, Vol. 3, No.1, p.30.

¹⁵¹ John Jenner and Andrew Richards (ed.), *Russell Wortley* (1980), p.18.

men from Cambridge and Oxford were able to execute the figures and directly ask the old dancers that they met if that was what they meant. As Allsop said, they put the Morris back on the streets. Lionel Bacon discussing this period, explained that the Travelling Morrice, together with the Morris Ring, was not only instrumental in bringing a focus to the dance steps and figures collected by Sharp, but also managed to get some of the old traditional Sides to reform.¹⁵²

By the time that the Travelling Morrice had undertaken their tour a number of Morris Sides had been formed in East Anglia. The men involved had decided that to flourish the Morris must break away from the Folk Dance Society clubs, where Morris was only a small part of the teaching programme, and in 1926 five teams gathered for a meeting at Ardeley.¹⁵³ In 1927 they held the first of the Thaxted meetings. The idea that Morris Sides could be independent of the Society grew rapidly, but as young men left University and moved around England they needed a way of maintaining contact with the dance, even if they could find no local team. In 1932 Sharp's national folk organisations merged to make the English Folk Dance and Song Society with the newly-built Cecil Sharp House as their Headquarters. The general programme of dance was retained, and the Society spread rapidly across the country, having area organisers and affiliated clubs, but not everyone was appreciative of the movement. Geoff Metcalf, writing about Cecil Sharp House between the wars: "Cecil Sharp House at that time was very much the preserve of the Hampstead-Chelsea intellectual types: there was quite a strong element of the 'vegetarian Fabian Society' kind of people."¹⁵⁴ Despite the enthusiasm for the Society's folk dance activities, it still paid little attention to the immediate needs of Morris

¹⁵² Interview with Lionel Bacon, conducted by A Wilkins and P Ashford of Winchester Morris Men, 22/02/1979. A tape of the interview was provided by Harry Stevenson of Winchester Morris Men.

¹⁵³ Simons writes: "The revival of Morris Dancing under the auspices of the English Folk Dance Society was, for most of the interwar period, confined to an urban environment." "Understanding Rolfery." p.25.

¹⁵⁴ Geoffrey Metcalf, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1.

Dancers. Because of this, in 1933 the Cambridge Morris Men held a meeting to discuss the setting up of a new organisation:

At a meeting of the resident Morris Men in Joseph Needham's rooms, in Gonville and Caius' college, on Thursday 2nd November 1933, the whole position was discussed, and Arthur Peck suggested the creation of a federation of Morris Men's Clubs, and Conway Waddington suggested the name "The Morris Ring" for this federation.¹⁵⁵

Five clubs were contacted by Needham – Thaxted, Letchworth, Greensleeves, Oxford and East Surrey – and at a meeting held in Thaxted the following year The Morris Ring was formally instituted.

The initial discussions to consider forming a new organisation took place at Ringstead Mill in Norfolk during a week-long tour of the Cambridge Morris Men. Lionel Bacon was present on that tour, and in his interview with Winchester Morris Men he gave his view of the reasons for the formation of The Ring, a view that was very definitely of its time, particularly in the language that he used. He suggested that there were two reasons:

One was to form a link [between dancers who had left Cambridge University or had been made honorary members of Cambridge Morris Men] – simply that. The other was to get the Morris out of 'petticoat influence' at Cecil Sharp House. The EFDS was in sympathy with this. Douglas Kennedy supported this from the start. The EFDS could not get men, not enough men, and one result of this was that not only were many of their teachers women, but also you could very rarely get a full men's Side and the women were dancing the Morris. So that from the point of view of the public who saw it, Morris was a women's dance with a few cissy men joining in. It was a women's dance and therefore the men must be cissy. So that was what we wanted to get away from.¹⁵⁶

The number of associated clubs grew quickly, and by 1935 fourteen clubs were listed in the Directory. On 1 February 1936 seventy men attended the Annual Meeting in Cecil Sharp House in London, and the guests of honour were Williams Wells, the Bampton fiddler, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Here was an organisation actively supporting the

¹⁵⁵ The rooms of Noel Joseph Terence Montgomery Needham, British scientist, historian and sinologist. Fellow of the Royal Society, the British Academy and Companion of Honour. Walter Abson, *The First Log Book* (1991), p.3.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Lionel Bacon and Winchester Morris Men, 22/02/1979.

old Sides as well as the new revival teams; an organisation that embraced men from across the social spectrum, from Cotswold village labourers to the highly educated urban elite. So a pattern of organisations was set, with the English Folk Dance and Song Society continuing the ways of Sharp and his associates, and The Morris Ring catering for the growing number of men's Morris Sides. In 1938 Douglas Kennedy, Director of the EFDSS, was elected to be the Squire of the Morris Ring, but instead of the usual period of office he held the post until 1947, throughout the Second World War.

Morris activities largely came to a halt during the war years, but as will be examined in Chapter 3, it was kept alive, generally by the women – teachers, and members of the EFDSS – who remembered the dance. In the immediate post-war years, the Morris was able to take up its place again within the English Idyll. But England was changing, and post-war reconstruction was beginning to drive out the old mythology. Morris dancing was still growing slowly in popularity, but it was the arrival of the new enthusiasm for folk song in the 1960s that would see the start of the massive changes to affect the dance at the end of the century.

The Second Revival.

After the second World War men were returning from active service and leaving universities and colleges of education where they had learned to dance, and the main organisation actively establishing new clubs was the EFDSS. Eric Foxley in interview said that, in 1951: “EFDSS was very central to dancing and the Morris was more or less under the same umbrella. Whenever you went on a weekend course somewhere Morris would be one of the options.”¹⁵⁷ The Morris Ring provided meetings where men could meet and dance, but it had no national structure to facilitate the formation of new clubs.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Eric Foxley, 09/11/2012.

That was left to the area organisers of the Society, and they were very successful, starting clubs based on schools and youth groups in many places. These new clubs followed the old pattern of men dancing, where possible with a male musician, but interviewees noted that instruction sessions were extremely regimented affairs, with long periods spent simply learning stepping. Irvine Reid: "My first term at Cambridge, we did nothing but learning steps, capers, different capers, different stepping, just getting Headington into our brain that first term. All we did was stepping."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, by the early 1960s, the picture that the south midlands' Morris dance presented was still one based firmly on the first revival, rooted in the Cotswolds. The invented 'English idyll' was still strong, and to dance at a country pub, or better still, to return to the Cotswold villages, was considered the ultimate experience.

During the 1960s, 'folk' became popular, and the EFDSS was the main driver for this enthusiasm, helped by the BBC. There was a regular Barn Dance programme on the radio, with the Greensleeves Band and Nibs Matthews as the caller, and highlights from the EFDSS Albert Hall Festival shown on television.¹⁵⁹ Folk song became increasingly popular, and there was a second revival of Morris teams. Derek Schofield writes of this in his book describing the history of the Sidmouth Folk Festival.¹⁶⁰ His first comment is one that relates directly to this study:

Morris dancing was still exclusively Cotswold or South Midlands Morris. There were very few North-West teams, no Border or Molly teams, and no 'invented' traditions.

Increasingly, younger men were becoming interested in Morris dancing, some of them from the song clubs, and they wanted to re-interpret the dances, rather than follow the established 'Book' way of performing them. Roy Dommett played a vital role in encouraging dancers to think about how and what they danced.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Irvine Reid, 09/05/2012.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Tony Foxworthy, who ran a dance programme on the radio from the North East. 19/09/2012.

¹⁶⁰ Derek Schofield, *The First Week in August – Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival* (2004).

¹⁶¹ Schofield, p.46.

Schofield includes these comments on the page for 1967, providing clear evidence that significant change happens very quickly, because within ten years the South Midlands Morris landscape had become one of countless North-West, Border and Molly teams, dancing alongside the remaining Cotswold Sides. As this second revival of Morris Sides gained momentum the younger teams did begin to look for new 'traditions', instead of continuing to perform only those dances collected and published by Sharp, although Schofield's assertion that this was happening as early as 1967 is questionable. New teams arriving in the 1970s were still dependent upon the established teachings for their dances, while the publication of Lionel Bacon's 'Aide-Memoire', *A Handbook of Morris Dancing* in 1974 gave a fresh impetus to the learning process for the classic dance traditions. Other traditions had been noted by the original collectors, but not in any great detail, certainly not in the same way that the village traditions had appeared in Sharp's Morris Book, but they did appear in Bacon's book. This led to dancers trying exciting new dances from, for example, the villages of Ducklington and Ascott Under Wychwood, but it also led to a major problem within the new Morris world.¹⁶²

When the Morris Ring was first formed one of its primary aims, as noted by Lionel Bacon, was to give individual Morris Men a centre that they could turn to after leaving a university team. At meetings of the Morris Ring those men needed to dance in sets, and therefore the repertoire was restricted to the dances in Sharp's book, and instructional sessions at Morris Ring meetings taught men to dance in one style, so that when giving public performances all the men could dance together.¹⁶³ Geoff Metcalf wrote that, between the wars:

¹⁶² Roy Dommett was instrumental in bringing many of these dances back into the main stream of the Cotswold repertoire.

¹⁶³ Interviews for this study, and details from the early log books of the Morris Ring show that as few as twenty or thirty men may have gathered for some meetings, and so a common repertoire was vital if any dancing was to be shown. The meeting at Grasmere in September 1936 had 21 men, there were 20 at Tideswell in 1937, 24 at Kettering that same year, and 22 at Longridge in 1939. Details from the First Log Book of the Morris Ring.

The concept (for revival sides) was that you learnt morris dancing, and you would learn it from one of the EFDS teachers, who all taught the same thing, so that six men who had learnt to dance could make a team, it didn't matter where you had come from, everybody did everything the same.¹⁶⁴

Mike Barclay during his interview said that in the 1950s: "I could go anywhere in the country and dance with any team because they danced exactly the way that I did."¹⁶⁵ But he did add – "that's all wrong." Eric Foxley however, added that there were benefits to be gained from having a common repertoire:

The other advantage in those days, thinking of the Morris, it was a much smaller – the number of clubs was much less. You all did the same dances more or less, whereas now you go to a festival and you can't have any massed dancing at most ordinary festivals there's nothing that everybody knows, but in those days there was quite a core of dances that everybody could do. Which made for a bit of camaraderie – mixing of teams – which was a good thing.¹⁶⁶

This led to an element of the shows, massed dancing, which became very popular with audiences, and as the meetings grew larger in the 1970s it was an impressive sight to see perhaps 200 men all dancing together. However, the younger teams began to object to what they saw as an attempt by the older dancers to regiment the way in which all teams should dance, and one of those teams, the Chingford Morris Men, felt that membership of The Ring was contrary to their wish to devise their own style of dancing.¹⁶⁷ It was an idea that was growing across the Morris world, but whereas some teams were happy to quietly devise their own styles alongside the standard repertoire, Chingford and others wanted to break away entirely.¹⁶⁸

The problem had started as early as 1966 when Peter Boyce took the young Chingford team to the Sidmouth Festival. Although later in the 1970s this team was one of those insisting that the Morris Ring was restricting their wish to devise their own dancing style,

¹⁶⁴ Geoffrey Metcalf, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1 (1993), p.31.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Mike Barclay, 26/04/2012.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Eric Foxley 04/10/2012.

¹⁶⁷ A team influenced by Hugh Rippon.

¹⁶⁸ Personal record from my days as Bagman of The Morris Ring, 1977-1984.



Fig. 19: Chingford Boys' Morris.¹⁶⁹

from comments written by Derek Schofield it would appear that the source of the irritation was one man, Peter Boyce, who started the team. Schofield wrote:

As well as the morning rehearsals for the country dancers, there was a Morris rehearsal. Bill's intention here was for the Morris men to rehearse their entrances and exits, plus any possible massed Morris displays. The reality was slightly different, and Peter Boyce's comments are indicative of the changing nature of Morris. Peter took his boys out of the 'practice' because, 'We were being taught a particular style for the massed Morris. This was having an horrific effect on my boys, (a) they were confused, (b) they concluded that "sir" had taught them wrongly.' Peter believed that in the massed Morris displays, teams should be allowed to do their own style. 'Morris practice should not be used to standardise style.'¹⁷⁰

The observation is interesting for three reasons. From Schofield's comments it would seem to have been one man who wanted to see change, the one man who had started a team in Weston and a second in London. People who act as catalysts are examined later (Chapter 4), and while Boyce does not fit all the criteria he was certainly responsible for getting many people involved in the dance. Secondly, while the Morris Ring was later accused of imposing a 'Ring Style' on the dance this piece of writing is an illustration of the fact that the EFDSS had an even stronger desire to see uniformity across the Morris world. Such a uniformity would not only strengthen the link to its founding father, Cecil Sharp, but also enable its festivals to include massed shows with all dancers following

¹⁶⁹ Schofield, *Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival*, p.44.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.44.

the same style. A large number of teams dancing in different styles may have been seen as the perfect way for Morris Sides to behave, but as part of one show, it was clear that uniformity was vitally necessary.¹⁷¹ Perhaps most importantly, what this also shows is that significant change was instigated not by a community, or a society, but by one man.

What was happening was not necessarily a complete break with the old traditions, with teams devising their own completely new dances, rather it was a re-imagining of some of the old ways. This is clearly illustrated by the dancing of two London teams, The Westminster Morris Men (Fig.20) and Hammersmith Morris Men (Fig.21).



Fig. 20: Westminster Morris Men.
Westminster Morris Men dancing at the Chichester Meeting, 07/07/2013.
Photograph by the author.

Both of these teams perform the dances collected from Harry Taylor, the foreman of the old Longborough team. Westminster follow an earlier style, jumping high in the capers, twirling their handkerchiefs above their heads, and making the dance flow, being in the past accompanied by the smooth accordion playing of Dennis Smith. Hammersmith were influenced by the later collectors, who suggested that the material could be interpreted in a different way. They jump just as high, but instead of twirling their handkerchiefs they

¹⁷¹ At an Albert Hall show in the late 70s the massed Morris demonstration was arranged so that while the musicians played one tune, each Side danced a different village tradition. The resulting performance was less than perfect, with the audience confused by the different movements, and the way that the teams finished dancing at different times. Personal recollection from my time as Ring Bagman.

shake them high above their heads, and instead of a flowing style, led by an accordion, they have a slower, staccato approach, helped by the playing of the melodeon.

In a sense, the men of Westminster were following the style laid down by the highly educated collectors and men of the Travelling Morrice, while Hammersmith were trying to take the style back to its imagined roots, as danced by agricultural workers in rural



Fig. 21: Hammersmith Morris Men.

Hammersmith Morris Men dancing outside the Westminster Arms during Westminster Morris Men's Day of Dance, 12/05/2012. Photograph by the author.

Gloucestershire. Both teams put on very good shows for the general public, but despite any announcement that the dances come from Longborough, if they were to perform the same dance at the same time, to the onlooker it would seem that they were dancing completely different dances.¹⁷²

Alongside this subtle change in style, some teams began to add new dances to the old 'traditions'. This process could be driven by the musician in the team who brought along a new tune, a very traditional way of adding to the repertoire, but might also be an attempt

¹⁷² In the same way Coventry Morris Men might say that they were dancing something collected in Ascott Under Wychwood, but it would be completely different in style to the dance performed by Bristol Morris Men, who would also announce that their dance came from Ascott Under Wychwood. Note also the connection with Place and person, examined in chapter 4.

to fill a gap in the dances collected from one village. If the collectors' notes had indicated that there had been a long stick dance, now lost, a Side might decide to invent one. If they had a particularly popular place to dance, or a well-known character in the team, a dance might be constructed in their honour.¹⁷³ In general, these constructs were all based on the old village traditions and at least one of these new dances, 'Balance the Straw' in the style of the Fieldtown dances, has entered the main stream repertoire, but most remain within the Side that devised them.¹⁷⁴ However, a few teams are now constructing totally new sets of dances, not linked in any way to the old traditions. Moulton Morris Men in Northamptonshire have their own dances, as do Woodside Morris Men (a team that Hugh Rippon once danced with), Mersey Morris Men, and Broadwood Morris Men from Horsham. The reason for highlighting these few teams is to show that these dances have little or no connection to place. Although the Moulton dances are sometimes introduced as being from the Moulton 'tradition', and that is clearly a locality, both Woodside and Broadwood are only team names. The Woodside dances have no connection to Watford, any more than the Broadwood dances are connected to Horsham. The dances are solely connected to teams and the people in those teams. This distinction between place and person will be considered later in Chapter 4.

Finally, the greatest change to affect Morris dancing in the modern world arrived in the 1970s. Women began to perform what had been seen by many as an all-male dance, and the way in which the women's teams arrived on the Morris scene will be examined in Chapter 3.

¹⁷³ Bristol Morris Men have *The Quinton*, named after a public house; Westminster Morris Men's dance *Big John* was devised by Leslie Saunders, a founder member of Westminster Morris Men. Leslie died on 28 September 2014.

¹⁷⁴ In the case of Bristol and Westminster it was Ducklington and Longborough respectively. During his interview Hugh Rippon said that he was present when *Balance the Straw* was being devised. However, other Sides have claimed to be the originators of this dance.

2: Recording the Dancers.

This chapter will look at the experiences of the interviewees, and will explore their Morris stories.¹⁷⁵ The initial intention was to contact the longest-serving dancers, and Norris Winstone certainly comes into this category. However, the main group of dancers fall into the post-war period, generally the 1950s and 60s, but in order to investigate some of the themes some younger dancers have been included.¹⁷⁶ Morris Dancing has always had a relationship with oral transmission, because of the way in which dances were handed down by word of mouth. When Lionel Bacon published his book of dance instructions it was deliberately called an 'aide-memoire', because he wanted new dancers to learn their dance from existing dancers, not from the written word.¹⁷⁷ However, both oral history and memory involve complex ideas and concepts.

At the beginning of this study Dommett and Taylor both said that the opportunity to talk to the oldest dancers was being lost, and one chance conversation demonstrated the truth of those comments. Carol Wheatley said that her uncle had been a Morris Dancer.¹⁷⁸ She was born in 1943 and had spent her early years in a German Prisoner of War camp. She had no particular memory of that time, but one event had lived with her and was still a vivid memory. On returning to England, at the age of three she was taken by her parents to see her Uncle dancing. She remembered that it was 1946, and it was at Cecil Sharp House in London. Her uncle and aunt were both dancing and she remembered being fascinated by the waving handkerchiefs. She said that his name was Whiddett and he lived in Streatham, but she had no further details of his dancing career. She must have witnessed one of the earliest gatherings after the war, and we can only

¹⁷⁵ Refer to the table in Appendix 1 for a list of interviewees and the dates of the interviews.

¹⁷⁶ There are gaps in this structure, the most glaring one being the lack of any interviews with members of the public, but such an investigation could become a study in its own right.

¹⁷⁷ Lionel Bacon, *A Handbook of Morris Dances* (1974).

¹⁷⁸ I had known Carol and her husband for many years, as Ted and I were Headteachers of neighbouring schools. Hearing that I was also a Morris dancer she told me the story of her uncle.

surmise now that the dancers were enjoying an interlude of fun and enjoyment after the trials of the war years. Wheatley refused to say any more about her early history, so the possibly fascinating story of her early life remains a mystery, and because no-one thought to question the dancers of those days about their Morris lives this brief glimpse is all that remains.

The methodology of this study.

The style of the interview section sits firmly within Qualitative Research. Some commentators suggest that it is difficult to identify the exact nature of the form:

However, providing a precise definition of qualitative research is no mean feat. This reflects the fact that the term is used as an overarching category, covering a wide range of approaches and methods found within research disciplines.¹⁷⁹

Kvale, however, is quite clear that qualitative research was a reaction during the 1980s to the harsher disciplines of positivist, quantitative investigations comprising questionnaires and behaviourist experiments. He uses a softer terminology, insisting that the process should be seen as a social interaction between interviewer and interviewee.

Rather than locating the meanings and narratives to be known solely in the subjects or the researchers, we argue in this book that the process of knowing through conversations is intersubjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as co-constructors of knowledge.¹⁸⁰

The dominant description that could be applied to these recordings is 'conversation' and Kvale is clear that this is the prime method of investigation within qualitative research. "An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose."¹⁸¹ Portelli suggested that oral history is "an art dealing with the individual in social and historical context."¹⁸² The interviews for this study were certainly approached as 'art' rather than

¹⁷⁹ Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice* (London, 2003), p.2.

¹⁸⁰ Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews* (Los Angeles, 2009), p.18.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁸² Alessandro Portelli. *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Wisconsin, 1997), p.viii.

'science'. Thompson claimed that it was possible to build in objectivity to the processes of oral work, but only by closely structuring the interviews, and if necessary, repeating some interviews to check that the information given was correct, but for this study the relevant description is not 'interview', but 'conversation'.

The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest.¹⁸³

Alessandro Portelli writes that there are private and public histories, and oral history is the way in which the private is explored.¹⁸⁴ The old public histories simply indicated that dancing had taken place, and gave no description of the dance, or reason for its performance. Without the private oral history from those dancers of earlier centuries there is much that we can never know, but today we have the opportunity to talk to modern dancers and from their personal account build a picture of the public dance. However, when some historians began to collect personal stories as oral history, others insisted that the resulting information would be completely subjective, as opposed to what they saw at the time as the objective written sources. The idea of an oral tradition was still linked in the minds of some anthropologists to peoples who were largely illiterate, who needed to keep their history through the memory skill of members of the community. As Buckland wrote:

Traditionally, written evidence has been deemed the province of historians: the oral, that of anthropologists and folklorists. The oral traditions of so called folk and primitive cultures were judged through European literate eyes to be poor history and therefore rarely admissible as factual evidence.¹⁸⁵

Those who defended oral history, including Portelli and Thompson, accepted that it was not objective, but that neither were the written sources; they were all subject to the

¹⁸³ Kvale and Brinkmann, *Interviews* (2009), p.2.

¹⁸⁴ Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia* (1997), p.68.

¹⁸⁵ Theresa Buckland, *Dancing from Past to Present: nation, culture, identities* (Wisconsin, 2006), p.11

reliability and the subjectivity of the memories of the people who had constructed the sources.¹⁸⁶ As Buckland said: "... the written is not necessarily any more reliable than the oral, both being situational records of perceived realities."¹⁸⁷ The conflict spawned a great deal of thinking about the part that memory plays within the historical discipline, and put simply: "The essential subjectivity of memory is the key issue to begin with".¹⁸⁸ Nora examined the subjectivity of memory and the associated problems, but was no less hard on the problems of history:

It [memory] remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.¹⁸⁹

Some writers have tried to bridge the gap between the supporters of the different approaches, pointing to the fact that oral histories, memories and written sources are all inter-connected. "Rather than insisting on the opposition between memory and history, then, we want to emphasize their interdependence".¹⁹⁰ Nord explained that, by becoming interested in Memory, historians could "seek to understand how people have constructed pasts that were useful to them in their own present."¹⁹¹ This is certainly true within the Morris world, as the collectors and dancers continually adapted their ideas to construct pasts that were acceptable to the changing cultures of the twentieth century.¹⁹² Nord also strongly supports the value of the memory of the individual, and it is those personal memories that have been the starting points for this study.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Thompson has long been a champion of Oral History in works such as *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000) and *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London, 1992).

¹⁸⁷ Buckland, *Dancing from Past to Present* (2006), p.11.

¹⁸⁸ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), p.88.

¹⁸⁹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* No. 26 (1989), p.8.

¹⁹⁰ Natalie Davis and Randolph Starn, the 'Introduction' to *Representations* No.26 (1989), p.5.

¹⁹¹ David Paul Nord, "The Uses of Memory: An Introduction." *The Journal of American History* Vol.85 No.2 (1998), p.409.

¹⁹² Sharp certainly constructed a past, as noted by Fox Strangways and Dommett. As Lowenthal wrote: "The past as we know it is partly a product of the present...." *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p.26.

But while memories may be constructed in culture and preserved in books, museums, or other public forms, they come alive in the minds of individual people.¹⁹³

Other writers have developed the idea that groups of people adopt a collective memory of the past that is acceptable to that group's world view, and the writing of Maurice Halbwachs has been used as the basis for all studies into this.¹⁹⁴ The work is valuable, although Morris dancing is a difficult subject to fit into any concept.¹⁹⁵ Halbwachs writes that families develop ways of doing things that are unique to that family: "... since a family possesses traditions that are peculiar to it."¹⁹⁶ If a Morris Side can be related to a 'family' that is true. As Misztal says, all of this helps the group cohesion:

Collective memory, being both a shared image of a past and the reflection of the social identity of the group that framed it, views events from a single committed perspective and thus ensures solidarity and continuity.¹⁹⁷

The Side might develop a collective view of its history which may not be a factual truth, but can provide continuity.¹⁹⁸ Some teams have adopted a strong collective identity, presenting a face to the world that other dancers and the public accept or reject.¹⁹⁹ Halbwachs explains that members of a family who have strong connections with the rest of society may bring ideas into the group that serve to adapt the traditions of the family:

Furthermore, since the general beliefs of a society reach family members through the mediation of those among them who are most directly involved in the collective life of the outside world, it can happen that these beliefs are either adapted to the family's traditions or, inversely, that they transform these traditions.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Nord, 'The Uses of Memory', p.409.

¹⁹⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans Lewis A Coser (Chicago, 1992). See also Barbara A Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (2003), p.51.

¹⁹⁵ This may not be entirely the fault of Morris dancing, as Cubitt writes: "...Halbwachs's statements about 'collective memory' and about its relationships to individual remembering are sometimes obscure and inconsistent..." Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), p.158.

¹⁹⁶ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (1992), p.74.

¹⁹⁷ Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (2003), p.52.

¹⁹⁸ Chandler explores this in relation to the Bampton dancers in *Morris Dancing at Bampton until 1914*, pp.4-6. Many dancers today would also assume that the Headington Quarry team had a long unbroken history when, as this study examines, this may not have been true (see the conversation with David Chaundy).

¹⁹⁹ The Royal Liberty Morris Men are an extreme case. From being a standard Cotswold team they changed into "the Biker's Morris" wielding scaffolding poles and wearing biker's leathers. This re-invention split both audiences and members of other Sides. Some loved it for its entertainment value, some hated it because they saw it as an insult to the 'tradition'.

²⁰⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p.74.

Where a member of a Side has strong connections with one of the national organisations, the collective view of the Side may be influenced by the national view. Among the interviewees for this study some expressed views that had been constructed by such organisations, which is not surprising, given the strength of the collective memory constructed by Sharp and his disciples. Through the EFDSS and the early years of the Morris Ring, a rural, agrarian pre-Christian past was invented for the Morris Dance, combined with a modern history that erased all mention of Mary Neal. The toast to The Immortal Memory of Sharp, detailed at the beginning of this study, served to re-inforce this imaginary past every time dancers met together, and to fix it in the collective memory of not only the individuals, but also whole teams. As Cubitt writes:

When the members of a group assemble to celebrate an anniversary or to commemorate a founder or benefactor, or even to celebrate the career of a retiring colleague or to honour the memory of a recently deceased member, the life of the group in the present is structured, momentarily at least, around the evocation of past events or experiences. Such events may even, in some cases, be designed explicitly to connect the past that is in living memory to the past that lies beyond it.²⁰¹

I have no doubt that when the toast to the Immortal Memory of Cecil Sharp was first proposed by Hunter it was with the very best of intentions, to remember a man who had undoubtedly done much for English Folk Music and Dance, but its later use at Morris gatherings could be viewed as a totalitarian desire to force dancers to accept the approved version of the history, and to cement that version in their minds by repetition.²⁰²

Following the views expressed by Dommett and Taylor, that the memories of the oldest members of the Morris community should be recorded, a request was made through the Morris Ring for members of Sides to offer to be recorded. Those early meetings were

²⁰¹ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), p.139.

²⁰² During my time as Ring Squire I did not use the “official” version of the toast, but instead asked dancers to remember all the people who had been instrumental in helping them to develop a love of the dance. This practice has been more widely followed in recent years, particularly with the current Squire (2014-2016).

interviews, in that the same questions were asked and answers were recorded, but it became apparent very quickly that the answers were presenting new and different questions that needed to be followed up in an increasingly free format. A pattern was established that saw the use of the same opening question with each interviewee – When and why did you start dancing the Morris? - which then developed into a deep conversation that enabled both parties to examine ideas and concepts about the Morris. This process was helped by the fact that the people involved were in most cases friends of long standing, who all had an interest in seeing a recording of the history, and while it was possible to suggest a time structure for the early discussions of perhaps ninety minutes, by the end of the study some conversations were taking whole afternoons. Controlling those conversations, knowing when to return to a structured interview and when to let the discussion develop was an 'art', and one that produced some significant successes together with a few failures, although only in the sense that the event became a simple interview with a collection of facts, rather than a complex development of ideas. Even those facts added considerably to the collection of detail about the Morris in the twentieth century.

As the study developed it became clear that it was necessary to talk to other members of the dance community, not simply the oldest but also to some of those dancers who had been instrumental in developing the Morris during the twentieth century, and to some of the dancers who are taking the dance in new directions. Despite this range of age and experience most discussions developed in the same way. The opening question was a useful way in and people were pleased to relate their Morris history. This led to new questions that followed their original comments, or perhaps investigated their particular connection with the developing world of the dance. In a number of cases, where the question of 'interview' or 'conversation' had been raised, the general view was that the

conversation mode was much preferred because not only did it serve to put the interviewee at ease, and was more appropriate given the friendship between interviewer and interviewee, but it helped to generate shared ideas.²⁰³

Forty-six recordings were made, with Roy Dommett and Mersey Morris Men being recorded in two different locations, and while in a few cases it would have been useful to return to ask further questions, the time limit for the study did not allow for this.²⁰⁴ Sadly, in five cases, men who had been interviewed and could usefully have been approached for further comment died during the course of the study. It is also not only unfortunate that time constraints have meant that some dancers who had offered their services have not been recorded, but sad that many important dancers have died during the course of the study and before an interview could be arranged.²⁰⁵ The urgency noted by people to record the memories of the oldest dancers has become all too apparent.

Some protocols would suggest that these interviewees should not be identified by their own names in the study. This point was raised and they were united in their desire to have their own names used throughout. They had volunteered their services, and wished to be remembered as dancers who had helped to have the story of the Morris recorded. Similarly, the teams mentioned have been named; it would be a nonsense if a history of the dance ignored the identity of the very groups that had forged that history.

²⁰³ In one case an interviewee, Keith Francis, spoke on the telephone about conversations, 18/11/2014, saying that he believed that it was only through conversations that insights into the Morris could be developed. He referred to a local initiative in his own community to gather the memories of Second World War veterans that had run into difficulties because the highly structured interview questions had led to a lack of spontaneity, and a consequent loss of much interesting material.

²⁰⁴ See Appendix 1 for a list of Interviewees.

²⁰⁵ Including Michael Blanford, John Monson and Reggie Welbeck – all of Cambridge Morris Men, Steve Adamson, Treasurer of the Morris Ring, and Ivor Allsop, Past Squire of the Morris Ring.

The Dancer's Stories:

1. The Second Generation.

Two of the interviewees, David Chaundy and Daniel Fox, came from families that have had a long and illustrious connection with Morris dancing, but their own dancing careers did not start from within those families.



Fig. 22: David Chaundy.

Faithful City Morris Men. The Fool in the white smock is David Chaundy, the son of Theo Chaundy of Oxford University, who interviewed William Kimber. Photograph by the author.

David Chaundy's father, Theo Chaundy, was a reader in Mathematics at Oxford University who had been involved with the Morris and later, wrote about it and recorded the playing of William Kimber. David's brother, Christopher Chaundy, married Mabel Stace who had been taught to dance by Kimber. David, however, never saw his father dancing, and can only remember seeing handkerchiefs waving above the crowds on May Morning in Oxford. He had started at Christchurch College, Oxford University, when, in 1949: "One night in dining hall someone said there's some local Morris Men who are advertising for more men."²⁰⁶ Ten of them went along to the Oxford Morris Men's practice – "which was a bit of an embarrassment because they'd chosen that particular night to invite William Kimber down to polish up their Headington." Chaundy persevered and

²⁰⁶ Interview with David Chaundy, 06/04/2014.

joined the Oxford City Morris Men in 1949 or 1950. Shortly after this a University Side was started, and the few men still dancing from the University moved over to the new team, and the men in Oxford City who were from Headington went back to see if they could restart the Headington Quarry Morris Men, leaving Oxford City without a viable team. This interesting comment shows that Headington were apparently still stopping and starting even though Kimber was now a celebrity within the Morris world.²⁰⁷ Chaundy had started playing pipe and tabor from the very beginning, and told how he had bought Kimber's records of Morris music:

May Morning we used to dance and I remember one May Morning I bought all Kimber's records, 78s, and one of them, I think it was 'Laudnum Bunches', had only got two men doing a corner, missed out the third man doing it. I mentioned this and he said "Oh you'd better play that for me"; I did, and he realised he'd got it wrong. I think they re-issued it with three corners in.

Later in the interview he used the words "the old man" to indicate what most Sides would term the Squire. It came in the telling of his first Morris tour, which was a joint tour with the Cambridge Morris Men:

Cambridge men wanted to do a tour but they hadn't got quite enough numbers and they invited us to join them, and so we had a joint tour in Fairford, under their auspices, where we learnt a lot about touring. John Dibdin was the Old Man.

Later Chaundy joined the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, started a boys' team which lasted for some ten years, and when he moved to Malvern he joined the newly-formed Faithful City Morris Men.

²⁰⁷ Geoff Metcalf also refers to the 1930s Headington team, saying that they had periods of inactivity. Conversation with Metcalf 31/05/1983, recorded in *The Morris Dancer* Vol.3, No.1 (1993), p.30. Geoff Metcalf died 01/05/1992.



Fig. 23: Daniel Fox.

*Daniel Fox, on the left, talking to Lawrie Aitken of East Suffolk Morris Men, 08/06/2008.
Photograph by the author.*

Daniel Fox's father, Peter Fox, went to Cambridge University and joined the dancers there. "He [Peter] was a founder member of Cambridge Morris Men and through that got to know Alec Hunter and Douglas Kennedy."²⁰⁸ Speaking about Peter's life as a churchman in Somerset, Fox said that – "He certainly helped West Somerset Morris Men in the 50s and 60s and possibly Exeter as well." Daniel Fox then made a comment about the nature of memory, which lies at the heart of the discussion about oral history: "...and this is either a remembrance I was told or I do actually remember it, you know what it's like when you're only four years old." He then told the story of his first public performance at the age of four, concluding by saying: "I either remember it or I've seen the photograph." Such comments are picked up by opponents of oral history as demonstrations of the difficulty presented by trusting to memory rather than written 'truth', ignoring the fact that if this statement had been written in a book it is likely that Fox would have left out the preamble noted above, and would simply have told the resulting story about his first public performance as if it was a fact. That writing, however,

²⁰⁸ Interview with Daniel Fox, 10/06/2011.

would still have come from a memory, and as Davis and Starn wrote: "Rather than insisting on the opposition between memory and history, then, we want to emphasize their interdependence."²⁰⁹

Peter Fox married one of the Hopkinson girls from Cambridge, seven sisters, of whom four married members of Cambridge Morris Men, so Daniel had three Uncles in the Side.

My mother was born and brought up in Cambridge. She was one of seven sisters, the Hopkinsons. In my father's Obituary in 'English Dance and Song' it said that he married one of the Hopkinson girls, who made courting in Cambridge such fun.²¹⁰

His mother, and at least two of his aunts went out on the Travelling Morrice tours, and Fox had a photograph of his Mother and Father on tour in Germany, with Imogen Holst in the party. Fox moved in to Thaxted in 1978, and although there was a strong family link with Morris dancing he could not remember dancing before: "I didn't knowingly start dancing until we moved to Thaxted. As a child I may well have danced then but I have no personal recollection of it." However, a Thaxted man, seeing Fox start with the team, said "You've done this before." It may have been that in this case his memory was at fault and Daniel Fox had danced before, but it could also be that as a child brought up in a dancing household he knew how to dance from watching his parents.

These observations by Chaundy and Fox show how close these dancers are to eminent characters from the past, a past that is still alive within their family memories. They provide a personal, unsophisticated view of people who have acquired an almost mythical quality among modern followers of music and dance, Kimber, who brought the dances from Headington to London, and Cecil Sharp himself. To Chaundy, Kimber was not a reverential figure of legend, he was the old man who he had helped to his feet after

²⁰⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, *Representations*, No.26 (1989), p.5.

²¹⁰ John Jenner in interview also talked about the Hopkinson girls.

he had slipped on the ice in an Oxford street; the man who had made a mistake in recording a tune. To Fox, Imogen Holst was the lady who danced alongside his mother during a dancing tour of Germany. Eric Foxley also met William Kimber:

[He was] the old Regimental Sergeant Major with them, and he didn't talk to you or nurture you, he just said – you know – 'faster' – 'get the beat stronger' – or in words like that; he was the big boss master with all the men there. No discussion, it was 'lay down the law'.²¹¹

Eric met Joan Sharp, sister of Cecil Sharp, and was given a three-hole pipe that had belonged to Sharp.

Joan Sharp was around in those days – hence I got Cecil Sharp's three hole pipe from her – which after I got it, I mean, this is going back, so she gave it to me late 60s or something about then, and I went down – it's stamped Dolmetsch on top – so I went down to Hazelmere and took it in and at that time old man Carl Dolmetsch was alive and he took one look at that and said 'I remember them. I made an order of six, a special order. Called Sharp he was.'²¹²

Mike Stephens of Peterborough Morris Men also has some memorabilia from Sharp. In the days when he was dancing with Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, they had danced in Horsham and a lady had approached him after one dance. "She said, 'Mr Sharp wouldn't approve of your galleys.' I hadn't got the heart to tell her they weren't galleys, but hook-legs!" But the lady returned later in the day and gave Stephens a bag containing some old, small, Morris bells. She explained that these had been given to her by Cecil Sharp many years before during a dance class, and she had not known what to do with them. Seeing the Morris men she decided that the time had come to pass the bells on.²¹³ Jack Brown of Stafford Morris Men made direct reference to this link with the past, explaining that in 1948 he had attended a week-long dance course at Attingham Hall, and there he met many people from the EFDSS who had known and worked with Cecil Sharp: "You

²¹¹ Interview with Eric Foxley, 04/10/2012.

²¹² One of these pipes may have been the subject of a story told by Lionel Bacon. He went to see Powell, the Bucknell piper, who complained about Helen Kennedy. Powell said that Kennedy had taken away the Bucknell three-hole pipe and given him in its place another pipe that was impossible to play. Bacon said that the new pipe was a very handsome wooden pipe but had continental fingering. It may therefore have been one of the Dolmetsch pipes ordered by Sharp. Lionel Bacon interviewed by the Winchester Morris Men, 22/02/1979.

²¹³ Story told by Mike Stephens, Eastern Area Representative for the Morris Ring, at an Eastern Area Instructional, 01/03/2014.

see you've got Douglas Kennedy, Helen [Kennedy], Marjorie Sinclair - Sinna, Elsie Avril played the fiddle beautifully, Catherine, Elsie Wightman, they were all there working with Sharp, and I was the next line on."²¹⁴ Lionel Bacon said that he attended a week's course at Cecil Sharp House in 1934 or 35, and he named some of the same teachers listed by Jack Brown.

The teachers included the Kennedys – Douglas and Helen – Maud Karpeles, Richard Callendar, William Ganniford, Sinna – Miss Sinclair, Amy Stodart and others. These were the great teachers of the times. You will notice that there were several women among them, and indeed it was a mixed course, men and women.

In a letter, John Walford wrote:

The EFDSS didn't continue the vocation schools after the war, but enthusiasts organised fortnight summer schools and other Groups weekend courses. These were run by Olive and Rhoda MacNamara and William Ganniford; I came to regard these people as second generation Sharp's disciples. They taught Morris, Rapper, Long Sword and Running Set as well as the Playford dances. My first one was at Grange-over-Sands held at the Whitsun weekend in 1960 that became my introduction to a new community from all over England with most in the London area. I attended Rhoda's monthly 'Baker Street' (Playford) dances held in a basement gymnasium in Paddington Street. For many years I went on three weekend courses a year where I learnt Morris, Rapper, Long Sword and Running set and most of my dance technique.²¹⁵

He also noted: "The Mac's were critical of the Morris that did not conform to Sharp's instructions; any variation was wrong." Roy Dommett also noted the link to the past when talking about his later collecting work:

The collecting of material meant that I went to see almost every surviving collector – all the survivors of the original Travelling Morrice – in other words, all those people who I thought had some contact with the tradition I went to have a chat to. Of course I missed key people but I did talk to Kenworthy Schofield, talked to Russell Wortley, never got to talk to Peck – I couldn't hold a conversation with him, never understood the man – I'd been at University but he was an academic of the worst sort – all the material flowed one way, he asked for things and I gave him things, but I never got anything back from him. I talked to Douglas Kennedy, talked to Maud Karpeles twice, Clive Carey half a dozen times, via Clive Carey and Rolf Gardiner a chance to talk to people who met Mary Neal and what her attitudes were.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Interview with Jack Brown, 26/05/2012. It is interesting that he lists five women and only one man.

²¹⁵ Letter from John Walford, August 2013. Lionel Bacon notes how, at that time, the EFDSS used folk dancing as an umbrella term to include what would now be called Morris Sword and country dance. Interview with Bacon, 22/02/1979.

²¹⁶ Interview with Roy Dommett, 21/06/2011.

2. The University connection.

In the 1980s a group of students from Edinburgh University recreated the Beltane Fire Festival in the city. The event is studied in depth by Tinsley and Matheson with particular reference to the work of van Gennep and Turner.²¹⁷ They begin with a detailed critique of Turner's theories, noting the general criticism that the idea of the liminoid was weak and needed further development, but they are supportive of what they call the 'Turnerian paradigm'. Tinsley and Matheson use the word 'revival' for the Festival. If there was an ancient Festival this might be an appropriate description, but it is more likely that the Festival is a recreation of a generalised ancient festival pattern. It could be contrasted with the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival, which is a revival of an older celebration and closely restores the major elements of that event, or with the Silurian Morris Men's Wassail evening, which they constructed to resemble older celebrations, but has no basis in an actual event, and is therefore not a revival.²¹⁸

Tinsley and Matheson write that participants in the fire Festival experience liminality by taking part in the event. There are 'van Gennep' portals to be passed through – "the Fire Arch" - and there are costumes.²¹⁹ The way in which this costume link applies to the Morris has been noted earlier, with many dancers explaining that they feel 'different' when they put on their Morris kit, and the idea of 'liminal bleed', feelings from within the state of 'otherness' feeding back into everyday life, can also be applied to the world of Morris Dancing.

The wider liminal space in which many of the volunteers are immersed, as well as the specific liminoid space of the Beltane Fire Festival, allows for an

²¹⁷ Tinsley and Matheson, 'Layers of passage: the ritual performance and liminal bleed of the Beltane Fire Festival, Edinburgh.' in Jennifer Laing and Warwick Frost, *Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World* (London, 2015).

²¹⁸ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/04/2013. The interesting link between the Edinburgh and Silurian events is that they both have wildly exceeded the assumed audience numbers.

²¹⁹ Tinsley and Matheson, p.150. "In terms of territorial passage, van Gennep refers to portals with rites of spatial passage becoming rites of spiritual passage."

exploration of such concerns that if positive can bleed back into feeling more complete in everyday life.²²⁰

While many dancers consider the changes that they feel when they are dressed in Morris costume to be positive, there is one particular example of a negative response. Through the 1980s the Phoenix Sword Team from Loughborough had a very imaginative and successful hobby-horse character, called The Eric, a phoenix bird. This animal had been created, and was always ridden, by the same man, Bob Jennings. Once in character he became extremely extrovert, and was often involved in crazy escapades. Audiences loved him, but were never sure if he was going to approach them as the good bird, or the bird who would attack them. But despite his success The Eric disappeared suddenly, and when questioned about this Jennings admitted that the animal was taking over the man, and it had frightened him. One day, out of costume, he found himself without thinking, about to attack someone who had bent down in front of him in a queue, exactly as he would do when wearing the costume.²²¹ He realised at the last minute and stopped, but he never wore the costume again.

Such extended immersion in liminoid space can become entrapping rather than liberating and can become an inhibitor to re-entering structured life.²²²

The Beltane Festival was started in a small way, largely by students from the Edinburgh University, and although it grew to include people from the city, students continued to be the dominant group of performers. These students could be said to be already experiencing liminality. While it might be true to say that all students, simply by being at an institution devoted to some form of higher education, are being exposed to a rite of passage, it would not be true to assert that all students experience, and are aware of,

²²⁰Tinsley and Matheson, p.150. Laing and Frost also say that many of the rituals and traditions examined in their book contribute to the well-being of the participants (pp.238,239) and this links with the comments made by Kirkpatrick, interviewed for this study.

²²¹ During my time as Bagman of the Ring I became close to the Phoenix team. When their animal disappeared, this was the story that I was told by the man who had created it.

²²² Tinsley and Matheson, p.153.

being in that liminal state. There are those who maintain strong connections with home, family and friends, and treat the education experience as no more than a job that needs to be done before returning to a continued existence. This was certainly not the case with the dancers interviewed for this study who had come into Morris through a University route.

Steve Bazire went to Bath University in October 1973.²²³ “There was a Freshers’ Week, and they had a thing called a Ceilidh, and no-one knew what it was. I remember spending some time trying to find out what it was.” Bazire did have some small understanding of the folk world, but he was more interested in the music.

I’d been a rock and pop music fan, but in November ’72 for some reason three of us went over to see Fairport Convention in Colchester and I bought a mandolin after that. No, I’d never seen Morris Dancing, I’d no idea what it was. I wanted to play actually. I played piano so I wanted to play something.

After going to the introductory Ceilidh, Bazire joined the Folk Society and found that they met in two rooms, the men dancing the Morris in one room, while the women met in the other. At ten-o-clock they would join for social dancing. “I started to play the mandolin for the dancing. I wanted to play but I just got sucked into it [the dance].”

The Society was run by Tubby and Betty Reynolds, who were to play a significant role in the rise of women’s Morris. Bazire said that Tubby encouraged the young men to have fun with their dance, but to dance well and put on a good show.

Jill Bazire started at Bath University in October 1974 and also went to the Freshers’ Ceilidh.

I knew nothing about folk music or dancing, I had only done country dancing at school. I hated discos and disco dancing, but I went to the Ceildh and thought ‘Oh this looks good’.

²²³ Interview with Steve and Jill Bazire, 02/12/2015.



Fig. 24: Steve Bazire.

Bath City in Ipswich. Tubby Reynolds is second from the right, Steve Bazire on the extreme left. Photo from the Bazire collection.

She also went on to join the Folk Society, spending time with the women and Betty Reynolds. Betty, she said, took a gentler approach, tending to sit back and let some of the young women run the sessions. From the way that they both spoke about Tubby and Betty it was clear that the two organisers treated the Society as one big family, inviting them to their home, and instilling in the young people a sense of the fun that it was possible to find in the folk world.

Caroline Peters also spoke about the Reynolds and their influence on the Folk Society at Bath. “Tubby and Betty were strong leaders.”²²⁴ Caroline had grown up on the edge of the Cotswolds and so had seen Morris Dancers in her village every year. When she went to Bath University in 1976 she also went to the Freshers’ Fair, and to the first Ceilidh. “It was a recruitment place. A big bunch of people in Morris kit thoroughly enjoying themselves.” Although she joined the Society, she also joined a Ballroom dancing club for a time, but stayed with the Morris team, because it was a very strong club, and again she commented on the sense of fun and family that the Reynolds brought to it.

²²⁴ Interview with Caroline and Tim Peters, 14/10/2015.

The man who was to become Caroline's husband, Tim Peters, followed a slightly different route into the folk world, but a Ceilidh played its part. "A friend in the Boy's Brigade invited me along to a youth club, which developed into a sixth form Association" The two young men began to run the Association's Discos and so, when Peters went to Exeter University he was invited to look after the Students' Union PA System, which was the only one available to the University societies.

Two of the organisations using it on a regular basis were the Folk Club and the Folk Dance Club, which I therefore got paid for going along to. At one Ceilidh fairly early on I met Great Western Morris and was impressed by their display, and the Folk Dance club was also great fun.

When Peters changed course he moved to Bath University and immediately joined the Folk Dance Society, and there met the Bath City Morris.

Keith Francis went to Reading University:

One Saturday evening, I had nothing to do, there was a Ceilidh advertised, so I went along to the Ceilidh, and they said the Morris Men meet on Wednesday night, so that's when I started. They had a Morris Side called Whiteknights attached to the University.²²⁵

Over ten years later David Tydeman also started at Reading University and followed the same route into the dance world. "I hadn't done any dancing before going to University but I went to the Freshers' Barn Dance and thought it was great."²²⁶ Francis spoke about the fact that folk dance and Morris was very strong in universities during the 1950s and 60s, and said that he went to a number of the inter-varsity weekends, including one in Glasgow. He said that Whiteknights did not go out very much to dance, but he does remember dancing on Rag Day. "We didn't use to go out and do much. We danced on Rag Day, and we even danced on a float. I've got pictures of us dancing Rapper on a float."

²²⁵ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

²²⁶ From talking to David Tydeman of East Suffolk Morris Men during dance evenings.

Roy Dommett attended Bristol University: “At Bristol University I met the Morris the first Rag Day – that was June ’52 – can’t remember now whether that was University or town.” He did not dance with them at that time, but through a friendship made at University and continued when he moved to Farnborough he finally started dancing in 1954: “during the winter he decided he wanted to raise a Morris Side for next summer and quite clearly I couldn’t escape.”²²⁷

Antony Heywood started dancing at Cambridge University:

I started in 1958 – ’57 – I started Country Dancing, never heard of the Morris – Country Dancing, I thought it was Scottish when I started English Country Dancing – I was looking for Scottish and found English – and one of the dancers doing Country was William Palmer, whom I think you’ve heard of, and he said to me – I’d been attending the Round for English Country Dancing at Cambridge for eight or nine months, and he said “Oh, you should come and do the Morris” and I said I don’t know what the Morris is, and he said I’ll come round one evening and show you some slides, so he came round to my digs and showed me some slides, and what impressed me was the After-Morris, the Après Morris – the beer, sitting outside a pub – I thought that’s for me, you see, and so I went along to Cambridge Morris Men and started learning. I joined them about, just after Easter, so it was very much a crash course, so I could do one or two dances in the summer, and I attended my first Travelling Morrice tour that year as well with a very limited repertoire.²²⁸

At Cambridge the progression from The Round, the Country Dance Society, to the Morris was a common one. Lionel Bacon said that in 1929 he started with an EFDS group within Cambridge University: “It was almost entirely women; they couldn’t get men.”²²⁹ But he quickly moved on to The Round, again noting: “I was very welcome as a man because they were so short of them.” From there it was a short route into the Cambridge Morris Men. Bacon also noted that The Round was full of “young people who danced for the fun of the thing. The elderly ladies in the EFDS used to scowl at us.” John Jenner said that he knew Russell Wortley through the folk dance world, and then Russell asked him to

²²⁷ Interview with Roy Dommett, 12/06/2011.

²²⁸ Interview with Antony Heywood, 28/11/2012.

²²⁹ Lionel Bacon’s interview with Winchester Morris Men, 22/02/1979.

join the Morris Men.²³⁰ Russell was also instrumental in getting Irvine Reid into the Morris in 1949:

On the Saturday afternoon Russell Wortley came up to me and said “Some of the men meet on Monday at the New Spring do you want to come along, have a half pint, eight-o-clock.” So I thought, as the New Spring was half way between my College and my digs there was nothing wrong with cycling past at eight-o-clock, going in and having a drink with the men. What I didn’t know was the terminology – ‘The Men’ was the Cambridge Morris Men. The Men were meeting at eight and I didn’t know anything about Cambridge Morris Men or any Morris Men. I knew Playford and Kentucky Running Set, and I now know I was meeting The Men, so I went. I was standing downstairs at the bar having a half pint and Russell looked at his watch and said “It’s time we went upstairs” and I thought ‘what the hell!’ I’d no idea what I’d let myself in for, but we all trooped off upstairs, and that’s when I found I was learning the Morris. I’d no idea what the Morris was, I’d no idea about it at all, but it was dancing, it was moving to music, and it was great.²³¹



Fig. 25: Dr Irvine Reid.

Dr Irvine Reid, on the left, talking to Brian Foster. 8 June 2008. Photograph by the author.

Antony Heywood had not known the Morris, but he had been shown some pictures before he started with The Men. Irvine Reid did not have that advantage, so – “At Easter time we went and did a show at Trumpington Village College, and the first time I saw Morris in costume, I was in it!”

²³⁰ Interview with John Jenner, 01/11/2012.

²³¹ Interview with Irvine Reid, 09/05/2012.

3. The School as Morris Teacher.

The problem of not knowing what the dance was also affected some of those dancers who began at school, another common way in to the Morris world. One of the Bathampton men, John Helsdon, said that he thought Morris was just a male form of country dancing, and it is difficult to know what the youngest children really thought they were doing when they were put into a Morris set.²³² However, Peter Trovell in Colchester certainly knew what they were doing, as his teachers were well-versed in the Morris:

I started in 1955 in my last year at Junior School, and – folk dancing, which everybody did at school – anyone who recognised they had a left foot and a right foot was told ‘you are going to Morris Dance.’ This was by Jock Balfour, who was a teacher at the school, and our Headmaster was a chap called Ernie Heard, who was the chap who first brought the Morris to Colchester in about 1926. I understand he was a member of the EFDSS National Demonstration Team and he came to teach in Colchester and he immediately started putting Colchester on its feet both folk and Morris-wise.²³³

Starting so young, and keeping going, is a little unusual. Keith Francis danced at Junior School, but then stopped until University. “Mr Worthy, the Headteacher, danced with an Oxfordshire Side, it wasn’t Headington, and he used to have a May Day celebration when the whole school was involved. They took some of the top class of boys and taught them Morris Dancing. I must have done it when I was ten and I can remember doing Headington ‘*Hunt the Squirrel*’, ‘*Rigs O’ Marlow*’, that was in 1947.”²³⁴ Again, David Tydeman, during conversations while out with East Suffolk Morris Men said exactly the same – “I hadn’t danced before University, well, except for dancing at Primary School.” When Mike Barclay spoke of dancing at school he regarded it as a positive: “I’ve been dancing all my life. I did country dancing from a very early age at school, right up to the age of thirteen. I was lucky, I went to a school that did that.” But Barclay also reflected that he only did country dancing, not Morris. Others started at Secondary school.²³⁵

²³² Interview with four Bathampton men, 12/05/2011.

²³³ Interview with Peter Trovell, 08/11/2012.

²³⁴ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

²³⁵ Interview with Mike Barclay, 26/04/2012.

John Walford started dancing in South London:

At 13 I went to Beckenham Technical School, SE London. In the second year, 1951/2, the Physics teacher Mr Fairs (I don't remember the spelling), of the Ravensbourne MM, persuaded a number of us to revive his Morris club (I had never heard of Morris) and we became enthusiastic.²³⁶

Many years earlier Norris Winstone had started dancing at his Secondary school, at a club run by the aptly-named Mr Morris:

When I was at Secondary School in Gospel Oak near Hampstead in London our PE master was named Mr Morris and he ran a little club on a Friday evening after school for dancing. We did country dancing, we were all boys, but we did country dancing and he also taught us one or two Morris Jigs. And that was really my introduction to Morris dancing. That was about 1928.²³⁷

Although Eric Foxley started his dancing with his Mother's Folk Dance Club, where, around 1951 at the age of 13, he had been given an accordion, it was watching a teacher at school that really cemented his love of the instrument:

... and in the meantime my maths teacher at school played accordion for the school folk dancing and I just watched utterly gobsmacked with his left hand on the accordion – all those buttons! What on earth does he do with them and I just copied him. It was sort of by the age of 14 that I was playing accordion all totally by ear and instinct and that was when I went and joined Thames Valley Morris.²³⁸

John Kirkpatrick also started his dancing career in a folk dance club, but in his case it was a church club, not a school one.

We used to go to St Paul's Church on Hammersmith Broadway. It was quite a thriving church and the lay reader was from Dorset and as a younger man he'd done country dancing, and he thought there was a youth club, there was a Mother's Union, a Men's group, all the different sections of the congregation, but there wasn't anything that everybody did together, and he said if we did country dancing all these different age groups could just mingle and it's a nice wholesome thing to do. This was in 1959, so he got in touch with Cecil Sharp House and said we'd like to have a country dance group, can you send someone, and they sent Hugh Rippon. He was a kind of young evangelist [for folk dance] in his late twenties I think, and he came along and we did country dancing every other week, and I was twelve so I hated it. I'd done country dancing at primary school and hated it. I was just awkward with girls and I didn't enjoy it at all, and I didn't like the teacher and it just seemed horrible. But I did it, and then country dancing with people I knew was in a way kind of worse. And Hugh saw all these families with lots of young lads and thought "Hey we could start a Morris team." So I was

²³⁶ Letter from John Walford, August 2013.

²³⁷ Interview with Norris Winstone, 12/05/2011. David Seaman of Westminster Morris Men also recalled dancing, many years later, in Primary School under the guidance of a Mrs Morris.

²³⁸ Interview with Eric Foxley, 04/10/2012.

twelve, I didn't go the first week but somebody broke a finger in a stick dance, so I thought this sounds fun. This is better than holding girl's hands.²³⁹

That club was the start of the Hammersmith Morris Men, although Hugh Rippon has a slightly different story to tell about the founding of the club:

Mr Day, Headteacher at Hammersmith Primary School, had moved there from Dorset where he'd done country dancing with Miss Maine and he thought it would be nice if he started a club in Hammersmith. So Sybil Lightfoot who was working at Cecil Sharp House, got hold of me and said would you go and start this club for them. So that was '59 I think. So within a couple of months of starting I was teaching the stuff!²⁴⁰

John Kirkpatrick noted the change that the young Hugh Rippon brought to the dance:

I have to start with Hugh Rippon, who founded the Hammersmith Morris Men and taught me my Morris dancing. I can't imagine a more inspiring and exciting initiation than the one Hugh gave us in Hammersmith. He was in his twenties, full of vigour and enthusiasm, a lovely strong dancer, he knew his stuff academically, he was an intelligent and witty teacher, he was inclined to be disrespectful and irreverent, and wasn't afraid to bend the rules slightly to accentuate the effect of any given movement or gesture or step to bring out the drama in the dance. He cared passionately about the dancing, and about doing it as well as possible. Nobody could have prepared the ground better than Hugh Rippon.

Kirkpatrick also makes the comment that he felt Hugh Rippon was only just one step ahead of the team, and despite their conflicting views of where the team started, Rippon agreed in interview that it was a correct assessment of his abilities.

One of the first ones was – no, not the first night, second night was John Kirkpatrick, aged fourteen, in shorts, and that first night he did a stick dance and he broke one of his fingers, but he said 'Oh, this is much more exciting than joining the choir at church!'

Once again a different view of the incident, but the thing that it points towards is that the sense of fun and danger encouraged John to join the Morris. On balance, it is likely that it was not John Kirkpatrick who suffered the broken finger, as he would have been more likely to have remembered such a personal incident.

²³⁹ Interview with John Kirkpatrick, 25/04/2014.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Hugh Rippon, 05/05/2013.



Fig. 26: Hammersmith MM at Sidmouth.²⁴¹

Rippon is insistent that he did not follow the old style methods of either the EFDSS or the Morris Ring. He taught young men to have fun, to enjoy their Morris, and in this way he was following the same approach taken by Mary Neal in the first revival. His approach was certainly successful with Hammersmith and John Kirkpatrick commented on this energy, but he also linked it with the need for precision in the dance, saying that in some case teams have lost the respect for any precision:

- but there was a lot of precision, I think everyone was then - early 60s let's say
 - there was a lot more precision in the dancing that has almost, not entirely disappeared, but I think a combination of precision and energy is the ideal thing. I think precision has become less of an importance for some of the younger people who are pushing the boundaries today, I think they're going for the energy and the spectacle and they've lost the point about the precision, because without the precision it's not exactly a waste of time, but it's such a huge part of the art.

Charlie Corcoran was immersed in folk ways from an early age.²⁴² He remembered seeing the Marshfield Mummers when he was very young, in the 1950s, in an age when they did not have to worry about traffic in the main village street.

My earliest memory of anything is the Marshfield Mummers . . . but it was just the village, nobody else, 'cause we're looking at 1954/55. In those days hardly anybody had cars, it was silent. I was terrified.

As a very young boy he was taken to see Bristol Morris Men when they visited Weston Super Mare, but he started dancing at Weston Grammar School in the 1960s. "The

²⁴¹ Schofield, *Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival*, p.46.

²⁴² Interview with Charlie Corcoran, 05/05/2013.

school had a Morris team that had been started by Peter Boyce, and when he left a bloke called Bill Moody took them over.”²⁴³ Corcoran explained that a number of teachers at the school were involved in Morris dancing, including their music teacher. Corcoran went on to study music at Teacher Training College in Birmingham, and the music link could have been why he was encouraged to join the dancers, but the sense of fun, of doing something different, may also have been a simple draw. “For a couple of May Days we all got into a hired minibus and went round the primary schools. I made my first hobby horse for that.” Because some of the teachers also danced with Mendip Morris Men, in 1965, while still at school, Corcoran also joined the Mendip Side.²⁴⁴

4. Learning in Clubs.

All these dancers entered a club to continue their dancing activities, but where the club was part of a school or University it could be said that the main organisation surrounded that club with a security cordon. In the school environment some of the interviewees have indicated that they trusted and admired the teachers who led the dance activities, as with Charlie Corcoran above, and they were therefore prepared to follow willingly into new experiences. Kirkpatrick said quite clearly that he did not like the teacher at the school, but he was happy to follow the new arrival, Hugh Rippon. At University the students had already entered the changed existence, the liminal state, and joining a dance club was only to take a further step along that route. However, others began their Morris careers by joining a club outside the education system.

²⁴³ Peter Boyce was one of the founder members of Mendip Morris Men. When he left Weston Super Mare he took up a teaching post in Chingford in January 1961 and started a new boys’ team at that school. They later became the Chingford Morris Men. From The Morris Federation Spring Newsletter, 2010.

²⁴⁴ Corcoran noted how influential the school became, with other pupils going on to dance with teams in the midlands. Details of the Weston Folk Dance Club show that Morris Dancing was taking place in the town as early as 1913, led by two women at a local school. From the web site of the club, <<http://www.westonfdc.co.uk>> [accessed 08/04/2016]. Possibly they were earlier connected to an Espérance group, perhaps the one noted by Charlie Corcoran in his interview.

If that club had a central, headquarters building, it could be argued that by passing through the doorway the prospective dancer was taking the first steps towards liminality, was beginning the journey towards or through a period of 'otherness'. Turner said that he was concerned not with the finished article, but with the journey, and the young people taking that first step into a new interest were beginning a journey. Even when there was not a dedicated club room, young dancers would be taken to a practice hall when joining the club, and in the 1950s many people wanted to join clubs and organisations. Hugh Rippon talks about this in relation to his family: "I thought, I want to join a club, a Morris club, a men's club; my brother's joined the local cricket club in Gloucestershire, I'll join a club; my other brother had joined a rowing club, I want to be in a club!"²⁴⁵ When Rippon came down from Cambridge University in the 1950s he attended the folk dance clubs at Cecil Sharp House in London, and joined London Pride Morris Men, and then Woodside Morris Men. Through his work with the Society he was approached to help a school team in Hammersmith.²⁴⁶ This enthusiastic group became the Hammersmith Morris Men. Rippon had already started a short-lived team in his home village of King's Stanley, and then as his work with Hammersmith Morris Men became well-known he was asked to help to form a team in Harrow, in North London. This became the Herga Morris Men.

Club activities were a crucial component of society in the 1950s, an aspect of society that began in school and continued through all forms of further education, and into everyday life. R J Morris writes about this: "The principle characteristic of the twentieth century was a simple increase in the density of organisation. There was a focus on organised leisure, on the world of clubs and hobbies."²⁴⁷ The need to join a club or society

²⁴⁵ Interview with Hugh Rippon, 5/05/2013.

²⁴⁶ Hugh Rippon.

²⁴⁷ Robert J Morris, "Clubs, Societies and Associations", Chapter 8, in Michael Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 1990). See also David Doughan and Peter Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (Abingdon, 2006), and Kate Fox, *Watching the English* (London, 2005).

is evident throughout the interviews, and through the written histories of dancers. Mary Neal's arrival into the world of folk dance was because of her own club, The Espérance Club in London. Rolf Gardiner was a keen advocate of youth movements across Europe, and one of the founders of the Travelling Morrice. Ivor Allsop began his dancing career with the Woodcraft Folk.²⁴⁸ Jack Brown of Stafford Morris Men, who worked for the EFDSS and had spoken about his direct connection with the days of Sharp, started dancing at a youth club in 1942.

At the beginning of the war in Whitchurch they started a youth club. It was a boys' club – there was no mixing in those days – but on the Wednesday it was girls' club and about 1942 the girls invited the boys from nine to ten-o'clock for folk dancing. I went along but there was one stipulation – if you didn't dance you were out so I danced and I enjoyed it, and then later on Betty Icken and Jack Hollins on the piano came from the folk dance society and gave further instructions.²⁴⁹

In 1945 Brown went into the RAF, and at the end of the war he attended a dance workshop at Attingham Hall in Shropshire. When he left the services in 1948 he went back to the Whitchurch youth club and started a Morris group.²⁵⁰ In recent times going to a youth club after leaving the Services would not be considered appropriate, but one of the Bathampton men followed the same route into the dance.

My father ran a youth club in Bath, and when I came out of the army I went to this youth club 'cause I hadn't got anything else to do, and there was a little girl there who I quite fancied. She did country dancing at this youth club, so I did country dancing. As an infant I'd done it down in Sussex at Infant School. This lady was also teaching boys Morris Dancing and we arrived early and they were one short so they said would I stand in. I did. They had five men and a chair. So I stood in for the chair and I still stood here and they said 'move about a bit', so when they did a back to back I did a back to back. If they did a figure of eight I did a figure of eight and they said 'are you coming next week?' and I said I suppose so. I then used to go on a regular basis.²⁵¹

Mike Chandler came into the Morris in 1952 through his Youth Club:

In my youth, in my early teens, our youth club used to have a monthly visit from Molly du Cane for her country dancing evening, and we used to go to her dancing

²⁴⁸ Ivor Allsop, Squire of the Morris Ring, 1978-80, and member of Barnsley Longsword.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Stafford Morris Men, 07/11/2012.

²⁵⁰ Jack Brown went on to work for the EFDSS. When he was offered the post, the company he was working for tried to persuade him to stay and asked how much the Society were going to pay. When he said £250 per year they said that there was no way they could match that amount.

²⁵¹ John Helsdon of Bathampton Morris men, 12/05/2011.

in the Victoria hall in St Albans about once a month or every quarter, and at some point I was plucked out of the crowd and she said 'I want to talk to you. This young man ought to take up Morris dancing.'²⁵²

Mike Chandler touches on one of the reasons for the great popularity of clubs for young people, the chance that it gave for travel. In Chandler's case it was a local journey into the nearest large city, St Albans, but for John Ryder from Lower Withington, the nearest city was much bigger and further away:

But you've also got to remember that in villages like ours there wasn't much going on in those days. As someone said to me the other day, well, you were lucky if you had a bicycle. It was like a club, you took part in this once or twice a week and then you got the opportunity to go out weekends. On a bus! And you went to all these strange places like Belle Vue, Prestwich, and Salford.²⁵³

The problem of having little opportunity for a social life was not confined to rural communities. Bob Tatman grew up in Orpington during the war:

The whole of my life and the life of my contemporaries, revolved around the war. We had more than our fair share of suburban bombing because the balloon barrage went - you can just see, at the end of those trees, and the anti-aircraft guns that shot 'em down were all around here, and therefore quite a lot of the German planes got a bit scary when they saw this lot and they thought, get rid of the bombs and get back to Germany while we're safe, and we were underneath where they used to drop them, so life was a little bit hectic. The result was we all had virtually no social life.²⁵⁴

Bob went in to London to University, went home in the evening, put up the black-out and stayed in, so it is not surprising that by the end of the war he was ready for a social life:

I hadn't really hardly spoken to a girl until the age of twenty because there was none there, it was an all-boys grammar School here; I studied engineering which in those days was a closed book to women.

He found an evening class in folk dance that had been started in a local Adult Education Centre, and was being run by Walter Faires who was also the foreman of Ravensbourne Morris Men. "Although he was only paid to do social dancing, he was always recruiting, and very quickly he got all the men together and started teaching them Morris."²⁵⁵ Even

²⁵² Interview with Mike Chandler, 13/07/2012.

²⁵³ Interview with John Ryder and Shirley Rogers from Lower Withington, 04/10/2012.

²⁵⁴ Interview with Bob Tatman, 19/09/2012.

²⁵⁵ Wally Faires had previously run a boys' team called Balgowan and had danced with the Morley College team. <<http://www.ravensbourne.org/about.htm>>

into the 1950s the problem of what to do with free time still exercised the minds of young people. Mike Barclay solved the problem of Saturday night:

About that time my brother announced that he'd joined the English Folk Dance and Song Society and they put him on to a local group in Benfleet, where they had a regular Saturday evening dance. So I wandered around and thought 'what shall I do on a Saturday?' and I thought 'Oh I'll go and do this', so I used to go there, then I joined the club.²⁵⁶

The recordings show that in those immediate post-war years, and well into the 1950s, there was a strong spirit of adventure in many communities. As Mike Barclay said: "There were some good people about who organised things." There was a desperate need to break away from the austerity of the war years and to try something new, and something which may bring a sense of fun back into life. In Birmingham in 1948, Gladys Watson, the Head Teacher of Acocks Green Junior School, was asked to start folk dance classes "at the request of ex-ARP wardens", and that led eventually to the formation of Jockey Morris Men.²⁵⁷ In 1951 a Square Dance craze swept the country, as Princess Elizabeth was seen dancing in Canada (Fig.27). Mike Barclay remembered: "Then came the Square Dance craze in 1951 when Princess Elizabeth went to Canada and did some Square Dancing. Suddenly over here people were jumping on the bandwagon and started dancing."



Fig. 27: Princess Elizabeth.²⁵⁸

*Princess Elizabeth dancing at a Square Dance in Ottawa,
given by the Governor General Viscount Alexander, 17th October 1951.*

²⁵⁶ Interview with Mike Barclay 26/04/2012.

²⁵⁷ David Ayres and John Stait, *5 More Men* (2010), p.8.

²⁵⁸ <<http://dancelines.com.au/the-dancing-queen-and-the-abominable-no-man>> [accessed 01/12/2014].

Eric Foxley also referred to the fact that Princess Margaret danced at Cecil Sharp House, and in 1960 she became the President of the EFDSS. Dance Festivals were held across the country, in Stratford upon Avon, in Sidmouth, and Irvine Reid was dancing at festivals in London.

Reid had started dancing at Cambridge, but when he went to continue his training at Guy's Hospital in London in the early 1950s he joined The Whirligigs, a folk dance team based at Cecil Sharp House, that regularly gave demonstrations at London festivals. He also followed what became the regular route for Cambridge Morris Men after they came down from University, into the London Pride Morris Men. At the time London Pride were a large and active club that had been started by women folk dancers. Within the organisation they had a rambling section that organised weekends away twice each year, (a club within a club), and Reid joined in enthusiastically, continuing to travel with them until the end of his life.

Mike Barclay took part in the festival held in Southend. He did not go with the Benfleet dance group to Stratford but that was the start of the Morris Side that he eventually joined, the Benfleet Hoymen:

In 1952 I think, a group of them decided to go to the Stratford on Avon Festival, and at this Festival they learned some Morris dancing so when they came back they announced we're going to start a Morris Side and we're going to plan to dance on Coronation Day in '53.²⁵⁹

Other Sides were either started for the Coronation, or used the event to inject new life into the team. At this time, in the 1950s, when roads were poor and motorised transport still unreliable, people were prepared to travel long distances in search of fun. John

²⁵⁹ Mike Barclay, 26/04/2012.

Walford in 1960 travelled from south London to Grange over Sands, but Norris Winstone related how, even in the 1930s, he had travelled from London to Giggleswick in Yorkshire to attend a folk dance course:

Leta Douglas ran courses at Whitsun in Giggleswick, and we always went to those – and there they had some absolutely super teachers and dancers – Willy Ganniford and Tommy Adkins I remember.²⁶⁰

Norris was not dancing with an established team at that time. They made up teams from the dancers attending the course, and then they toured the local area on Whit Monday. There were both men's and women's teams – "nobody bothered!" Lionel Bacon also spoke of a car journey in 1935 in a hired car, travelling from Cambridge to the Welsh Borders for a Travelling Morrice tour: "We hadn't gone very far before we discovered there were no brakes on the car!"²⁶¹ After the war the longest and most adventurous journey recorded must be the one undertaken by Irvine Reid when he joined the Travelling Morrice tour to the Forest of Dean in 1950. At the time Irvine lived in Felixstowe on the Suffolk coast:

The Travelling Morrice is where it got into my bones. The first year it was cycling to the Forest of Dean. I cycled from here [Felixstowe] to Cambridge, on to Oxford, spent the night in Oxford, on to Gloucestershire, and then I'd a week's cycling tour, and cycled home. I dug out of my records my 1950s Youth Hostel card that tells me I signed in to Cambridge, Oxford and Mitcheldean Youth Hostels. On the way back, two of the people I was on tour with gave me digs, one was in Gloucester and the other was in Buckingham.²⁶²

Irvine admitted that he could not contemplate such a journey today.²⁶³

Roy Judge related how Cecil Sharp had used a bicycle on his collecting trips, but that he also depended upon the railways of the time.²⁶⁴ Many years later Roy Dommett also

²⁶⁰ Winstone, 02/09/2009. Leta Douglas collected the Boosbeck Sword Dance in 1934. Ivor Allsop, *Longsword Dances* (Brattleboro, 1996), p.45.

²⁶¹ Bacon tape, 22/02/1979.

²⁶² Irvine Reid, 09/05/2012.

²⁶³ Lionel Bacon wrote that in 1935 he walked from Thaxted in Essex to the Cotswolds to join a Travelling Morrice tour. *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.7, p.209. Des Herring walked from Slough to a Youth Hostel in the Cotswolds where he first learned to dance. Interview 09/09/2009.

²⁶⁴ Roy Judge, 'Sharp and the Morris', *Folk Music Journal*, Vol 8, NO.2 (2002), p.213.

relied upon the rail network as he began his Morris career, regularly travelling by train and bus to attend evening meetings:

I had no car in those days, but I found it possible to get to Abingdon practice and back by public transport – bus into Reading, train from Reading to Radley, Radley into Abingdon, attend a practice at the Station Hotel, have a couple of drinks and come back again.²⁶⁵

And so he found himself travelling from home in Church Crookham to dance with Thames Valley Morris Men, Abingdon Morris Men, Oxford City Morris Men and Farnborough Morris Men. His commitment to the Morris may have been extreme, but many others travelled to join Morris clubs.

Beth Neil came into Morris Dancing through a much shorter journey. She had grown up in the midlands in the 1960s, and as her father was a Scot she had experienced Scottish dancing. When they moved to Eyam in Derbyshire she did not dance, but after a while found the Carol Singing tradition that is still strong in the Derbyshire/Sheffield area. At Birmingham University she found Ceilidh dancing, but all that stopped when she moved south after university to work in Windsor.²⁶⁶ Therefore, she did have some small background in general folk traditions, even though she had not seen Morris Dancing, when she was offered a lift to work.

When I moved to Windsor I happened to get a lift with someone whose wife had just started this funny thing called Morris Dancing and because I said I'd done Scottish they said come along and that was it. I was hooked and that was January '75 and I've been passionate about it ever since.²⁶⁷

Neil stayed with Windsor Morris, although she danced occasionally with other teams, and went on to become an officer in the Morris Federation.

²⁶⁵ Roy Dommett, 21/06/2011.

²⁶⁶ Folk Dance was strong in the West Midlands for many years, and certainly during the late 1960s under the guidance of Ken and Sybil Clarke. Ayres and Stait, *5 More Men* (2010).

²⁶⁷ Interview with Beth Neil, 21/01/2013.

Sarah Slocombe also followed the familiar pattern of experiencing a Ceilidh, which led to a Morris Side, but in her case the Ceilidh was not connected to a University. She moved to East Sussex in 1999 to teach and took to going to Barn Dances. Unfortunately for her, her husband at the time did not like dancing, and so she had to go alone. The Caller and the Band members were Morris Dancers and she was taken with the idea of Morris, but not with them, as they were members of Ashdown Forest Morris Men, a Morris Ring Side. She now says that she suspects that some of the initial impetus to take up Morris was actually a device to annoy her husband, but for her, it was also through a love of dancing.

So I found a female Side – Shalesbrook. I played the violin a bit as well, so they encouraged me to play. They were really just supportive people, they were lovely. At that time there were about twenty; I was the youngest. Then my daughter joined, she was about nine, which was lovely.²⁶⁸

Slocombe stayed with Shalesbrook, but also started a Border Morris team, and the repercussions of that move will be considered later.

The entry of Barry Care into the world of Morris Dancing combined a number of themes. “When I was at primary school elderly ladies came in to take country dancing.”²⁶⁹ He accepted that these ladies only appeared ‘elderly’ to the young children of the early 1950s, and they did not teach Morris, but he did remember being interested the dance moves and the music. Care went on to Teacher Training College in 1960:

When I went to college in Abingdon a chap used to come from Oxford to play the accordion and call dances. We went mainly not because I was interested in country dancing but they used to bring a coach load of nurses from the Radcliffe which to an all-male college was an extremely interesting evening.

At this point his dancing career had only covered country dancing, and there had been

²⁶⁸ Interview with Sarah Slocombe, 15/02/2016.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Barry Care MBE, 09/10/2013.

no introduction to Morris.²⁷⁰ When he started teaching he continued with country dancing by helping the young teacher who ran the club:

But the chap who had the classroom next door to hers, he used to teach the boys Morris. He was Harold Albright, the past Squire of Northampton Morris Men. He started his dancing about 1950 I should think, so we're talking about 63 to 68, that sort of period.

When Albright was sent on a lengthy course he asked Care to take over the Morris club, because they were committed to dancing at a May Festival.

So from the Autumn term through to the Spring term I taught the Morris. He had me there for about a month with him – I did Bacca Pipes, Bean Setting, Rig's O Marlow, all the Headington ones you see, to records which the Society had produced, so that's how I started the Morris, with the boys in the school.

When Barry Care got his first Headship he carried on training a boys' team, and they danced in the village May Day procession. He took them to festivals in Birmingham and London, and explained that May Day customs and May songs were still very important in Northamptonshire. "Nothing might have come of it, but we had to do the bells up here [Moulton] and the fundraising started in 1971." Care and the Vicar of Moulton Parish Church decided to combine the Church Fete, the Carnival Procession and the May Queen Ceremony on the same weekend, and someone suggested that there should be a Barn Dance in the evening. They contacted Barry Lewis, the local EFDSS Organiser, and he agreed to arrange the dance.

Cause, we didn't know, but Brackley Morris Men had been booked, so at the back there stood me and all the members of the Bell Ringers, some members of the church choir, and the Brackley men came crashing through the door. In those days they were good, young men, absolutely brilliant. So I said 'I do it with my kids at school.' Will you teach us? Can we have a go?

Nothing further happened until August when the question was asked again, and this time four men met on the first Thursday in September in Care's garage. The next week there were twelve present and that was the birth not only of Barry Care's dancing days, but

²⁷⁰ Care's experience of Morris in Abingdon closely resembled my own: "But I was in Abingdon remember – never saw a Morris Dancer, never heard anything about Morris Dancing the three years I was there. Now I find that extraordinary. That was 60 to 63." See Chapter 4, the section on Sides and Communities.

also of Moulton Morris Men. As Care had a very limited repertoire of Headington dances they asked Northampton Morris Men for help, but received a very cool reception and were told that they could not possibly succeed with their venture. Instead they went back to Harold Albright and he willingly came to help and brought a musician, Mike Jowett, to play for them.



Fig. 28: Barry Care MBE.

*Barry Care, on the left, walking up the hill to Saddleworth Church at the 1995 Rushcart.
Photograph by the author.*

In Barry Care's case a school could be said to have provided the initial impetus for his progress into the world of Morris Dancing, but it was the club that he formed, together with a village community, that cemented his love of the dance. Once again, he stressed that sense of the fun and enjoyment that was felt by them all when they first saw Brackley Morris Men – "Absolutely Brilliant!"²⁷¹

Conclusion.

In the early years of the twentieth century Morris Dancing was found to be the preserve of rural workers in a few Cotswold villages, and the interviews provided evidence of how much has changed. By the 1930s dancers were from a completely different social grouping, often being university undergraduates, who were prepared to travel long

²⁷¹ See Fig.46, and the interview with John Weaver of Brackley Morris Men, p.189.

distances to take part in dance weekends, and a recurring theme is that many dancers throughout the century were filled with a great sense of enthusiasm and a willingness to try new things in a search for adventure, or as they all reported, a search for fun.

The attempts by Sharp and Neal to get Morris Dancing onto the education syllabus certainly had success, judging by the number of interviewees who reported that they had danced either at school or university. The school route is open to some criticism; Barclay said he was 'lucky' to attend a school that valued dance, but Kirkpatrick said that he 'hated it', and evidence from my own career in education would suggest that in many cases, folk dance taught in Primary School is later regarded simply as something that is performed by children, not to be enjoyed by adults. By university level it was a success for many, opening up a new way of life for young people away from home. It was noteworthy that the Bath City team had such an influence, and was run by Tubby and Betty Reynolds, who willingly invited their young dancers into their home. They used Roy Dommett as their instructor, and he achieved high status within the Morris world, but it might be considered that Dommett would not have become so well-known had it not been for the support that he was given by Bath City.²⁷² This family grouping could easily fit into the Turnerian paradigm described by Tinsley and Matheson. The young people were experiencing significant life changes, and putting on the Bath Morris persona allowed them to step outside their everyday existence, yet into a welcoming and secure environment. Even interviewees from other places appear to have been experiencing some significant change in their lives – starting work perhaps, or even undergoing marital difficulties. It is possible that joining a club, making their way among a new society, and putting on a costume, allowed them to step outside their everyday existence for a short time.

²⁷² Steve Bazire said in interview that Bath City Morris Men only joined the Morris Ring to help Dommett's attempt to become Ring Squire. 02/12/2015.

The EFDSS is shown to be a strong influence from its inception in the 1930s through to the 1960s. Interviewees spoke about being taught by Society instructors or going to sessions at Cecil Sharp House. Norris Winstone, John Walford and Irvine Reid went to Cecil Sharp House in London to attend dance classes, and while they, and others, supported the work of the EFDSS, not everyone was so appreciative. In later years The Morris Ring often came in for considerable criticism for apparently insisting on a standardised form of Morris, but the evidence from these interviews suggests that the EFDSS exercised a much stronger influence on the development of the dance from the 1930s until the mid - or late - 1960s.

From the 1920s through to the 1950s it was invariably women from the Society who taught both folk and Morris dancing, and played for the dance. As a number of the interviewees pointed out, this was quite understandable, because the men were either away fighting, or lost to the war. It was the women who kept more than the farms and factories going through the difficult years. The comments made about the years following the Second World War bring into clear focus a number of important elements of social history, not necessarily connected with dancing. The restrictions of the war years, graphically described by Bob Tatman meant that people were desperate for not only simple enjoyment, but for something to do and they were prepared to go to considerable lengths to arrange clubs, meetings and Festivals. Folk dancing was important in those post-war years, and was given an enormous boost by the interest shown by the Royal Family, with a 'Square Dance Craze' following the Royal visit to Canada in 1951. Stage shows and Festivals were held across the country, and while the long-lived and prestigious Stratford Festival stopped, Sidmouth survives. The people involved in the folk dance world were all huge enthusiasts for dance and they worked tirelessly to further

the art, to develop the teams, to encourage new people into the community of dancers, and to take the dances out to the public. They also showed that English willingness to form and join clubs, travelling considerable distances to take part in club activities and dance events across the country. Irvine Reid's cycle trip may have been extreme, but others travelled by bike, car, bus and train on a daily basis to dance with or play for groups, or to talk to surviving members of the old teams.

In the 1960s Morris Sides were increasingly formed by teams of enthusiastic young men intent on finding the vigour that dancers like Hugh Rippon and others were bringing to the dance. Some of these new teams came not from the folk dance world, the old EFDSS dominated dance world, but from the growing community of folk clubs that arrived with the second folk revival. These teams valued energy and athleticism, and actively sought out links to the past. These changes that affected the Morris world during the 1960s were discussed by John Kirkpatrick and Hugh Rippon. Their observations about the older, regimented style of Morris, and the way in which younger clubs wanted to explore new ways, and to bring the fun back into the dance, can be seen as an up-to-date version of the arguments between Sharp and Neal. As Kirkpatrick points out, there has to be a balance of fun and precision for the dance to work well. If either element is missing the art is lost.

However, the one common factor noted enthusiastically by everyone, was fun. All interviewees said that they valued the entertainment and fun that Morris dancing provided. It was interesting that no-one suggested that they had started to dance because of the traditional nature of the Morris, or to continue something that was perceived as a national treasure. Some of them tried other forms of dance, but found that the Morris gave them the most pleasure, so it was Morris dancing that they stayed with.

3: Women in the Morris.

When Sharp saw the Headington Quarry dancers in 1899 the few remaining Morris Sides were all male, both dancers and musicians. In the years following this meeting the men of Cambridge went back to find the old, male dancers and musicians, and after the Second World War teams that were revived were again all male. By the time that young men were coming into the dance during the second revival of the late 1960s they could be forgiven for assuming that Morris Dancing was an all-male activity, developed by men for men over many hundreds of years. Whether or not this was true in the distant past is now lost to us, but for the twentieth century this view of the dance hides the fact that women played a major role in securing the survival of Morris Dancing, and in the last quarter of the century brought about one of the greatest changes seen in the Morris Dance world.²⁷³ This chapter will explore this hidden history, the underlying social conditions that governed the way in which women related to the dance, and the seismic shift of the 1970s that saw the arrival of the women's teams.

The First Revival.

The toast at Morris Ring Feasts has always been "to the Immortal Memory of Cecil Sharp." This was proposed by the first Squire of the Ring, Alec Hunter, at the inaugural Meeting in Cecil Sharp House in London in 1934:-

Before we sit down I am going to ask you to drink to the memory of the one man above all others to whom we owe our knowledge of the English Morris.²⁷⁴

This abridged version of Sharp's influence on the first revival is interesting for a number of reasons. Immediately Hunter has directed the history towards one 'man' above all others, ignoring the many people, and many women involved in the rediscovery period

²⁷³ Some dancers would insist that it is not lost, but that there is some evidence that women did perform Morris dances in the distant past.

²⁷⁴ Abson, *The First Log Book of the Morris Ring* (1991), p.7.

before the First World War. Hunter also suggests that Sharp immediately saw the great value of the dance, when in fact after that first meeting Sharp was only interested in the music. However, it can be difficult for twenty-first century observers to appreciate that in stating matters in this way Hunter was being true to the social mores of the 1930s, and his words would have been accepted equally by both men and women. Indeed, the very strong-minded women who were instrumental in keeping the dance alive during the war periods would probably have been the first to agree with Hunter's statement. They would have agreed not only because Sharp at that point was still held in high and unquestioning regard for his work collecting both song and dance, but also because, during the early years of the revival, the newly emerging world of folk dance and song was keeping close company with the political world at a time when that world was embroiled in scandal and controversy, and had become a period that many wished to forget. Therefore, the main protagonists of the drama were lost from the history, and so it was not simply one 'man' who saved the Morris, but a man who for a vital but short period of some four or five years was working alongside one woman, and arguably that woman provided the vital spark that ignited the revival.

When Sharp saw the Headington men he noted down the tunes that they had used from their musician William Kimber, and returned to London where he both constructed a musical work containing the tunes and lost Kimber's address.²⁷⁵ For the next five years he did nothing further to explore Morris Dancing and there the story might have ended had it not been for the growing Labour movement, the rise of the Women's organisations, and the intervention of Mary Neal (Fig.29).

²⁷⁵ The manuscript music for "Suite for Small Orchestra" is held with the Sharp papers in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.



Fig. 29: Mary Neal.²⁷⁶

Clara Sophia Neal was born in 1860 in Birmingham, and she later wrote that she was not happy with her restrictive, Victorian upbringing. She left home in 1888 to join the West London Mission in Soho that had been established by the Wesleyan Methodists a year earlier, and Clara became Sister Mary.²⁷⁷ Neal was not only passionate about helping the poor working girls of London but was also committed to the newly emerging Labour movement. In 1891 Emmeline Pethick joined the Mission, helping Neal to run the girls' club activities, and in 1895 the two women left the West London Mission to form the Espérance Girls' Club in premises in North London. Some women from this period are portrayed as having a messianic zeal for good causes and the picture that emerges of the now Mary Neal at this time suggests that she accurately matched the stereotype. This original tailoring establishment was quickly followed by the Green Lady Hostel at Littlehampton where the young workers could take an annual holiday, and there were evening clubs for senior girls and boys, and a junior club, and these clubs established a reputation for excellent 'national dancing'. After Emmeline Pethick married Frederick Lawrence in 1901 Herbert MacIlwaine joined Neal as her musical director.

²⁷⁶ From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Neal> [accessed 22/10/2013].

²⁷⁷ Details of Mary Neal's life from Roy Judge, "Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris", *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.5, No.5 (1989), pp.545-591.

In 1905 MacIlwaine was looking for some material that would engage the girls, and after trying out some of the songs from Sharp's newly published *Folk Songs from Somerset* Neal asked Sharp if he could recommend any dances that could accompany the songs. Sharp gave Neal such information that he had regarding Kimber and the Headington team, and with her customary enthusiasm Neal went to Oxford, found Kimber and invited him to come to London to teach her girls. Fox Strangways details this in his biography of Sharp written in 1933, in collaboration with Maud Karpeles, who, as Fox Strangways notes in the Preface "knew Cecil Sharp intimately for thirteen years."²⁷⁸

Sharp told her of the morris dances and of William Kimber, and in a short time she had gone down to Oxford to interview Mr. Kimber, and had arranged for him and another dancer to come and teach her girls.²⁷⁹

That visit to London by Kimber and his cousin, and the subsequent performance of the dances at the Christmas party in 1905, were a great success and set Neal, MacIlwaine and the club firmly on the road to their great work, the recovery and re-introduction of Morris Dancing to the English people. Neal formed a relationship with Sharp, and at demonstrations he would deliver an address, often about his song collecting, and the club members would sing and dance. Their fame spread rapidly, and by the end of 1906 girls from the Espérance Club had been invited to perform and to teach dancing in towns and villages across southern England. One of these was Blanche Payling who, in 1910, went to Thaxted in Essex to train a group gathered by Miriam Noel, the wife of the Vicar of Thaxted, Conrad Noel (Fig.30). That visit led to the formation of Thaxted Morris Men, who celebrated their centenary in 2011.²⁸⁰ Groups from the Espérance Club gave performances at fetes and galas, and put on complex shows at prestigious London

²⁷⁸ Arthur H Fox Strangways, *Cecil Sharp* (Oxford, 1933).

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p.70. Also see p.129.

²⁸⁰ Details of the formation of Thaxted Morris Men from Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement* (London, 1967), Harry de Caux *Thaxted: A Desperate Morris Place* (1983) and Mike Garland, *The Development of a Tradition: The Thaxted Morris Weekend* (Unpublished MA Dissertation).

venues, but 1906 also marked what could be called the beginning of the end for the partnership between Sharp and Neal.



Fig. 30: The Vicarage Garden, Thaxted.

A photograph from Conrad Noel's personal albums held by the Essex record Office, T/P224. Although there are few captions in the album, it is believed that this photograph shows the Vicarage Garden, with Conrad Noel on the left talking to Blanche Payling, with George Chambers, the Curate, standing on the right.

In 1906 Pethick-Lawrence and Neal were approached first by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and then by Annie Kenney to help with the foundation of the London branch of the newly-formed Women's Social and Political Union. They not only attended the first meeting in London but Neal acted as minuting secretary for the group.²⁸¹ Members of the Union, including Pethick-Lawrence and Kenney, were arrested in 1906 after an initial campaign to bring the question of Women's Rights before Parliament, and after that Evelyn Sharp, the younger sister of Cecil Sharp, also joined the WSPU. This illustrates quite clearly the fact that these people, known as prime movers in ensuring that folk song and dance were returned to the people of England, were also known to each other through strong political affiliation with the Fabian Society, the emerging Labour Party and the movement for Women's Rights. Unfortunately, by 1908 the campaign for Women's Rights was becoming more extreme, and the partnership between Sharp and Neal came to an end.

²⁸¹ Both Judge and Roy Dommett wrote about the links that Neal had with the WSPU, Dommett in his unpublished paper "How Do You Think it was" (1980, re-distributed 2011). Judge, "Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris", *Folk Music Journal*, p.558.

Three reasons for the collapse of their enterprise can be identified; the increasing violence of the WSPU campaign, which neither Sharp nor MacIlwaine would support was certainly a major stumbling block, and one that was said to be the reason why MacIlwaine left the Espérance Club; artistic differences in the way that Morris Dancing was being portrayed, and the way that the development and collecting of folk song was being advertised, and thirdly, a suggestion that Sharp was concerned that he was losing the right to be regarded as the country's leading authority on folk dance and song, which in turn was putting at risk his position with the Board of Education. "The reasons behind Sharp's deceptions are clear: he needed to be recognised above Mary Neal as the leading authority so that he could continue to receive a school board salary. His livelihood was under threat."²⁸²

In his detailed description of this period, Roy Judge suggests that there was a point where Neal was ahead in the race to lead the folk dance revival, but her trip to America at a crucial point was ill-timed, and allowed Sharp to re-assert his dominance.²⁸³ Reading the communications from the time it is easy to see at this distance that the arguments were complex, and not necessarily to do with Morris Dancing. Sharp was clearly a new breed of collector. Unlike many of the early scholars in the field, known for remaining in their rooms, while others were sent out to do the fieldwork, Sharp went out to undertake his own research in the countryside, and published his own results.²⁸⁴ But he was known for being a difficult man to work with, and it seems that he needed to be the leader in his field at all costs. He argued with Charles Marson, his friend and original collaborator in his song collecting work, and he fell out with Mary Neal.²⁸⁵ The basic reasons in both

²⁸² Keith Chandler, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.5 (1997), p.142.

²⁸³ Judge, 'Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris', *Folk Music Journal* (1989), p.566.

²⁸⁴ A criticism levelled at Percy Manning, and Frazer, among others.

²⁸⁵ See Sutcliffe, *The Keys of Heaven* (2010). This would also put Sharp in to the Catalyst grouping explained in Chapter 4.

cases were concerned with Sharp's control over the collected material, and the view that society would have of this material, particularly the view of the Board of Education, because Sharp had a great desire to see his work brought back to society through being taught to children in school.

The artistic differences tend to be the one element that is highlighted today. Sharp is often portrayed as the keeper of tradition, of a controlled energy, and an uprightness so often associated with very best of Victorian and Edwardian gentlemen. Neal, despite the obviously huge public enthusiasm for her teams that were flooding the country with dance, has sometimes been dismissed as nothing more than an enthusiastic supporter of 'fun'. In fact, some of the evidence from the time would suggest that Neal was much closer to the contemporary nature of the tradition than Sharp.²⁸⁶ In her own writing Neal says that she had seen teams where no two men were dancing the same way, yet they were all perfectly illustrating the tradition and their enjoyment of the performance.²⁸⁷ As Dommett suggests in his notes, the arguments between them often came down to little more than a minute detail over the placing of a leg. "Much was made of whether the leg in the morris step should be straight or bent at the knees!"²⁸⁸ Neal certainly expected her dancers to enjoy their performance, to show the fun in dance, but she also expected her teams to put on a show of skill and perfection. Indeed she could not have supported her programme of concerts at the London venues unless the performances were highly polished. Sharp, on the other hand, is portrayed as a stereotypical stern and serious Victorian, but in Kimber, at least in Kimber's later life, Sharp seems to have found a

²⁸⁶ The drawings of the dancers at Stowe House in the 1818 show a team thoroughly enjoying their dancing. Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance* (2005), p.181. "Stowe House", 1844, by James Danby, in "The Cotswold Morris – Hey-Day, Decline and Revival". *Russell Wortley* (1980), p.10.

²⁸⁷ Quoted by Judge from an article written by Neal for the Observer Newspaper, 3 December 1911. *Folk Music Journal* Vol.5, No.5 (1989), p.569.

²⁸⁸ Dommett, 'How Do You Think It Was' (1980).

kindred spirit. We may not know how Kimber acted as a much younger man when he went to teach the girls in London, but there is a clue from the writing of Theo Chaundy:

The girls danced well, and, if you ask Kimber nowadays whether women should dance the Morris, he replies with an unhesitating 'yes': 'whack half the men at dancing a jig' and he adds, 'I've always been used to playing fair, and who started the Morris revival but the girls? They danced a damn'd sight neater than we do now.'²⁸⁹

Morris Men today who met Kimber (Fig.31) in his later years have reported that he expected and demanded perfection from his dancers.²⁹⁰ His word was law and he would stand no opposition.²⁹¹

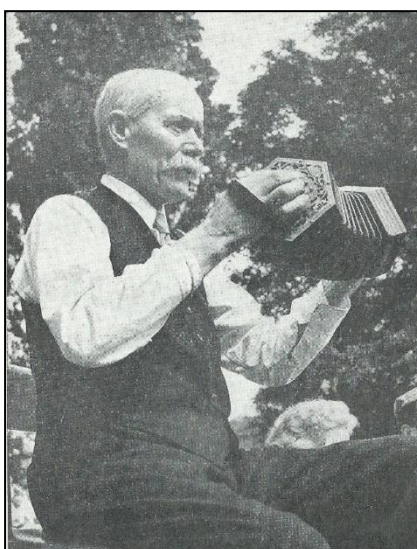


Fig. 31: William Kimber.

*William Kimber, playing the concertina that he bequeathed to Father Kenneth Loveless, Squire of the Morris Ring, 1980-82.*²⁹²

Unfortunately, the debate between Sharp and Neal was not allowed to run its course. Although Sharp had a need to be in control, to be in the ascendancy, he did not always achieve that. Judge notes how Sharp had been forced to resign his post at the Hampstead Conservatoire after 'bitter disputes' with the proprietor, and for some time during the arguments with Neal it seemed that she might win the day. Reading Judge's

²⁸⁹ Theo W Chaundy, "William Kimber. A Portrait." *The Journal of the EFDSS*, Vol.VIII, No.4 (1959), p.203.

²⁹⁰ Information given for this study by men who had met Kimber, David Chaundy, Eric Foxley and Mike Chandler.

²⁹¹ Thompson describes the clear social order of the time - Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians* (London, 1992), pp.186-234.

²⁹² Photograph of William Kimber from the EFDSS collection, printed in the 11th edition of the leaflet produced by The Morris Ring, *The Morris and Sword Dances of England*.

detailed descriptions of the arguments and disagreements it is possible to come to the conclusion that the enthusiastic collecting by Sharp and Neal in the years before the war was being driven not by a desire to save the ancient dance form, but a simple desire to be the first in a new field of study.²⁹³ It might be suggested that England's traditional dance heritage was saved because of an argument. It is fascinating to consider what the dancing map of England might look like today if Neal had taken control, but international events intervened, and as war broke out Neal disbanded the Espérance Clubs and moved into war work. For a period of nearly ten years the revival had been started and driven forward by a woman, the Morris had been danced by teams of both girls and boys, many dancers from the old teams had been to London to teach the girls, and in 1910 Sharp wrote to the Daily News explaining, among other things, why women should dance the Morris. As Dommett explains in his papers, this was not really a revival of the Morris Tradition, but a re-invention. "It should be remembered that the 'revival', really a reinvention, was made possible because of what both of them did."²⁹⁴

In 1911 Sharp founded the English Folk Dance Society, and in 1912 he put together a men's Side. Three of that team, including the young composer George Butterworth, died at the battle of the Somme. After the war Neal had lost the enthusiasm for the fight, and so the field was left open for Sharp and his EFDS to take the revival – or re-invention – forward. What they had both achieved in those ten frantic years was outstanding, but was equally of its time. Sharp was the true Edwardian gentleman, Neal the epitome of the enthusiastic Edwardian new woman. It is surprising that they managed to work together at all, and completely unsurprising that they eventually separated, but Dommett is quite correct when he talks about a re-invention. Neal's girls dancing in halls in London

²⁹³ See also Judge, "Cecil Sharp and the Morris 1906-1909", *Folk Music Journal* Vol.8 No.2 (2002), pp.195-228.

²⁹⁴ Dommett papers, "How Do You Think It Was?" (1980).

was far removed from the Bampton team dancing outside their village pub, or Abingdon accompanying the Mayor of Ock Street, but members of both of those teams had been to instruct at the Espérance Club. Yet Sharp's insistence on regimentation and controlled strength was equally a new direction for the dance, and furthermore, after the war the EFDS kept the Morris firmly in the Village Hall or the Vicarage Garden. However, some of Neal's work remained, and although Sharp began to actively encourage men to dance the Morris, the influence of the women remained strong in the post-war dance world.

Mary Turner reflects that while the typical image of Victorian Ladies as poor, weak "frail creatures needing protection" was largely true, nonetheless there were exceptions.²⁹⁵ There were "strong women who have resisted the stereotypes" and it is clear that Mary Neal falls into this latter category.²⁹⁶ Turner goes on to say that "many strove, not for personal gain or achievement, but to right the many injustices suffered by women" and again this accurately describes the motivation that led Neal to set up the Espérance Club.²⁹⁷ However, her life and work also meet with the same modern indifference that affects much of the traditional dance history of England. Although there are many works detailing that vital political period in the early twentieth century when women had begun the fight for the vote, hardly any of them mention Mary Neal, despite her role within the London branch of the Women's Social and Political Union alongside the Pankhursts, Kenny and Pethick. Pethick's marriage to Frederick Lawrence is regularly mentioned, with the note that Lloyd George was a guest, but there is no reference to the fact that Neal arranged the festivities on that day. Duncan Crow is one of the few authors to mention Neal, but he seems to damn her with faint praise in a statement that does little to highlight the extent and strength of her work in North London: "Emmeline Pethick was

²⁹⁵ Mary Turner, *The Women's Century* (London, 2004), p.3.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

a Quaker, who with Mary Neal, a pioneer in the Folk Dance movement, had started the Espérance Girls' Club to lighten the lives of East End working girls."²⁹⁸ It may only be a postscript to a crucial period, but it has a resonance with the way that Neal was later treated by the folk world and by other historians. In 1968 Dorson published his extremely detailed work "Folklore and Folklife", and in her section on Folk Dance Joann Wheeler Kealiinohomoku says:-

Three figures stand especially tall in English folk dance scholarship. They are Cecil J Sharp, Maud Karpeles, and Violet Alford. Sharp was the first serious scholar of folk dance in England, and his studies were inspired after a great awakening of awareness within himself when he saw a morris dance in 1899.²⁹⁹

Once again the pioneering work of Neal has been ignored and Sharp's 'scholarship' highlighted. So even though this work was not published until 1972 it still follows the approved EFDSS version of the history of the first Revival. Sharp and his associates hold the dominant position and all other influences are ignored. It was clearly an exciting time and while this study has highlighted the work and influence of Mary Neal, arguments could be made to support the work of other collectors, suggesting that they have a right to be considered as the first in the field. MacIlwaine and Carey, for example, travelled with Neal and continued their studies after the Neal-Sharp split.

Similarly, works detailing the social history of the period rarely mention the Espérance Club. The Club may have had a vital impact on the lives of the girls, and on the re-invention of Morris Dancing, but it was also an important milestone in the development of the Labour movement. Neal's organisation took girls from the poorest areas of London, gave them work and security, a living wage, and an annual holiday to be spent away

²⁹⁸ Duncan Crow, *The Edwardian Woman* (London, 1978), p.197. Neal and Pethick are noted in a more appreciative piece by Martha Vicinus "The long-term success of the Espérance Club was due in large measure to the hard work and foresight of its two founders, who were unusually sensitive to the varied needs of the members." *Independent Women; Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (Chicago, 1985), p.233.

²⁹⁹ Joann Wheeler Kealiinohomoku, "Folk Dance" in Richard M Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife* (Chicago, 1972), p.388.

from the smoke and grime of the city, all good socialist aims. Through their dancing some of the girls were introduced to a totally different way of life, travelling the country to train local teams as Blanche Payling did at Thaxted in Essex. Florrie Warren (Fig.32), not only became Neal's principal dance teacher, working across the country and helping MacIlwaine with the descriptions of movements for the Morris Book, but she went to America with Mary Neal.³⁰⁰



Fig. 32: Espérance Club dancers.

*Florrie Warren, centre, dancing in London with two of the girls from the Espérance Club.*³⁰¹

Photographs and postcards of the time still appear showing the Espérance teams at fetes and galas, but with no reference to the nature of the display shown. This pioneering work deserves to be brought before a wider audience, but, again, lack of any publicity is typical of most ventures connected with the world of traditional song or dance.

Further light is thrown on this period by writings relating to the positions of Helen and Maud Karpeles. The two sisters were born in London in the 1880s, children of German Jewish immigrants. When they left school they went as volunteers to the Mansfield House Settlement in East London, where they were particularly involved with the Guild of Play, a club set up to help the poorest children in the area.³⁰² There are echoes here

³⁰⁰ Judge, "Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris", p.566

³⁰¹ <<http://www.maryneal.org/object/6433/chapter/1004/>> [accessed 15/12/2014].

³⁰² Details of Maud Karpeles' life taken from <<http://www.ju90.co.uk/ctfolk/ctfolk3.htm>> [accessed 24 November 2014]. The text of the web site is by Ju Gosling for the EFDSS.

of the young Mary Neal, who, at the same time was setting up a club with very similar intentions in North London. Again, just as at Neal's *Espérance Club*, dancing was a central activity at Mansfield House, and in 1909, being in Stratford-upon-Avon to see a play, they heard of a local dance festival and went along to see if they could pick up any information that would be of use in London. The event was the Stratford Folk Dance Festival with Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal as judges, and the Karpeles sisters were entranced by what they saw, and subsequently became deeply involved in the folk dance movement. Maud travelled with Sharp on his collecting excursions, including his lengthy trip to America, helped to establish the English Folk Dance Society in 1911 and, after his death in 1924, continued his work, becoming his literary executor. Sharp had put together a men's Morris Side that included Douglas Kennedy, and he married Helen Karpeles. That team also included George Butterworth, the composer, and it has been suggested that he was in line to take over the EFDS after Sharp, but after his death Kennedy became the Director of the Society.

In her writing Helen Kennedy talks of those early days and while she gives Neal credit for her folk dance work she explains the origins of the Morris element within the *Espérance Club* in a slightly different light, saying that it was Sharp who suggested it to Neal, with no indication that it was Neal who first approached Sharp. "This club was already well-known for its interest in national dancing and Mr. Sharp suggested to Miss Neal that she might like to include the Morris dance in the club's repertoire."³⁰³ She goes on to talk about the early days of the EFDS and makes it quite plain that women were the driving force: "... and the members of the staff were Miss Kennedy, Miss Wilkinson, Mrs. Kettlewell, Miss Karpeles and myself. Miss Collis, who was the star pupil, made the

³⁰³ Helen Kennedy, from - <http://www.americanmorrisnews.org/tonybarrandv28n3reprintsfromEDSSpart2.html> [accessed 24 November 2013].

sixth for the demonstration side...” not only doing the teaching, but putting on dancing shows dances as well. Although Sharp had written in support of women dancing, Douglas Kennedy was very much against such a move, yet in 1929 Kennedy led a tour of Canada and the party included: -

Joan Sharp, daughter of Cecil Sharp; Maud Karpeles, Sharp's closest collaborator and literary executor; her sister Helen Karpeles Kennedy, wife of Douglas Kennedy; May Gadd, National Director of EFDS's American counterpart, the Country Dance and Song Society, and Imogen Holst, daughter of composer, Gustav Holst. Three musicians also came on the tour. May Hobbs played piano and Elsie Avril played violin...³⁰⁴

So in this volatile early period, the first Revival and the formation of the Dance Society, it was clearly the women who were the driving force. Sharp and Kennedy may have been the figure-heads, as demanded by the norms of society at that time, but women were teaching and performing the dances.

The Inter-War Period.

In the period after the First World War the place occupied by women in English Society was confused and contradictory. While some women threw themselves into the gaiety of the 'Roaring Twenties' to forget the horrors of the war, other wives and mothers simply wished to return to a quiet life with a re-united family. Many, of course, did not have this option as their husbands and sons had died in the war. It is one of the ironies of the time that although Neal had retired and the Espérance Club disbanded, leaving Sharp and the EFDS in overall control, and although Sharp's view of an all-male Morris had won the day, even with Neal, the folk dance world was now over-populated with women. "The EFDS, as it then was, had a branch in Cambridge which wasn't doing very well. It was almost entirely women – they couldn't get men – and their numbers were low."³⁰⁵ Many

³⁰⁴ Daniel Stone, writing in the American Morris Newsletter - http://www.americanmorrisnews.org/pastissues/july2007v27n2/current_issue/danielstonev27n21929efds.canadatour.html [accessed 24 November 2013].

³⁰⁵ Judge notes how Rolf Gardiner spent some time with Neal and persuaded her that she should support men's Morris. Bacon, "Reminiscences", *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.7, p.202.

continued to attend the EFDS clubs because it gave them a link to those care-free Edwardian days before the war, and kept alive memories of those husbands and boy-friends now lost to them. They danced the social dances collected by Sharp, and the Playford dances that had been restored by the EFDS, and they also danced the Morris, but only in the privacy of the club, and never in public. "Of course, there was quite a big corps of competent lady dancers to draw on."³⁰⁶ In his interview Bob Tatman referred to these days, when he and a few friends would cycle round the local villages to visit the new Folk Dance Clubs. "They were run by women, and most of the members were local women who knew one another socially through other village activities".³⁰⁷ To many, the dance clubs were a lifeline, giving them a purpose in a world so dramatically torn apart. As the Director of the Society, Sharp was the man they revered for restoring this treasure trove of dance to the English people, and the true story of the pre-war period was quietly buried. As Roy Judge wrote:- "Many would have thought it sensible to let the name of Mary Neal and the bitter antagonisms of the early years become distant memories, best forgotten."³⁰⁸ So when Hunter stood up at the inaugural meeting of the Morris Ring in 1934 both men and women would have totally supported his view that Sharp was alone in restoring Morris Dancing to the English People. But one legacy of the work of both Sharp and Neal was active and extremely important to the survival of Morris Dancing.

Before the First World War both Sharp and Neal had been training teachers, and the board of Education had agreed that folk dancing should be included in the curriculum of schools in England. After the war, although young women were entering new professions, Ruth Adam notes that "The dominant spinsters of this post-war world were the teachers."³⁰⁹ This new direction set a pattern that was to survive through the inter-

³⁰⁶ Geoffrey Metcalf, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1, p.29.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Bob Tatman, 19/09/2012.

³⁰⁸ Judge, "Mary Neal and the Esperance Morris", p.545.

³⁰⁹ Ruth Adam, *A Woman's Place 1910-1975* (London, 1975), p.102.

war period and into the 1950s.³¹⁰ Undoubtedly many of these women had learned to dance either directly with the Espérance groups, or through the courses run by Sharp and Neal before the war. Now they kept the spirit alive both at work and in their recreational life at the folk dance clubs, but as Sharp was now the accepted master of this dance world they also followed his teaching. The new Morris Dance was confined to the hall or the Garden Party, never on the streets outside a public house, and young dancers had to go through a complex period of training and certification before they were allowed to give public demonstrations. Ganniford wrote about the early days of Greensleeves Morris Men: "Our only appearances in public were when we were invited to give a show at a Country Dance Party somewhere in London or, on rare occasions, at a Summer Fete."³¹¹ This approach was replicated in schools by the 'spinster teachers', and the club histories of the few teams active at that time detail the way in which they and the Folk Dance Society were instrumental in bringing Morris Dancing to life after the war.³¹² The general picture is that men learned to dance in the EFDS clubs, and then wanting to do something more, formed their own groups under the patronage of the Society. The first Squire of Greensleeves Morris Men from London wrote about their formation in 1926:

"....the idea is to have a private club consisting of men who do not habitually demonstrate for Headquarters, but do know their business up to a decent standard. The theory is that a really good team can be made up of unpretentious individuals if they practice constantly and regularly together ... We do not teach technique to individuals; that is done in the Society's classes. We train teams. At present, anyone who has progressed through all the grades but is not constantly performing in shows for H.Q. finds himself at rather a loose end. A private club such as ours ought therefore to be a godsend. The team will find plenty of outlets for its energies, but the idea is that practices are the main thing, shows and competitions merely incidents."³¹³

³¹⁰ Note how interviewees, particularly Barry Care, talk about 'elderly ladies' teaching dance in schools.

³¹¹ William Ganniford, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1, p.26. Lionel Bacon also said: "I think it's fair to say that the EFDSS never encouraged or itself arranged for women to dance the Morris in public, but at classes and parties it was certainly mixed." 22/02/1979.

³¹² The influence of these teachers was long-lasting. I taught with a teacher who had begun her teaching career before the Second World War, and in 1973 she still refused to have boys in her folk dancing classes. The boys played football while the girls danced.

³¹³ <<http://www.greensleevesmorris.org.uk>> [accessed 23 October 2013].

Note how the Squire only writes about 'shows and competitions' rather than club evenings outside a village pub, and even then he refers to them as 'incidents'; practice is paramount. The writing also highlights the other situation of those days, the fact that the Society was in charge of training dancers to 'progress through all the grades', and many of the Society's teachers were women. Grace Meikle joined the Society in the early 1920s and in 1925, having passed all her examinations and been welcomed by Sharp himself, was appointed as organiser of the East Surrey branch.³¹⁴ Once there she realised that it would be possible to form a men's team and so she gathered and taught the dancers who would eventually become the East Surrey Morris Men. Having assembled the team, she passed them on to Kenneth Constable who had been dancing as a member of the Headquarter's Team. He wrote about his time at Oxford, and how he had received instruction from both Kimber and Sharp, and from Marjorie Barnett, who he said "capered better than any of us men."³¹⁵ These two clubs became founder members of the Morris Ring in 1934 and are still active today.

The Gloucestershire Morris Men can also date their history back into the 1930s, with links to the Cheltenham Folk Dance Club. That club was affiliated to the EFDSS and Miss Audrey Armstrong taught the dancers some Morris. At some point they became the Cheltenham Morris Men, and they were admitted into the Morris Ring in 1938. During the Second World War Mrs. Dorothy Williams taught country dancing once a month at Pate's Junior School in Cheltenham – "...where she also included some Morris for both men and women." Towards the end of the war she also taught the remnants of the Cheltenham Men, and they eventually became the Gloucestershire Morris Men. For those practices they had Mrs. Hitch playing the piano: "Mrs Hitch obliged at the piano,

³¹⁴ <<http://www.esmm.org.uk>> [accessed 23 October 2013].

³¹⁵ <<http://www.esmm.org.uk>> [accessed 23 October 2013].

putting her knitting on keys beyond where she would be playing and resumed knitting while we argued what to do next.”³¹⁶

Although not quite so directly involved, Tatman also spoke of the influence of a woman during the foundation of the Stansted Morris Men in Kent in 1934:-

One of the regular visitors to the Fairseat Folk Dance Club was Mr Bentley Thorne, a member of Douglas Kennedy’s EFDSS display team. He lived at Bromley, and in the autumn of 1934 he met some of the younger men of the village at a country dance party given by Mr and Mrs Hunt in Goodmans Barn and persuaded them to take up the Morris. Mrs Hunt willingly offered the use of the Oast House adjacent to the barn and so the Stansted Morris Men came to be formed in the winter of 1934/5.³¹⁷

There is no suggestion that at this time in the history of The Morris there had been anything like a complete re-invention of the dance. There was still a direct link, a line from the remaining traditional Sides, through the men from those Sides who had travelled to London to teach Neal’s girls, through Sharp and the Folk Dance Society, to the men, and the women, who were learning the dance in the post-war period. “Our musician was a delightful lady pianist, Mrs Matthews, who was always seated at her piano long before any of us arrived. She had a fantastic memory for the tunes and never needed to refer to Sharp’s published music books.”³¹⁸ The changes were restricted to differences in the way that the dance was shown to the public, and the fact that girls and women were dancing, and were teaching the men. The newly created teams were finding their way in the new Morris world. In fact, this period between the wars is sometimes seen as a quiet time, almost a time of waiting for the next explosion. Mary Turner writes that the pre-war feminist agenda disappeared after the war – “the sense of urgency that had characterised earlier campaigns died down once women finally won the vote on the same terms as men.”³¹⁹ Although it was true that life for women was changing in many ways,

³¹⁶ <<http://www.glosmorrismen.org/>> [accessed 12 June 2012].

³¹⁷ Bob Tatman interview, 19/09/2012.

³¹⁸ William Ganiford, *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1 (1993), p.25.

³¹⁹ Mary Turner, *The Women’s Century: A Celebration of changing roles 1900-2000* (Kew, 2003), p.73.

Turner explores the continued confusions that they faced. In the Depression women were sometimes forced into the role of breadwinner, while in more prosperous areas and times they were encouraged to provide perfect homes for their husbands, but this striving for 'domestic bliss' could bring on 'suburban neurosis', a sense that life held nothing more than an endless round of housework and boredom in a new suburban wasteland.³²⁰ The problem was made worse, as Langhamer explains, when writers in the daily press encouraged women to allow their husbands the freedom to enjoy sports and hobbies away from the home.³²¹ Once again these descriptions of life in the years between the wars ignore the continuing enthusiasm for all kinds of folk dance. Men's Morris Sides were appearing across the country, and the English Folk Dance Society's work was growing. Perhaps the direct influence of women on the dance was less obvious than it had been before the war, but as club histories note, women were there, dancing with teams at practice sessions, teaching from their positions within the EFDS and increasingly providing music for the teams, as they tried to move away from the piano in the village hall.³²² "Live music was provided by Ruth Andrewes, a loyal and competent, if somewhat uninspiring, violinist."³²³ Bathampton Morris Men date from this time, originally started by Charlotte Oakey who was the Headteacher of the village school, another link to the education world that was begun by Sharp and Neal.³²⁴ Mrs Oakey's son Douglas was a member of the Society's Demonstration Team, and helped with the formation of the boy's team in the village. Once again, all of this activity was brought to a halt by the outbreak of war.

³²⁰ Mary Turner, *The Women's Century*, p.73.

³²¹ Claire Langhamer, *Women's leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester, 2000), p.138.

³²² In 1932 the Folk Song Society combined with the English Folk Dance Society to form the English Folk Dance and Song Society, the EFDSS.

³²³ John Hawkins, *London Pride* (2009), p.15.

³²⁴ *The Bathampton Way* (1994) and from interviews with Bathampton Men, 23/10/2012.

The Morris Ring held a meeting in Thaxted during the weekend of 10 June 1939. One hundred and ten men attended the meeting, and the First Log Book of the Morris Ring lists the clubs represented – Balgowan, Bedford, Bishop's Stortford and Thorley, Cambridge, Clifton, East Surrey, Greengate, Greensleeves, Letchworth, London Pride, Morley College, St Albans, Stansted, Suffolk, Thaxted, Wargrave, and West Yorks. They were joined by nine Basque dancers who had made the journey from Spain. This was the eighteenth meeting of the Ring Clubs, and at the end of the business meeting plans were made for a number of further gatherings in 1940.³²⁵ In the event only one meeting was held, at Cecil Sharp House in London on Sunday 10 March 1940. Seventy men attended that meeting, and although it was hoped to be able to hold further meetings, particularly the one at Thaxted on 8 June, the Log Book records the cancellation of all further meetings for the duration of the War:-

It must here be recorded that although the arrangements for this meeting were made, and although the chances of holding it seemed very favourable, events of May and June were so serious for our country that very reluctantly it was decided that we should have to abandon the meeting. No further gatherings of the Ring took place during the war years, but many clubs succeeded in holding occasional meetings – a few held regular ones, and the activities of the Ring were in abeyance until the beginning of 1946.³²⁶

In the written histories of modern sides there are occasional glimpses of the way in which the teams continued to dance throughout the war, and once again women were shown to be of vital importance. In the history of the formation of the Icknield Way Morris Men they describe how Miss Mary Shunn, a teacher at Icknield Secondary Modern School, introduced Morris dancing into the school curriculum during the 1950s as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. From that school group the Icknield Way Morris Men were eventually formed, first dancing out in 1965. Mary Shunn had been a friend of William Kimber of the Headington Quarry Morris Men, and she had not only played for that team, but had danced with them during the war: "...and had danced with the side

³²⁵ Abson, *The First Log Book of the Morris Ring*, p.41.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.43.

during the Second World War when the men were away fighting.³²⁷ Sharp and others may have insisted on men dancing the Morris, but it seems that some teams turned to the women to keep going during times of emergency. Headington Quarry may only have been one among many.

The Immediate Post-War period.

The next meeting of the Morris Ring was held again in Cecil Sharp House on March 23, 1946, when one hundred men attended and the Log notes the way in which each new arrival was greeted with expressions of joy and pleasure.³²⁸ The teams represented were all men's teams; some had come directly from the Dance Society and had been started by the Society's women teachers, some had been formed from school teams where, again, it was often the women teachers who had started the Morris Clubs, as at Bathampton. But in every case a woman would still not dance out in public with the men or the boys, because the social protocols of the pre-war period remained strongly in place. "So it should be taken for granted that quite late in the twentieth century discrimination against women was still at least in some quarters regarded as part of the natural order of things."³²⁹ Commentators on the situation in the immediate post-war period note how many women simply wanted to return to a peaceful home life, and the drive for the feminist cause disappeared.³³⁰ The feeling of the time mirrored that of the post-World War One period, and is clearly expressed in one line from the Morris Ring Log of the 1946 meeting: "At last, what had seemed to many men like a bygone dream, came a Ring gathering again." In the 1930s women were encouraged to allow men to find a hobby; these men had that hobby, and after so many years of male companionship in the forces, to many it was a relief to be able to spend time back in the all-male

³²⁷ <<http://www.icknielldwaymorrismen.org.uk/>> [accessed 12 June 2012].

³²⁸ Abson, *The First Log Book*, p.44.

³²⁹ David Doughan and Peter Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (Abingdon, 2006), p.5.

³³⁰ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism* (Oxford, 1997).

environment of the Morris Side. However, although men were pleased to see so many friends return from the fighting, the post-war situation was not good as far as the standard of dance was concerned, and it was the Society's regional organisers, and the organisers of local dance clubs who were best placed to witness the problems. In the Midlands Sybil Clarke, working for the EFDSS started the Birmingham Boys Morris and Sword Team, based at Ryland Road School in Erdington. When the team outgrew the school, and Clarke became too busy with other duties to continue, they moved to the Green Man pub and became the Green Man's Morris and Sword Club. Although they were now an all-male dancing team, they had a woman musician, Mary Evans.³³¹

In another part of Birmingham Gladys Watson, the Headteacher of Acocks Green Junior School had established the Acocks Green Folk Dance Club. Gwen Taylor, a member of the club and of the English Folk Dance and Song Society was also concerned about the post-war standard of Morris. Through connections that she had made while attending EFDSS courses it was suggested that she should try to form a Morris Side, and in February 1949 she asked a few friends from the Acocks Green Club if they would like to meet to practise the Morris. This group quickly became of sufficient standard to dance out in public, and choosing the name Jockey Morris Men they appeared at the Birmingham Music Festival in June 1949, where they won the 'teamwork' section.³³² In the history of the Jockey Morris Men it is noted how many of the embryo clubs at that time were connected to teachers or teacher training colleges. Briefly there was a team at Saltley Training College, but those men quickly joined Jockey. Ken Clarke, Sybil's husband, was running clubs at Hope Street School and Nelson Street School in Birmingham, and Gwen Taylor was employed by Birmingham Education Authority to teach Morris Dancing at St Thomas's School. So at this point in the development of the

³³¹ Colin Spencer, *A Short History of the Green Man's Morris and Sword Club* (2005).

³³² David Ayres and John Stait, *5 More Men* (2010).

post-war Morris two influences from the years of the first revival were strong, the number of women actively teaching and playing for the dance, and the connection with education that had been so strongly developed by both Sharp and Neal. But these women in the 1940s and 50s were still following the pattern set by the pre-war dancers; women learned to dance and taught the dance, but they would not dance in public. As Sharp decreed, the Morris should be performed by men.

In 1950 Douglas Kennedy, the Director of the EFDSS, published his book called "England's Dances", and Mary Neal disappeared from all aspects of the re-discovery of Morris Dancing:

He had been engaged in teaching his recently collected folk-songs to the members of a working-girls' club. Revelling in this new experience, they asked him if he could find some dances to match. This request reminded him of the Morris Dances, so he brought William Kimber up from Headington, and together they started to teach the girls.³³³

This version of the early history of the first Revival may accord with the way that Helen Kennedy, née Karpeles, described it in the 1920s, but is clearly at odds with the description given by Fox Strangways in 1933, and therefore by Maud, Helen's sister. Sharp was not teaching the songs; they had been introduced by MacIlwaine; Neal invited Kimber to London, and it was Kimber and another dancer who taught the girls. Sharp's only contribution at that point was to lecture on folk song during the dance performances by the Espérance dancers. But Kennedy's version of the early history was completely in agreement with the authorised version as put out by the EFDSS. Sharp and Kimber were the only begetters of the Morris revival, and their instruction, that the Morris should be performed by men, was being followed to the letter, at least, as far as the public were concerned.

³³³ Douglas Kennedy, *England's Dances: Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday* (London, 1950), p.15.

The insistence on male dancing is often today considered a matter for comment, and it was so even in the 1950s, with the written history of Jockey Morris Men carrying a newspaper cutting from Birmingham Mail of September 18, 1951, having the headline “Morris Club Founder Cannot Join In.”³³⁴ The opening paragraph of the article explains that, although Gwen Taylor started the club “she is barred from joining in the dances because tradition precludes the participation of women in the displays.” The article makes no attempt to explain this statement, to say why there was such a ‘tradition’, but it does go on to talk about the work that women do for the club: “Nevertheless, the affairs of the club owe a good deal to feminine influence, for although to the men goes the glamour, behind the scenes their womenfolk do a deal of hard work.” There is clearly some bewilderment here, and the journalist does not understand the ways of the Morris Dance world at that time, but the women directly involved with the club would have found no contradiction in the way that women could train the dancers but take no part in the shows. What Sharp started, whether from a Victorian view of the place of women in society, or from a belief that Morris Dancing was simply a male dance, his instruction was clearly being followed to the letter. However, the way that the wider feminist agenda disappeared after the war is noted by many of the writers who detail women’s history in the twentieth century. The women of the EFDSS were firmly of the opinion that it was the place of the men to dance in public, and nothing would change that view.³³⁵

These women of the EFDSS and women teachers in schools across Southern England taught boys and young men to dance. As Tony Foxworthy said: “I was taught by a

³³⁴ Ayres and Stait, *5 More Men*, p.32.

³³⁵ Evidence from club histories as noted from Jockey MM, Stafford MM and East Surry MM shows that women would learn to dance in class, and would teach the dance, but would not join the men in public display. Writers describing the period after the second world war, Dougan and Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (2006) and Caine *English Feminism 1780 – 1980* (1997), suggest that women were content to accept the male dominated social structure, and it must be assumed that the women of the EFDSS also followed this general pattern. However, Caine writes about the change in the feminist agenda during the 60s and 70s and therefore it may have been that the seeds of these changes, detailed later with regard to the Morris dance, were sown privately during this earlier period.

woman. A lot of men were made into Morris Men by females who'd done the Morris in their younger days."³³⁶ They watched with pride as those new Morris Men took to the streets, and where necessary they provided the musical accompaniment to this new breed of dancer. Although some teams during and immediately after the war were able to find women musicians who could not only play for dancing, but who already knew the tunes they were being asked to play, as with Icknield Way Morris Men described above, other teams had to take a different route: "Music was provided by an accordion played by an enthusiastic young lady who answered an advertisement in the local paper. She knew nothing about Morris, but was an able player. Her accordion was very nearly as large as herself and weighed a ton."³³⁷

As the dance grew in popularity and the young men gained in confidence, the new dancers went back to the older men and to the records of the collectors to start moving their Sides in a new direction.³³⁸ Instead of turning to the women of the Society for instruction they appointed their own Foremen, and acquired male musicians, so the words of Sharp would come true, and Morris Sides would be made up entirely of men. In 1951 when the English Electric Morris and Sword Section was formed in Stafford they were started by an apprentice from Ludlow, not a member of the EFDSS local branch, and it was a male team. They did turn to EFDSS courses and festivals for instruction, and also to local Morris Sides, like Jockey Morris Men, and to the Morris Ring. In 1957 this group became the Stafford Morris Men.³³⁹ The booklet they produced in 1983 provides an excellent description of the club history, but one sentence sets the tone of the publication firmly within this post-war period: "The success of the club has been mainly due to the improving leadership, the abundant talent within the club and the

³³⁶ Interview with Tony Foxworthy, 19/09/2012.

³³⁷ Geoff Mendham, "The Rugby Morris, 1946-1949", *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.4, p.118.

³³⁸ Conversation with Roy Dommett in Bury St Edmunds, 17/04/2010.

³³⁹ *Stafford Morris Men* (1983).

unwavering support of “The Ladies”.³⁴⁰ Mary Turner, in her book detailing the lives of women in the twentieth century, also talks about ‘the ladies’:

Men referred to women of all classes as ‘ladies’ and the more accurate ‘women’ was considered rude. By implication, feminine women were entertainingly dizzy and fluffy: they paid a great deal of attention to their appearance and left serious matters to men; most importantly they accepted men as their superiors.³⁴¹

The men of the Stafford club used the terminology, but while some of them may have thought that they were superior, it is more likely that most of them realised that the success of the club owed a great deal to the efforts of the women. Their booklet goes on to say “The ladies have turned the men into complete dancers by partnering them in display and social dancing” and so, despite this being a male Morris Side, there is still the implication that it existed because of a partnership between men and women. This was true for many of the new Sides that started in the 1950s and the early 60s, but a major change was coming on the back of a second ‘folk revival’.

The Second Revival.

Commentators have observed that although the 1960s are today seen as a time of great change, particularly with regard to the place that women occupied in that society, in reality there had been little movement from the 1940s and 50s. DeGroot makes the point by saying that “They might profess to espouse the flower-power ideals but were still expected to do the washing and cooking.”³⁴² He also notes that there was still an expectation that men would be in charge - “For all the talk of participatory democracy, the sixties generation was rather keen on male heroes.”³⁴³ However, Barbara Caine notes that there was a shift in emphasis among women’s groups after the Second World

³⁴⁰ *Stafford Morris Men* (1983), p.15.

³⁴¹ Turner, *The Women’s Century*, p.101. Also Doughan and Gordon, “The term ‘ladies’ was and is used rather than ‘women’, a term not always appreciated by those involved.” *Women, Clubs and Associations*, p.18.

³⁴² Gerard J DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged* (London, 2008), p.288.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.289.

War.³⁴⁴ During the 1960s and 70s new organisations appeared with very different agendas from the pre-war groups; once they had achieved the vote the older organisations had been concerned with pay and criminal law discrimination, but the new feminist groups put sexual freedom and social equality as their prime objectives. This new direction comes through very strongly from the interview with Val Parker, who started dancing in Bath in 1971.³⁴⁵

Parker said that she was the first woman in her family to go to University, at a time when there was a growth in young women going into further education away from home. She felt that it was a time during which roles were changing and girls were becoming more confident, a time when women felt that they could take control of their own futures. When she announced that she intended to go to university her father had questioned her decision, suggesting that there was little point in spending three years studying when she would only get married and raise a family. It was a discussion that must have been held in many families at that time, and it certainly helps to explain why so many young women felt a great sense of freedom when they did break away to spend time in further education. She said that she had been to an all-girls' school and so found it quite a shock to come out into the world of University and then the world of work; in particular, she was astonished by the general attitude towards women.³⁴⁶ She commented that even in the early 1970s women suffered active discrimination in so many ways; they paid a reduced rate of National Insurance because they "would" get married, and Parker quoted an incident that happened to another young dancer who, after getting married wrote to the tax office. Her new husband later received a letter that began "Dear Sir, Thank you for the letter from your wife." Parker's willingness to throw herself into the life of the

³⁴⁴ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780 - 1980* (Oxford, 1997).

³⁴⁵ Interview with Val Parker, 28/03/2013.

³⁴⁶ Compare this comment with that of Bob Tatman who had attended an all-boys school.

University Folk Club is very simply summed up by her comment when describing the girls she was with – “They just wanted to get on with it!”

The Folk Club at Bath City University was organised by Tubby and Betty Reynolds, and once a month they held a Saturday evening Ceilidh. On the second Saturday after Val Parker’s arrival in Bath she saw a team of Morris Dancers performing in Bath during the afternoon, a team that she later discovered were the Chipping Campden Morris Men, and they would be appearing at the Ceilidh that evening. Because she thoroughly enjoyed the show she went to the Ceilidh and from that began to attend the weekly Folk Club sessions. Tubby Reynolds had been running the Bath City Morris Men since 1967 and on club nights he would take the men off for their practice for the first hour while Betty would find something for the women to do, before they met up for social dancing for the final part of the evening. Around this time, 1971, the women decided that they would also like to try some dancing, so Betty Reynolds approached Roy Dommett, who was known for his collecting work, to ask if he could suggest anything that would suit the female section of the club, an interesting comparison with Neal and Sharp. Initially he suggested some Stave Dances, and dances from Cheshire, and so from this, from the *Espérance Morris Book* and from dances that Tubby suggested from the men’s repertoire, they put together a number of dances and formed a women’s Morris Side, which is generally accepted to have been the first one.³⁴⁷

At the same time there were significant developments happening at the Sidmouth Folk Festival. In 1955 the EFDSS was keen to start a new Festival to take the place of the Stratford Festival that had been running since the days of Sharp and Neal.³⁴⁸ Because

³⁴⁷ Details taken from the interviews with both Val Parker and Roy Dommett.

³⁴⁸ This move away from Stratford could be seen as a final rejection of the old, ‘Merry England’ style of Folk Revival from the early twentieth century.

Nibs Matthews had taken Morris Men to Sidmouth, and an energetic local EFDSS group had established some very popular Folk Dance displays in the town during the summer months, the place was felt to be 'folk-friendly' and as such would provide a site that had all the elements that could come together to make a successful week-long summer Folk Festival.³⁴⁹ Originally conceived as a dance festival, by the end of the 1960s the revival in interest in folk song meant that the Festival had become an international event, embracing all aspects of the folk world. To accommodate the many Morris dancers at the Festival, dancers who in 1969 and 1970 were still all men, there were beginners' and experienced dancers' workshops. The beginners' sessions had been run by Hugh Rippon, and had attracted so many people that he had sometimes moved outside the marquee and simply held the workshop on an open green space.³⁵⁰ Neither he, nor Dommett, running the advanced workshop, objected to women standing around the edge of the arena, watching the proceedings. But in 1971 Griff Jones of Lutterworth Morris Men was asked to run the beginners' workshop, and Jones, a dancer heavily involved with male Morris Sides, insisted that his session must be 'men only'.

Women who had been used to attending Rippon's workshops strongly objected to this new ruling, and four of them wrote to the Festival organisers to complain, saying "Bring back Hugh Rippon".³⁵¹ Interestingly these four women were teachers, another connection to the long standing educational background of the twentieth century dance. Dommett, running the advanced workshop was still happy for the women to watch the dancers, which only added to the Festival Organisers' problems. They managed to find a way round the difficulties for 1972 by asking Dommett to run a "Ladies Ritual Dance Workshop", but by then Bath City Ladies had started to dance, and the England's Glory

³⁴⁹ Derek Schofield, *Fifty Years of The Sidmouth Festival* (2004).

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.47.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.71.

women's team had started in Cheltenham.³⁵² A number of women's teams started around this time, and the common factors when they talk about their formation are always Dommett and Reynolds, and the Sidmouth Festival. Certainly the Festival and the anti-women stance of Jones provided a catalyst for the beginning of the women's teams, but the work of Reynolds gave them a platform and a debating chamber.

The EFDSS ran a Festival in January each year at the Royal Albert Hall, but it tended to be a very intense event, dedicated to the old style dancers and singers that the Society had groomed during the immediate pre and post war world. Reynolds started running an event that he called "Albert's Out of Town", perhaps originally intended to simply provide a venue for those enthusiasts who could not get to London, but from descriptions of the event it seems that it quickly became an 'alternative' festival.³⁵³

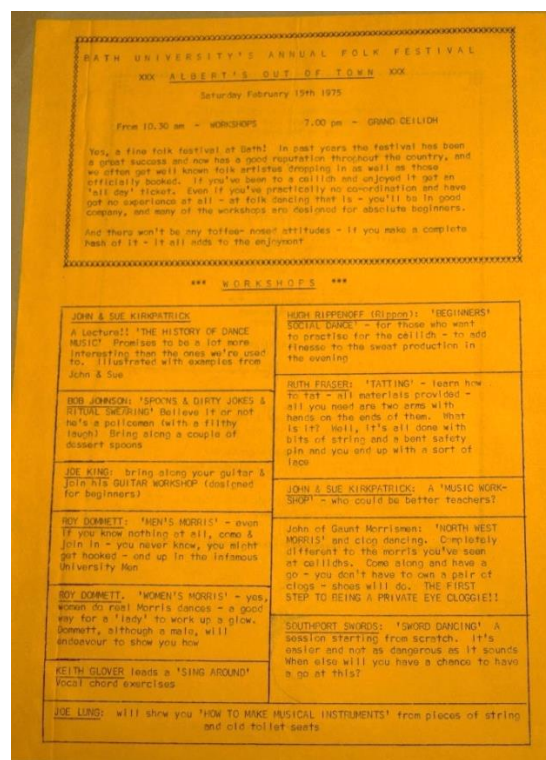


Fig. 33: 'Albert's Out of Town' poster.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Details from the England's Glory web site, <<http://www.englishglory.org.uk>> and from Beth Neill's history of the Morris Federation.

³⁵³ Interview with Roy Dommett, 21/06/2011. Roy died in November 2015.

³⁵⁴ Programme for the 1975 "Albert's Out of Town" festival. From the collection of Steve and Jill Bazire.

Whether or not the new women's teams took an active part in the Festival it is clear that it became a vital talking shop, where the new young women dancers could meet with like-minded enthusiasts. Both Tubby and Betty died before they could be interviewed, but Roy Dommett was a fascinating commentator on this period. His views did cause controversy and divided opinion among Morris Men, but he was an extremely important character within the Morris world, and was held in high esteem by the women's teams, holding vital information about the development of the dance during the twentieth century. His work certainly ranks alongside all of the other great modern scholars of the Morris, men like Lionel Bacon and Russell Wortley, but his support for the Women's Morris Sides was controversial.

Dommett first saw dancing in 1952 while at Bristol University. When he left to begin working at Farnborough he joined the local team there, and was also taken to Abingdon Morris Men and to Thames Valley Morris Men. As Dommett put it, he then had a bit of good luck. He had been working on the Blue Streak missile project, but when that was cancelled, although he put forward further ideas for a joint Anglo-American Missile project, there was a two-year delay in getting the equipment from their American partners. During that enforced gap Dommett pursued an active Morris Dance agenda. He visited all the remaining collectors from the early years of the twentieth century, and all of the surviving members of the first Travelling Morrice tour. He spoke to Maud Karpeles and to Clive Carey, and therefore to people who had had direct contact with Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal. He toured the Cotswold villages, speaking to the old dancers and their wives, and he attended the remaining traditional days, particularly the day when the Bampton teams toured their village. He spent time in Cecil Sharp House and the Vaughan Williams Library in London going through the notebooks and diaries of the collectors, and the rest of the archives of the EFDSS. His teaching work started at

Halsway Manor in the mid-1960s when Nibs Matthews asked him to help out with a workshop session, and that grew into instructional sessions for individual Sides and area organisations, often working with Tubby Reynolds.

In interview Dommett was concerned to say that his teaching was meant to be 'inspirational' not 'instructional'. He knew that people who attended the workshop would have come from a Side having its own teachers and its own style, and if he tried to change that in one brief session it would only induce confusion and panic. His job, as he saw it therefore, was to inspire the dancers to go away and try new things, to want to dance well, and to build the new material into their own club style. He always encouraged the dancers to think about their dancing, to dance with their heads as well as their feet. Another interviewee, Mike Barclay, on hearing that Dommett had been interviewed, commented on his teaching style.³⁵⁵ Barclay said that if you attended two workshops on the same dances, but perhaps two or more years apart, you might find that Dommett taught different things. At the first session, for example, he might say that the collectors found two hand movements, and he would teach the first style. But at the next event Dommett might again say that there were the two styles, but this time he would teach the second way. On being challenged about this by Barclay, Dommett said that it was not just forgetfulness but an intentional attempt to observe the development of these styles over a number of years. He hoped that the people attending the workshops would meet with other Sides and observe the differences, leading the dancers to seriously consider their dancing. While this is an excellent methodology for someone brought up in the modern education system, having been to University and being a world leader in his field, it is another example of the way in which the Morris has changed during the twentieth century. It would have been a totally alien way of thinking for the countrymen

³⁵⁵ Interview with Mike Barclay, 26/04/2012.

of the remaining Cotswold teams at the turn of the century, although the opposite case could also be made.

I would argue that, perhaps without realising it, Dommett was in fact returning the dance to an old way. The men's teams that grew out of the Revivals were all trying to follow the dances laid down in Sharp's Morris Books. The only decisions to be made were concerned with the interpretation of Sharp's notes and in the majority of cases Sharp in his writing had disposed of confusion and doubt, and had published one, clear style. It was only by going back to his original field notes that dancers could uncover the hidden differences, and Dommett had done so, and was now passing those findings on to the wider world. In fact, the old teams had no books to guide them, simply that confusion, and those decisions to make each year about their dancing. If they were to keep their team traditions alive and different from other Sides in the area they needed to consider their dancing, and possibly to change their dancing year on year. We have a clear example of this when John Jenner, in his interview, talked about the Bledington Sides, and the fact that the young team danced differently to the old team - the young men seen by the Travelling Morrice, the older men interviewed by Sharp.³⁵⁶ Dommett could therefore have been seen as a thoughtful, intelligent educator, as a forgetful bumbler, or as a devious malcontent spreading confusion and doubt. All three views are regularly expressed, but the women's teams tend towards the first opinion.³⁵⁷

Reynolds started the women's team Bath City in 1971 and in 1972 England's Glory was formed in Cheltenham by women who had been to the Sidmouth Festival. That festival also produced The Maids of Barum in 1974, Bourne Bumpers in 1974, and Water Cum

³⁵⁶ Interview with John Jenner, 01/11/2012.

³⁵⁷ Many men's teams also agree with the first opinion, as does the author of this study.

Jolly in 1975.³⁵⁸ Other women's teams were formed in Cardiff by Reynolds in 1973 and in Islington and Windsor from folk clubs in 1974. When Val Parker left University and the Bath City team she moved to Hertfordshire and although there was a team near to her called English Miscellany they danced a different style of dance to Bath City, so Parker started a team called "Queen of Hearts". Although it was a short-lived team, only dancing for some eighteen months, it allowed Parker to maintain her connection with the other teams. By 1975 there were women's Sides appearing across England and the original group of women connected with Bath City and England's Glory decided that a new organisation was needed to give them a focus, to provide a channel of communication, and to arrange such essentials as insurance. As the Morris Ring continued to be steadfastly male the women called this group the Women's Morris Federation. Fox notes how this duplication is often a common practice among English clubs:

...just as every conceivable English leisure pursuit has a magazine or six, each one also has clubs, if not a National Society, with a whole network of Regional Groups and subdivisions. Usually there are two rival National Societies, with marginally different views on the activity in question, who spend most of their time happily bickering and squabbling with each other.³⁵⁹

The reasons for its formation mirrored those of the men's clubs in the 1930s when the Morris Ring was founded, and the immediate growth in women's teams once the Federation appeared, again, was exactly similar to the growth in men's clubs after 1934. Parker noted that only a few young women wanted an organisation that was blatantly feminist, with comments being made about its headquarters being called 'Cecilia House' (rather than Cecil Sharp House, the Headquarters of the EFDSS) but she said that this was a very small group, and the driving force for most clubs was simply that they wanted a means of contact between clubs. Parker went on to become an officer in the new Federation.

³⁵⁸ Beth Neill, *Morris Federation – Twenty One Years 1975 – 1996* (1996).

³⁵⁹ Kate Fox, *Watching the English* (London, 2005), p.250.

The Morris Ring was clear in its constitution; an affiliation of 'men's Morris Clubs'. When the Women's Federation was formed the Ring's view was simple – Morris had been danced for hundreds of years by men, and should remain as a male-only tradition. Women were perfectly entitled to dance on the streets, but they should not call it Morris Dancing. The Federation countered with two arguments, the first being that the evidence about Morris being male was unclear, and the second that women might have wanted to dance but were restrained by the social conditions of the time. A third, much smaller, organisation, The Open Morris, was formed, initially for those clubs where men and women danced together, and were therefore unable to join either the all-male Ring or the women's Federation. In those early days of the new groupings there may have been antagonism between the two large organisations, but unfortunately for the Open Morris, the one argument that united them was that they both believed that Morris Dancing should be a single-sex activity; men and women dancing together was simply social dancing, not in any sense a ritual.

The EFDSS was in a difficult position. Although its founder, Cecil Sharp, had been instrumental in guiding Morris Dancers towards a men-only mind-set, the women were now dancing partly because of the way that they had been encouraged by the Society's own Festival at Sidmouth. One argument in their favour was that the first instructional for women at Sidmouth was entitled 'Women's Ritual Dance' in an attempt to avoid a collision with the male dancers. However, in the 1980s the Society was in financial difficulty, and for some time there was a very real danger that it would collapse. Because they had other, more pressing things to worry about, the arguments over who was entitled to dance the Morris were left very largely to the Morris organisations. In fact, while there were obvious differences between the groups, there was little contact and no informed debate among them. At this point the Ring was strong and still growing. New

clubs had been formed during the period of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, and some had survived to enter the main stream Morris world.

Observations were made at this time concerning European dance forms, for example the Cossack dances, where men and women take different roles and perform different movements during the dances. It was suggested that England may also have once had clearly defined dances for both men and women, but for whatever reason the women's dances had disappeared, leaving the men's Morris dance. This argument was apparently based on no evidence, and may have only been a way to divert the discussion away from becoming a simplistic, misogynistic rant against women dancers. The argument suggested that if the Morris dance was once for both men and women, the restrictive social constructs of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may have taken the women's roles out of the dance. Other arguments suggested that if the Morris had been developed by soldiers in the fourteenth century or if it had been at some time connected with quarter-staff practice, women would not have been involved. Similarly, if it had been connected in any way with religious rites, again, women would have been unable to take part. Other strands of the argument pointed out that, whereas continental European social folk dances often had clear roles for men and women, English dances had developed along very different lines; social dances in this country were not story dances, and did not provide platforms for men and women to show off their individual prowess. Unfortunately, at national level, none of these arguments were used in discussions between the organisations. They could regularly be heard at club level, certainly among the male dancers, but there was little attempt to engage in constructive dialogue. Where meetings did take place between the officers of the three large

organisations, the atmosphere could usually be best described as a delicate truce, with people determined to show that they could be polite under difficult circumstances.³⁶⁰

At one point early in the development of the women's clubs Roy Dommett stood for election as Squire of the Morris Ring. He was unsuccessful, but some have since suggested that it was a missed opportunity for the Ring. Dommett said that the reason that he started teaching the women's Sides was because he saw some of them dancing in Somerset in the mid-1970s and felt that their dancing was so bad that they must have been taught by "second or third rate men".³⁶¹ Someone needed to take control of that situation and in the absence of anyone else, he and Reynolds stepped in. It has therefore been suggested that at that point, instead of ignoring the formation of the Women's Federation, the Morris Ring should have actively taken all clubs under its wing, perhaps forming male and female sections. Dommett, it has been said, could have been the man to lead this departure. However, others have stood by their conviction that only men should dance the Morris, and for them, Dommett would simply have damaged the Ring, and encouraged a development that would have quickly led to a total loss of the dance in, what they believed, was its correct form. A third strand of this hypothetical discussion, given that Dommett was not elected, suggested that he may have found himself in a 'Thomas Becket' situation, having been elected into the body of the church, and therefore restrained in public to follow its constitution and decry the rise of the women's Morris Clubs. In this way Dommett's influence may have been diluted and the Ring made stronger. But all such arguments, as indeed all the arguments for and against the

³⁶⁰ Ivor Allsop, when Squire of the Morris Ring, reported a discussion he had with a South African reporter concerning African folk dance. The reporter was of the opinion that women would not take the man's part in any dance. Private report given to me by Ivor Allsop.

³⁶¹ Interview with Roy Dommett, 21/06/2011. This point was also picked up by Steve Bazire in his interview. He observed that this was a strange assertion for Dommett to make, because at that time he had in fact been the lead teacher of women's teams.

women's clubs, came to nothing because society moved on and affected the men's clubs very quickly.

The Women's Federation grew as more women's clubs appeared. Dommett spoke of a woman's Side in the south that split up as dancers moved away, but that split gave rise to at least six new Sides across the country. Beth Neill, in her interview, talked about one young woman who left Windsor and formed Updown Hill, but then moved on again and started Jack Straws.³⁶² Although these interviewees spoke of this growth as if it was unusual, it is exactly what had happened in the 1930s, again in the 1950s and in the 1960s with the men's clubs. One dancer moved on and started another Side. That Side may not have lasted, although many did, but often the new dancers moved again and started new Sides. The way that the women's teams grew was simply in line with the way that all of the teams have developed during the twentieth century. By the beginning of the 1980s the Federation felt that there should be a change, and they should drop the 'Women's' part of the name, becoming the Morris Federation. Parker said that they were very aware of the fact that there could be difficulties over this change, but around 1983 they decided to go ahead.

The Morris Ring was obviously concerned about this change. Some felt that it might signal the beginning of the end, because of the two difficulties that were facing the Ring. The first was a problem that had been suggested as soon as women began to dance. Once women began to dance, some said that the men would stop as it would be difficult to persuade young men to take up a pursuit followed by young women.³⁶³ This prediction seemed to be coming to pass, with women's teams growing strongly, but the men's teams reporting that it was now very difficult to persuade young men to come into the

³⁶² Interview with Beth Neill, 02/01/2013.

³⁶³ Note the language used by Lionel Bacon in his interview – 'cissy men', see p.52.

dance. While the men's teams of the late twentieth century still had plenty of dancers from the second revival, men who had joined in the late 1960s and early 70s, the problem appeared to be one that would gradually affect the clubs in the early twenty-first century. Indeed, by the beginning of that century the problem with dancers was becoming apparent, but the problem concerning Morris musicians was more pressing.

The developments and changes evident within the provision of music for dancers are complex. When the EFDS began to teach its members to dance in halls and on stages the piano was considered an obvious choice of instrument, but as soon as teams moved in to the open air changes had to be made. Some teams danced to a fiddle, but as the number of teams grew the accordion seemed to be the natural progression from the piano.³⁶⁴ Many of the women of the Society who would not want to dance in public found a role playing for the men. Kate Butters played for the Thaxted Morris Men, Gwen Taylor for Jockey Morris Men, and Ruth Andrewes for London Pride Morris Men, among many others. As the number of Sides grew during the 50s and 60s, and as those Sides joined the all-male Morris Ring, so more men began to play instruments, and teams lost their women musicians. In many cases this was with the good wishes of the women, who at that time were pleased to see the Sides becoming completely male. It is therefore, interesting to note that as the women's teams developed they were often dependent upon male musicians, a complete reversal of the previous order (Fig.34).

³⁶⁴ For further information about the music see Appendix 5.



Fig. 34: Windsor Morris.

*Windsor Morris dancing in Bristol, 30/06/2012, to music provided by a male musician.
Photograph by the author.*

However, as the male clubs approached the end of the twentieth century they found that not only were they missing the young men as dancers, but they were losing their musicians. Some clubs found that in order to keep dancing out they had to call upon the expertise of women musicians, and if they were a Ring club they had a problem when it came to attending all-male Morris Ring events. Some borrowed a male musician from a neighbouring club or called upon the services of one of their own dancers who could play a few tunes on an instrument. Others simply stopped attending Ring events, confining their activities to club evenings in their own area, and joint events with other local clubs who were happy to accept all musicians. By the end of the twentieth century the situation was becoming critical, and some clubs were talking of leaving the Ring because they were unwilling to continue with the deceit, while other clubs were insisting on a 'name and shame' policy, saying that the Squire of the Ring must ask those clubs known to have women musicians to leave the Ring. However, action had to be taken when the Equalities Act was passed by the Government in October 2010 because although the Ring was perfectly entitled to remain a single-sex organisation under the terms of the Act, it could only do so if all of the member clubs legally followed the terms of the Ring

Constitution. This was clearly not the case, and the options were simple – change the Constitution or expel the offending clubs. Many feared that asking those clubs to leave would mean the collapse of the organisation. All of this came to a head at the Annual Meeting in 2011 when a motion was put forward proposing that the Morris Ring should allow member teams to have women musicians.³⁶⁵

While this would seem to be a minor change to anyone outside the Morris world, it raised two major concerns. The first was simply that the Morris Ring had been an all-male organisation since its inception and many wanted to see it remain in that form. Their argument was that asking some clubs to leave the Ring was a small price to pay for keeping true to the beliefs of the founding fathers, that Morris Dancing had always been a male activity and should remain so. The second concern was more complex but was based around a fear that allowing female musicians would ultimately lead to an influx of women dancers. There had always been a strong feeling that musicians had to be dancers as well, so that they would understand the nuances of the dance, and could use the music to lead the dancers through the intricacies of the figures. Taking that argument to its logical extreme women would have to be encouraged to dance in order to become good musicians.

Leading up to the Meeting there was considerable activity on the Morris Ring Web Site with the various factions trying hard to canvass support. This activity was not always conducted in the spirit of fellowship that is supposed to characterise the Ring, and the arguments were lengthy, heated and complex. It certainly seemed that the idea that women should be accepted as members of Ring Sides was still a hugely contentious

³⁶⁵ The Morris Ring was not alone in having to consider its position in relation to the Equalities movement. Doughan and Gordon discuss the situation regarding the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, which did not discuss the issue of female membership until 1977. *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (2006).

issue and anathema to many dancers. Peter Halfpenney, the Ring Squire during the period of the changes, had an extremely difficult job to steer the organisation through these muddy waters, but it was a task that he handled with apparent consummate ease and the final meeting proved to be much less of a challenge than was feared.³⁶⁶

The main change to the constitution of the Morris Ring was proposed by Rumford Morris Men. They suggested, among other details, an addition to the wording at the beginning of clause two:- “Any established Men’s Club or Team which meets regularly for Morris or Sword Dancing or Mumming, which restricts its dancing or acting members to men, ...”³⁶⁷ This, they hoped, would satisfy the requirements of the Equality Act, maintain the Ring’s aim of promoting male dancing, but would allow those clubs with women musicians to continue their relationship as full members of the Morris Ring. Two clubs, Thaxted Morris Men and Moulton Morris Men, proposed amendments that in essence required the Ring to restrict clubs to both male dancers and musicians, but these were not accepted by Rumford and were rejected by the meeting. The basic amendment to the Constitution as proposed by Rumford was passed and the Morris Ring could allow Sides to continue with women musicians. One immediate effect of this change was that Devil’s Dyke Morris Men from Newmarket, having two women musicians, applied to join the Ring and were admitted at the next Annual Meeting (Fig.35).

Before the Meeting some men claimed that if the Amendment was not passed the position of the Ring would become untenable. Clubs with women musicians would be forced to leave in order to satisfy not only the re-affirmed constitution of the Ring, but

³⁶⁶ Details from the Morris Ring Newsletters – No.71: January 2011; No.72: February 2011; No.73: March 2011. These cover the period immediately pre and post the Annual Meeting, No.73 containing the Draft Minutes of the Meeting.

³⁶⁷ The previous wording at the beginning of clause two only said: “The Ring shall be an association of Men’s Morris, Sword and Mummers Clubs and Teams.”

also the demands of the new Equality Act. Although no-one knew how many clubs would leave because of this, it was claimed that other genuinely all-male clubs would leave simply because they would not accept what they thought would become a deeply misogynistic, dinosaur organisation, out of step with the rest of the folk world. In total contrast to this, others suggested that if the amendment was passed the male clubs would resign from the Ring and form their own all-male organisation. In practice there was no way of knowing how many clubs fell into each of these categories, and while there were numerous postings on the Ring Website prophesying the end of the Morris Ring, a considered examination of the clubs involved in those discussions showed that very few clubs were actively taking part in the discussions, and furthermore, it was far from clear whether these comments came from all of the members of a club or simply from one or two vocal individuals. It gradually became apparent that the majority of the clubs were appalled by this posturing and were pleased to see the organisation settle peacefully into a new role within the Morris dance world.



Fig. 35: Devil's Dyke musicians.

Three musicians of Devil's Dyke Morris Men in Southwold, including one of their women, 28/08/2006. Photograph by the author.

Considering the position held by the men and women dancers in this way ignores the dance itself, and Parker was keen to bring it back into focus. During her interview she said that she thought “the dances were still the dances”; who did them and the sex of the

dancers did not matter.³⁶⁸ It has always been rumoured that in Victorian England one of the old Sides drafted in a woman to dance when there were not enough men.³⁶⁹ Given the social constraints of the time, it must be assumed that the survival of the dance in that community at that time was seen as being more important than any possible social disgrace, but it is equally probable that if they were no more than an entertainment the simple requirement of collecting money for the performance outweighed all other considerations. If the dances had become vital to the community, such that they had to ensure their survival, was it that age had endowed them with an importance to the imagined health of that community - had the dances become 'traditional'? If that was the case, then it could be argued that the sex of the dancers would matter, because the performers would also become bound by the rules of the tradition. However, Parker's observation is true in a modern context, because where society has little respect for the tradition of the Morris Dance, however that tradition is interpreted, then in order to protect the form of the dance as an artefact, the sex of the performer does not matter as long as the dancers respect the process of the tradition. This question will be further examined in Chapter 5, Tradition and Change.

Conclusion.

Setting out the twentieth century history of the Morris Dance highlights three strands of the women's history – the leadership years of the Espérance Club, the back-stage supportive EFDSS years, and the dancing years post-1970. While it is vital to consider the part played by women in the modern Morris Dance, and over-statement of that position may be necessary to redress the imbalance brought about by the years of domination by the EFDSS and the Morris Ring, male dancers should not be allowed to

³⁶⁸ Interview with Val Parker, 28/03/2013.

³⁶⁹ This was the team dancing in Upton-upon-Severn at the end of the nineteenth century. They were fishermen, generally considered to be among the poorest members of the town's community, and it is said that the girl had to wear men's clothing and have her hair cut to resemble a man in order to take part.

disappear from this history, because throughout the twentieth century it was in fact the combined efforts of women and men that drove both revivals. And, as Val Parker pointed out, the most important element in the history, the dance itself, must not be ignored.

The work of Mary Neal had a major impact on the re-invention of the dance in the years of the first revival, an impact that could be seen as being greater than that of Cecil Sharp, certainly during the vital first five years, given that she was the person who took the initial steps to bring the dance, rather than just the music, back into public view. Neal was the archetypal Edwardian philanthropist, throwing herself with great energy and enthusiasm into a life dedicated to helping others. She made an enormous impact on the lives of so many young people, training teams of both young men and women. She worked with the key men of the remaining Cotswold Sides, bringing the dance to a wide audience and introducing women to the public performance of the dance. However, alongside those changes, the dance itself did not change. Neal's teams danced the Headington dances as laid down by Kimber, and so the Cotswold dances survived in their collected form.

After the First World War Sharp came to occupy a dominant position, so that the rise of the men's clubs was seen as a natural progression. However, while the women of the 1930s EFDSS were very different from the Edwardian 'ladies', they had, if anything, even more power when it came to driving forward the Morris revival. The women who worked so hard during this period had no explicit connection to Neal's Espérance Club, but many of them may have begun to dance with that institution, and now they worked behind the scenes, dedicated to following Sharp's wishes, to put the male Morris back into what they saw as its rightful place within English society. They taught the dance, they organised clubs, and in schools they ensured that all forms of English Folk Dance were supported. At this point the dance itself was perhaps the closest it has been in the

twentieth century to the ways of the old teams, as the work of the Travelling Morrice ensured that it had gone back on to the streets and back to the Cotswold villages, but it would not have re-appeared without the support and encouragement given by the women.

The final stage of the Morris in the twentieth century, seeing women's teams dancing on the streets in increasing numbers, was driven by a feminist movement, but not necessarily one entirely proposed only by women dancers. It came in as part of the changes across society that saw educational establishments insisting on complete equality, signalling the demise of the University linked Morris Sides that had taken in only male dancers, and the demands that, within schools, both girls and boys should be able to dance. Since 1970, society has not only accepted women dancing on the streets but has positively encouraged that move in the drive for equality. This was the new ideology that saw Bath City start their women's team, and the participants in the Sidmouth Festival demand equal dancing rights. Alongside these changes, the men's teams continued, and consideration of the new ways, and of the political changes demanded of the Morris Ring, should not hide the fact that the old ways, and men's Morris, could still be found alongside the women's teams, because the one factor linking all of these phases of development, was, as Val Parker said, the dance itself.

Throughout the century Morris dancing has been supported and sustained by both men and women acting together and separately as occasion demanded. The arguments between the two major organisations during the 1970s and 80s may be seen as the most difficult time for relationships between dancers and teams, but the direct way that Douglas Kennedy removed all mention of Mary Neal from the historical record of the first revival certainly sowed the seeds of discontent.

4: Place or Person?

When Morris Sides that concentrate on the South Midlands or “Cotswold” style dance today, they will invariably announce the name of the dance, perhaps for example, ‘Banks of the Dee’, followed by the name of a community, which in this case could be ‘from Fieldtown’. This approach suggests that the dance in some way belongs to that place, was collected there, is maintained by the members of that community, and continues to illustrate an ancient style that has been passed from generation to generation within the community. Modern teams will tour The Cotswolds, honouring this sense of place, seeking to take the dance back to its ancestral home. This chapter will examine that premise, how it came to be the standard approach of Morris Sides, and it will seek to show that in reality the dance form has little connection to place, to an abstract concept of community, other than the fact that its practitioners may live there. Morris Dancing, as with other customs linked to communities, is entirely dependent upon people, and often to a single ‘catalyst’ person.

The Early Collectors.

An integral part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century surge in antiquarian interest in folk traditions was the concentration on place. Whenever a custom was found it was linked to the community from which it was collected. When Cecil Sharp began to collect folk song he initially concentrated on the County of Somerset, and the books that he published linked the songs, and later the folk dances, to particular communities in that County.³⁷⁰ However, quite early in his collecting career Sharp realised that as far as the songs were concerned this may not have been the correct approach. In his book “English Folk Song: Some Conclusions” he states at the beginning that:

³⁷⁰ Cecil J Sharp and Charles E Marson, *Folk Songs from Somerset* (London, 1904).

“...the critic may object that the title *English Folk Song* is misleading, in that the book deals with the folk songs of Somerset rather than with those of England. This objection however, is, I believe, more apparent than real.”³⁷¹

He goes on to suggest that the songs of Somerset may be representative of England as a whole, but insists that further collecting would be necessary to come to a firm conclusion. As he was writing in 1907, only some four years into his own collecting career, and there had been no attempt to collate the work of those people active in the field, he was correct to be cautious, but he adds the conclusion that “...there is some warrant for the belief that the distribution of folk songs throughout the kingdom is, to a large extent, independent of locality.”³⁷² In later editions of the book, edited by Maud Karpeles, she adds a footnote to say that “...this has proved to be the case.”³⁷³ Collectors in the late twentieth century, particularly song collectors, have given prominence to the singers, not to their place of residence. John Howson, for example, in his book ‘*Songs Sung in Suffolk*’ details the songs under the name of the singer, rather than the place.³⁷⁴ Tony Harvey, therefore, has his name in heavy type, rather than the position of his farm at Tannington.³⁷⁵

When Sharp first saw Morris Dancing on Boxing Day 1899 it was being performed by a team from Headington Quarry, led by William Kimber. At that point in his career, before he had collected any other dances or any songs, Sharp immediately linked the dances to the locality, to the community of Headington Quarry. Even in the second edition of the *Morris Book*, published in 1912, and therefore after his comments regarding folk song, he still made the same connection, and wrote about the dance as a ‘village tradition’ – “To trace the history of a village tradition through all its vicissitudes is always a matter of

³⁷¹ Cecil J Sharp, ed Maud Karpeles, *English Folk Song: Some conclusions* (London, 1965. First pub. 1907). p.xxi.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p.xxii.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.xxii.

³⁷⁴ John Howson, *Songs Sung in Suffolk* (Stowmarket, 1992).

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.57.

some difficulty.”³⁷⁶ But as noted earlier, when Sharp first saw the Morris he was only interested in the tunes, and having taken some of them from Kimber, he took no further interest in the figures of the dances. It was only after Mary Neal had requested help, and had invited Kimber to London to teach the dances to the Espérance Club, that Sharp became involved again. It is now known that Kimber took other men from the team in Headington to help with the teaching, but that he had to tell those men how he wanted the dances to be performed because either they had different ideas, or did not know enough about them to be able to teach.³⁷⁷ Therefore, the dances being taught to the Espérance Club were not necessarily ancient movements that could be traced back through the members of one village community, but were in fact dances being put together by one man, William Kimber. The only link to a locality was that it was Kimber’s place of residence, and it might be argued that if he had moved he would have taken his dances to a new location. But Kimber did not move, and Sharp and other collectors were understandably making a link that considerably simplified their attempts to write about the dance.

The collectors travelled around the south midland counties, particularly that area known as The Cotswolds, and collected dances from many towns and villages. Henry Franklin gave Sharp the dances from ‘Fieldtown’ (Leafield in Oxfordshire), but when Sharp found him Franklin was living in a suburb of Oxford. In the Morris Book Sharp suggests that Franklin left Leafield in the 1850s, shortly after the Morris Side disbanded, and some fifty years before the interview.³⁷⁸ Yet Sharp writes that this eighty-one year old man gave him fifteen dances in great detail – “all of which Mr Franklin danced and described to me

³⁷⁶ Sharp and Macilwaine, *The Morris Book; Pt1* (London, 1912), p.76.

³⁷⁷ Noted by Roy Dommett in his unpublished writings. See also Keith Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (1993).

³⁷⁸ Cecil J Sharp, *The Morris Book, Pt.IV* (Reprinted 1991), p.9.

down to the minutest detail.”³⁷⁹ This not only raises the question of how this man managed to remember so much, and how much he might have invented to please Sharp, but illustrates the difficulty facing all collectors. Would it be easier and more appropriate to list the dances as those of Mr Franklin, or simply to call them the Fieldtown dances – a community the man had left half a century before? In the case of this one provider at that time it would have been possible to list the dances under his name, but the complexity of the problem is better illustrated by the visits that Sharp made to the Gloucestershire village of Bledington. There he found five members of the old team, and he took dances from Charles Benfield, John Hitchman and Edwin Gibbs. Benfield and Hitchman he met first, but in a later visit he spoke to Gibbs. In *The Morris Book* Sharp wrote that this later visit enabled him to “revise the original descriptions of the three dances in Part III” which must again raise the question – are these dances truly from the village, or are they inventions of Edwin Gibbs? ³⁸⁰ But it would have been very difficult to list the dances under the one name ‘Gibbs’ when at least two other dancers had been consulted. The most obvious way of dealing with the problem was simply to call them the Bledington Dances.

This was the system applied by all of the collectors. Dances were listed according to the residence of the interviewee, and quickly became known as the village ‘tradition’. In a talk to the Monkseaton Morris Men in 1980 Douglas Kennedy, who had been the Director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and a Squire of the Morris Ring, explained this when describing his time with Sharp’s Headquarter’s Team;

“The dances we performed were grouped under the names of the different villages where he [Cecil Sharp] had noted the steps and tunes, and other detail. Thus the repertory of the local team at Headington Quarry near Oxford was known to us as the Headington Tradition.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ Sharp. *The Morris Book*, p.9.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.46.

³⁸¹ Douglas Kennedy, “Tradition: A Personal Viewpoint of Douglas Kennedy, Vice President of the Society.” *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.4, No.3 (1982), pp.195-207.

This statement is interesting in that, as noted above, Sharp did not necessarily note the dances in the villages. Franklin lived in Oxford, and George Simpson, who gave Sharp the 'Sherborne' dances, lived in Didcot, in Berkshire. But the effect of concentrating on the place was to wipe the old dancers from the record. Dancers today may be able to tell the audience that they are performing a dance from the 'Longborough tradition', but they would probably not know that they are performing a dance given to Sharp by Harry Taylor, the man who was the last Foreman of the Longborough team.³⁸² In recent years Keith Chandler in his book *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* has sought to bring the names of the informants back into the story through detailed investigation of census records, and this has highlighted two important characteristics.³⁸³

The first is that Chandler notes how many of the nineteenth century dancers came from the very poorest levels of society. They were, therefore, arguably the group who were least likely to move around the country, and their involvement in a team based in one community was a major factor in ensuring that the dance continued in that place. Secondly, Chandler shows how families played an important part in the longevity of those old teams, and this idea of a strong leader is a theme that will re-appear later in this chapter. Chandler also has a short section in his book dealing with the problem of naming the dances, noting not only how teams were linked to place in early reports of dancing, but also the fact that in the nineteenth century teams in the Cotswolds were regularly made up from men from two or more villages.³⁸⁴

³⁸² Recently a team of dancers have studied the Longborough dances under the name "Taylor's Men". January 2016.

³⁸³ Chandler, *Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles* (1993).

³⁸⁴ Chandler, pp.27-28.

The Revival Teams.

Before the First World War Mary Neal's Espérance teams concentrated on the Headington dances that had been given to her by William Kimber, although from information provided by John Jenner of Cambridge Morris Men, Billy Wells from Bampton also went to see Neal.³⁸⁵ Jenner has a letter from Wells in which he writes: "Miss Mary Neal paid me five shillings a day and all my expenses."³⁸⁶ Neal retired after the War, leaving the development of the Morris Dance to Sharp, and he published *The Morris Book*. In 1924 dancers at Cambridge University, who were performing a number of the dances listed in *The Morris Book*, embarked on a tour of The Cotswolds under the name The Travelling Morrice. They wanted to visit the Morris villages to seek out the old dancers, the men Sharp and the other collectors had taken dances from during the initial period of collecting before the War. Their prime purpose was not only to visit and enjoy the area from which the dances had been collected, but also to see if they could find some of the men who had spoken to Sharp, to check that their performance of the dances was correct. It was a successful tour and in general the way that they danced met with approval. They did meet some of the old dancers, and they were able to change a number of details, but with hindsight it is clear that what they had were dances frozen in time. As soon as they were committed to paper the natural process of change and development stopped. John Jenner tells the story of one of the Cambridge Morris Men, George Cook, who went to the Bampton Morris Day in the late 1920s. He had learnt the Bampton dances with Cambridge, and when he told the Bampton team that he was a dancer they invited him to join them. Immediately and rather embarrassingly he found that what he had been taught was not the way that the team now performed the dances in their home village.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Dommett and Chandler also note that other dancers visited Neal, including men from Abingdon.

³⁸⁶ Interview with John Jenner, 1/11/2012.

³⁸⁷ Interview with John Jenner. Note also the comments made by Geoffrey Metcalf: "...and for many years Sharp (I believe) had actively discouraged people from going to Bampton – of course, it didn't bear any

Whereas the old teams had constructed their dances so that they could compete with other teams, and be recognised as different from their neighbours, dances which were changed and improved during performance, the Travelling Morrice only reconstructed the old; they made no attempt to construct new dances. There was no move to make a Cambridge tradition of dances. By 1934 there were at least six recognised revival teams, yet none of them had begun to make a new tradition based on one community. They all took dances from Sharp's book, and because they were now dependent upon the written word the dances became permanently linked to the last description given by the old dancers. Perhaps the team that might have been considered the most likely to develop its own tradition, Thaxted Morris Men, a team that by 1934 had been in existence for over twenty years and was clearly and strongly linked to one place, still only performed dances from the villages documented by Sharp. However, the one linking factor between all of these new, revival teams, apart from their dependence on *The Morris Book* and the work of the Travelling Morrice, was their need to rely upon named, individual people.

The original men interviewed by the collectors had been painted out of the picture to be replaced by the names of villages, despite the fact that the teams were no less dependent upon those men. Headington Quarry, for example, was quite clearly led by Kimber, and the Bampton Side by members of the Radband, Wells and Tanner families, but the new teams bred a generation of experts who became household names to the new dancers.³⁸⁸ The book written by Walter Abson describing important sections from the first log Book of the Morris Ring lists some of these men.³⁸⁹ Douglas Kennedy was the Director of the EFDSS and became Squire of the Morris Ring; Alec Hunter was the

resemblance to what was being taught." *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.1, p.30. Kennedy also wrote in 1950: "Sharp's original description of the dances does not fit exactly the present method of performance by the Bampton team." *England's Dances*, p.56.

³⁸⁸ Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing at Bampton until 1914* (1983).

³⁸⁹ Abson, *The First Log Book* (1991).

first Squire of the Ring, and Walter Abson its first Bagman; Arthur Heffer and Rolf Gardiner, both founder members of Cambridge Morris Men, organised the first Travelling Morrice tour; Arthur Peck, Kenworthy Schofield and Lionel Bacon, all Squires of the Morris Ring were all collectors, interpreters and teachers of Morris Dancing. Abson's book also highlights the differences between these new dancers and the members of the old teams. About Charles Benfield Abson simply writes "The Fiddler of the 'old' Bledington side." And for Harry Taylor – "The leader of the Longborough side, when it was last dancing in public in 1887." But for Joseph Needham, one of the architects of the Morris Ring with Arthur Peck, Abson notes: "University Reader in Biochemistry, Fellow and later Master of Gonville and Caius College." And for Arthur Peck – "University Lecturer in Classics and Fellow of Christ's College." These were the new leaders of the Morris Dance world, the men to whom dancers across the country looked for help and inspiration. John Jenner has a particular view of this social change:

"We've had in Cambridge people from a different social class altogether; I mean Cyril [Papworth] was an ordinary carpenter and labourer. It is fair to say that the genuine so-called upper class are quite happy to mix with the workers. It's the up and coming people who think they're grand who in fact upset the so-called lower class. The people like Rolf Gardiner and George Cook, and those sort of people – well, they went to Trinity most of them, and they all paid to go there – but they were only too happy to talk to the locals in the pub. The locals in the pub, after all, were the people who were doing the Morris!³⁹⁰

When the Morris Ring was first instituted on 2 June 1934 there were six clubs – Cambridge, Letchworth, Oxford, Greensleeves, East Surrey and Thaxted. Yet by the Inaugural Meeting on 20 October an extra seven clubs were represented. Apart from Greensleeves all of these clubs had taken the name of a town – for example Liverpool, and St Albans – yet the dancing before the evening meal at that meeting only included dances from the Cotswold villages named by Sharp. By the time of the Thaxted meeting on 10 June 1939 there were seventeen clubs present, and certainly another ten that had

³⁹⁰ Interview with John Jenner, 01/11/2012.

become members of the Morris Ring but were not represented at that meeting, yet the dances performed at all meetings were still firmly drawn from Sharp's books, and indeed William Kimber from Headington was a regular guest at the meetings, often teaching the Headington dances. In 1936 at the meeting held in Wargrave Abson notes that Kimber commented on changes that had crept into the Headington dances, and he encouraged the men to follow the notes that had been accurately made by Sharp.³⁹¹

It is true to say, therefore, that by the outbreak of the Second World War the old dances from the Cotswolds had been rescued by a team of enthusiastic collectors, but the names of the old dancers had been overshadowed by the names of their villages. The dances had been passed on to a wider audience, initially by members of the EFDSS and then primarily by the Travelling Morrice and Cambridge Morris Men, and were now being protected by a small group of highly-educated and extremely influential dancers. New clubs had typically been formed by undergraduates moving away from university, meeting members of a local EFDSS group, and forming a new Morris Side, but those new clubs still looked back to the Cotswolds for their inspiration. The outbreak of war interrupted this pattern, with many Morris Sides ceasing all activity, but the women who remained behind managed to keep some EFDSS groups going. A typical comment made about these women was that, although they knew how to dance and would do so in private, they would never dance in public, but they did know how to teach the dances, and men who started dancing in the late 1940s or early 1950s were often first taught by women teachers, either in school or in the folk dance groups that had a resurgence after the war. However, those teachers were grounded firmly in the ways of the EFDSS, and the dances they taught were the dances collected by Sharp. The idea of constructing new dances would probably never have occurred to them.

³⁹¹ Abson, "He urged the necessity of keeping the purity of form of the dances." *The First Log Book*, p.20.

The Bathampton Morris Men started in this way, being taught by Mrs Charlotte Oakey, the Headteacher of Bathampton village school, and Jockey Morris Men in Birmingham owe their formation to Gladys Watson, the Headteacher of Acocks Green Junior School. David Seaborne of Westminster Morris Men started his dancing in 1948 at the age of five in Infant School, being taught by the aptly-named Mrs Morris, and John Jenner said: “- virtually all the ancient ladies in the village had learned the Morris at their village school.”³⁹² It was a pattern that was repeated across the country, and the continuing growth in the number of teams dancing after the War was entirely due to the activities of these enthusiastic individuals. Club histories now detail these names in proud detail, and while the dancers may know nothing of the old men from the Cotswolds, they can talk at length about the characters responsible for the development of their own club. Yet none of these new teams, that were pleased to call themselves after the name of their community, developed their own dances. They all returned to Sharp’s book and the Cotswold dances that had been pre-eminent in the dancing of the first revival sides before the war. Jockey Morris Men list Headington, Bledington, Brackley, Adderbury and Fieldtown as their ‘traditions’ in the early years of the club.³⁹³ Bathampton Morris Men preferred the Headington, Adderbury and Fieldtown dances.³⁹⁴ This period of the revival spoke of place, but was in fact only concerned with people.

In 1951 a team was formed that throws this distinction between people and place into high relief. The dances performed in the villages on the Cheshire Plain have never entered the mainstream of the Morris world. They were seen by Maud Karpeles, but she did not note down the dances and they were not published. In form they are similar to

³⁹² Conversations with David Seaborne, Thaxted, 01/06/2013, and John Jenner, 01/11/2012.

³⁹³ Ayres and Stait, *5 More Men*.

³⁹⁴ *The Bathampton Way*, p.9.

the procession dances performed in Lancashire, with a few additions from the South Midlands or Derbyshire traditions. They were particularly performed in competitions, and the team from Lower Withington was known as one of the best in the area. It was formed largely from the pupils of the village school, and went on to be taught by Mrs Eleanor Rigby (Fig.36).



Fig. 36: Lower Withington.
The Lower Withington Troupe; Rose Day Procession 1960.
*Mrs Rigby walking at the head of her team.*³⁹⁵

Three surviving members of the team, John Ryder, Shirley Rogers and Bob Carbutt, were interviewed in October 2012 and they still say that the years they spent dancing in the Lower Withington Morris Troupe were the best days of their lives.³⁹⁶ Yet, despite the name, they had no connection with their community other than residence. They had a few set dance patterns, and they made up one or two new ones each year to enable them to stay ahead of their rival teams. They rarely performed for the village, except perhaps at the village Fete, and in 1961 they stopped dancing. Not only were they getting short of members, but other teams were becoming largely all female, and as a team having half men and half women they were finding it difficult to take part in any competitions. After a celebratory meeting to round up the club's affairs Mrs Rigby went

³⁹⁵ Photograph from the Morris Ring Archives.

³⁹⁶ Conversations with the three members of the Lower Withington Troup, 4/10/2012.

off to start a team in another village, and her Lower Withington dancers moved on to other interests and never went back to Morris Dancing.



Fig. 37: John Ryder and Shirley Rogers.
John Ryder and Shirley Rogers, outside John's cottage in Lower Withington, 04/10/2012.
Photograph by the author.

At first glance this seems to be a very different pattern of existence to that followed by the Cotswold teams, but closer examination would suggest that there are considerable similarities, and the role of person over place is equally important in both areas. If Sharp or Karpeles had visited Cheshire and noted down their dances it is quite possible that some team would now be dancing a Lower Withington dance, but the evidence is quite clear that in fact there was never such a dance. Karpeles, had she followed Sharp's methods, would only have noted down the dance for that one year, ignoring the fact that they changed it regularly for competition purposes. The role of Mrs Rigby, teaching the dances, training the Troupe, and leading them during their competitive outings, would have disappeared from the record, if the Cotswold pattern was followed. However, transferring the methods of the early collectors to the Cheshire villages can only be supposition, but the reverse can be rewarding, considering the pattern of dancing in the Cotswolds in the light of the history of the Cheshire teams.

A number of commentators, particularly Roy Dommett, have noted that although modern sides do not openly compete with each other, there were competitions among the old Cotswold teams, just as the Cheshire teams competed in the 1950s. Kimber said, when talking at a Morris Ring Feast, that Headington and Bampton competed at the Kirtlington Ale, with Headington always winning the Ribbon.³⁹⁷ The fact that it was Kimber talking illustrates a second similarity, in that one person was instrumental in keeping the team together. In Leicestershire, near to the small town of Hinckley, there was a Plough tradition, known as The Bullockers. Tony Ashley, who revived or re-imagined this custom in 1987 (Fig.38) said that there was a strong element of competition between the villages: “Sharnford, Sapcote, Stony Stanton, there were teams from all over, and they used to vie with each other to see who were the best.”³⁹⁸ Ashley found reference to the Bullockers being strong between 1830 and 1850, but then they stopped. Later evidence presented to him suggested that they had reformed towards the end of the nineteenth century.³⁹⁹ Similarly, Headington did not have an unbroken history, stopping and starting a number of times during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When these teams stopped dancing it was not the community that encouraged a reformation, some amorphous body of inhabitants of the Quarry or of Stony Stanton; it was one person.⁴⁰⁰ Our modern view of the old teams, encouraged by the original folklorists, is that they had many years of unbroken history. Indeed, the collectors and dancers saw this as a great accomplishment, saying that particular teams may have had an unbroken history of over three hundred years. Keith Chandler examines such claims as these and he suggests

³⁹⁷ Abson, *The First Log Book*, p.20.

³⁹⁸ Conversation with Tony Ashley during the Bullockers' Tour, 12/01/2013.

³⁹⁹ It is not clear whether or not this Plough tradition was the Leicestershire one referred to by Frazer in 'The Scapegoat' (see p.37). Ashley had not heard of the references given by Frazer but suggested that he would investigate further.

⁴⁰⁰ In the case of Headington in 1898, as noted earlier, it was Manning of Oxford University.

that even two hundred years is too long, and he is only prepared to consider claims that go back to the early years of the nineteenth century.

What these accounts are saying is that there was morris dancing being performed in Bampton since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century and perhaps earlier. This is not at all improbable yet there appear to be no surviving written records to confirm that this was indeed the case.⁴⁰¹

But the evidence from teams such as Headington, Lower Withington and the Bullockers would suggest that even such a long run as one hundred years was unusual. What is much more likely is that the team continued as long as there was one person, or one family, prepared to maintain it. If things became difficult regarding numbers, or events at which to perform, it is quite possible that the team would simply stop, just as Mrs Rigby stopped her team. John Jenner said:

"I think there used to be a lot of coming and going, and very few of these Sides were continuous. The Bledington men definitely – the old Bledington and the young Bledington Sides danced differently; they were different, there's no doubt about it."⁴⁰²

The Lower Withington dancers did not perform again. Among modern revival teams this might be seen as strange, as surviving members of teams do join with other failing teams to produce a new team or move to a nearby larger team.⁴⁰³ However, as noted earlier, some of the men interviewed by Sharp had stopped dancing and had not sought to amalgamate with other dancers or to join another team. Franklin of Leafield did not go to join Headington, even though it was much nearer to his place of residence when he was seen by Sharp, and even though Headington had gone through periods when they could not find enough dancers. It is therefore possible to assume that Headington folded due to lack of numbers or some other problem, just as with Lower Withington, and the dancers stopped. Once again, the over-riding consideration is person, not place, because the community apparently showed no concern that their Morris Side was no

⁴⁰¹ Chandler, *Morris Dancing in Bampton until 1914* (1983), pp.5-6.

⁴⁰² John Jenner, 1/11/2012.

⁴⁰³ For example, Micklebarrow MM and Lincoln MM at the end of the twentieth century.

longer in existence. Tony Ashley hoped that he might be able to hand the Bullockers back to the community:



Fig. 38: The Hinckley Bullockers.

*The Hinckley Bullockers. Photograph by the author, 12/01/2013.*⁴⁰⁴

“When we first started we had six blokes from Stony Stanton. I thought Brilliant! We’ll get it going and we’ll step back and give it to them. But they’ve gone. Now people come from all over.”⁴⁰⁵

During the 1950s and into the early 1960s the pattern of restoration following the Second World War continued. Clubs that had been strong before the war were able to continue, but thanks largely to the great enthusiasm for folk activities in schools and colleges new clubs were being formed. Jockey Morris Men, Westminster Morris Men and many more of today’s senior clubs began life in that period. Once again it is clear that those Sides, whatever name they might adopt, had little contact with any locality, but were formed and developed through the energies of people who were committed dance enthusiasts.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that the camera has caught the dancer on the left, wearing the green sash, in a pose very similar to one of the Munich ‘Moriskentänzer’ figures.

⁴⁰⁵ Tony Ashley, 12/01/2013.

⁴⁰⁶ These two named teams both had dancers who did develop dances for their own teams. Roy Yarnell, with Jockey Morris Men, was instrumental in devising one dance in the style of the Lichfield dances, to the tune *Jenny Lind*, that has been taken up by many Sides, and Westminster Morris Men, under the guidance of Mike Wilson Jones, have developed a number of dances in their Longborough style. However, neither team has taken the next step of composing their own dance style.

Morris Leadership: Father or Catalyst?

If we accept that the role of the individual within the Morris Side is paramount, and far outweighs any influence that the generalist concept of community might have, we might then consider who the characters are within a club and how they affect the continuity of the Morris.⁴⁰⁷

In most Cotswold style Morris Sides there are three or four club officials. The leader, or Squire, the dancer who often stands in the number one position to call the dance figures; the club secretary, the Bagman, who maintains contact with other organisations and acts as the main point of contact between members of the club; the treasurer; and the Foreman, who teaches the dances.⁴⁰⁸ In some teams this latter duty is carried out by the Squire, but where the Squire is changed on a regular basis, perhaps every two years, the team may find it necessary to have someone who can ensure that there is a continuity of club style. From this brief description it could be assumed that the club moves forward from year to year with its elected officials acting as guardians of the Side. However, in most clubs, this is a simplistic picture that is far from accurate. Charlie Corcoran, who at the time was Ring Bagman, said during his interview: "Who runs a Morris Side? Not the Squire, it's the Bagman. The number of times on Ring Meetings, go to find out who's going to do what and when. I go round – "who's the Squire?" The Squire? they say – no idea!"⁴⁰⁹ If the Squire changes on a regular basis it is likely that almost all of the club members who are prepared to stand as Squire have been appointed to the post. So the question has to be asked, 'who really leads the team?'

⁴⁰⁷ During the conversation with Paul Carey and Sarah Slocombe comment was made that some of this terminology is used by organisations when considering the sociology of projects within companies. These are commonly short-term projects, and the structures are significantly different to these club formations.

⁴⁰⁸ The reasons for these terms are lost to us, although it is possible to suggest derivations – Squire from an important person in the local community, Bagman perhaps from the army. The fact that they are very masculine terms certainly helped to strengthen the idea that the dance groups should also be all male.

⁴⁰⁹ Corcoran further complicated this discussion by adding "I think the most important is the musician."

Most clubs, and this may not be restricted to Morris Clubs, seem to have one person who acts as the 'Father' of the club.⁴¹⁰ He may not hold office within the club, and the significance of that person's influence on the club may only be apparent to other Morris dancers, but if, for whatever reason, that person leaves the club the result can be catastrophic. The question was directly put to Tony Ashley, because he is the man who undertook the original Bullockers research, started the new Bullockers, and leads them each year.

"Rob Ashton, when we were having our last practice said 'I will be there even if we do it on zimmer frames!' He said 'I will be there!' But I think basically there's four of us – although Jules has got all the notation and everything, but you're partially right, unless Jules took it on, and we're all of an age, it would stop."⁴¹¹

Ashley is also the man who is instrumental in leading The Anker Morris Men, but in that side it has been suggested that there might be someone else who would step into the role of Father if Ashley left. Emma Melville, one of the Anker musicians, suggests that it might be her husband, Jon Melville, who would keep the Side together, but it is not always clear who will step forward to take on the role of the club's Father.⁴¹² When Colin Fleming died suddenly, the man who had been a Squire of the Morris Ring and was the acknowledged leader of Westminster Morris Men, the club went through a privately difficult period, despite the fact that a number of men in the Side are strong characters, and well-known in the Morris World.⁴¹³ On being asked the about leadership Antony

⁴¹⁰ It might be assumed that the correct term for women's clubs would be "the Mother" of the Side, but in interview women seemed relaxed about this, and in fact the two terms 'mother' and 'father' suggest different qualities. Sarah Slocombe suggested this difference when she said "The Squire would put to rest any fractious happenings and then there was a very strong other lady who had a big influence over what happened.

⁴¹¹ Tony Ashley 12/01/2013.

⁴¹² Family discussions with the author. It must also be noted that members of a club do not opt to be the club's Father. The role is granted to one person by the way in which they are viewed by the other club members.

⁴¹³ Observation by the author, having been with the team on a number of occasions during this difficult period. Unfortunately, the difficulties have continued. The man who appeared to be taking over as the new Father has left the Side, with the result that it looked for a while as if the Side would be disbanded. It has kept going into 2016, but there are still those who fear it may not survive.

Heywood, who dances with Helmond Morris Men in Holland, immediately quoted the contribution of one of the club's founders: "You must have a strong person – Jo Kuipers – we miss him enormously", but considering the club that he dances with in England, the Greensleeves Morris Men, Heywood immediately identified the club's Foreman:

"Bert Cleaver, I think he's the most marvellous teacher we've ever had – every single movement had a purpose – you couldn't fault him on a galley or where you do a feint step; it was all there exactly."⁴¹⁴

One difficulty with asking this question can be that the man being questioned appears to be the 'Father' of the club to people outside the club, but is reluctant to admit it, or does not realise the importance of his contribution to the Side. In fact, from Heywood's history in dance he may have more influence within Helmond than he realises.

This lead character within the club should not necessarily be confused with another important person, the one described by Keith Francis as a 'catalyst person'. In talking about the foundation of Silurian Morris Men Francis described the importance of Dave Jones to the team:

"They'd been started in 1969 by Dave Jones. Dave had been with Hereford and I think he fell out with them, but because he lived at Putley he started up this Morris Side in Ledbury. He'd got a Morris Side at the school he taught at, White Cross Boys. He's one of those catalyst people in communities who does things, gets things going. He was responsible for setting up Bromyard Folk Festival, very involved with the West Midlands Folk Federation."⁴¹⁵

The Silurian Morris Men were a Cotswold-style Side, but Jones was working on the Border dances from Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire, and he persuaded Silurian that they should dress in the manner of the old teams, and only dance the dances collected in that part of the country. As Keith Francis said:

What I like about it is that we're doing something in our own area that belongs to our area, and maintains that tradition; and although we don't have a dance from

⁴¹⁴ Interview with Antony Heywood, 28/11/2012. By using the term "strong person" for Kuipers, Heywood may have been implying that he was a catalyst rather than a Father figure.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

Ledbury [where the team is based] they are from round this area. So many teams that were started up in the great revival have no link with the area at all.⁴¹⁶

When John Kirkpatrick started the Shropshire Bedlams, at about the same time that Dave Jones was working with Silurian, he was acting also as the catalyst for the team, but he has not moved on, and has now become the father of that Side. Hugh Rippon, however, who introduced Kirkpatrick to the Morris, moved around a number of teams, starting some and helping others to become established.⁴¹⁷ In these three men, these three catalysts, Rippon, Kirkpatrick and Jones, we also see three individual approaches to the question of dance and locality. Rippon was closely connected to the Hammersmith Morris Men, but they only danced the Cotswold dances as collected in the first years of the twentieth century. They made no attempt to construct a Hammersmith tradition, although one dance, called *The Hammersmith Flyover*, was made for them by John Kirkpatrick, but it was based on the Longborough dances from the Cotswolds. This was the old-style practice, drawing almost entirely on the Cotswold dances overlaid with the Neal desire to see an enthusiastic approach to the dance. Kirkpatrick formed The Bedlams and constructed new dances for them, and although they are based upon the old ones collected in Welsh Borders, they are in fact modern constructions that are meant to develop and enhance the properties of those old dances for a modern audience. Jones, on the other hand, adhered firmly to the old ways, and Silurian only perform those dances collected in the Welsh Border Counties, their own home territory. They try to remain true to the ways in which the original collectors noted the dances. They have only reconstructed dances where they are known to have existed, but were not noted in detail, and then they have followed very closely the original notes for the pattern of the known dance.

No, we wouldn't make one up. There is one dance we do called Colwall Change Set which combines some of the moves that are in the Upton dances, but we do it – but that's the only one that's in our repertoire – otherwise everything's written

⁴¹⁶ Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

⁴¹⁷ See below. As Rippon was working for the EFDSS his catalyst qualities may have been necessary.

down – but even that one combines all of the movements that are actually written down.⁴¹⁸

It could be argued that of these three men only one was a true catalyst, Dave Jones, who exhibited all of the traits of that role. He started more than one team, encouraged them to follow his own ideas as far as a dance repertoire was concerned, and managed to annoy and upset people within the groups to the point at which he was forced to move on. Rippon was certainly enthusiastic, and helped teams to form or to continue, but as it was a part of his regular job, it was a personality trait that was being harnessed, rather than one that was allowed free range. Kirkpatrick started the one team, but that is hardly enough to qualify him for full catalyst status.

It was a typical catalyst, Rolf Gardiner, who after the First World War was instrumental in arranging the first Travelling Morrice Tour. He had toured Europe with dance groups and organisations of young people. He went to see Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp, and he set up the one of the first, large estates based upon modern, environmentally sound procedures at Springhead.⁴¹⁹ But he also managed to annoy people; Sharp and others in the revival world were unhappy about Gardiner's plans for the undergraduate dancers. Not only was Sharp against his tour plans, largely because Gardiner did not hold a Society certificate, but it is clear from the way that Heffer controlled the plans for the first Travelling Morrice tour that some within the Cambridge dancers were also unsure about giving Gardiner too much power within the group.⁴²⁰ Looking at the piece from Francis about Dave Jones we see the same trait – 'he fell out with Hereford'. Jones went on to fall out with Silurian, and leave them to start another Side, the Not for Joes.

⁴¹⁸ Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

⁴¹⁹ Rolf Gardiner, *Water Springing from the Ground: An Anthology of the Writings of Rolf Gardiner* (1972); Douglas Kennedy, "Rolf Gardiner 1902-1971", *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.2, No.3 (1972), pp.258-259; Matthew Simons, *Understanding 'Rolfery': Rolf Gardiner and the Travelling Morrice, A Study of a Patriotic Young Man caught between Eccentricity and Obstinacy*. (Unpublished BA Thesis, De Montfort University, 2014).

⁴²⁰ Simons: *Understanding Rolfery*.

These 'catalyst people' appear in many places after the Second World War, setting up Folk Dance Festivals, Morris Sides and song clubs - "They are people who like to be in control. Once they've lost control then they're lost, they perhaps move on."⁴²¹ Some people who may have been catalysts found a legitimate outlet for their tendencies by working for organisations such as the EFDSS, and from his interview, Tony Foxworthy seems to have been one of those. Indeed, being a catalyst may have been one of the major requirements for a position with the Society.⁴²² Sarah Slocombe appears to demonstrate some of the classic catalyst traits - annoying dancers in one team and starting a new team – although she may not have been in a controlling position. In fact, during the interview, she insisted that she was a very shy person, and that seeking to be a leader was not in her nature. As described earlier, she had started dancing with a team in Sussex called Shalesbrook Morris. The seeds of discontent were initially sown through an argument over the dress: "We had a bit of an issue with kit. Nobody would listen to young people saying maybe we should have a bit of a change of kit, so a few feathers were ruffled there."⁴²³ – but Slocombe then started another Side:

I discovered Border morris, so I went to a workshop with an Eastbourne Side and they were just too far to get to, to carry on with the Shalesbrook and to get to Eastbourne, so I decided to set up my own Side and to carry on with Shalesbrook to support them, but again I ruffled more feathers, because they said 'you're taking all our dancers, we'll never carry on; you're a horrible person.' But I didn't take the dancers. I found friends, mainly, in the village where I was living, who were mad enough to have a go, and because they were hiding behind black make-up it's ok for them. They were anonymous.

Both the shyness of Slocombe and her insistence that she did not want to be seen as a leader were called in to question when she said: "They'd be sitting chatting and I'd be 'Come on, let's dance!' But they would all moan because they'd always wanted to do it

⁴²¹ Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

⁴²² Peter Dashwood, who worked for the Society in East Anglia, certainly acted as a catalyst, starting festivals and Morris Sides across the region during the 1970s.

⁴²³ Interview with Sarah Slocombe, 15/02/2016.

but they'd never got up and tried it. They were quite resentful." The new team formed by Slocombe, Spirimawgus, are still dancing, but this might be thought to be surprising, considering a further comment about the team:

With Spirimawgus we didn't have a bagman or anything, it was all co-operative. And I'm not sure that entirely worked either. There was always a bit of a friction as to why aren't we doing more, or why aren't we doing less. Who is in control? But we deliberately kept it like that.

Sarah Slocombe has now moved to Devon and is not yet dancing with another team, but in considering what she might do next she made an interesting comment that looked back to her days with Shalesbrook:

I've kind of got a Side earmarked, and they are a bit "whoopy" but they're really friendly people. When you're in the Morris you commit so much of your life to being with these people you've got to find the right group. There's a bit of me – erm – I like the idea of Rapper and if I'd stayed back in Sussex I was about to set up a Rapper Side, so there's a bit of me that hasn't explored that yet, but we've got the Dartmoor Tradition of stepping, so I'm looking for somebody to teach me that as well; to be doing something that's local to the area rather than importing things into it.

Having joined Shalesbrook, and then annoyed some of them by setting up Spirimawgus, was she about to annoy them all again by setting up a Rapper Side? It was interesting to hear her repeat the comments about the importance of friendship within teams – Shalesbrook: "They were really just supportive people, they were lovely." Spirimawgus: "I found friends in the village." and the team in Devon: "They're really friendly people." And yet by acting as a catalyst she seemed to have the knack of annoying these friends to the extent that they apparently called her "a really horrible person."

While it was interesting to be able to talk to someone who had certainly acted as a catalyst in one part of the country, it is not clear whether or not she will continue now that she has moved. The signs are that she might, but starting new teams does not necessarily suggest catalytic tendencies. In the 1970s many women's teams were formed by dancers moving around the country, in exactly the same way that men's teams

were formed in the 1930s and the 1960s. The enthusiastic dancer may simply be good at persuading people to take up a new interest, and having formed the team may stay with them.⁴²⁴ As control is the suggested driving force behind the catalytic impulse, a catalyst who moves to a new area may refuse to join an existing team, because of that need to be in control of something new.



Fig. 39: Bampton Morris Men.

Photographs in the collection of Steve Bazire showing two of the Bampton teams.

Unfortunately, where two or more Catalysts or Fathers appear at the same time in a club it can lead to arguments. There have been two Morris Sides in Bampton for many years, one originally run by Arnold Woodley and one by Francis Shergold, and although both of these men are now dead the split remains. In fact, it is worse, because there are now three, or some might suggest four Sides in Bampton (Fig.39). In Adderbury there are at least two Sides after arguments, and in places where there are revival Sides these argumentative ways still lead to multiple Sides. Richard Boswell certainly acted as a catalyst in the Preston area, falling out with Garstang Morris Men, setting up Preston Royal Morris Dancers, and after falling out with them setting up Royal Lancashire. Boswell's case was the classic example of someone, as Francis said, losing control, and

⁴²⁴ Desmond Herring and Ivo Barne formed and stayed with East Suffolk Morris Men for their whole dancing careers, and there are many other examples from across the whole spectrum of the Morris world.

deciding to move on.⁴²⁵ A few dancers followed him to help form a new team, and he did not move from one part of the country to another, he simply persuaded a new group of people to join together to form a new team, echoing exactly the pattern established by Jones in Herefordshire. There are also cases where a badly-handled challenge can lead to the collapse of a club, as happened to Thanet Morris Men in the 1990s.⁴²⁶ But without the catalysts the Morris world would be much smaller, and without the Fathers many teams would not survive.

Sides and Communities.

The teams discovered in the Cotswold hills either had already adopted the name of their home community – Bampton, for example – or were given the name of a community – Bledington, Longborough – by the collectors. Many modern Morris Sides also take the name of their local community – Coventry, St Albans, Peterborough, for example – and some have a costume that is directly related to that community.⁴²⁷ The story repeated so often is that clubs try to develop links with their communities as much as possible. If they are invited to dance for a community event they try to attend, in the hope that it might draw club and community closer together.⁴²⁸ But the reality is that most modern Councils and organisations do not consider their local Morris Side when trying to arrange events that show off the culture of their community. An extreme example was the case of the Abingdon Morris Men. They have a long history, were contacted by Mary Neal, and are very proud of their ‘Mayor of Ock Street’ celebrations. They have won European awards for their dance tradition. Yet in the early 1990s, when the author visited the Abingdon

⁴²⁵ These events were well-known to the author as they happened during his time as Ring Bagman and Squire.

⁴²⁶ During the Author’s time as Squire of the Morris Ring he was asked to go down to Thanet to mediate between the two factions. It was clearly impossible to bring the parties together and the Thanet Morris Men disbanded.

⁴²⁷ Coventry MM have the City coat of Arms, Stafford MM the County Knot among many other examples.

⁴²⁸ There is also the question of recruitment to consider. As Morris Sides struggle to find new dancers, performing for local events might be a way to encourage people to join the club.

Town Museum, there was no mention of the Morris, and when a lady was asked to explain the absence she claimed to have no knowledge of any local Morris team.⁴²⁹ If local communities are so dismissive of their Morris Sides, even when, as in this case, they have won prestigious awards for their dancing, it is hardly surprising on a national level that the Olympic Committee refused to consider Morris involvement in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Two teams, Blackheath Morris Men from Blackheath in London, and Rag Morris from Bristol, were included in the closing tableau, but were not given a key role in the celebration.⁴³⁰ Therefore, modern clubs have little incentive to develop a group of dances based on their locality if they are not given recognition for their efforts. This argument does not hold in the case of Thaxted in Essex, where the town signs have Morris Men proudly depicted on them, and yet a Thaxted dance tradition has not been devised. However, it could be argued that for Morris Sides to wait to be asked is the wrong way to look at the question. Perhaps the reality is that Councils will only work with local Morris teams if the Side develops the event. An excellent example of this outside the Cotswold area is the Saddleworth Rushcart Weekend (Fig.40).

The Rushcart processions were a well-known phenomenon of eighteenth and nineteenth century Lancashire towns and villages, but they had all died out when, in 1975 the Saddleworth Morris Men revived the Uppermill Cart and its procession.⁴³¹ This event rapidly became a great favourite in the Morris world, and as the weekend has developed,

⁴²⁹ This was also the experience of Barry care, reported earlier, who attended college in the town thirty years before this. The Morris is now part of the exhibition, and perhaps it was the author's question that triggered the interest. However, a recent conversation about the village of Moulton in Northamptonshire has mirrored the Abingdon experience. Moulton Morris Men are proud of their village connections, and their founder, Barry Care MBE, interviewed for this study, has been honoured for his contribution to village life. Yet a resident of the village recently said that he did not know that there was a local Morris team. Conversation with Jon Melville, 07/12/2014.

⁴³⁰ See chapter 6 – The Future.

⁴³¹ Peter Ashworth, *Rushcarts in Saddleworth* (1995).

and the fortunes of the community have improved, so the Rushcart Weekend has become a major event in the Saddleworth social calendar.



Fig. 40: The Saddleworth Rushcart.
The Saddleworth Rushcart arriving in Delph. 23/08/2014.
Photograph by the author.

Shops along the route have photos and memorabilia in their windows, local breweries produce special ales for the event, and hotels and restaurants are filled with bookings made months before, or repeated from year to year. It has become an occasion that the community cannot ignore, and indeed chooses not to ignore. Rather than waiting to be asked, the Saddleworth Morris Men gave the community an event of which it could be proud, and in this case they also recreated the Saddleworth dances. Certainly it is true that the Lancashire teams have a tradition of developing dances specifically linked to one location, but it does point to a considerable difference between the North West and the Cotswold Morris. Where Cotswold teams have developed regular events, they have not combined them with a portfolio of newly created dances for that locality.

The final element to this story concerns the apparent importance of the Rushcart to the local community. At the 2012 Rushcart two of the newer men dancing with Saddleworth were asked if the Rushcart Weekend was the biggest social and cultural event in the community. They replied that although it certainly had a very public face, it probably

came some way down the list of major local events, the most important one being the Brass Band Weekend. The follow-up question therefore, was – ‘would there be a community out-cry if the event stopped?’ The answer these men gave was that if the Rushcart stopped, while a few might mourn the passing of a ‘folk’ custom, and some businesses would lose money, in general there would be no reaction. Something else would come along to fill the gap. It was a salutary thought that these events today appear to mean more to the business world than they do to the cultural life of a community.⁴³²

Conclusion.

This chapter has demonstrated that although Morris dancers today remain determined to link dances with localities, the reality is that the dances are attached to people, not communities. The first collectors faced the problem of defining the dances in some way, and it was certainly easier for them to list dances under village names. The outcome was that the old dancers disappeared from the general record, and the new, revival dancers were led to assume that the communities had a much greater influence over the dance form than was actually the case. It was, therefore, a further step along the road towards creating a mythical past, an invented tradition that emphasised the imagined golden age of the villages of rural England. However, clearly the impact of the individual dancers must not be ignored. The dancers found in the Cotswolds by the collectors and the Travelling Morrice may have been leaders of their Sides, catalysts who created teams and dances; they may have been father-figures who kept the teams together, or they may have been no more than Morris foot soldiers, dancers who just happened to have out-lived their companions, but they deserve as much acknowledgement for their part as is given, for example, to Dave Jones, the catalyst, and Tony Ashley, the much-respected

⁴³² Conversation with two Saddleworth dancers at the 2012 Rushcart. It is interesting to note Ashworth’s comment at the end of his booklet on the Rushcart: “- these attractions are a big boost to the local shops, pubs, restaurants and other small businesses. It is unfortunate that they have not reciprocated the arrangement by supporting the event financially.” p.51.

father figure, for it was through them that the dance was passed on to the collectors. They certainly deserve to be known for their position within the Morris fraternity, rather than for their social standing. The documents describing the remaining members of the old teams concentrate on their rural status, whereas the twentieth century dancers are noted as being urban academics. Despite this, some interviewees were keen to note that the dance was a great leveller, and that within the team, social standing was of no concern; dancing ability was all that mattered.

Many teams today continue to announce the name of a dance, combined with the name of a community, even when the dance has been composed by that Side. It is a formula that is hard to break after so many years, but some dancers are trying to change, and as John Kirkpatrick said, The Shropshire Bedlams simply announce the name of the dance. Obviously the remaining old Sides, the 'traditional' teams, would never add the team name to a dance. When the Bampton team are dancing it is simply *Maid of the Mill* – there is no reason to add 'from Bampton'. Yet as described by the interviewees, communities in general pay little attention to their dancers, except in regard to the financial rewards that they might bring. Even when there is support, there is a suspicion that if the Side were to stop dancing there would be little or no encouragement from the community to help the team to survive. From the evidence provided by David Chaundy, the village of Headington Quarry did not help the team to continue, and the Saddleworth men were convinced that the Saddleworth community would not step in to continue the Rushcart. I would argue that this is an example of the way in which the majority of modern Morris Sides should consider themselves as entertainment, not as something that has a right granted by spurious tradition to dance in an area.

5: Tradition and Change.

Throughout the study one concept has underpinned all conversations that on investigation proves to be complex and problematic. All interviewees have at some point used the words *tradition* or *traditional* when describing their dances, but when asked to define that concept some have resorted to simplistic definitions that do nothing to explain the term; tradition is generally seen as a vague concept that has something to do with the past. Tony Foxworthy, who worked for the EFDSS could only suggest – “the tradition to me is an activity that goes back a long way and has been handed down through the ages, like the Morris.”⁴³³ Foxworthy also provided a quote that illustrates the confusion surrounding the concept when he proposed – “the problem with the Border Morris and the Molly is that there’s not enough information around to make it traditional.” Some dancers, however, have given the subject rather more thought and suggested that tradition is concerned with maintaining cultural references, and a feeling that some things need to be continued and preserved because they add an indeterminate value to human existence.

The Morris in English Culture.

*She is not any common Earth,
Water or wood or air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye,
Where you and I will fare.*⁴³⁴

The desire for a national identity based on folk traditions - custom, dance, song and story - that swept Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, may have been started by a fear that the growth of great industrial conurbations would obliterate the old, peaceful, rural ways of ancient societies, but it was brought into focus by the First World War. In place of a concern that an industrialised society might ignore ancient songs and

⁴³³ Interview with Tony Foxworthy, 19/09/2012.

⁴³⁴ Rudyard Kipling, ‘Puck’s Song’, ed. Ivor Brown, *A Book of England* (London, 1958), p.28.

stories, there came the realisation that the guns of the western front were pounding those old ways out of existence faster than anyone believed possible. In the space of those few years the music of English composers assumed a great importance, far above any simple, musical considerations, and it is an importance that continues to this day.⁴³⁵ Poets and writers contributed to this desire to return to a simpler, purer age, and in a strange accident, Thomas published his poem 'Adlestrop' in 1917, seeming to link the lost rural idyll with the very place in which the collectors of folk dance were finding the Morris:-

*And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and around him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.*⁴³⁶

In the Cotswold Hills of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire the collectors found the last remnants of the south midlands' Morris Dance, and it was enthusiastically welcomed by men desperate to find the Holy Grail of peace amidst the confusion of post-war England. That terminology can be used deliberately to describe the dance, because it became associated with the Victorian and Edwardian ideas of folk traditions having clear links to the age of Shakespeare, the myths of King Arthur, and to a pagan culture of fertility and seasonal growth. To find a simple dance, performed only by men, in ancient villages seemed to the first collectors as if they had indeed stumbled on the Holy Grail, the very heart of Englishness. Peter Ackroyd wrote of the way in which English composers of the early twentieth century looked back to an older world: "... the possibilities of English music spring from the distant past, and can be expressive of it." and he talks of the melancholy and pastoral beauty of English music.⁴³⁷ Clearly, there was a great desire in the early years of the twentieth century to construct an English culture; it may have been

⁴³⁵ In particular Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Grainger and Butterworth. Vaughan Williams' music, particularly his *Fantasia on Greensleeves* and *The Lark Ascending* regularly top the classical music polls.

⁴³⁶ Edward Thomas "Adlestrop", *The Nation's Favourite Poems* (London, 1996), p.43.

⁴³⁷ Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London, 2002), p.444.

a rural idyll, a mythical view of the country's past and present, but such a construction was no different to the way in which other parts of the British Isles were imagining their pasts, and the myth was helped considerably by the work of the folk song and dance collectors.⁴³⁸ The success of the mythmakers can still be seen today, by the way in which the popular art world is dominated by pastoral works, the plethora of programmes on television about rural life, and the desire to travel into the country to experience chocolate-box villages and walk the footpaths of old England.⁴³⁹

Despite changes across society during the inter-war period, among which were the arrival of new dance crazes from America and an enormous increase in the provision of popular music, the rural myth developed at the turn of the century was firmly rooted in English consciousness. In 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War, Parker and Charles published *There'll Always be an England* for the film "Discoveries". Vera Lynn made it hugely popular.⁴⁴⁰

*There'll always be an England,
While there's a country lane.
Wherever there's a cottage small
Beside a field of grain.*

However, to try to place Morris Dancing into a culture can be difficult. Although Tylor was quite clear about the concept of culture:

Culture or Civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.⁴⁴¹

others have not been so certain. Williams wrote that Culture is "an exceptionally complex term." and: "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English

⁴³⁸ As described for Scotland and Wales in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (2009).

⁴³⁹ Not only the classical works of Turner and Constable, but the modern work of Ravilious, Nash and Hilder among many others, who all draw on the rural myth for their inspiration. On television 'Countryfile', occupies a prime slot on Sunday evening television.

⁴⁴⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/There'll_Always_Be_an_England> [accessed 04 December 2014].

⁴⁴¹ Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (1873), p.1.

language.”⁴⁴² Smith and Riley wrote: “At the start of any text it can be useful to define the central concept. In the case of “culture” this has proven to be surprisingly, even notoriously, difficult.”⁴⁴³ However difficult to define, the early twentieth century culture of England was strong, and lasted for many years; in fact, it still underpins many aspects of English life today, even though it could be argued that it is wrong to speak of one culture. The chocolate-box, Shakespearean image may have been ‘invented’ during the early years of the century, but the idea of the ‘swinging sixties’, an urban based culture, was similarly invented later in the century, and was equally strong.



Fig. 41: Godshill Model Village.
A typically English scene – The Men of Wight Morris Men portrayed in the Godshill Model Village on the Isle of Wight. Photograph by the author.

Morris Dancing was a significant part of the rural idyll that formed the basis of English culture throughout the twentieth century. Shakespeare, picturesque villages, country pastimes and ancient pubs were all signifiers of this broad culture, and Morris Dancers on the village green or outside the village pub, were seen to be the icing on this cultural cake. Rolf Gardiner wrote:

We must give serious thought to the ‘landscape architecture’ of the dance. In the ‘twenties’ the village greens, the road outside the ‘pubs’, the background of stone-built churches, manors, cottages among the elms, the interiors of noble Cotswold barns – all these gave idyllic settings to the Morris.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London, 1988), p.10; p.87.

⁴⁴³ Philip Smith and Alexander Riley, *Cultural Theory, an Introduction* (Oxford, 2009), p.1.

⁴⁴⁴ Rolf Gardiner, writing in 1966, in answer to a discussion document put out by the Morris Ring, the Chipperfield Report, in December 1965.

Music, poetry and art all combined to cement this idyll within the national consciousness.

John Storey suggests that anything falling within the definition of 'folk' played an important part in this cultural construction.

Similarly, the 'discovery' of folk culture across the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an integral part of emerging European nationalisms. From the middle of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth we find the same idea repeated over and over again: folk culture is the very embodiment of the nature of a nation; in it, the national and natural blur.⁴⁴⁵

Storey also explores the complex idea of culture: "To share a national culture is to interpret the world, to make it meaningful and to experience it as meaningful in recognisably similar ways." He links Gramsci's work on hegemony, Marxist theories of discourse, and Foucault's writings to explain how a nation builds this identity, to provide an agenda of nationality that people can accept or argue against, but can always turn to during moments of crisis.⁴⁴⁶ As an antidote to rampant industrialisation, and as a security blanket for soldiers returning from war, the English rural idyll was a perfect construct.

Storey calls his writing 'Becoming British' and lists rituals that cover all of the country, but Morris Dancing in the twentieth century is peculiarly English, and the question of a national identity has recently become focussed around the individual identities of each part of the United Kingdom. While Scotland, Wales and Ireland appear to have developed clear identities, even though Hobsbawm and Ranger have suggested that some of these identities have been recently 'invented', England has struggled to find a voice. Graves and Hodge writing in 1940 were dismissive of the folk revival:

Folk dancing enjoyed a great popularity for about ten years, chiefly under church patronage; and one or two well-attended conventions were held at the Albert Hall. But Tin Pan Alley, the New York music factory, killed it in the end."⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ John Storey, "Becoming British" in Michael Higgins, Clarissa Smith and John Storey, *Modern British Culture* (Cambridge, 2010), p.15.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.17-20.

⁴⁴⁷ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The long Weekend. A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* (London, 1940), p.49.

and Fox noted: "The English have no 'national costume' – an omission noted and lamented by all those currently wringing their hands over our national identity crisis."⁴⁴⁸

When Morris teams travel abroad they gather large crowds to watch any show, and are often told that England is lucky to have such a vibrant folk dance tradition, yet dancers will comment in return that the one place Morris dancing is ignored is England. In the 1930s Lionel Bacon travelled to Hungary, to a Rover Scouts camp, and he commented on the way in which the English have ignored their national dances:

The sad thing, of course, was this. Here were we, apart from the Hungarians themselves, we, the English, were the most numerous scouts there by a long way, and we hadn't a clue about our national dances. While everybody else, all the other countries in the world, it seemed, were dancing their dances all night and all day, in season and out, we hadn't an idea about ours.⁴⁴⁹

Bacon explained that he attempted to redress the balance a little by getting some English scouts to learn and perform a Morris dance – "very badly!" Scruton also noted the way in which the English have ignored their own culture:

It is a fact that England has been forbidden – and forbidden by the English.

... every practice in which the spirit of England can still be discerned seems fated now to arouse contempt, not in the world at large, but in the English.⁴⁵⁰

Paxman is particularly scathing about Morris Dancing: "The closest thing the English have to a national dance, Morris-dancing, is a clumsy pub-sport practised by men in beards and shiny-bottomed trousers."⁴⁵¹ While this is a stereotype that is beloved of critics of the Morris, one reason for the cultural difficulty faced by England has been explored by Robert Colls. He argues that the cultural identity of the English is devoid of people. "Interpreters of the folk, then, inclined to a history of their own choosing, and England with the people put in but their agency left out. Cottagers counted for less than the cottages they lived in, and were just as mute."⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ Kate Fox, *Watching the English* (London, 2005), p.267.

⁴⁴⁹ Bacon, interviewed 22/02/1979.

⁴⁵⁰ Roger Scruton, *England: an Elegy* (London, 2000), p.247.

⁴⁵¹ Jeremy Paxman, *The English; A Portrait of a People* (London, 1998), p.11.

⁴⁵² Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), p.301.

The development of a national culture, to combat industrialisation, or to provide a safe haven for the war-weary, needed no people other than in supporting roles. Morris Dancers might appear on the village green, but the stars of the story were the surrounding 'Tudor' cottages, the leaf-green lanes and the hanging woods on the nearby hills; the security of a 'green and pleasant land'.⁴⁵³ There is an echo here from the way in which Sharp named the 'village traditions' but left out the names of the old dancers. They joined the ranks of the invisible poor, while the villages took their place in the cultural idyll. Colls writes of the rural poverty, and Irvine Reid spoke in interview of visiting an old Cotswold dancer in the 1950s and finding that his cottage had no electricity or running water. The cultural identity of England has lost its way and it could be said that Cotswold Morris Dancing has suffered the same fate. "And although Cecil Sharp did have some success in getting his sort of country dancing introduced into elementary schools, it would be hard to suppose that English children preferred it to the palais glide, the hokey-cokey, or the cake-walk."⁴⁵⁴ Children of the later twentieth century might have preferred the Twist, but the principle holds. Gardiner offered a clear reason for this cultural confusion as far as Morris dancing is concerned: "Nothing is more absurd than a team of dancers in full regalia dancing in a street of parked or moving vehicles, with all the noise and stench and disarray that are involved. The think isn't logical."⁴⁵⁵ The kind of voice that will emerge to describe an English culture for a new age has not yet been heard, and the place that the Cotswold dance will inhabit is equally unclear. It has seen something of a rebirth as we enter the twenty-first century, but there is a tendency to fall back on an insistence that the Morris must continue, must be seen as an integral part of our culture, whatever that is seen to be, simply because it is 'traditional'.

⁴⁵³ Note how Gardiner, quoted above, only lists these things for Morris of the 1920s.

⁴⁵⁴ Colls, *Identity of England* (2001), p.306.

⁴⁵⁵ Rolf Gardiner writing in 1966.

The Meaning of Tradition.⁴⁵⁶

When dance collectors began work in the early twentieth century they published their findings and referred to the dances from each village as that village's 'tradition'.⁴⁵⁷ 'Traditional' has therefore become the accepted way of describing Morris Dances but the meaning of the word, and the concept that it embraces, is far from clear. Eller writes about the problems of defining tradition, and even uses the phrase 'the Tradition of Tradition', implying that the very use of the word has become in some way 'traditional':

What precisely is tradition? It implies something that exists and continues "from way back" or "following old ways." "Traditional," therefore, suggests continuity with the past, something that is rooted in and even identical to the past. But of course, no societies today are carrying on the past exactly as it was.⁴⁵⁸

The Collins English Dictionary provides a number of different definitions for the word:

Tradition: n 1 The handing down from generation to generation of the same customs, beliefs, etc, esp by word of mouth 2 the body of customs, thoughts, practices, etc, belonging to a particular country, people, family or institution over a relatively long period 3 a specific custom or practice of long standing.⁴⁵⁹

These are perfectly acceptable, and it would certainly be possible to group many of the ways that the word is used today within these three, initial categories, even allowing for the imprecise use of the word 'relatively', but a glance at a Thesaurus suggests some of the difficulties that arise from the use of the word, given that it appears in sections dealing with mythology, folk life, habit and convention.⁴⁶⁰ When used by some commentators referring to community events, the word and the concepts surrounding it have overtones of a deep necessity for the community, almost suggesting a religious dependence. Others will use the word simplistically, to mean no more than a regular occurrence, or 'a

⁴⁵⁶ Williams, "Tradition:- Tradition in its most general modern sense is a particularly difficult word." *Keywords*, p.318.

⁴⁵⁷ As in Sharp and MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book, Part 1* (1912), where they write about 'The Traditional Morris Dance' and 'The Headington Tradition'.

⁴⁵⁸ Jack David Eller, *Cultural Anthropology* (London, 2013), pp.221-222.

⁴⁵⁹ *Collins Dictionary* (Glasgow, 2010), p.1730.

⁴⁶⁰ Fran Alexander, *Bloomsbury Thesaurus* (London, 1997).

practice of long standing.’ Use of the word when referring to dance encourages a personal definition, perhaps from deep personal concepts of belief and mythology.

In 1980, when Douglas Kennedy, the Director of the EFDSS and Squire of The Morris Ring, gave the talk at a dinner hosted by the Monkseaton Morris Men, referred to earlier, he gave the assembled company what he called a personal view of tradition.⁴⁶¹ It might be assumed that Kennedy, steeped in the dance and song of the British Isles, and very proud of his family’s song heritage, would understand and be able to talk about a true meaning for the word tradition, but he spoke about the village traditions of the Morris Dance without setting out what that meant for the villages in question.

The Morris dances we performed were grouped under the names of the different villages where he [Cecil Sharp] had noted the steps and tunes, and other detail. Thus the repertory of the local team at Headington Quarry near Oxford was known to us as the Headington tradition.⁴⁶²

Kennedy said that he received his dance through ‘oral transmission’ from a ‘traditional source’, but it was from Sharp, not directly from ‘the source’. Towards the end of the talk he demonstrated clearly the way in which he entered the culture of the English Folk movement during the period when it was being strongly influenced by the work of Frazer.⁴⁶³ As in *The Golden Bough*, Kennedy made leaps across cultures and millennia with no reference to evidence. The Iron Age, Bronze Age and even the Stone Age were called upon to stand as the forefathers of English Folk culture.

The fact that the sword dance is the prerogative of the coal miners, in the case of the rapper, and of the iron-stone miners, in the case of the Cleveland varieties of long sword dances, is reinforced by the similar survivals among miners in Europe suggesting a widespread Iron Age tradition.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ Kennedy, “Tradition: A Personal Viewpoint of Douglas Kennedy, Vice President of the Society.” *Folk Music Journal*, Vol.4, No.3, (1982), pp.195 – 207.

⁴⁶² Kennedy; p.196.

⁴⁶³ Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1925).

⁴⁶⁴ Kennedy, *Folk Music Journal*, p.201.

Douglas Kennedy did much to further the cause of English Folk Music and Dance, but it is difficult to agree with his insistence that people closely involved in folk dance and song must therefore have a natural feeling for what he called tradition since his writing does not make it clear that he knew what was meant by the term. Interestingly, at the end of the speech he stated that even Cecil Sharp's methods were not 'traditional': "Looking back, I find it difficult to think what else he could have done at the time, yet the method itself was essentially not traditional."⁴⁶⁵

Douglas Kennedy may not have been able to explain his definition of the word tradition but he was convinced that he knew what it meant, and that it informed his life and work. Edward Shils wrote that he knew what the word meant and that he could explain the broad concept, yet he used an unfortunate starting point for the discussion:

It is rare to encounter persons who pride themselves on the espousal of a tradition, call it that, and regard it as a good thing.⁴⁶⁶

Later Shils may come closer to the true meaning of the word: "Tradition means many things. In its barest most elementary sense, it means simply a tradition."⁴⁶⁷ He suggested a time limit for the development of traditions, saying that they must last longer than three generations, which is certainly more helpful than the dictionary definition suggesting no more than a 'relatively long period'.⁴⁶⁸ He explained the idea of the generation by saying that it might mean members of a family, but it might mean a period of time in the life of an institution.⁴⁶⁹ In terms of cultural events that are recognised as traditions the three generation rule may or may not be accurate, but it provides a good base to work from, and has some resonance in the often heard saying, usually in jest, that if a thing is being

⁴⁶⁵ Kennedy, *Folk Music Journal*, p.207.

⁴⁶⁶ Edward Shils, *Tradition* (London, 1981), p.3.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p.12. Compare with Cutting's suggestion that the Morris is what people call The Morris.

⁴⁶⁸ Shils, *Tradition*, p.15.

⁴⁶⁹ For a school, for example, a generation might mean the time that it takes for one pupil to move through the classes of a school, or in fact, if a tradition is linked to one class a generation might be no longer than one year.

done for the second time it has become traditional.⁴⁷⁰ It must, therefore, have been invented in the recent past.

Hobsbawm and Ranger's work on the 'Invention of Tradition' was important, not only because it provided detailed evidence of the development of customs and traditions in Scotland and Wales, but it also focussed attention on the fact that traditions have to be invented.⁴⁷¹ This was, arguably, not the outcome that was envisaged by the authors, because in the introduction Hobsbawm tries to identify the differences between what he calls the 'old traditions' and invented ones and he makes it quite clear that he is dismissive of these invented traditions, considering them unfulfilling, vague and unspecific.

On the other hand the strength and adaptability of genuine traditions is not to be confused with the 'invention of tradition'. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented.⁴⁷²

Critics have since pointed to the basic problem with the book, the undeniable fact that all traditions must have been 'invented' by someone at some time, which leads to a much more interesting question, asking why some events or practices survive and become traditions while others quickly disappear.

When Alan Gailey wrote a piece for the Folklore journal that he called 'The Nature of Tradition' he began by noting that there had been few attempts to examine tradition - "Generally, as particularly when dealing with modern Western societies in which discussion of tradition has been eschewed, historians and anthropologists have not been reflective about tradition." - and he briefly mentioned the work of Hobsbawm and Shils, concluding that - "It is perhaps not surprising that there is lack of consensus if not also

⁴⁷⁰ Williams, "It is sometimes observed, by those who have looked into particular traditions, that it only takes two generations to make anything traditional; naturally enough, since that is the sense of tradition as active process." *Keywords*, p.319. Also note the interview with John Kirkpatrick.

⁴⁷¹ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (2009).

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p.8.

confused thinking about tradition.”⁴⁷³ Anthony Giddens, in giving the BBC Reith Lectures at a number of cities around the world also lamented the lack of many works dealing specifically with the subject of tradition.⁴⁷⁴ The overall title of the lectures was “Runaway World”, and the third talk in Delhi was simply titled “Tradition”. It was a short but clear statement of the basic situation regarding the subject:

Tradition and custom - these have been the stuff of most people's lives for most of human history. Yet it is remarkable how little interest scholars and thinkers tend to show in them. There are endless discussions of modernisation and what it means to be modern, but few indeed about tradition.⁴⁷⁵

Where Gailey had based his work on Shils, Giddens began with Hobsbawm and Ranger and the Invention of Tradition. He criticised their argument and went on to say that, where Hobsbawm said that traditions were unchanging, he believed that they can and do change, sometimes very quickly. “I would turn their argument on its head. All traditions, I would say, are invented traditions.”⁴⁷⁶

At the end of the lecture Giddens turned to other subjects, but he proved to be a great supporter of tradition and made a number of interesting points, saying that, even though it might undergo change, tradition brings an honesty into society, and gives people in that society a framework for their lives.

What is distinctive about tradition is that it defines a kind of truth. For someone following a traditional practice, questions don't have to be asked about alternatives.⁴⁷⁷

Not only is it good for a society to have traditions, but Giddens suggested it is essential.

“In my view, it is entirely rational to recognise that traditions are needed in society.”⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷³ Alan Gailey, “The Nature of Tradition”, *Folklore Vol.100, No.2* (1989), pp.143 – 161.

⁴⁷⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The 1999 Reith Lectures – Runaway World*. Lecture 3 – Tradition, para 6, “When I was researching for this lecture, I came across dozens of academic books in English with 'modernity' in the title. Indeed, I have written a few myself - but I could only discover a couple of books specifically about tradition.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week3/week3.htm> [accessed 17 January 2012].

⁴⁷⁵ Giddens, para 6.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., para 12.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., para 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., para 23.

He insisted that tradition sits firmly at the centre of a healthy society. We need our traditions in order to maintain a balanced, healthy lifestyle; not only society but also all individuals.

As the influence of tradition and custom shrink on a world-wide level, the very basis of our self-identity - our sense of self - changes. In more traditional situations, a sense of self is sustained largely through the stability of the social positions of individuals in the community. Where tradition lapses, and life-style choice prevails, the self isn't exempt. Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before. This explains why therapy and counselling of all kinds have become so popular in Western countries.⁴⁷⁹

To link declining tradition with increasing levels of counselling is thought-provoking, but it resonates with comments made in the interviews conducted with Morris Men today (see Kirkpatrick below p.195).

Phillips and Schochet also began with a comment about the lack of interest in tradition as a discipline, and noted the fact that the word is used regularly by many people. "In general usage the concept of tradition has the widest currency, yet in most academic disciplines it has come near to disappearing in serious use."⁴⁸⁰ In a thoughtful preface and first chapter the editors set out in detail the position regarding tradition, and the problems there are in trying to study it. They are dismissive of Hobsbawm and Ranger – "... the very idea of 'invented tradition' makes little sense without a prior conception of 'tradition' as such." - but equally criticise Shils and others for a lack of breadth in their studies, a criticism that certainly cannot be levelled at Phillips and Schochet.⁴⁸¹ They draw widely on studies from a number of disciplines, linguistic, religious and scientific, and note at one point that we are in danger of making tradition so all-encompassing that we must include everything; it will – "swallow the whole world."⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Giddens, Para 28.

⁴⁸⁰ M S Phillips and G Schochet, *Questions of Tradition* (Toronto, 2004), p.3.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., p.xi.

⁴⁸² Ibid., p.21.

Like Giddens, Phillips and Schochet are very positive about tradition, and they suggest that traditions help us to experience and make sense of the world; they help to provide pathways to the future.

...tradition is best understood not as a thing in itself, but as a manner of experiencing the world⁴⁸³.

Loyalty to a traditional past is, in practice, a way ahead, a distinct path to the present.⁴⁸⁴

Ivor Allsop, a Past Squire of the Morris Ring, once said when instructing young men in the steps of the Longsword dance that they needed to keep one foot in the past – respecting and observing the ways of the old teams – but two in the future. Peter Brown of Monkseaton Morris Men from the North East, in talking about the Rapper Sword dance, said that hundreds of people turned out to see them dance at New Year, and he explained the presence of so many by saying that as it was a northern dance: “It matters – its personal.” - which may be a good way of saying that something is traditional.⁴⁸⁵ Eric Foxley of Nottingham Foresters Morris Men, on being asked to define ‘Tradition’ simply said that it was what he imbibed as a young dancer with Thames Valley Morris Men. It was his experience of the Morris world, and it set the tone for his life in Morris and with its music. “What I imbibed in my youth! What Christopher Penton said to me, – soak it all up and then feel free to change it and so it ends up personal.”⁴⁸⁶



Fig. 42: Brackley Morris Men.

Brackley Morris Men, dancing on Midsummer Common, Cambridge, 2014.

Photograph by the author.

⁴⁸³ Phillips and Schochet, *Questions of Tradition* (2004), p.16.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.156.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Peter Brown, 14/07/2013.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Eric Foxley, 08/11/2012.

John Weaver dances with the team from Brackley in Northamptonshire (Fig.42). There are photographs of the team in the early twentieth century, Sharp saw them in 1909 and 1922, and there are village records detailing members of the team as far back as the seventeenth century. They are usually regarded as a 'traditional' team, although perhaps not as well-known in Morris circles as Bampton or Headington Quarry. Despite their status John Weaver did not offer any clear guidance as to the meaning of the word 'traditional' although it could be said that his simple assertion of longevity was significant.

Question: Brackley are a traditional Side?

JW: We would say so, yes.

Qu: What do you mean by the word traditional?

JW: We have our own tradition in the village and we dance those dances, among others.

Qu: So, who made up the dances?

JW: They were always there. We reckon they were in existence in 1623.⁴⁸⁷

But when asked if the dances that they were performing were the same as the 1623 dances, Weaver explained that they were the ones collected first by Sharp in 1909 and 1922, and later by Fred Hamer of the Bedford Morris Men. In this case tradition seems to have a link with the length of time that the dance has been performed, and the exact nature of that dance was not mentioned. It may have changed dramatically between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, but that, apparently, was not significant. The fact that some dancing took place in the village was the crucial point.

This was at the heart of an extremely thoughtful contribution from Laurel Swift and Crispin Walker of the Morris Offspring Group which is worth setting down in its entirety.

To begin with this was Crispin's answer to the question "what do you mean by tradition?"

Thinking about tradition as an artefact and thinking about tradition as a process, as far as I can tell Sharp thought tradition was how it was done and I find this when I'm trying to explain Morris to people outside of the Morris world, when you say tradition they tend to think how it was done then, as if there was a defined moment where that tells you what tradition is – and in terms of how I experience Morris and what we call traditional dancing it doesn't feel like that at all, it feels

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with John Weaver, 10/05/2014.

like tradition is a process, a way of doing things where what you're doing is historically informed – it's derived from something, but tradition is a way of doing things rather than something that tells you what to do. So I don't think there's any kind of authenticity in tradition. It's what we do as dancers and I like it for that, and personally I think Raglan [a modern set of dances] is as authentic a tradition as Bampton is, and I feel quite strongly about that and I suppose with Offspring I don't think anyone thinks what we did counts as traditional Morris but even so I think you could make a claim for it as being within a Morris tradition, exploring what you can do with that tradition.⁴⁸⁸

Laurel Swift's answer built on Crispin's comments:-

Tradition is all about context and a sense – on a timeline, there's some kind of connection with something that went before that gives us some kind of meaning or reason to do this thing in that context, and there's some kind of facility for allowing it to continue in some way, so there's some kind of means of transition and reason for wanting it to carry on. Chris Woods' says – it might be a thing he got from Carthy – this idea of being custodians for a while, and you don't want to leave it in a worse state than what you got it, but at the end of the day - -

Crispin :-

I really hope I get the opportunity to pass on the Morris traditions to the next generation and I really hope they do something completely different with it. Take it in different directions.

The majority of the interviewees recorded for this study were able to provide thoughtful and considerate definitions for the meaning of Tradition, and also showed a remarkable degree of agreement underlying their very personal approaches to the subject. Occasionally the views expressed were counter to the historical evidence, or to the views of other interviewees, but this did little to detract from the basic conclusion that the concept of tradition not only seems to be in the eye of the beholder but is, to use Laurel Swift's phrase, all about context and sense, or as Crispin Walker said, a process.

The Seven Champions Team from Kent (Fig.43) has developed a performance style that may have been originally based on Molly Dancing but now, they insist, they are neither Molly nor traditional; they proudly assert that they are simply The Seven Champions.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with Laurel Swift and Crispin Walker, 30/04/2014.



Fig. 43: Seven Champions.⁴⁸⁹

Two of their dancers were engaged in conversation in 2014 and they were justifiably proud of the achievements of the Champions, but equally keen to insist that they were definitely not a Molly team.⁴⁹⁰ Their dance and performance style has been widely copied by many of the new teams, particularly from East Anglia, and dancers from one of those teams, Gog Magog Molly (Fig.44), were interviewed in Cambridge.⁴⁹¹



Fig. 44: Gog Magog Molly.

Gog Magog, Parker's Piece, Cambridge, May 2014. Photograph by the author.

Gog Magog are a colourful team, and their costumes follow the extreme style of other new Molly teams from the East, whereas the Seven Champions have adopted a more reserved modern interpretation of agricultural clothing based on cord trousers and heavy boots. The Squire of Gog Magog said that they were a Molly team, based on the old Molly teams that were once found around Cambridge:

⁴⁸⁹ <<http://www.sevenchampions.org.uk/gallery/pages/claygate.html>> [accessed 05/12/2014].

⁴⁹⁰ This was the view expressed by the two members of the team during a discussion at the Morris Ring AGM in 2014 but is not always replicated by others. Their web site suggests that they are a Molly Team - <<http://www.sevenchampions.org.uk>> [accessed 05/12/2014].

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Gog Magog, 10/05/2014.

Something that was once traditional East Anglian dancing but probably really isn't any more, so most of our dances are our own traditions; some of them are based on the traditional dances that were collected around the villages of Cambridge but equally the style we dance in and the style they were traditionally danced in are quite different. The style is for want of a better word, very stylised, very angular, so I suspect they're not really recognisable as the same dances anyway.

Question: The one that you did just then looked to me very much like the Seven Champions?

Ans: The Seven Champions were a big influence because they were the first Side of the Molly revival, so there's a big influence in the stepping and the precision of the style.

In this short piece it is noticeable that the Squire of Gog Magog uses the word traditional both to refer to the old dances collected in Cambridgeshire and to the new dances constructed by the team. She also appeared to refer to Seven Champions as a Molly team, when, as shown above, some of the Champions insist that they are not. However, as the Squire was interrupted by others present at the show, the interview was continued by two other dancers from her team, and in their thoughtful response they moved the discussion much closer to that of Laurel and Crispin from the Morris Offspring team.

Question: Is this an entertainment or street theatre?

- Entertainment and Morris, I don't think it's street theatre.
- Certainly not street theatre. I would say it's part of the wider tradition of which Morris is the main part, so it's Morris in the same sense as sword dancing is, technically not, but for all practical purposes it is. Doing things the way they've always been done? – We're not doing things the way they've always been done, but we can draw a kind of direct line – what we're doing is closely based on and inspired by Ouse Washers in our case, and what they do is based on and inspired by Seven Champions, and what they do is based on and inspired by Kemps Morris Men I think; it's an evolving tradition.⁴⁹²

Here again, the distinction is made between the fact of the dance being performed, what Crispin Walker called 'the artefact', and the concept of the tradition, or the process of being traditional. Sharp wrote clear directions for his dances and the men and women who followed his teaching tried hard to learn those dances exactly as he dictated, keeping both process and artefact locked in to the past, but now we have young dancers

⁴⁹² Two members of Cambridge Morris Men collected the surviving Molly Dances, Cyril Papworth and Russell Wortley. Cambridge MM then recreated the dances and these were picked up by a number of East Anglian teams, including Kemp's MM of Norwich.

coming to the idea of a tradition with great thought and consideration, and being happy to immerse themselves totally in the process, while seeking to develop new and exciting artefacts to enhance and embellish that process.

Wicket Brood (Fig.45) from Hertfordshire perform dances in the style of those developed by the Shropshire Bedlams.⁴⁹³ They wear tattered coats, have black or painted faces, and perform lively, energetic dances to a large band.



Fig. 45: Wicket Brood.

*Wicket Brood dancing at the JMO Day in Cambridge, 10/05/2014.
Photograph by the author.*

The first member of the team to be approached admitted that she was a new member but agreed to answer questions. On being asked if she thought the dances were traditional she suggested that they were not, although she said that she thought they were folk dances. However, when their Squire took over the interview she immediately insisted that the dances were traditional.

They come from the Welsh Borders – Hereford, Worcester, Shropshire. We dance the tradition from them; as far as we know it they blacked their faces, they were begging for money during the winter months because they were all tenant farmers; in order so they wouldn't get sacked and thrown out of their tenant houses they wore disguises, so they blacked their faces. They wore rag jackets and they probably did just one dance and they went round the houses.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ The team started by John Kirkpatrick in Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, who created the dances for the team, basing them on the material collected in the Welsh Border counties.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Wicket Brood, 10/05/2014.

Much of this statement may be factually incorrect.⁴⁹⁵ Although the collectors often only found one dance from a village, Keith Francis of Silurian Morris Men, believes that there may have been many more, and he is also certain that there is no such thing as an overarching Welsh Border tradition:

There's no such tradition. The 'Welsh Border Tradition' never existed, and each village probably had more dances than have been remembered.⁴⁹⁶

It could be argued that the mis-remembered facts are of less importance than the idea that these dances are being linked to a past; it might be an imaginary past, but they are being given a history and therefore a right to be included in a tradition.

Some of our dances are traditional – sort of – some are poached from other Sides, and some we make up ourselves, but Morris is a living tradition as far as I'm concerned so although it's based on Tradition, dances are evolving all the time.⁴⁹⁷

In this case it was the young dancers insisting on links to an imagined past, to a tradition, while the more senior member of a team from Ledbury in Herefordshire was apparently doubting the idea of tradition.

There isn't such a thing as tradition I don't think, and I wouldn't say that what we do is traditional. As soon as you say that you start to fossilise it; you need to change because of changes in society.⁴⁹⁸

In fact, while Francis appears to be disagreeing with the very concept of tradition, he also seems to agree with all of the interviewees who have suggested that society must move on, that traditions must evolve and change. Karen Beardslee wrote:

The changing nature of our traditions reflects the changing nature of our lives. And while all this change can be a scary thing, if the alterations to our traditions are handled with care, they should not detract from what we look to our traditions for: stability, security, structure, a sense of who we are and where we belong.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ For example, the dancers in Upton on Severn were fishermen, not farmers, and they did not wear rag jackets. See Dave Jones, "Here the morrismen were well known and it seems that, in common with other towns and villages along the Severn, it was largely performed by fishermen and boatmen." *The Roots of Welsh Border Morris* (1995), p.57.

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/04/2013.

⁴⁹⁷ Wicket Brood Squire.

⁴⁹⁸ Keith Francis.

⁴⁹⁹ Karen Beardslee, *Translating Tradition* (2004), p.118.

Hugh Rippon said that tradition was “something that is flexible enough that we can add to it and pass on the general idea to someone else.”⁵⁰⁰ Antony Heywood of Helmond Morris Men also referred the idea of tradition directly to Sharp’s work and again highlighted the fact that by the very nature of the collecting process they were in danger of destroying the thing they sought to save:-

The only thing we have is what the Morris was like in 1899 and shortly afterwards – that was tradition, because they didn’t think about it, it was just the way they passed things on. Once Sharp wrote it down that was the beginning of the end; it became a museum piece and any attempts to change it were resisted.⁵⁰¹

From these opinions therefore, it would seem that in their professional writings, Giddens, and Phillips and Schochet managed to get very close to the feelings and ideas of the modern dancer. Tradition is a way of experiencing the world, a way of approaching a personal truth, and as Allsop, Francis, Walker and Swift among others suggested, the link with the past provides a pathway to the future. Lowenthal wrote:

But people realize that tradition is a brake on progress. They may acknowledge the virtues of yesteryear and the benefits of relics and roots, but they also know that the old has to give way, that youth must be served, that new ideas need room to develop – that the past does indeed constrain the present. Stability and change are alike essential.

Yet to cope amidst change we also need considerable continuity with the past.⁵⁰²

John Kirkpatrick of the Shropshire Bedlams provided an echo of the work of Giddens in his response. Giddens suggests that traditions are needed for healthy societies, and Kirkpatrick said:-

I probably prefer to use the word traditional rather than folk; you don’t very often hear Morris described as ‘folk dancing’ and it obviously is, but you do hear it described as ‘traditional dancing’ even though sometimes it isn’t. Perhaps that’s as good a definition as any really – traditional – something can become traditional if it happened last year.

- so Morris Dancing addresses an ancient side of us that isn’t addressed very much. We’re so sophisticated and information bound now that the primitive side of our nature isn’t often dealt with. I’m sure that causes a lot of problems for a lot of people. But when you can express it and harness all that youthful energy with something like this everything makes a kind of sense and you think this is

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with Hugh Rippon, 05/05/2013.

⁵⁰¹ Interview with Antony Heywood, 28/11/2012.

⁵⁰² David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), p.69.

fantastic, because it's such a primitive urge to get up and dance; it may be millions of years old and perhaps it is and perhaps it isn't – whether it is or it isn't, because it addresses that basic side of our nature we think it goes back to the medieval, you know, primeval swamp, even if we know that we only made it up last week. So the point is it fulfils a need that might not be fulfilled otherwise, even by us cobbling together something that we're not quite sure how authentic it is – the right sort of feeling about it, then people think it's old and therefore it's traditional.⁵⁰³

Giddens says that traditions are needed to ensure that we have healthy societies, and

Kirkpatrick says that traditions fulfil a need. Beardslee wrote:

These traditions play a large part in our idea of who we are and where we belong. Moreover, whether we recognize it or not, it is by these traditions that we structure our lives – measure our days and show evidence of what matters to us.⁵⁰⁴

Laing and Frost similarly wrote:

Even in the face of modernity and globalisation, there are traditional events that are retained and treasured. Traditions, and how we use them, lie at the very foundation of many of our contemporary events.⁵⁰⁵

Perhaps it can all be summed up by Peter Brown's simple statement - "It matters."⁵⁰⁶

An Invented Tradition.

Does it matter to everyone in the same way? Through their work 'The Invention of Tradition' Hobsbawm and Ranger suggest that modern invented traditions do not have the same power as 'old traditions'. Their work has been criticised by other historians as outlined earlier in this chapter, largely on the simplistic grounds that all traditions must have been 'invented' at some point in the past, and yet Hobsbawm himself appears to agree with this by saying – "There is probably no time and place with which historians are concerned which has not seen the 'invention' of tradition in this sense."⁵⁰⁷ Or as John Kirkpatrick said during his interview for this study, "something can become traditional if

⁵⁰³ Interview with John Kirkpatrick, 25/04/2014.

⁵⁰⁴ Beardslee, *Translating Tradition*, p.62.

⁵⁰⁵ Laing and Frost, *Rituals and Traditional events in the Modern World*, (2015), p.17.

⁵⁰⁶ At the beginning of a talk I asked the group (of non-dancers) to describe their own family traditions. They all immediately replied that they had none. When told that it was very sad that they did not celebrate birthdays, or Christmas they all began to reconsider their initial answer and went on to suggest many family 'traditions' that they had never stopped to consider would fit into that category.

⁵⁰⁷ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, p.4.

it happened last year.” In his introduction Hobsbawm repeatedly draws comparisons between ‘old’ and ‘new’ traditions, and always to the detriment of the recent additions.⁵⁰⁸ At no point does he try to investigate or explain those supposedly ‘old’ traditions, some of which it could be argued may not be as old as he imagines. Furthermore, his political agenda combined with a lack of knowledge about some of the folkways that he describes obscures some of the detail.⁵⁰⁹

Hobsbawm says that the process of creating traditions is obscure and refers to some that have been created by one person. The evidence from this study is that creation by one determined individual is the usual method by which traditions are developed, with Sharp being the most obvious example of this. However, consideration of these problems should not obscure the positives that can be found in the writing. Hobsbawm defines an Invented Tradition as:

... a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.⁵¹⁰

This would certainly apply to some recent events that have become regular additions to the Morris calendar, and Hobsbawm makes the case for the historical study of traditions by saying – “They are evidence” – suggesting that they throw – “a considerable light on the human relation to the past, and therefore on the historian’s own subject and craft.”⁵¹¹ Certainly the people interviewed for this study have enthusiastically offered their evidence and shed light on their past.

⁵⁰⁸ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, p.10, “The former were specific and strongly binding social practices, the latter tended to be quite unspecific and vague...”

⁵⁰⁹ His notes on folksong and folk carols, for example, are confused and ignore the strong carol singing that continues to this day in the Sheffield area.

⁵¹⁰ Hobsbawm, p.1.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p.12.

When Sharp began his collecting work he was concerned to place the dance in a context of his own devising, but a context that was firmly based on the prevailing culture. In the introduction to the *First Morris Book*, written in 1912, he wrote:-

Shortly, however, we may explain that it was one of the seasonal pagan observances prevalent amongst primitive communities, and associated in some occult way with the fertilization of all living things, animal and vegetable.⁵¹²

There is no evidence for this view, but once written down it became established 'fact' and was repeated regularly by the leaders of Sharp's EFDSS. It is a theory of folk culture that was perfectly in tune with the artistic and cultural movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the writings particularly of Frazer and Tylor who were concerned to place all such culture within a broad historical structure firmly based upon ancient, pagan society. "Viewed in the light of what has gone before, the awakening of the forsaken sleeper in these ceremonies probably represents the revival of vegetation in spring," wrote Frazer about various spring festivals – festivals that he did not witness for himself, as he seldom left his study.⁵¹³ When Sharp began to collect the Morris Dance (and at least he did go out into the field to undertake the collecting), having been immersed in that culture of the time, he must have thought that he had found the crock of gold at the end of the Edwardian rainbow.

Sharp was convinced that Morris Dancing was of the rural 'common people': "confined solely to villagers; it does not seem to have been shared in any way by the more educated classes."⁵¹⁴ He explains away the interest in the Morris during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as being no more than a passing fancy in what he calls "the 'quaint' dances of the common people."⁵¹⁵ Will Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder* he dismisses

⁵¹² Sharp, *The Morris Book*, p.11.

⁵¹³ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p.134.

⁵¹⁴ Sharp, p.20.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

as “a very un-Morris-like escapade.”⁵¹⁶ In the Cotswolds Sharp sought out the oldest dancers, and in the village of Bledington, for example, he ignored the team of young men who had been seen dancing within the recent past, instead interviewing the one surviving member of the old team (Fig.46 shows two of the Bledington dancers when they were subsequently interviewed by members of the Travelling Morrice in 1937).



Fig. 46: Bledington dancers.

*George Hathaway and Lewis Hall at Bledington, June 1937,
with Russell Wortley (left) and Rowland Hills of the Travelling Morrice.*⁵¹⁷

Photographs were taken of some of the old dancers, and when Neal and Sharp taught new teams they copied not only the old dance steps, but also the costumes, claiming that it was all relevant to the ‘tradition’. In this way they not only put Morris Dancing back on to the streets of Britain, but they also ‘invented’ what they saw as being the tradition of the dance.

Here are the beginnings of a completely invented tradition. A dance form based on agricultural workers dressed in a simple costume, performed no more than once or twice each year, starting in April or May and finishing by high summer. The reason given for the dance was to provide fertile crops for the community and the capers performed by the dancers were there to encourage the crops to grow to a great height. It achieved an

⁵¹⁶ Sharp, *The Morris Book*, p.20.

⁵¹⁷ Russell Wortley (1980), p.28.

immediate resonance among a general population keen to try any new pastime that would relieve the boredom of working in an industrial nation, and among the cultural elite, driven by a desire to return to a mythical past. In 1923 the music critic Fox Strangways published an article about Sharp in the magazine *Music and Letters*.⁵¹⁸ He stated quite clearly in his introduction to some of Sharp's own words that the Morris can be seen as an invented tradition: "Everything here is "tradition," so there has arisen, naturally enough, "Mr. Sharp's tradition."⁵¹⁹



Fig. 47: The Travelling Morrice.
*The Travelling Morrice on the Ninth Tour.*⁵²⁰

In 1924 the Travelling Morrice group from Cambridge University added detail to this new tradition by undertaking a tour of the Cotswolds (Fig.47). This may not have been a conscious effort to replicate the pre-feast walkabouts of the old Cotswold teams but it was seen by many to be a modern equivalent, and other groups immediately followed their lead. When the Morris Ring was formed in 1934 they also added Saturday tours to their weekend meetings. Typically, these tours avoided urban centres, visiting small villages to dance outside the village pub. This invented tradition survived throughout

⁵¹⁸ Arthur Henry Fox Strangways (1859-1948), musicologist and critic; founded the quarterly magazine *Music and Letters* in 1920.

⁵¹⁹ Fox Strangways writing in *Music and Letters*, No.4, Vol.IV (1923), p.323.

⁵²⁰ Photograph from the archives of the Cambridge Morris Men, printed in *The Morris Tradition* (a pamphlet printed for The Morris Ring).

most of the twentieth century and laid down a pattern of performance that is common today throughout the revival teams.

In this way Sharp invented a Morris Tradition, and once established and detailed in print it became fixed in the public's perception of tradition. During the conversation with John Kirkpatrick he related the story of the Bishop's Castle Rushbearing. There is no tradition in Shropshire of parading rushes around the town before they are spread on the church floor, but it was once common in the north-west of England and has seen a revival there, most notably in Saddleworth. Knowing this, towards the end of the twentieth century the vicar of Bishop's Castle suggested that they might copy the event, using one of the old biers that were kept in the village church. A suitable day was chosen, rushes were collected, and a procession accompanied by the Shropshire Bedlams team, toured the streets of the village, ending up at a church service where the rushes were blessed. This proved popular and continued. Recently villagers were heard by Kirkpatrick to be talking about the event, saying that "it was excellent that these old traditions were being continued." The population of the village had taken the event to its heart and regarded it as a worthwhile tradition, despite the fact that it was only a few years old and quite obviously an "Invented Tradition". As so many people are heard to say, and as John Kirkpatrick himself said, if it's been done twice, it has become traditional. Kirkpatrick was also convinced that it is good for the community; it is not "unspecific and vague", but is a "strongly binding" social practice.⁵²¹

Change and Recent Developments.

Cecil Sharp's view of Morris Dancing as a rural pursuit is now regularly repeated, particularly by Morris Dancers. As quoted earlier the Squire of Wicket Brood referred to

⁵²¹ Interview with John Kirkpatrick, 25/04/2014.

the Border farmers, and Keith Francis said “Dances performed by men in the agricultural communities – that was the tradition...” Sharp was dismissive of the apparent attempts by the elite of previous centuries to copy the “quaint” rural dances and was clear in his writings that the dance was firmly based in rural agricultural communities. What he and the other collectors found in the early years of the twentieth century was certainly a rural activity and, as suggested above, once detailed in print that version of the history of the dance was bound to become an accepted fact, but there is a different way of considering the evidence. As with so much of Morris history assumptions must be made from the slimmest of references, but they can be linked to the historical process of diffusion.

In their book *Annals of Early Morris* Heaney and Forrest detailed as many references to Morris Dancing as they could find.⁵²² It was not an exhaustive list, but was an excellent beginning, detailing over seven hundred references, and one reason for its production was, as Keith Chandler noted in his Preface to the book, to help to overcome the dependence on what many see as an incorrect reading of Morris history.

One result of scholarly attention has been the generation of developmental theories based on analogies with ceremonial dance forms from many corners of the globe; and one such, which has attained widespread popularity, postulates a ritual origin dating into prehistory. This impulse towards elucidating origins has, alas, frequently been tempered by romantic notions of a rural idyll, and, as a consequence, has often tended towards a near complete disregard for concrete historical data and provable temporal developments.⁵²³

The first table in the book lists forty-one references and of those eighteen are listed as being connected with royalty, or having a member of the royal family present at the event. The earliest of the royal connections is dated 1494 from Henry VII's court at Westminster and records detailed by Heaney and Forrest and by Cutting show that money was paid for Morris Dancers in 1501 and 1502, and then by Henry VIII's court in 1510, 1511 and

⁵²² Michael Heaney and John Forrest, *Annals of Early Morris* (Sheffield, 1991).

⁵²³ Keith Chandler, Preface to Heaney and Forrest, p.v;

1514.⁵²⁴ These records do not suggest that royalty was simply making fun of quaint rural pastimes; the Morris appears to be an integral part of the festivities and celebrations, and the money being paid was substantial, fifty-three shillings in 1502. There is no way of knowing why John Mauldons of Bildeston in Suffolk had produced Morris costume, but the four men who put their names to Mauldons' Inventory after his death in November 1576 valued it at twenty shillings:- *sarten parelle for mores dancers & other capellementes with the bels*. In modern terms this could translate to nearly three hundred pounds and may show that the dancers at these events were still highly regarded, and highly paid entertainers.⁵²⁵ This exalted position of the dance did not last and court appearances have more or less disappeared by the middle of the sixteenth century, and the Morris became part of Guild or Church celebrations.

The records listed now proceed to detail the continued decline of the dance. Before and during the Commonwealth the Morris Dance came under attack from the authorities, but it survived and enjoyed a slight re-birth during the restoration.⁵²⁶ Although it was supported by high society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the nineteenth it was in decline, and again under attack from the authorities. The two difficulties with the records from the early modern period are firstly that very few illustrations have survived to show what these performers were doing, and secondly, because the records all come from a level of society that was sufficiently educated to keep records, we have no way of knowing whether or not the dance was also performed more generally across all levels of society. However, we are left with the impression that this was an illustration of diffusion.

⁵²⁴ Cutting, *History and the Morris Dance* (2005).

⁵²⁵ A number of internet sites were checked for this, and they gave widely varying answers between £150 and £500. The figure of £300 seems to be a reasonable assumption at the time of writing.

⁵²⁶ Roy Dommett, "My Thoughts on the Morris, Its early history and origins." A Lecture given by Dommett at the Sidmouth Festival (2011).

A key factor that underpins much of the argument about the capacity of cultural forms to move freely through the social structure is the diffusion thesis, in which cultural goods are introduced in the upper echelons of society and, over time, filter down the social structure.⁵²⁷

Among other items that have journeyed down the social scale Borsay includes Morris Dancing - "In the medieval period there were tournaments and chess, and in the early modern era, hunting, morris dancing, and luxury foodstuffs like sugar, tea, coffee, and tobacco, all of which travelled a good way down the social order." - and in a review of cultural interchanges he notes that it has been recorded that at some point the upper sections of society decided to abandon older pastimes.⁵²⁸ "Engagement with 'popular' culture ran the risk of being stigmatised as socially inferior."⁵²⁹ Borsay does not give a date for the complete divorce of the gentry from popular culture, but suggests that this would probably be placed around the beginning of the nineteenth century, by which time Morris Dancing in some parts of the country was being held by local authorities to be begging.⁵³⁰ At this point it had become a rural pastime and anyone prepared to ignore the long history of the dance, as it seems that Sharp was happy to do, would easily link it to an Edwardian rural idyll.

Although the Morris Ring tried to exercise a degree of control over Morris Dancing for many years during the twentieth-century, with the founding fathers insisting that Sharp's instructions must be followed, the dance and the culture surrounding it was nonetheless being shaped by society and wider social developments. One popular idea of tradition suggests that whatever happens to society the traditional pastime will survive and continue without change. In practice, the opposite is true. Society is the control and as it changes so the dance follows to reflect those changes. The evidence gathered for this

⁵²⁷ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure* (London, 2006), p.98.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p.98.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., p.102.

⁵³⁰ Robert Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850*, (Cambridge, 1973), Chapter 8, particularly p.165.

study concerning the rise of women dancing shows that change typically can happen very quickly, within no more than ten or twenty years, and in the case of the women was entirely due to the change in society that encouraged women to take a more active role. If this principle is applied to other changes during the early history of the Morris it might explain some of the extreme differences between the Morris today and the entertainments labelled as Morris from the early modern period. Cutting explores these differences and examines illustrations of dancers from the fourteenth century onwards. He notes that many of the earliest are not labelled as Morris, but he concludes that it is possible to use that terminology to describe them.⁵³¹ The illustrations that he calls his 'Renaissance Collection' from 1480 to 1510 all come from continental Europe and show figures dancing around a lady (Fig.48).

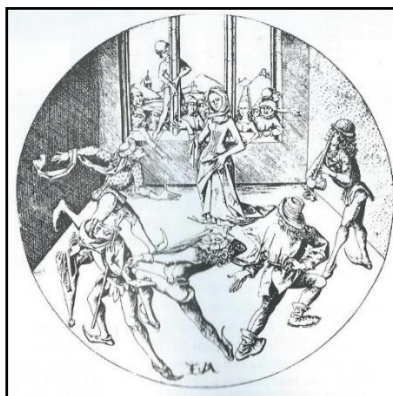


Fig. 48: Van Meckenem Circular.
Engraving by Israel Van Meckenem.⁵³²

He suggests that this may have been the Morris Dance seen at the English Royal Court. Although there are those who doubt that this style of dance was in any way related to the English Morris Dance if the ideas of dramatic change in society are applied there is no reason to doubt that this was The Morris.⁵³³

⁵³¹ Cutting *History and the Morris Dance* (2005), p.167.

⁵³² Ibid., p.155. Engraving noted as being from the British Museum.

⁵³³ Mike Heaney examines in great detail the similarities between the Van Meckenem designs and those of the Betley window in *The Morris Dancer*, Vol.3, No.11 (January 2004), pp.331-344.

An entertainment suitable for Court and the halls of the nobility might not easily translate into an item suitable for inclusion in a Guild procession, but it would only take a little imagination to change the ring antics into a line dance. There was a significant change in English society during this period that may have been the catalyst for a change in the Morris and it is detailed by Henry Kamen in his book on the period. "It is likely that the culture of Europeans changed significantly during early modern times."⁵³⁴ Not only does he examine the political and social upheavals, but he also relates them to the questions of tradition. "Traditions are not easy to measure or to pursue through time, particularly when oral and undocumented as most popular culture was."⁵³⁵ The Morris was certainly undocumented and even up to Sharp's time seems to have been transmitted simply by oral instruction, but Kamen talks about a more significant cultural change that would have had a great effect on an entertainment such as a Morris Dance. He explains that during the period there was a cultural shift from one all-embracing culture enjoyed and understood by everyone, to a position where some elements of the culture were regarded as only suitable for one section of society. As society found more time for academic and scholarly pursuits in the arts and sciences these became the reserve of the elite or educated classes; a fun, energetic pastime such as Morris Dancing was relegated to the artisan or uneducated classes.

A simple, popular, universal culture, which included in its upper strata the intellectual achievements of the élite, was gradually fragmented into a culture for the élite – what has been called the 'great tradition' – and another for the masses – a 'little tradition'. The former consisted of the arts and sciences, the recorded and the memorable, and the latter of entertainments such as folksongs, plays and festivals; the former persists in our manuals, the latter has been largely forgotten.⁵³⁶

As the dance ceased to be required entertainment for the élite and appeared more in Guild and Church festivals it is recorded that costumes were held centrally for the

⁵³⁴ Henry Kamen, *European Society 1500-1700* (London, 1998), p.194.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.194.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.194.

dancers, and it might be supposed that the performers were drawn from Kamen's *masses*. A further change during the period, documented by both Kamen and Wiesner-Hanks, was a considerable fall in the standard of living. "Real wages for agricultural labourers and rural artisans in England were cut in half during the period 1500 to 1650."⁵³⁷ Both these historians draw attention to the rise in beggars, often simply workers seeking employment, but again it is possible to speculate that people trained to dance for a Guild may readily have decided that dancing to raise money for themselves was a better way forward.⁵³⁸

The changes detailed here took place over a period of some two hundred years. If in thirty years Morris has changed from being a dance constructed to patterns recorded one hundred years earlier, performed only by men dressed in white trousers and shirts, with a simple baldric costume, to modern choreographed dances performed by men and women with painted faces, dressed in bright multi-coloured clothing, it is perfectly possible to speculate that over the much longer timescale even more dramatic changes would have been seen. They would have followed changes in society, and as has been shown by this study, communities would have quickly adapted to the new ways and been happy to accept them as established traditions. As Keith Francis said – "as society changes things will change."⁵³⁹

Within the Morris world things are certainly changing. In 1900 there were possibly only three teams still performing the Cotswold dances. There were further sword teams, and some clubs in the North West, but it is likely that, in all, there were no more than ten teams regularly dancing what Cecil Sharp labelled the Morris. By the year 2000 the

⁵³⁷ Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe 1450-1789* (Cambridge, 2013), p.213.

⁵³⁸ Kamen, *European Society*, p.152. "In the midlands the cost of living for a farm labourer rose sixfold between 1500 and 1640, while his real wages over the same period fell by about 50 per cent."

⁵³⁹ Interview with Keith Francis, 06/03/2013.

national organisations were claiming that there must be at least five hundred clubs regularly dancing. While we know that at the beginning of the century there were very few teams dancing in the Cotswold style, today it is very difficult to identify such clubs, because many dance in more than one style, and sometimes change what they regard as their main dance form.⁵⁴⁰ Recent comments on the internet (June 2016) noted the fact that although thirty years ago the south midlands' style Morris would be the main dance form seen at any event, today Cotswold teams are becoming rare, and the main style seen at festivals today is the Border style.

In 1970 there were two national organisations supporting Morris dancing, the EFDSS and the Morris Ring. By 1980 there were four, as the original two had been joined by the Women's Morris Federation (as it was then known) and the Open Morris. Although there were periods, noted earlier, when there was little contact between them, there are now regular meetings between the officers, joint Days of Dance, and some of the important work is handled by one central body. This significant change is further examined in the next chapter.

Conclusion.

The English culture of the early twentieth century suited Morris dancing perfectly, even down to Colls idea of the praise of inanimate objects – the hills, woods and cottages, rather than the people. In fact, if the culture was being invented to suit the particular circumstances of the time, as a way of countering industrialisation and war, Morris dancing was excellently placed to be one of the signifiers of that culture. In order to fit comfortably within the cultural scene, the dance was also labelled as traditional, but as

⁵⁴⁰ As an example of this, Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men were a Cotswold side that also danced the North West Morris. At the Thaxted meeting in 2016 they appeared as a North West team.

so many writers have pointed out, tradition is one of the most over used words in circulation today. It is interesting to follow the philosophical discussions about the nature of tradition, most of which took place over a short period of time in the second half of the twentieth century, and it is salutary to find that in some cases, while the arguments in the published literature came to no clear decision as to the meaning of the word, the young people interviewed for this study were able to offer definite opinions.

All of the dancers interviewed used the word at some time, and yet, when asked to define the concept some fell back on the idea of tradition simply implying something that had always been done, leaving a distinct feeling that there was little thought being given to the reason why such events should be labelled as 'traditional'. Such thoughtlessness leaves the events exposed to the accusation that they are a millstone holding society back, rather than a valuable part of the structure of any community. This may well be at the heart of the problems encountered by the Morris today when some observers, particularly in the press, are disparaging about the dance and about tradition in general, and suggest that it should all be consigned to the dustbin of history. Yet the younger dancers interviewed had a more positive approach to the problem and were able to give thoughtful, constructive ideas and definitions, and there was a strong suggestion that a respect for tradition was vital for the health of any community. Traditions must be kept alive, and have a vitality that encourages respect. As Crispin Walker suggested, tradition is a process and the dances are the artefacts that enable the process to develop and remain relevant to their community.

This study is not the platform for a considered criticism of the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger, other than to note the fact that others have been critical of their writings concerned with tradition. A positive outcome from their work is that they directed attention

towards the idea that an event constructed or invented in the recent past can quickly be viewed as traditional. Their writing about these invented traditions concentrated attention on the fact that, as Kirkpatrick said, once an event has been repeated it can be classed as traditional. The length of time is not important; the view of the society is all that matters. From the evidence, Sharp and the other enthusiasts for the dance certainly invented a Morris tradition, based on the writings of Frazer, and the evidence that the collectors found in the Cotswold hills.

Morris Dancing is usually assumed by audience members, and indeed many dancers, to have been an unchanging dance form, with links going back hundreds of years. In fact, compared to the oldest drawings the dance has changed dramatically, and the Cotswold dance bears no relation to the renaissance forms that might be classed as Morris. However, during the twentieth century the south midlands' Morris has not changed as much as some other forms, particularly Molly and Border Dancing. The Cotswold Morris is generally being performed in the spirit of the invented 'Englishness' that grew out of the latter years of the nineteenth century. Dancers wear a costume that is still related to those worn by the teams that Sharp saw, and the movements and figures of the modern Cotswold dances are largely those collected in the early years of the Revival. However, while other styles appear to be moving forward, and while there have been significant changes to the national bodies concerned with the dance, the fact that the Cotswold style remains rooted in the past may be damaging its image, as there is some evidence that fewer teams are prepared to engage with south midlands' Morris. Which raises the question, where next for the Cotswold Morris dance?

The Future.

The title of this study refers to the Cotswold Morris in the twentieth century. Why, therefore should there be a chapter looking beyond the end of that century? Surely there was sufficient change to the dance, even between the start of the great collecting period in 1905 up until the arrival of the women's teams in 1971, to fill more than one piece of work. The problem, however, is that while the period began with a single event, the Headington men dancing at Sandfield Cottage, which led to a rapid spread of enthusiasm for Morris dancing, the end of the century has no such clear finale. In fact, the final years of the old century began to feel as if they were building towards some great new momentous period of change, as if the upheavals of the twentieth century had been building towards this new direction. That period has still to run its course, but the situation with regard to the 2012 Olympic Games in London, and the latest disagreements related in the press are worth examining, as is the interview with the man who has introduced another Morris-based entertainment into the folk world.

The significant changes that affected Morris Dancing from 1970 onwards resulted in a variety of press responses. The initial, commonly-held opinion was that Morris Dancing was an out-dated form of dance, performed by elderly, bearded, overweight men.

The closest thing the English have to a national dance, Morris-dancing, is a clumsy pub-sport practised by men in beards and shiny-bottomed trousers.⁵⁴¹

References were always cynically suggesting that Morris should be consigned to the dustbin of history. The Morris Ring was criticised for its attitude to women dancers, and yet members of the public continued to refer to Morris Men, even when the dancers were clearly female⁵⁴². Tourist guidebooks continued to use photographs of Morris dancers,

⁵⁴¹ Paxman, *The English* (1998), p.11.

⁵⁴² As reported earlier this happened to me during my teaching career, when children would bring in photographs they had taken on holiday of "the Morris Men", often Morris women.

but they would sometimes choose women's teams, and had no regard for any traditional link to the area. It has been cynically suggested by some male dancers that editors had decided that women in colourful dresses were more photogenic than the men. As the new century came in the Bagman of the Morris Ring composed a pessimistic press release, stating that Britain's traditional dance was on the verge of disappearing forever.⁵⁴³ Some men had always predicted that if women began to dance the men would stop, and it seemed that this was coming to pass. Recruitment to men's teams was at an all-time low, and reports from the other Morris organisations suggested that all teams were struggling to find new members. Initially the press release seemed destined to follow this trend, as no paper picked it up, but then a local paper in the west of England decided to run with it.⁵⁴⁴ The article was noticed by the area television station and a reporter was dispatched to the local Morris Side, Mendip Morris Men, where he questioned them and was invited to join a dance. The response was immediate, and national papers, realising that they had missed an important moment, ran articles bemoaning the loss of a national tradition. Letters were sent in to the press from many members of the public saying that the Morris must not be allowed to die out, and Sides began to report a change in the approach of their public. Instead of passing by shaking their heads, people began to stop to say that they were pleased to see the dance, and that they hoped it would not die.

As this change in public attitude was being reported in the press, Britain began to consider the celebratory events that would surround the 2012 Olympic Games. Morris Dancers were keen to be involved, and area meetings were held to discuss ways in

⁵⁴³ Charlie Corcoran, Morris Ring Bagman and member of Leicester Morris Men.

⁵⁴⁴ During his interview Corcoran could not remember which paper, but he thought that it was the Western Daily Press, and that the story was followed by BBC South West. Mendip MM confirmed that the reporter who visited them was John Kay, South West Regional Reporter for the BBC, based in Bristol, and the piece went out on the BBC national news. The date was spring 2004. Mendip were unsure of the actual day.

which the Morris could be shown to a world-wide audience. Enthusiasm was high, because all other Games ceremonies had showcased the country's traditional dances. Although comments were made by Sebastian Coe that Morris Dancers might be considered, he made it clear very quickly that this was a joke, and Danny Boyle, charged with producing the Opening Ceremony, was said to have commented that Morris dancers would appear "over my dead body". The Mail on Sunday ran a good article by Stephanie Condon: "When asked by The Mail on Sunday whether morris dances would be included in the ceremony, an Olympic spokesman simply laughed."⁵⁴⁵ The article quoted Peter Halfpenney, the Squire of the Morris Ring, who said: "There seems to be little interest in indigenous folk culture for the first time ever in the history of the Olympics." Barry Goodman, president of the Morris Federation, added: "The feeling among morris dancers is fury." There was an immediate, highly critical backlash from dancers, and some suggested that there should be 'flash' groups of dancers appearing around the Olympic Park. Although representation was made to the Olympic Committee (and requests made to respond to this study), nothing was forthcoming. Paul Reece, a member of Thaxted Morris Men and a Past Squire of the Morris Ring, wrote in to the paper contrasting the focus of an article in The Times with the response of the Olympic Committee: "Friday's 'Times' article on the decline of town twinning featured a Morris photo to underline our indigenous culture that frequently defines Englishness and who we are." In the event, Morris Sides did not appear at the opening ceremony, despite the fact that it opened with a 'village green' scene that would have been ideal for dancers. There was considerable criticism that, while the intention had apparently been to avoid the stereotype of Morris dancers in the rural setting, the show immediately moved to reinforce all of the old stereotypes of 'dark satanic mills', and a Britain stuck firmly in the nineteenth century. Two Morris teams, Blackheath Morris Men from London and Rag Morris from Bristol,

⁵⁴⁵ Mail Online, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home>> [accessed 12 December 2011].

were booked to dance during the closing ceremony, but they were totally lost in a rather chaotic massed event, and many people said that they did not realise Morris Dancers had been represented. Neither of the teams knew why they had been chosen, and the National organisations were not approached for their advice or recommendations.

This dismissive approach to Morris Dancing by national and local government is seen time and time again. On September 30, 2013, the *Farmer's Guardian* carried an article about a comment made by Owen Paterson, the DEFRA Secretary, when he said that he was going to operate a "Morris dancer filter", implying that anything that included Morris Dancing would immediately be filtered out of any proposals. Again, although a request was made by the Squire of the Ring (and by the author of this study), to discuss the effect of the comment, no reply was received. At a local level Morris teams travelling abroad to international festivals have reported that dance teams from other countries can be supported by their local communities, with teams arriving in coaches paid for by their home town, having also received an accommodation subsidy to help them represent their country. Morris teams do regularly travel abroad, but usually by providing all finances from within their own club funds. Although there may be worthy local exceptions, the one national exception to this generally dismissive approach is The British Council. Members of the Council have been keen to use Morris teams to celebrate Britain abroad, and have been very helpful in providing links with foreign communities.

Since the Olympic Games, reports in the press concerning Morris Dancing have, in the main, been supportive, if rare. However, anything concerning the Morris is likely to raise issues that divide opinion, and two recent examples (October 2014) have achieved national prominence. Although the Bacup Coconut Dancers (Fig.49) have been outside the area considered by this study, their hounding by the press has a national resonance,

as does the photograph of the Prime Minister, David Cameron, shown standing with a Border Morris team, Foxs Morris (Fig.51).



Fig. 49: Bacup Coconut Dancers.
The Bacup Coconut Dancers dancing at the Thaxted Meeting, 30/05/2009.
Photograph by the author.

The Bacup team dance through their village on the same date each year, and have been doing so for many years. In some places they dance on the road, and so the arrival of strict Health and Safety regulations, meaning increased road closures and large numbers of crowd control marshals, combined with the decision by the local Council to withdraw funding for such events, has threatened the day. The Bacup team has argued that the day has never required this level of policing, and that this is Health and Safety gone mad, threatening a traditional event that the community has enjoyed for over one hundred years. Unfortunately, the Bacup dancers are a black-faced team, and it is this that has attracted most comment in the press.⁵⁴⁶ The question of policing Morris events is being faced by other teams across the country, and while some authorities are very helpful, as for example, in Thaxted in Essex, where the annual Morris Day requires the main street to be closed on two occasions, others are less helpful. The Saddleworth Morris Men, for example, have had to change from ‘old-style’ policing (Fig.50), and are now having to employ a small army of ‘marshals’ from a private company, at an enormous cost, to satisfy the local Council that all Health and Safety considerations are

⁵⁴⁶ See particularly the ‘Letter’ column in *The Daily Telegraph* 15/10/2014 and 16/10/2014.

being met. A discussion around this aspect of traditional dancing would have been very useful, but in the event, the press was full of letters either supporting or criticising Bacup simply for their black faces.



Fig. 50: A Saddleworth policeman.
*Old-style 'good' policing at the Saddleworth Rushcart.
Photograph by the author.*

The David Cameron issue hinged around the same problem, in that, being a 'Border' team, the dancers he was photographed with also had black faces. Again, there was no attempt to praise the Prime Minister for attending a Folk Music event, or for supporting his local community, there was only criticism that the dancers were being in some way racist because they had used black face paint, and therefore, by association, the Prime Minister must also be a racist (Fig.51).



Fig. 51: Foxs Morris.
David Cameron with Foxs Morris⁵⁴⁷

All attempts to explain that this was simply a form of camouflage used for centuries by people who participated in events that had, at some point in history, been regarded as

⁵⁴⁷ The Daily Telegraph, 13/10/2014.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/11158847/David-Cameron-poses-with-blacked-up-Morris-dancers-at-Banbury-Folk-Festival.html>> [accessed 9 December 2014].

being outside the pale of polite society, came to nothing. The papers continued to press the racist button, and some members of the public responded. One letter insisted that Morris Dancing should be banned because all Morris Dancers were simply making fun of African Tribal dancers and were therefore racists. Luckily there was an immediate response asking whether or not the dancers of the fifteenth century knew about African Tribes, but the article and exchange of letters only highlighted the continuing problems with the Morris, that some of the mouthpieces of society are not prepared to accept it as a national dance, and some members of the public are woefully ignorant about the nature of the dance.⁵⁴⁸

These discussions have drawn in all three organisations, and one major change in the new century is that they all spend time working together. The seeds for this were planted by Ring Squires and officers of the Federation in the 1990s, with discussions for the provision of a School's Pack, and joint meetings with the EFDSS. Now there are regular Days of Dance organised by the Joint Morris Organisation, with all clubs welcome to dance in one location on the same day. The Morris Ring has had to change the style of its meetings, and most of them now accept clubs that have women musicians. This was a major consideration in the arguments leading up to the constitution changes, because some Sides argued that Ring Meetings would have to stop. The practical reason given was simply the difficulty of providing accommodation for both men and women, when the meetings had typically been held in village halls or school halls with men sleeping on the 'indoor camping' principle. The extreme reason sometimes put forward was the suggestion that a meeting of both men and women would encourage a collapse of

⁵⁴⁸ This issue has been addressed by Pauline Greenhill in relation to American Morris dancers: "Folk and Academic Racism: concepts from Morris folklore." *Journal of American Folklore*, 2002, No.456 (2002), pp.226-246; and: "On the Whiteness of Morris, an illumination of Canadian Folklore." *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* – 1994, No.3 (1994), pp.16-20. Their indication that black face paint would have different repercussions in North America relates to the way in which Leicester Morris Men now use red face paint to avoid problems in their city.

morals. In the event clubs have easily been able to provide appropriate accommodation, and the suggested descent into immorality has been avoided. However, whereas meetings organised by the three national groups were once the only opportunities for Sides to dance together, there has now been a great increase in days of dance organised by one Side, and often, all clubs from an area will be invited to attend.

Changes in national legislation have also encouraged the national organisations to work together. An important item for them all is the provision of insurance for clubs, and whereas this began by being arranged separately by the three groups, it is now under one umbrella. Meetings of the Joint organisation discuss this and other matters that are of joint interest. Individual clubs and dancers can increasingly be heard voicing the opinion that the time may soon arrive when the three national groups merge into one, but that would be a difficult move to negotiate, and therefore, for the national groups, as the dance moves into the new century the future is still uncertain.

The Morris is a national dance, and yet, while Irish step dancing has acquired a world-wide reputation through the Riverdance phenomenon, and Scotland rejoices in its sword and folk dances, the English Morris Dance struggles to be accepted as a national treasure.⁵⁴⁹ It has been suggested that we need a Morris show to rival Riverdance, but the nature of the Morris Dance is such that it sits best in a small, outdoor situation, closely surrounded by the audience. However, there is an increasing understanding that more has to be done to encourage young people into the dance. The Morris Ring has begun to provide funds for the clubs in an area to hold instructional days for young dancers. The principle aim of these days is to give young dancers the opportunity to dance

⁵⁴⁹ Riverdance is the Stage show of Irish dance that was devised first as an interval entertainment during the Eurovision Song Contest.

together, rather than having to restrict themselves to the pace of the older dancers (Fig.52).

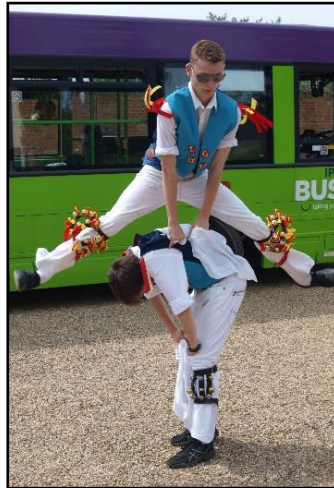


Fig. 52: Young dancers.

Two young dancers from East Suffolk Morris Men, who are both part of the Young Dancers Initiative. 26/05/2014. Photograph by the author.

This initiative is not without its detractors, as some claim that the only way to attract young people into dancing is through the local club. Moulton Morris Men have been strongly in favour of the club approach, and they have successfully developed a very young team, dancing energetic, traditional Morris (Fig.53).



Fig. 53: Moulton Morris Men.

Moulton Morris Men dancing at Thaxted, 01/06/2009. Photograph by the author.

However, it has been pointed out that such teams generally come about because of special circumstances, perhaps a small community with a supportive secondary school

at its heart, as in the case of Moulton. Where clubs are in a large, urban environment it is more difficult to enlist young dancers, although many clubs have close family connections. Moulton certainly also manages to have strong family ties, with Barry Care, who was interviewed for this study, having a son and grandsons in the team, but many other clubs can point to fathers and sons in the Side (Fig.54).



Fig. 54: A dancing family.

Three generations of one family – from the left, Adam Garland, East Suffolk Morris Men, currently Squire of the Morris Ring; Mike Garland, East Suffolk Morris Men and Past Squire of the Morris Ring; musician Jon Melville, Anker Morris Men; Toby Melville, currently Squire of Anker Morris Men; Sam Garland, East Suffolk Morris Men. Son, father, son-in-law, and two grandsons. Dancing at The Windmill, Chipperfield at the Greensleeves Morris Men's Weekend of Dance, 13/07/2014. Photograph taken by Joe Oldaker of Anker Morris Men..

There are other groups trying to move the dance forward. Morris Offspring (Fig.55) and Fool's Gambit (Fig.56) are groups of young dancers, performing recognisable Morris Dances, sometimes with additional choreography making them suitable for stage presentation.



Fig. 55: Morris Offspring.
*Morris Offspring dancing at Towersey Festival.*⁵⁵⁰



Fig. 56: Fool's Gambit.
*Fool's Gambit dancing in Chippenham, 2013.*⁵⁵¹

The Demon Barbers Road Show also has young Morris Dancers at its heart, and combines Morris with other forms of modern dance that can be seen on the streets – such as Hip-hop dancing and Break dancing – but some have suggested that this is not the way to take the Morris forward, as the modern dance forms will not last. Ewan Wardrop started the Bo Diddlers group in 2006 and he suggested in interview that, although some of his dancers had come from a modern dance background, they included

⁵⁵⁰ <http://morrisman.f2s.com/PHPGallery/index.php?/tags/14-morris_offspring> [accessed 10 December 2014]. Although this team of young men and women dance energetically and arrange their dances as entertaining stage shows this photograph shows them dancing without bells, which according to some references means they are not dancing the Morris.

⁵⁵¹ <<http://www.foolsgambitmorris.co.uk>> [accessed 10 December 2014].

very little street dance in their stage routine.⁵⁵² As he explained, although break dancing and other forms of modern dance were regularly seen on the streets of London a few years ago, the pattern today was for groups to perform. He did not want the Bo Diddlers to be seen as a “one-trick, modern thing”. Wardrop grew up in Sidmouth and saw all of the dance teams who came to the festival. He said that “Morris was my first experience of any form of performance.” He was drawn to Morris in particular because of the strangeness of the dance; teams, he said, were “so other, so exotic.” He did not join a team at that time, but after two years at the Royal Ballet School, moved to the White Lodge Ballet School in London, and there learned Morris with Ron Smedley and Bob Parker.⁵⁵³ He was intrigued by the fact that, once out into the dance world, with the Scottish Ballet and Matthew Bourne’s group, the male dancers would often make each other laugh by using extreme movement, some of it based on the old, eccentric dance acts of the variety theatre. In 2006 he collected these thoughts together and developed a show for the Brighton Festival, based around the idea of a ‘traditional’ dance group turning up, but then doing something completely unexpected. Because they enjoyed it so much they decided to continue, but not as a gimmick, “we wanted to make it richer than that.” Although the show has become “surprisingly popular” Wardrop said that there was never an intention to provide a future direction for Morris Dancing. He is still drawn by the inherent beauty of the original dance form. “A lot of what we do is physical comedy, but Morris has a hypnotic quality, it is beautiful.” One of Wardrop’s comments also returned the discussion to the ideas of Turner when he spoke about the ‘otherness’ of Morris.⁵⁵⁴ The Bo Diddlers are used to putting on costumes and experiencing Turner’s liminality, and yet from Wardrop’s view, the Morris added an extra dimension to that

⁵⁵² Interview with Ewan Wardrop, Director and founder of the Bo Diddlers group, 04/10/2014.

⁵⁵³ Ron Smedley and Bob Parker worked with the BBC, the EFDSS and the Royal Ballet. In the 1990s they produced a school’s programme for the BBC, teaching Morris Dancing.

⁵⁵⁴ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), and *The Anthropology of Performance* (1992).

experience, being hypnotic and beautiful, and capable of adding to their overall spirit of community.

In the interview Ewan echoed many of the views expressed by other dancers who have been interviewed for this study. He claimed not to have thought greatly about Tradition, but as the discussion developed he said –

Traditional? I don't like saying 'that is how you do it.' The steps weren't handed down by God. They evolved – all traditions evolve and change. The dance has personality and character, it's an expression.

He likened it to the ways of Ballet, where dancers learn the set, classical ballet, but once they have that structure firmly embedded they can then 'break the rules' and develop the dance, taking it in new directions. But the tradition is always there to refer to, as a foundation. He also picked up on the point about individuals and the community. He agreed that it is not the Morris that leads the community, but rather that the community comes first. As this study has shown, society leads and the Morris changes to suit the needs of that society, but Ewan took it further by explaining that – “Bo Diddlers are a small community – we gave ourselves a reason to meet. That reason could have been anything, but it was Morris.” (Fig.57). That one comment goes to the heart of the discussions surrounding fathers and catalysts in Morris Sides. The Sides that have survived the longest have become communities in themselves, have developed their own traditions, and their dancers have become bound to those traditions in many ways. The Bo Diddlers continued because “we enjoyed it too much” and any team that can say that has an excellent reason for staying together and developing. The same could undoubtedly be said about any club or society, but in the Morris world, these are people who come into regular contact with deep concepts of custom and tradition, and dancers who consider those concepts, and make them part of their dancing, add an extra dimension to that simple enjoyment.



Fig. 57: The Bo Diddlers.

*The Bo Diddlers. Ewan Wardrop dancing on the extreme right.*⁵⁵⁵

In 2014 the Bo Diddlers performed at the Sidmouth Folk Festival, and Ewan was asked what the audiences had thought of their show. He said that they were much appreciated by large audiences, and they had even been approached by Morris Sides that wanted the Bo Diddlers to teach them some of their dances. As might be expected “some of the more traditionally-minded said it was a travesty” but Ewan was keen to point out that one of their aims was to make people think.⁵⁵⁶ They had no manifesto for developing Morris Dancing, simply to bring pleasure to their audiences and if, along the way, it made them consider their ideas of the dance, then that was a bonus. When he was asked what he thought Morris Dancing was, he initially said “It’s a big question,” and said that he was intrigued by, and enjoyed, the flow of the dance. That response might be expected from someone who had spent much of his life developing his own love of all dance forms, but after encouragement he added “what we try to do is provide entertainment, to make audiences smile.” And he agreed that Morris Dancing is a street performance.

⁵⁵⁵ <<http://www.thebodiddlers.co.uk/test-gallery>> [accessed 10 December 2014].

⁵⁵⁶ Note the connection with Dommett’s teaching style, trying to make dancers think seriously about their work.



Fig. 58: Mass dancing in Cambridge.

Teams dancing at the JMO Day of Dance in Cambridge, 10/05/2014. Photograph by the author. The photograph includes East Suffolk Morris Men, Cambridge Morris Men, Peterborough Morris Men and Whitchurch Morris Men. Although there were a few dancers from women's teams in this dance, it is an example of the issue considered earlier, that today it is difficult to get teams to dance together, now that so many Sides have developed their own dances.

Conclusion.

If Morris Dancing can continue to attract young dancers who enjoy their dance, who are prepared to mix the old, traditional ways with new ideas, and are convinced that it must remain on the streets, at the heart of communities, the dance will survive. This study has shown that many of those young dancers are also prepared to think deeply about questions of tradition, and about how the dance is presented to audiences. If Catalysts continue to develop new teams, and fathers ensure that existing teams are maintained in good health, then, as has happened throughout the history of the dance, the Morris will change as society makes new demands upon it. The three national organisations, The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation and The Open Morris, are now working more closely together, and there are regular Joint Morris Organisation Days of Dance, where all teams gather to showcase Morris in all its forms (Fig.58). Perhaps the biggest challenge is to persuade dancers that they must not look inward, continually worrying about internal matters, but they must work hard to convince both Government and public that the Morris is a national treasure, worthy of their whole-hearted support.

CONCLUSION

Investigating the twentieth century progression of the Cotswold Morris dance presents a number of problems, not the least being that in common with many historical periods, it is difficult to contain it within proscribed boundaries. To understand the reasons behind the great enthusiasm for the dance in the early years of the century there has to be an examination of the work of the nineteenth century folklorists and anthropologists, because it was on their structure that a love of the rural dance form was built. Cecil Sharp has been held in high regard for his work, but as this study has shown, without the foundation laid by Percy Manning and D'Arcy Ferris, and the drive of Mary Neal and Herbert MacIlwaine the dance may have remained a rural curiosity in one small area of England. Furthermore, to examine the theories suggested by the dancers and enthusiasts of the 1930s and 1940s, they have to be held against the knowledge that we now possess about the dance in earlier centuries. It was not just a simple rural custom, but was seen in the largest urban sites, and the dance described by the word Morris was widespread across the country.

It is equally difficult to find a clear and simple ending. The great change, the rise of the women's teams, started in the 1970s and has gained momentum into the twenty first century. That change has in turn accompanied changes across the whole landscape of the Morris, seeing the south midlands' style of the dance being overtaken by other forms, the North West, Border and Molly styles. A study determined to investigate one style of dance has therefore had to include the others, simply because the themes that have been raised are common to all, and can be illuminated by reference to comments made by dancers across the whole spectrum.

The Cotswold dance supports a number of philosophical disciplines. Even as recently as the 1930s the past for the Morris was indeed a different country, and it added to Colls perception of a culture developed around the inanimate, a culture without people. Yet it also demonstrates the difficulty in defining some popular concepts. An English culture that suited the years of war and hardship was particularly appropriate for the ancient, rural dance found in the Cotswold hills, but that version of an English culture found little resonance in a country beset with grinding poverty during the years of recession, or with people enthusiastically following the cultural changes of the 1950s and 60s – ‘teddy boys’, ‘mods and rockers’, and the colourful ‘hippy’ era. For some the old culture of ‘a sceptred isle set in a silver sea’ has continued, and is a cultural paradigm actively presented by tourist agencies as a picture of England, with Morris dancing occasionally used photographically to enhance this vision. Unfortunately, there are many within the artistic elite of the country who consistently denigrate the old dances, and refuse to accept that Morris Dancing can play any part in the country’s modern cultural image.

It may be that part of the problem is related to difficulties with another concept, that surrounding the use of the term ‘traditional’. As has been noted by many commentators and writers, the word is massively overused, and it seems to have lost any concrete meaning. The majority of people interviewed for this study, particularly the older dancers, found it very difficult to explain what the word meant to them, but they continued to use it at every opportunity. However, the younger dancers found interesting new ways to explain the concept, enabling them to accept that, while it was necessary to continue to dance, and therefore maintain that tradition, the form of the dance could change to enable it to survive in different social constructs. There was universal criticism of the suggestion that there was any difference between old and new traditions, or that there should be surprise to find that traditions were being invented. Inventing traditions was

not strange or unusual; the interesting fact to consider was why some continued and grew while others disappeared.

Although the term 'Street Theatre' was used by some to describe Morris Dancing, others objected to this and simply referred to it as traditional dance. It could be argued that there is as much a 'tradition' of street theatre as there is of dance, but if the Morris is in any way connected to the theatre, Turner's and van Gennep's ideas about the way in which actors enter another world simply by putting on a costume are relevant. That idea was not only openly commented upon by some dancers, but was also implied in the way in which people had turned to the dance family during times of significant change in their own lives. Although the idea of changing character by putting on costume often implies a change from quiet to extrovert, it was also suggested that an eccentric character, suppressed in everyday life might be given the chance to express their true character by wearing a costume. Some might turn to the theatre, or even the circus, but Morris dance has certainly acquired numbers of eccentrics.

Tradition implies continuity, but as this study has shown, the Morris as performed on the streets has changed dramatically during the twentieth century. Indeed, the fact that it is on the streets at all is one of those changes. During the early years of the EFDS it was confined to halls, and it was only thanks to the enterprise of a team of young men, the Travelling Morrice, that the dance has returned to what is seen as its rightful place. The Travelling Morrice took young male dancers back to interview older male dancers, but a second great change during the century is that now, women are seen to be dancing the Morris on the street. This study has explored the fact that, whatever the public perception may be, women have always been at the heart of the revivals, despite the efforts of Sharp and Kennedy to remove them. Neal brought the dance to London, and through

the Espérance Club, spread it across England. Although Sharp and the EFDSS ensured that only men would be seen on the streets during the mid-century, women continued to work in the background, teaching and supporting the male Sides, until the changes in society after the 1960s allowed women to dance alongside the men. The national organisations, once bitter enemies, are now working together to support all dancers. However, the fact that women are dancing has also brought about a further change, and the Cotswold style of dance is rapidly being overtaken by Border and Molly dancers as the main forms of dances seen in England today. Initially these dances were adopted by women because they did not have the high capers of the Cotswold dance, but it seems that the extreme styles that have been developed appeal to many younger Sides of both men and women. As society is changing, and trying to lose the older culture of rural England, so the dance is trying to find a new identity.

Studying the Cotswold Morris dance during the twentieth century is, therefore, a complex area, but yet, it could also be seen as being quite straightforward, because two areas provide simple statements. The Cotswold dance itself, unlike some English styles, has not changed, and practitioners are united in their reason for dancing. The interviewees were sometimes confused by being asked what they thought they were doing. Some were bluntly honest and said that they had no idea, but others stated that they were performing the dances that Sharp collected from the Cotswold hills. In that, they were correct, because the dances were set down in Sharp's books, and later described in a slightly different way by Bacon, but in essence, the dances as performed at the end of the century are those that were collected at the beginning. Sharp, Kimber and later, Jack Brown among others, all expressed the firmly held opinion that the dances should be performed as given by the old dancers. There were problems initially, largely because Sharp changed some of the dances to suit his own prejudices, but now the dances have

been taught from the written instructions to such a degree that the original forms and styles can be seen in the majority of Cotswold teams. There may be slight, individual differences but the dances are basically one unified whole, and dancers can move from team to team without too much trouble, exactly as was envisaged by the EFDSS and the Morris Ring in the 1930s and 1940s. Where Sides have constructed their own dances, they have generally followed the basic patterns of the old dances, so that the waving of handkerchiefs and clashing of sticks is still recognized by the general public as being indicative of their general perception of Morris dancing. This style of dance falls perfectly into the culture that was prevalent during the first half of the century, and that culture, based on a rural, Shakespearean England, is still often called upon today. The designers of the 2012 Olympics in London consciously tried to ignore it, to invent a new, modern culture, but in doing so they not only failed to provide an alternative, but were forced back onto other, arguably less successful, stereotypes – dark, satanic mills, and the ‘swinging sixties’.

The Cotswold dance could therefore be seen as a direct line to the south midlands’ traditional past, an activity redolent of small villages, of close-knit communities, and days of entertainment regulated by the changing seasons, but as this study has shown, that vision was invented by a number of interested parties during the early years of the century, and set in stone by the writings of Cecil Sharp and other folklorists, with the dance playing a crucial role in furthering that vision. By setting the dances down in this way the dance has been fossilized and its development arrested in a way that would not have been recognized by dancers before the twentieth century. The desire for a new culture, expressed so vehemently by the Olympic designers, and the lack of a clear English culture as bemoaned by many during the discussions about devolution, has also cast the Cotswold dance adrift on a sea of troubles. Many in the artistic elite dismiss the

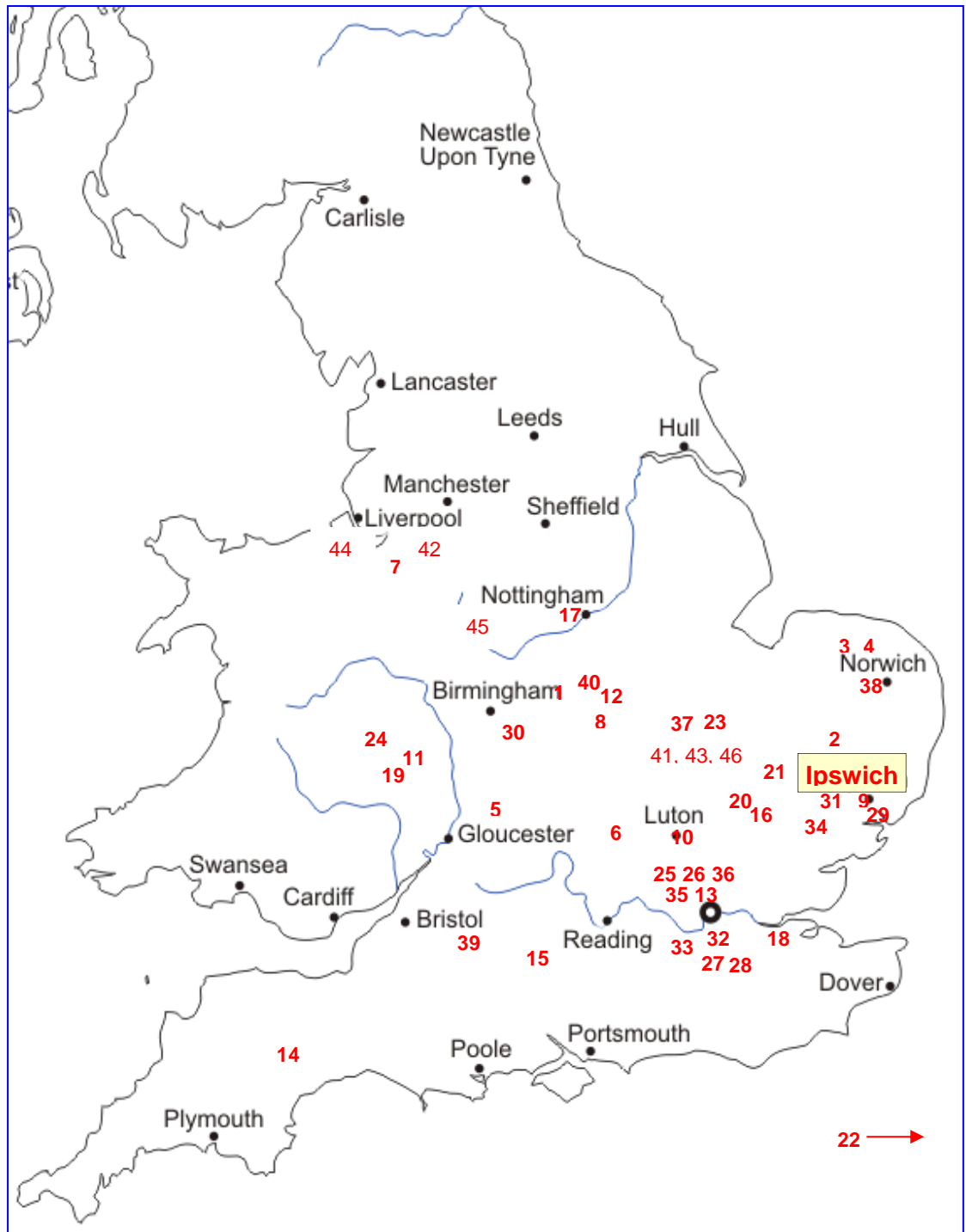
dance as having no relevance to a modern world, and some members of the general public follow a popular view of the dance as performed by old, shambling, drunken men. Yet thousands still turn up to see the Thaxted Morris Day, or the Westminster Day in Trafalgar Square, and these audiences are regularly heard to say that the dance is a valued part of England's culture and must be continued. As this study has shown, at its best the Cotswold Morris is being performed by young dancers who bring vitality and enthusiasm to the dance, and who are prepared to think deeply about the history and tradition of the dance.

When asked why they danced all of the interviewees gave the same answer. Not only was the dance great fun, but they were immediately engaged with a group of people at a time when they needed support. For many of them it was at the start of their university life, and the family atmosphere provided in Bath by the Reynolds family was particularly noteworthy. For others the Morris team provided support when starting a new job in a strange town, and for one interviewee the Morris Side provided crucial support during the break-up of a marriage. No-one suggested that they were dancing to further a 'tradition' or to keep something alive that was part of English culture. No-one engaged with a discussion about liminality or trying to step outside of a normal life experience. They all took up the dance because they wanted to be entertained, they needed to engage in a fun activity in a social setting and Morris dancing supplied that need. Furthermore, they all made reference to the fact that this social aspect of the Morris world, and the support that it could provide, was national in character, and in the case of Antony Heywood, international. As they moved round the country they were welcomed into the local club. For Tatman it was clubs in the London area, Francis moved from Reading to Sheffield and then to Ledbury, and Heywood found a welcome in Helmond in the Netherlands when he moved there from Cambridge.

When asked why dance the Morris rather than any other form of dance one interviewee was quite clear – why Beethoven and not the Rolling Stones? Why do some people prefer the theatre to television? It simply comes down to personal preference. Some interviewees danced everything, some specialized, but fun, in a welcoming social setting, was the overriding reason given for taking up the dance, and that reason seemed to be constant throughout the century. It was why the oldest interviewees came to the dance, to have fun and experience warm, social contact in a grey, war-torn world; it was why the eccentrics of the 1950s found an outlet for their mad-cap ways among like-minded individuals; it was why the young university students of the 1970s started to dance. Later, they may all have begun to consider the deeper issues, and some of the youngest interviewees came up with the most considered reasons for continuing to dance, but it was quite clear that people did not come into the dance because they felt they had to protect a national institution. They came to have fun.

Therefore, at the end of a century when Cecil Sharp was held up as being the man who had re-discovered and preserved Morris dancing, and Mary Neal was wiped from the record, it seems that the modern dancer is following the lead set by Neal rather than that set by Sharp. Where Sharp insisted on a men-only regime, and concentrated on the discipline of the dance, Neal was said to accentuate the fun to be had from dancing. It was a complex discussion, because Sharp's men would not have danced if there was no enjoyment to be had, and Neal's young people would not have been accepted by Edwardian society if they had not had considerable discipline, but today our young dancers impose their own discipline, put on interesting and lively shows, and have a great deal of fun in doing so. Communities appreciate this fun, entertaining dance spectacle, and whether it is a traditional dance, or street theatre, while there are young dancers who can bring vitality and enthusiasm to the Cotswold dance it will continue.

Appendix 1.



Locations of Interviews.

For details please see next page.

		Date	Site of Recording	Usual team
1	Ashley, Tony	12/01/2013	Stony Stanton, Bullocker's tour	Anker MM
2	Barclay, Mike	26/04/2012	At home, Debenham	East Suffolk MM
3	Bazire, Jill	02/12/2015	At home, Neatishead	
4	Bazire, Steve	02/12/2015	At home, Neatshead	
5	Brown, Jack	26/05/2012	Chipping Campden Ring Meeting	Stafford MM
6	Brown, Peter	14/07/2013	The Windmill, Chipperfield	Monkseaton MM
7	Carbutt, Bob	04/10/2012	At home, Siddington	Lower Withington
8	Care, Barry	09/10/2013	At home, Moulton	Moulton MM
9	Carey, Paul	15/02/2016	Ipswich docks	Ashdown Forest MM
10	Chandler, Mike	13/07/2012	At home, Dyers Farm	Whitchurch MM
11	Chaundy, David	06/04/2013	At home, Leigh Sinton	Faithful City MM
12	Corcoran, Charlie	05/05/2013	At home, Leicester	Leicester MM
13	Crisp, Laurel	04/10/2012	At home, Tottenham	Morris Offspring
14	Dommett 1, Roy	16/04/2011	Instructional, Exeter	
15	Dommett 2, Roy	21/06/2011	At home, Farnborough	
16	Fox, Daniel	10/06/2011	At home, Thaxted	Thaxted MM
17	Foxley, Eric	04/10/2012	At home, Nottingham	Foresters MM
18	Foxworthy, Tony	19/09/2012	At home, Gravesend	EFDSS
19	Francis, Keith	06/04/2013	At home, Ledbury	Silurian MM
20	Goatcher, Mike	12/05/2011	At home, Thaxted	
21	Herring, Des	09/09/2009	At home, Needham Market	East Suffolk MM
22	Heywood, Antony	28/11/2012	At home, Eindhoven	Helmond MM
23	Jenner, John	01/11/2012	At home, Bassingbourn	Cambridge MM
24	Kirkpatrick, John	25/04/2014	The Three Tuns, Bishops Castle	Shropshire Bedlams
25	Neill, Beth	21/02/2013	At home, St Albans	Morris Federation
26	Parker, Val	28/03/2013	At home, St Albans	Morris Federation
27	Peters, Caroline	14/10/2015	At home, Sidcup	Kettlebridge Clog
28	Peters, Tim	14/10/2015	At home, Sidcup	Hartley MM
29	Reid, Irvine	09/05/2012	At home, Felixstowe	East Suffolk MM
30	Rippon, Hugh	05/05/2013	At home, Coventry	EFDSS
31	Slocombe, Sarah	15/02/2016	Ipswich docks	
32	Tasker, Brian	08/03/2013	Wrotham, Kent	ARM
33	Tatman, Bob	19/09/2012	At home, Orpington	Hartley MM
34	Trovell, Peter	08/11/2012	At home, Colchester	Colchester MM
35	Walker, Crispin	04/10/2012	Tottenham	Morris Offspring
36	Wardrop, Ewan	04/10/2014	Delice cafe, Walthamstow	Bo Diddlers
37	Weaver, John	10/05/2014	Midsummer Common, Cambridge	Brackley MM
38	Winstone, Norris	12/05/2011	At home, Norwich	Kemps Men
			Teams	
39	Bathampton 1	23/10/2012	Bathampton Mill	
40	Bullockers	12/01/2013	Stony Stanton	
41	Gog Magog	10/05/2014	Parker's Piece, Cambridge	
42	Withington 2	04/10/2012	Lower Withington	
43	Mersey	05/04/2014	On tour, Fen Ditton	
44	Mersey	28/04/2014	The Seven Stars, Thornton Hough	
45	Stafford 3	07/11/2012	Church Eaton	
46	Wicket Brood	10/05/2014	The Maypole, Cambridge	

- 1 David Duncan, Fred Goater, John Helsdon, Roy Philips; present and past members of Bathampton MM interviewed in the Bathampton Mill, Bathampton.
- 2 Shirley Rogers, John Ryder; interviewed at the home of John Ryder. Duncan Broomhead of Adlington MM also present.
- 3 Jack Brown, John Edwards, Peter Stephens, Gordon Taylor, Fred Waygood; members of Stafford MM; interviewed at the home of John Edwards.

All meetings were recorded on a small digital recorder. Because of its size, most people ignored it and it was capable of dealing with challenging situations. All interviewees were asked if they had any objection to the recording being made, and it was stressed to them all that it would only be used for the purposes of this study, and that they could receive a copy of the recording. No-one objected to this, and no-one asked for the recording, although one club has since asked for a copy to add to their memorabilia, following the death of the man being interviewed.⁵⁵⁷ Because most people ignored the recorder they spoke very naturally and only one dancer adopted what can only be described as an 'interview mode' when the recorder was switched on, but as he made some extremely useful points, this attitude in no way detracted from the power of the recording.⁵⁵⁸ The majority of meetings were held on a one-to-one basis in a quiet environment, usually the private home of the dancer. They were generally the most successful, although some of the quick interviews snatched at dancing sites were also valuable. Two meetings were arranged with numbers of men from a club, one in a private home, one in a pub. They were arranged in that way at the request of the two clubs, because it was felt that by putting a number of the longest-serving dancers together they would encourage memories. In fact, they were less successful, partly because the men only tended to give their own history and few collected memories were related, and partly because it made identifying individuals much harder.

The Interviewees:

Tony Ashley.

Interviewed 12 January 2013, on tour with the Bullockers, and at other times at Morris events and private functions.

Dances with Anker Morris Men; has been a key figure in the West Midlands and started the Bullockers after researching the history of the dance in the Hinckley area.

⁵⁵⁷ John Helsdon of Bathampton Morris Men, interviewed 23/10/2012.

⁵⁵⁸ Peter Brown of Monkseaton Morris Men, interviewed 14/07/2013.

Mike Barclay.

Interviewed at home in Debenham, 26 April 2012, and also while dancing with East Suffolk Morris Men.

Started dancing with the Benfleet Hoymen in the 1950s after visiting the Sidmouth Festival, and later moved to Suffolk; dances with Hoxne Hundred, being the Foreman for their Cotswold team, and with East Suffolk Morris Men.

Jill Bazire.

Interviewed at home in Neatishead, Norfolk, 2 December, 2015.

Danced with the Bath City teams while at University.

Steve Bazire.

Interviewed at home in Neatishead, Norfolk, 2 December, 2015.

Started dancing with Bath City while at University. Later joined Bristol Morris Men, and for a short while Kemps Men.

Duncan Broomhead.

4 October 2012. Dances with Adlington Morris Men and is keeper of the Morris Ring Photographic Archive. Had researched the history of the Lower Withington Troupe and arranged the interviews with the three remaining members of that team.

Jack Brown.

Interviewed on tour in the Cotswolds, 26 May 2012 and with other Stafford Morris Men, 8 November 2012.

A key figure in the Morris world. Trained with the EFDSS in the north midlands under tutors who had known Sharp. Danced with a number of early teams in the midlands, and was one of the people who acquired the letters about the Lichfield dances. Now dances mainly with Stafford Morris Men.

Peter Brown.

Interviewed at Chipperfield, 14 July, 2013.

Dances with Monkseaton Morris Men, and is well known as their Betsy for the Rapper dance. Peter's father, Alan Brown, was Squire of the Morris Ring 1966-68.

Bob Carbutt.

Interviewed at home in Siddington, 4 October 2012. Lower Withington Morris Troupe.

Barry Care OBE.

Interviewed at home in Moulton, 9 October 2013.

A founder member of Moulton Morris Men; now also attached to one of the Bampton teams; has been Treasurer (1977-1982) and Squire (1982-84) of the Morris Ring. Has a son and grandsons dancing with Moulton MM.

Paul Carey.

Was present in Ipswich during the interview with Sarah Slocombe, 15 February 2016.
Dances with Ashdown Forest Morris Men.

Mike Chandler.

Interviewed at home in Harlington, 13 July 2012.
Whitchurch Morris Men. Started dancing with St Albans Morris Men, also now with Thaxted Morris Men, and has been an influential musician, playing the pipe and tabor. Squire of the Morris Ring 1990-92.

David Chaundy.

Interviewed at home in Coles Green, 6 April 2013.
Started dancing with Oxford Morris Men, then with Chanctonbury Ring MM; joined Faithful City Morris Men when they started in 1968. Plays pipe and tabor. David's father, Theo Chaundy, recorded William Kimber playing the Headington tunes and talking about his life with the Morris.

Charlie Corcoran.

Interviewed at home in Leicester, 5 May 2013.
Dances with Leicester Morris Men. Bagman of the The Morris Ring.

Roy Dommett CBE.

Interviewed at an instructional session in Exeter, 16 April 2011, and at home in Church Crookham, 21 June 2011.
Started dancing with Farnborough Morris Men after leaving Bristol University. Collected dances in the Cotswolds and met many of the people who were active during the first revival. A leading character during the second revival, Roy encouraged and taught many of the early women's teams and ran instructional sessions for the men's clubs. Died November 2015.

David Duncan.

Interview in Bathampton Mill, 23 October 2012.
Member of Bathampton Morris Men.

John Edwards.

Interviewed at home in Church Eaton, 8 November 2012.
Member of Stafford Morris Men; rides their hobby horse.

Daniel Fox.

Interviewed at home in Thaxted, 10 June 2011.

Member of Thaxted Morris Men; Squire of the Morris Ring 1998-2000. His father, Peter Fox, danced with Cambridge Morris Men, and was a member of the first Travelling Morrice tour of the Cotswolds.

Eric Foxley.

Interviewed at home in Nottingham, 9 November 2012.

Started dancing with Thames Valley Morris Men; now with Nottingham Foresters.

Tony Foxworthy.

Interviewed at home in Gravesend, 19 September 2012. Worked for the EFDSS.

Keith Francis.

Interviewed at home in Ledbury, 6 April 2013.

Started dancing at Reading University; has danced with a number of teams but for many years has been a leading figure with Silurian Morris Men; Bagman of the Morris Ring 1984-1991.

Mike Goatcher.

Interviewed at home in Thaxted, 12 May 2011.

Danced with Thaxted Morris Men, and now holds a comprehensive archive of the Morris in Thaxted.

Fred Goater.

Interviewed in Bathampton Mill, 23 October 2012.

Bathampton Morris Men.

John Helsdon.

Interviewed in Bathampton Mill, 23 October 2012.

Bathampton Morris Men. Started dancing at school in Bathampton. Died June 2014.

Desmond Herring.

Interviewed at home in Needham Market, 9 September 2009.

Founder member of East Suffolk Morris Men. Suffered a major stroke in August 2013 and died 26 February 2015.

Antony Heywood.

Interviewed at home in Eindhoven, 28 November 2012.

Started dancing at Cambridge; danced with Greensleeves Morris Men, and then moved to Holland where he has been an influential member of Helmond Morris Men.

John Jenner.

Interviewed at home in Bassingbourne, 1 November 2012.

Cambridge Morris Men; holds an extensive archive of the Cambridge Morris.

John Kirkpatrick.

Interviewed in The Three Tuns, Bishops Castle, 25 April 2014.

Began dancing with Hammersmith Morris Men; formed the Shropshire Bedlams team, and constructed many of their dances. Important musician and singer and one of the world's leading experts on melodeons, accordions and concertinas.

Beth Neill.

Interviewed at home in St Albans, 21 February 2013.

Dances with Windsor Morris; was a key figure in the Morris Federation, and editor of Morris Matters.

Val Parker.

Interviewed at home in St Albans, 28 March 2013.

Started dancing at Bath University; formed teams in the Thames Valley; worked for the Morris Federation.

Caroline Peters.

Interviewed at home in Sidcup, 14 October, 2015.

Started dancing at Bath University with the Bath City team. Now dances with Kettlebridge Clog in Kent.

Tim Peters.

Interviewed at home in Sidcup, 14 October, 2015.

Danced with Bath City, Hammersmith and currently with Hartley Morris Men.

Roy Phillips.

Interviewed in Bathampton Mill, 23 October 2012.

Bathampton Morris Men.

Irvine Reid.

Interviewed at home in Felixstowe, 9 May 2012.

Started dancing at Cambridge University; attended a number of Travelling Morris tours; Joined East Suffolk Morris Men. For many years the recognised 'Father' of ESMM. Died December 2013.

Hugh Rippon.

Interviewed at home in Coventry, 5 May 2013.

Worked for the EFDSS; instrumental in starting a number of clubs, particularly Hammersmith Morris Men. Danced with Chingford Morris Men, Woodside Morris Men and Coventry Morris Men.

Shirley Rogers.

Interviewed in Lower Withington, 4 October 2012.

Lower Withington Morris Troupe.

Peter Rollason.

By email, 27 April 2013.

Bedford Morris Men.

John Ryder.

Interviewed at home in Lower Withington, 4 October 2012.

Lower Withington Morris Troupe.

Peter Stephens.

Interviewed in Church Eaton, 8 November 2012.

Founder member of Stafford Morris Men.

Laurel Swift.

Interviewed at home in North London, 30 April 2014.

Dancer and choreographer with Morris Offspring. Daughter of Sue Swift who was involved with the Morris Federation.

Bob Tatman.

Interviewed at home in Orpington, 19 September 2012.

Learned to dance under Wally Faires after the war; joined London Rodney and then Hartley Morris Men.

Brian Tasker.

Dances with Hartley Morris Men, Ashdown Forest Morris Men, and North British Sword.

Squire of the Morris Ring 2008 – 2010.

Gordon Taylor.

Interviewed in Church Eaton, 8 November 2012.

Stafford Morris Men.

Peter Trovell.

Interviewed at home in Colchester, 21 February 2013.

Learned to dance at school; joined Colchester Morris Men.

David Tydeman.

Interviewed at various times while out with East Suffolk Morris Men.

John Walford.

By letter. Kennet Morris Men.

Crispin Walker.

Interviewed in North London, 30 April 2014.

Member of the Morris Offspring Group.

Ewan Wardrop.

Interviewed in Walthamstowe, 28 July 2014.

Classical dancer; grew up in Sidmouth; started the Bo Diddlers group. Major performer on the London stage.

Fred Waygood.

Interviewed in Bathampton Mill, 8 November 2012.

Bathampton Morris Men.

John Weaver.

Interviewed in Cambridge, 10 May 2014.

Brackley Morris Men, regarded as a 'traditional' side; also a member of Cambridge Morris Men.

Norris Winstone OBE.

Interviewed at home in Norwich, 2 September 2009.

Kemps Men; began dancing in the 1930s. Died October 2011.

Teams:

Members of these teams were interviewed during shows, two during a JMO event in Cambridge, and the third, Mersey Morris Men, once during the Devil's Dyke meeting, and shortly after during one of their own evening tours in Cheshire.

Gog Magog.

Interviewed in Cambridge 10 May 2014.

Mersey Morris Men.

Interviewed in Cambridge 5 April 2014, and in Thornton Hough, 28 April 2014.

Wicket Brood.

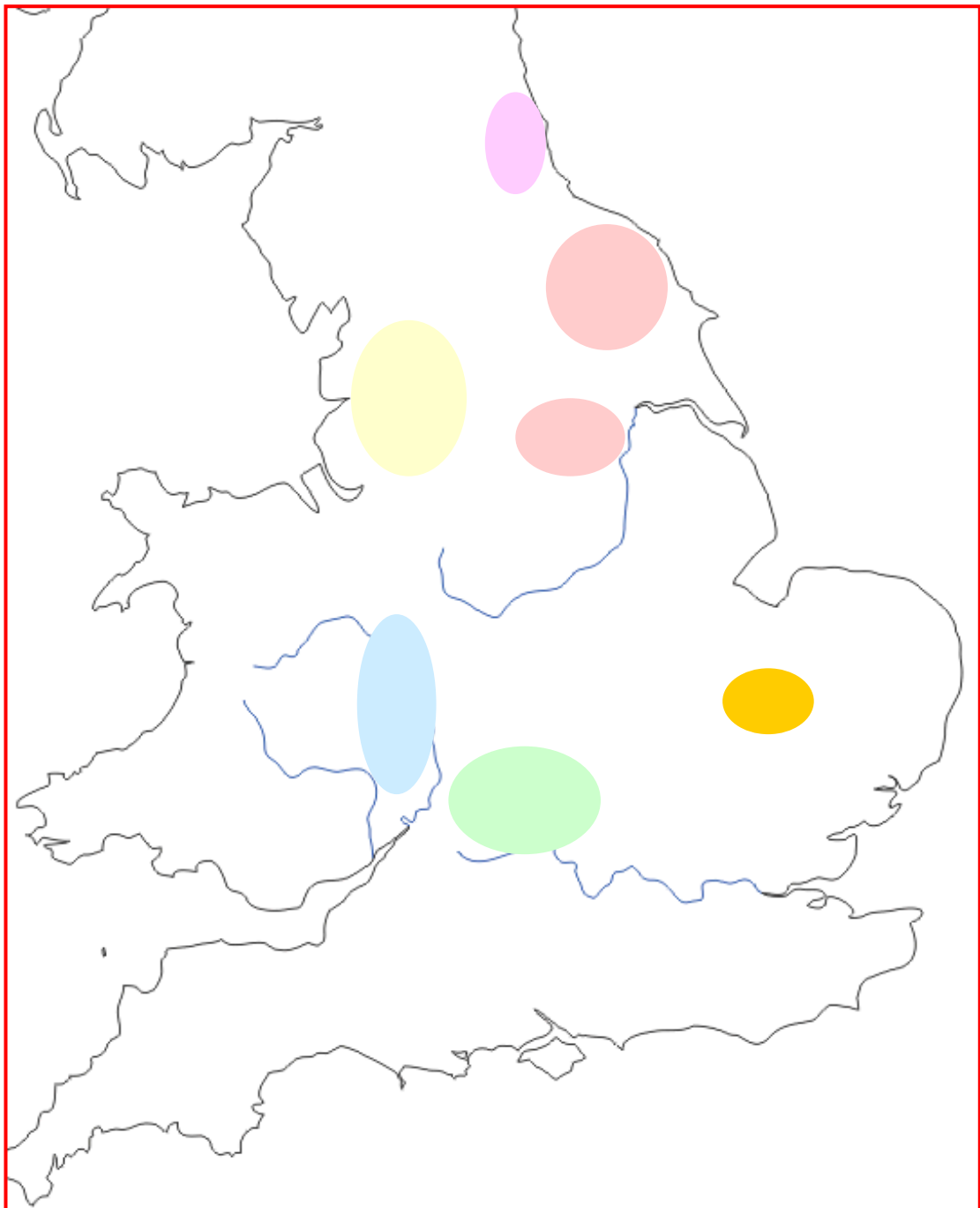
Interviewed in Cambridge, 10 May 2014.

A tape was kindly provided by Harry Stevenson of the Interview with **Lionel Bacon**, conducted by Albert Wilkins and Paul Ashford of the Winchester Morris Men, 22 February, 1979. Bacon started dancing with Cambridge Morris Men in the 1930s, later with many other Sides, including London Pride and Whitchurch, and for many years, Winchester Morris Men. In 1974 the Morris Ring published Bacon's *A Handbook of Morris Dancing*.

Appendix 2.

Chronology.

- 1886 D'Arcy Ferris trains a Morris team for his Bidford Pageant.
- 1888 Headington stopped dancing. Mary Neal began work at the West London Mission.
- 1890 Frazer published the first part of his "Golden Bough".
- 1892 Sharp returned to England.
- 1895 Neal and Pethwick started the Espérance Club in London.
- 1896 Sharp Principal of the Hampstead Conservatoire of Music.
- 1898 Percy Manning enables the reformation of the Headington Quarry Morris Men.
- 1899 Headington Quarry, with Kimber as musician, meet Sharp on Boxing Day.
- 1905 Neal and MacIlwaine approach Sharp and meet Kimber.
- 1906 Espérance teams begin to perform across England.
- 1910 Blanche Payling to Thaxted.
- 1911 Formation of Thaxted Morris Men. Sharp forms the English Folk Dance Society.
- 1913 Cambridge Folk Dance group formed.
- 1922 Rolf Gardiner takes a party of folk dancers to Germany.
- 1924 First Travelling Morrice tour to the Cotswolds. Death of Cecil Sharp.
- 1927 First Thaxted Morris Meeting.
- 1932 English Folk Dance and Song Society formed.
- 1933 Cambridge Morris Men discuss formation of The Morris Ring.
- 1934 The Morris Ring is formally instituted at a meeting in Thaxted.
- 1971 The first women's team is formed in Bath.
- 1975 Formation of the Women's Morris Federation.
- 1983 The WMF changes name to The Morris Federation.
- 2011 The Morris Ring accepts women musicians.



- Cotswold-style Morris Dance
- Welsh Border Dances
- North-West Dances
- Longsword Dances
- Rapper Sword Dances
- Molly Dances

**Distribution of Dance Customs,
as found during the early
twentieth century.**

Approximate areas only;
there was some overlapping - between
Cotswold and Welsh Border, the various
sword dances, and between the North-West
and the north Midlands dances from
Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.

Appendix 3.

A Brief History of the Morris to 1899.

The oldest references to Morris Dancing present two immediate problems. There are very few illustrations, and therefore no clues as to the style of dance or type of performance, and because the records all come from one strand of society, there is nothing to indicate the popularity of the dance, or how far it spread through all levels of society. The basic clue to the presence of the dance is simply the word Morris, but this again presents difficulties. The reference that was for many years considered to be the oldest known record of a Morris Dancer has “moreys”, but even if it is accepted that the word Morris is the modern equivalent of that ancient spelling, it is by no means clear that the word has retained the same meaning.⁵⁵⁹ Without pictorial evidence there is a danger that a modern meaning is automatically assumed, when in fact a very different style of performance may actually have been described.

At the time of writing the earliest known references to Morris Dancing in Britain are from 1448.⁵⁶⁰ Before these came to light the earliest reference was held to be from 1458, from the Will of Alice de Wetenhale of Bury St Edmunds and London. She left to her daughter *iiij ciphos argenti sculptos cum moreys dauncie* – three cups of silver engraved with Morris Dancers. In the same year, Sir Thomas Chaworth in York also left in his Will a piece of silver “with a Moresk theron.”⁵⁶¹ It is assumed that Morris Dancing must have been so well-known at the time that people would immediately recognise a dancer engraved in silver and it has also been assumed that the dancer must have been similar

⁵⁵⁹ The Will of Alice de Wetenhale. Cutting examines this problem in his book, and he lists *moris*, *morisco*, *morisca* and *morysk*, pp.63-68.

⁵⁶⁰ John Cutting, “The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London have in their accounts - *Item to the Moryssh dancers 7s.* and in the same year there is mention of a tapestry from Caister in Norfolk showing a *morysk* dance.” *History and the Morris Dance* (2005), p.196. Cutting notes that Michael Heaney of Oxford noted the first find in the *Folk Music Journal* of 2004.

⁵⁶¹ Cutting, p.104.

to the dancers shown in illustrations, largely from continental Europe in the fifteenth century, depicting men dancing in an extreme, grotesque fashion around a lady; the most well-known being the carvings from Munich, the Moriskentänzer, produced by Erasmus Grasser around 1480 (Fig.59).⁵⁶²



Fig. 59: Moriskentänzer figure.⁵⁶³

The first reference to an actual Morris event comes from the Draper's Guild accounts for 28 June, 1477:

Payment of the costis don in seint Petre Nyght for the Wache Wayting vppon the Meyre. ffirste paid for the morisse daunce and for the costs of the ix worthi as it aperith by a bill of parcels of the same. xxviiij s. ix d.⁵⁶⁴

And the first actual representation of a dancer comes much later, 1600, from the frontispiece of Kemp's book, *The Nine Daies Wonder* (Fig.60).



Fig. 60: Will Kemp.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² There are ten figures in the Müncher Stadtmuseum. There may have been up to sixteen originally, including a lady holding a ring and a musician.

⁵⁶³ Postcard showing Moriskentänzer figure No.8. Müncher Stadtmuseum.

⁵⁶⁴ John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing* (Cambridge, 1999), p.47.

⁵⁶⁵ Illustration taken from Sharp and MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book, Part I*, plate alongside p.20.

In between these two dates a pattern was established that continued until the beginning of the twentieth century. Brief comments would appear in a range of sources indicating that Morris Dancing had been observed. They appeared in Court, Guild, and church records, accounts of court cases and latterly in newspapers. In their booklet detailing some of the villages in their dancing area the Dolphin Morris Men note: "In 1618, six "morrice dauncers" from Bradmore, and Anthony Trewman of Ruddington and Ralph Lees of Wisall, who accompanied the dancers by playing the pipe, were in trouble with the church for "prophaninge the Sabaoth by Morrice dauncinge".⁵⁶⁶ It was widespread, from Cornwall in 1466, and then across the whole of southern and eastern England, the Midlands to the borders of Wales, the north of England, and into Scotland. The references are generally very brief and say nothing of the dance itself, simply mentioning that a dance has occurred: "In reward to the mores-dancers, at my master his return into the country 2s."⁵⁶⁷ The early illustrations show a very dramatic dance, in a ring around a Lady, but by 1618 when the dancers were in trouble for "prophaninge the Sabaoth" the record simply mentions six dancers and two musicians, a configuration that would be recognised today.⁵⁶⁸ There is a modern assumption that during most of this period Morris was one simple dance that came from rural communities and at various times was banned by Church or State, typically criticised by Puritans and encouraged by Royalty as being part of 'Merry England'. In his extremely detailed account of the period Forrest shows that this simplistic view is generally incorrect, in that proscription or

⁵⁶⁶ *The Dolphin Guide to Local Villages and Dances* (1980). Cutting notes that in 1575 Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, staged a Bride-Ale at Kenilworth Castle which included "a lively moris dance, according to the ancient manner: six dancers, Maidmarian, and the fool." *History and the Morris Dance* p.115. Heaney and Forrest particularly note evidence of the Morris in Guild records from 1521 to 1530. *Annals of Early Morris* pp.14-16. Forrest devotes a chapter to 'Church Property' in *The History of Morris Dancing* which includes entries from a number of church records – "Likewise in the churchwardens' accounts of Thatcham, Berkshire, for 1566 there is the entry: *Item payd for payntyng of the morys daunssers coyttes ij s.*" p.160.

⁵⁶⁷ Cutting, p.115, quoting from the household accounts of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk.

⁵⁶⁸ *The Dolphin Guide to Local Villages and Dances* (1980).

encouragement of the dance by all groups depended upon complex political or social factors unrelated to anything that the dancers may have done.⁵⁶⁹

Kemp provides the earliest illustration of a dancer who is simply called a Morris Dancer, but in his book, *The Nine Daies Wonder*, there are no suggestions about the form of the dancing or the steps used. The most description given is that there were jumps involved: “They being intreated, I was soone wonne, to fit her with bells, besides she would have the olde fashion with napkins on her armes, and to our jumps we fell.”⁵⁷⁰ Kemp’s writing again suggests that people knew the dance, since he notes that many people either joined him to dance sections of the route, or challenged him to a competition. “It was the custome of honest Country fellows my unknowne friends, upon hearing of my Pype (which might well be heard in a still morning or evening a myle) to get up and beare mee company a little way.”⁵⁷¹ It is worth noting that this journey did not fit in with any twentieth century theories about the ritual year, nor did it have any links with place. London was where he lived and Norwich, England’s second city, an appropriate destination. It was simply an entertainment arranged by one man to raise money and to advertise his skills.⁵⁷² The first illustration discovered to date showing a recognisable Morris Dance appeared c.1620. *The Thames at Richmond, showing the old Royal Palace* (Fig.61) is a view of the River Thames and the Palace, but with some characters in the foreground that are clearly performing a Morris Dance⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing* (1999).

⁵⁷⁰ *Kemps nine daies wonder* reprinted for Kentwell Hall 1986, p.9.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵⁷² When Kemp’s Jig was re-enacted in 1977 by teams from The Morris Ring the Lord Mayor of Norwich met the procession on its arrival. In his welcome address he commented that he had investigated the amount that Kemp had received from the City, with a view to donating similar funds in modern terms to the dancers. He said that he had discovered that it would be impossible, as to replicate the amount would bankrupt the modern city. Personal recollection of the author.

⁵⁷³ *The Thames at Richmond, showing the old Royal Palace*, early seventeenth century, possibly 1620, held in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Originally thought to be by the Dutch artist Vinckenboom, but now generally described as ‘Flemish School’.



Fig. 61: The Thames at Richmond.⁵⁷⁴

A drawing of a dancer appeared in the publication *Recreation for ingenious head-peeeces* and while there were similarities with the costume of Will Kemp, this dancer had cross belts – or baldricks – and was beginning to resemble a modern dancer.⁵⁷⁵ This change was further illustrated in the large painting that is generally known as *The Dixon Harvesters*.

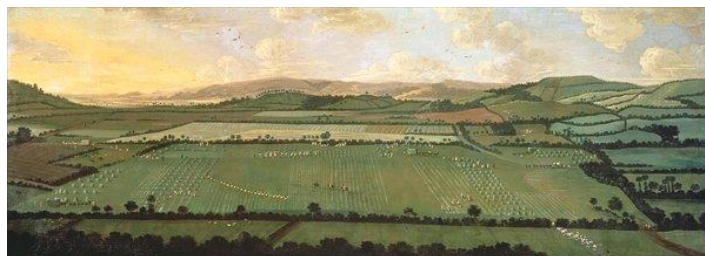


Fig. 62: Country round Dixon Manor.⁵⁷⁶

This is a generalised view of the Gloucestershire countryside with a hayfield in the foreground, and the work being illustrated is not from one moment in the production of hay, but is rather a collage of various tasks that have to be completed over a period of some weeks. In the lower right corner there appears to be a line of Morris Men dancing out of the field (Fig.63).

⁵⁷⁴ Image taken from <<http://the1642goodwyfe.wordpress.com/category/common-people/page/9/>> [accessed 07 July 2014].

⁵⁷⁵ John Mennes, *Recreation for ingenious headpieces; or A pleasant grove for their wits to walk in. Of epigrams 700; epitaphs 200; fancies, a number; fantasticks, abundance. With their addition, multiplication, and division.* (London 1654). Also Cutting pp.177-178.

⁵⁷⁶ Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, 'Country Round Dixon Manor' showing the Dixon Harvesters, by an unknown artist of the English School, around 1715. Image taken from - <http://www.magnoliabox.com/art/207064/Dixon_Harvesters_c1725 07/07/2014> [accessed 07 July 2014].



Fig. 63: Dixton Manor, detail.

Due to the nature of the painting there is no indication of the exact point in the cycle that the dance would have appeared, but there has to be an assumption that it marks the end of a period of hard work, and therefore the arrival of the time when the workers would have been able to enjoy some relaxation.⁵⁷⁷ The dancers have a distinctly modern appearance, wearing breeches, white shirts and baldricks. The Morris Dancers at Stowe House in 1844 still wore similar costumes, but the written records from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries give a confused picture of the dance.⁵⁷⁸ Some references still referred to the dance as entertainment, and in this way it provided a means by which poorly paid workers could supplement their income. Bushaway explains that such legalised forms of begging were widely accepted by society and while the dancers collected money from their audiences, they also expected to receive largesse from the local gentry.⁵⁷⁹ In a few cases teams were maintained by the Lord of the Manor, and dressed in his livery.⁵⁸⁰ Records and illustrations from the eighteenth century show that Morris dancers were regular participants at festivities and indeed, even into the early years of the nineteenth century, dancers were still booked as entertainers at functions,

⁵⁷⁷ The link between work and leisure is a complex one. What is now called leisure or relaxation, may have been considered as a duty by the farm labourers.

⁵⁷⁸ Painting by James Danby showing festivities at Stowe House, September 1844.
<<http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/mettle.htm>> [accessed 07 July 2014].

⁵⁷⁹ Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700 – 1880*, (London, 1982).

⁵⁸⁰ Russell Wortley, "The Cotswold Morris – Hey-Day, Decline and Revival", *Russell Wortley*, (1980), p.11. See also Robert Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp.56-58.

as they were at the Election Dinners in Bury St Edmunds in 1802, 1812 and 1820.⁵⁸¹ A report in the Ipswich Journal for Saturday 16 July 1814 noted that Morris Dancers appeared in Harleston on the National Day of Thanksgiving to celebrate the end of the war with France.⁵⁸² However, an inexorable drift down through society meant that dancers were increasingly involved in fights and reports of drunken behaviour. "Often they became so drunk that they lost step and bumped into each other, after which fighting would start and the team would disband."⁵⁸³ Bushaway explains that the country festivals were being overwhelmed by visitors from the nearest towns who also added to the schedule of inappropriate behaviour. "the 'scum and refuse of the nearest great factory towns' had taken them over."⁵⁸⁴ Such behaviour was not to be tolerated by the rising tide of puritanism that grew during the nineteenth century, and Bushaway explains that many traditions were suppressed during this time; Dover's Games at Chipping Campden stopped in 1852, and the Kirtlington Lamb Ale in 1858.⁵⁸⁵

Morris Dancing had been criticised before these events came to a close. Bushaway quotes John Byng, who wrote in 1784 that he: "attended to a troop of Morrice dancers headed by the buffoon; but to me, their mummerly appear'd tedious, and as little enjoyed by the performers, as the spectators: the genius of the nation does not take this turn."⁵⁸⁶ In trying to explain the decline in the dance it has become the custom to follow Sharp, when he wrote:

One of the causes may, perhaps, be the enclosure of the common lands, and the creation of a proletariat, which led to a general migration of labouring men from the villages to the towns in search of work, the disruption of the social life of the village, and, incidentally, to the disbandment of many of the Morris teams.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸¹ Jane Fiske ed. *The Oakes Diaries: Business, Politics and the Family in Bury St Edmunds 1778 – 1827*, (The Boydell Press).

⁵⁸² "The return of the procession was welcomed by morris dancers and children strewing flowers before them, the simplicity of which had a most imposing effect." Ipswich Journal, 16 July 1814 (Page 2, column 4).

⁵⁸³ Bob Pegg *Rites and Riots* (1981) p.94.

⁵⁸⁴ Bushaway, *By Rite* (1982), p.246,

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.246.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.242. Note the link with the twentieth century comments by Paxman.

⁵⁸⁷ Sharp and MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book, Part I*, p.19.

Enclosure had been around for many years without affecting the dancers, as at that time they were quite used to dancing in large houses, in the grounds of those houses, or on the streets. Malcolmson suggests that enclosure may have been one of the influences in restricting popular pastimes, but he links it particularly with cricket and football, pastimes that needed large open spaces. Sharp may have been much nearer the mark when he spoke about the drift into towns in search of work. Malcolmson highlights this desire to work as one of the causes of the decline in traditional pursuits:

The puritan emphasis on regularity, orderliness, sobriety, providence, and dutifulness in one's calling were reflections of a general regard for individual and social discipline.⁵⁸⁸

He writes that "industry was thought to be the linchpin of English progress" and therefore, whereas Sharp was putting a negative emphasis on a "drift in search of work", Malcolmson suggests that this moving to find work was a positive desire to further both themselves and their families, and the nation. He also notes a second movement within society that had an enormous effect on all pastimes, the rise of the evangelical movement: "Another powerful influence which helped to weaken the customs of popular recreation, and often worked in tandem with the emphasis on labour discipline, was the evangelical movement."⁵⁸⁹ Public gatherings for pure entertainment were suspect as occasions when evil could triumph, and there was a great emphasis on the value of a quiet life within the home. Cunningham quotes from the Quaker William Howitt who said: "Happiness does not consist in booths and garlands, drums and horns, or in capering round a maypole. Happiness is a fire-side thing."⁵⁹⁰ Sharp has an echo of this when he says: "One old dancer said that it was because "people had got so proud"; another

⁵⁸⁸ Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations* (1973), p.90.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁵⁹⁰ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780 – 1880* (London, 1980), pp.85-90.

because “no one would give anything, and it got like begging, and that we didn’t like.”⁵⁹¹

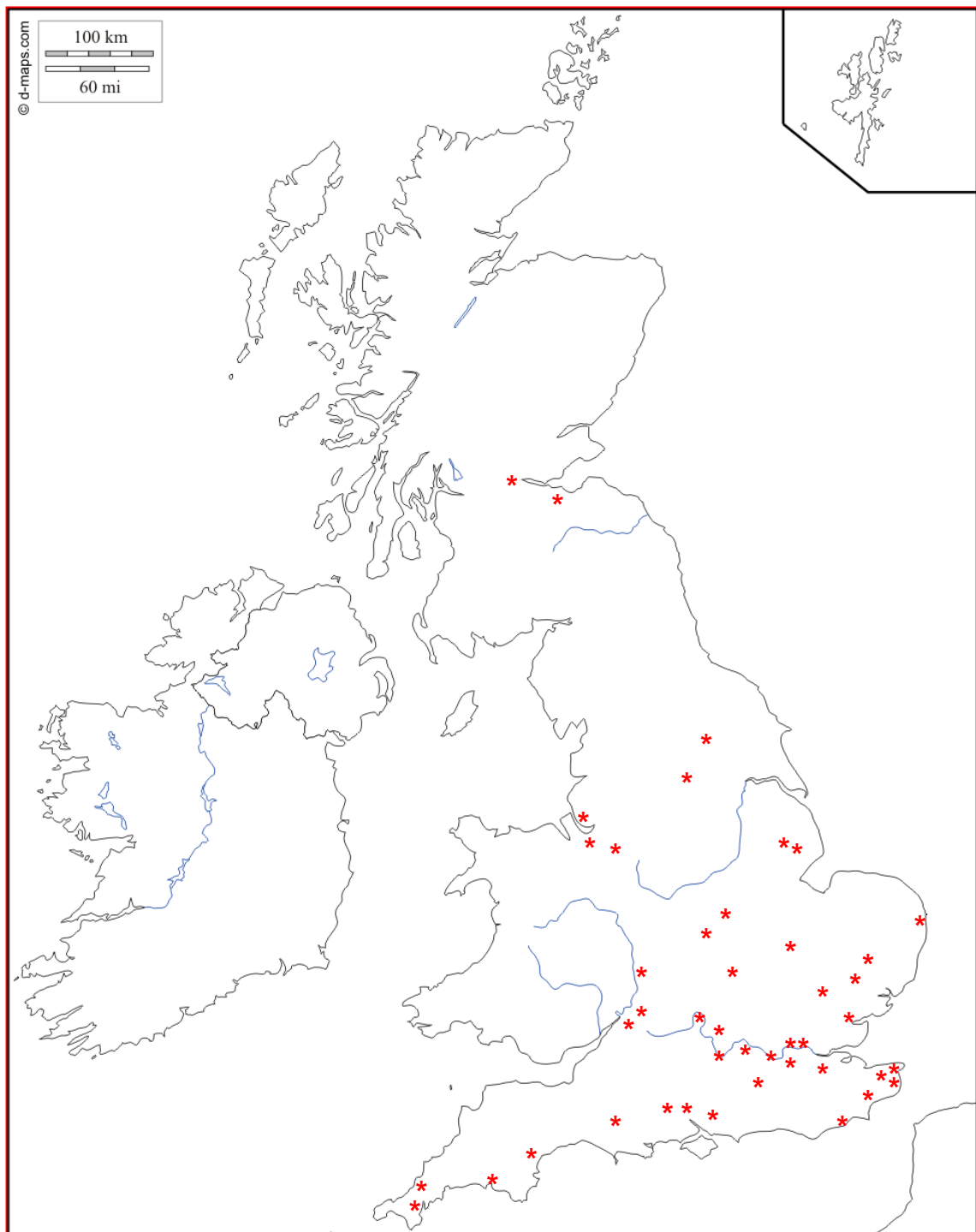
Bushaway has a quote from 1821 when magistrates tried to stop a group of Plough Boys:

It gave me great pleasure at the last Quarter Sessions at Kirton to hear from the Chairman that the magistrates have determined to visit with exemplary severity the misconduct of persons who appear as Morris-dancers, or Plough Bullocks, or under names of similar character.⁵⁹²

These changes in society did not stop the dance altogether, and while there are no documents detailing the demise of the teams in East Anglia or along the Thames Valley, neither is there evidence as to why teams continued to dance in villages in the small area of the Cotswold Hills. the influence of the nineteenth century antiquarians and folklorists may have played a major part in the survival of the Morris, and certainly the theories that they developed concerning the origins of the Morris are still very much alive.

⁵⁹¹ Sharp, *The Morris Book*, p.19.

⁵⁹² Bushaway, *By Rite*, p.251.



Approximate sites of dance references from the sixteenth century.

For many of these sites, particularly for London, there are multiple references to Morris dance events across the century. The proliferation of dance sites in the Thames Valley may simply be because there was a concentration of literate members of the population, prepared to note events, and preserve those notations.

References taken from Heaney and Forrest, *Annals of Early Morris* (Sheffield 1991).

Appendix 4.

Costume⁵⁹³



Fig. 64: Headington Quarry Morris Men.

*The Headington Quarry team that was revived by Percy Manning in 1897.*⁵⁹⁴

Revival teams in the early years of the twentieth century wore a costume that copied the clothes worn by the remaining Cotswold Sides – white shirt, with rosettes or baldricks, white trousers, and bells below the knee (Figs.64, 66). These modern trousers may have been cricket flannels, whereas in the case of the rural dancers the trousers may have been moleskin or some heavy cloth that looked white because of bleaching in normal wear. A white shirt would have been the normal dress for all men.



Fig. 65: Chipping Campden Morris Men.

*Chipping Campden Morris Men, 1897.*⁵⁹⁵

However, the few illustrations that survive from the distant past suggest that the dancers were simply wearing contemporary clothes, decorated with ribbons, rosettes or a special

⁵⁹³ This area is worthy of a study in its own right, but these few details are relevant when considering the development of the dance in the twentieth century.

⁵⁹⁴ *Russell Wortley* (1980), p.14.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

coat. The trousers worn by the dancers shown by the side of the River Thames at Richmond (Fig.61) are the same as those that can be seen on the members of their audience, and the dancers leaving the hay field at Dixton are again wearing standard breeches for that time (Fig.63), but the modern revival teams did not wear modern dress, they copied the clothes of the old teams. In the twentieth century, men's Sides either opted for the white trousers with a white shirt, or dark knee breeches. One Side, the Shropshire Bedlams (Fig.66), chose to wear jeans, but as John Kirkpatrick explained during his interview, it was not according to any original plan.



Fig. 66: Shropshire Bedlams.

Shropshire Bedlams dancing in Bristol, 30/06/2012. Photograph by the author.

They had decided to wear the rag coat that has become common among Sides dancing in a Border Morris style, but could not decide on the kind of trousers to wear. Then one evening a young dancer arrived at practice wearing his rag coat over his normal denim jeans, and the rest of the team liked the style, and decided to adopt it as their costume.

The hat is a further example of some Morris men adopting a form of standard dress that has no connection with the past – the decorated straw hat. Photographs and illustrations from the past show dancers either having no hats (see Chipping Campden, Fig.65), or wearing standard forms of contemporary headgear, sometimes decorated with ribbons or feathers. Where they have top hats or bowlers it is said that the Side's costume may have been provided by a benefactor. The photograph above of the Headington team re-established by Manning (Fig.64) shows them wearing standard flat caps. In the inter-war

years many revival Cotswold Sides did not wear hats, but at some point the fashion for a straw hat, decorated with flowers, arrived, and was adopted by many Cotswold revival Sides (Fig.67).



Fig. 67: East Suffolk hats.

Two men from East Suffolk Morris Men in Trafalgar Square at the Westminster Morris Men's Day of Dance, 12/05/2007. Photograph by the author.

It is possible that it started because of the desire for a 'national costume' that saw the country dance teams of the EFDSS adopt what was called 'Festival Dress'. This lack of a standardised English costume was felt keenly in the years of the second revival as Morris teams travelled abroad and encountered continental teams proudly wearing not a generalised national costume, but a dress from their own local area (Fig.68).



Fig. 68: Segovia.

A dance team from Segovia, photographed by the author, 16/03/2014.

The problem became particularly acute when the women's teams began to dance. Many chose to adopt a mock-historical style, rather like the Espérance costumes. Beth Neill

said: “They were horrible – they had pinafores and a lot of them still have got pinafores.”⁵⁹⁶ (Fig.69)



Fig. 69: Minden Rose.

*Minden Rose dancing at their Day of Dance in 2002. To the left, in a brown dress is a member of Knots of May, also wearing a pinafore.*⁵⁹⁷

The discussion during Neill’s interview turned towards the fact that some of the most feminist of the young women’s teams dressed as Edwardian milkmaids. “I did find some of those kits very bizarre. If you look at the photographs of the early Federation gatherings everybody’s in pinafores and ankle-length skirts.” However, it was also noted that this was yet another example of the dance following the culture of the day: “Admittedly, early 70s, that was quite popular wasn’t it? Mid calf – ankle length?”

Today Neill’s team, Windsor Morris, wear white trousers, because as Neill said, it is the only costume that allows them to perform the full range of Cotswold movements (Fig.34). The New Esperance team also wear trousers, rather than the milkmaid costumes of Mary Neal’s original dancers, but the Belles of London City have taken their costume to the other extreme (Fig.70).

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with Beth Neill 21/02/2013.

⁵⁹⁷ <<http://www.minden-rose.org.uk/2002/Day%20of%20Dance%202002.htm>> [accessed 8 December 2014].



Fig. 70: The Belles of London City.⁵⁹⁸

The Belles' web site clearly states that they provide an 'entertainment' and it could be suggested that in doing so they are nearer to some of the seventeenth century Morris teams performing in guild processions than many other modern teams.

The men's Cotswold teams can be seen wearing baldricks (crossed belts), rosettes, waistcoats or tabards. Where the baldricks cross there is often a badge, and sometimes it is the insignia of their local town. Similar badges might be used on a waistcoat or tabard, or there might be some other design representative of their home area. The colours of the ribbons or rosettes are sometimes taken from significant local colours. Stafford Morris Men have the Staffordshire Knot, Colchester Morris Men the Borough Coat of Arms, Coventry Morris Men the Elephant from the Coventry Coat of Arms, and East Suffolk Morris Men the ship from the Ipswich Coat of Arms, but there are many other examples. While this might imply that these Sides have a close connection with their community, this is generally not the case, and in fact Sides are free to design their own costume, and so many have no local connection at all.

⁵⁹⁸ <<http://thebellesoflondoncity.audiodynamite.co.uk/who-we-are/>> [accessed 9 December 2014].



Fig. 71: Officers of the Morris Ring.

Ravensbourne rosettes, East Suffolk waistcoat and Leicester baldrick. The three Morris Ring officers – Treasurer, Squire and Bagman – at the Dartington Ring Meeting, 07/09/2014. Photograph by the author.

This form of costume is firmly embedded in the national consciousness as being 'Morris'. Changing to a more modern appearance (whatever that might entail) would not be considered, and would probably create confusion among audiences. Perhaps because women's teams are still seen by some as being a modern development of the dance, they are able to be more experimental with their costumes. However, it is noteworthy that continental folk dance teams have also remained faithful to traditional costumes, and clearly would not consider changing to a modern dress. But, as noted earlier, many continental European communities have an established local, traditional costume, and it is treasured by that society. This is not the case in England. In fact, the only element of the costume for Cotswold Morris Sides that has remained constant is the bells, still worn below the knee.

Appendix 5.

Music.⁵⁹⁹

It is acknowledged that until the nineteenth century the pipe and tabor were the standard instruments for the Cotswold Morris. Tom Sly can be seen playing for Kemp (Fig.60), and the dancers by the Thames at Richmond have a piper (Fig.61). However, by the late nineteenth century the fiddle had taken over as the instrument of choice, and then the concertina and the melodeon became popular Edwardian instruments (Fig.72).



Fig. 72: East Suffolk musicians.

The musicians of East Suffolk Morris Men playing during the Thaxted Meeting, 05/06/2010. Concertina, fiddle and melodeon. Photograph by the author.

During the twentieth century the pipe and tabor have been taken up again, despite the difficulty in both acquiring suitable instruments, and learning to play. Russell Wortley, David Chaundy, Mike Chandler (Fig.73) and Bert Cleaver have all been notable performers, and a particular advantage of the instrument is that it is not only loud, to overcome traffic noise, but has a tonal quality that cuts through the background noise of modern, urban dance sites.

⁵⁹⁹ This is another area that can only be briefly addressed here. The modern development of Morris music demands a full study.



Fig. 73: Mike Chandler playing the pipe and tabor.

Mike Chandler (on the right), interviewed for this study, playing for Thaxted Morris Men in Totnes at the Dartington Meeting, 07/09/2008. Photograph by the author.

The other advantage of the 'push-pull' instruments, the melodeon and concertina, and of the pipe, is that they provide the jerky rhythm preferred by many dancers. When the fiddle first gained ascendancy it was said to be too 'smooth', unless played in the right manner, and the accordion is also said to provide flowing music that does not sit well with the dance. There are many excellent musicians today who disprove this assertion, in particular Dennis Smith of Westminster Morris Men.⁶⁰⁰

When Sharp first began collecting he was, as explained earlier, only interested in the music, and the great majority of Cotswold Sides today will still be heard playing those tunes that the collectors found in the Cotswold Hills in the early years of the twentieth century. Sharp hated the Music Hall and considered that the tunes that came out of it were destroying the great wealth of England's traditional music. Ironically it is now known that some of the tunes used for the dances were in fact the pop songs of an earlier age. Many of the Cotswold tunes were song tunes, used for the very popular Broad-sides of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Fig.74), and in at least one case, a pop song from the Halls (Fig.75).⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ Unfortunately, Dennis Smith no longer plays as he is now in the advanced stage of Alzheimer's Disease, but his legacy lives on in the playing of other accordionists.

⁶⁰¹ The tune *Getting Upstairs* was one of the first minstrel songs to come over from America.

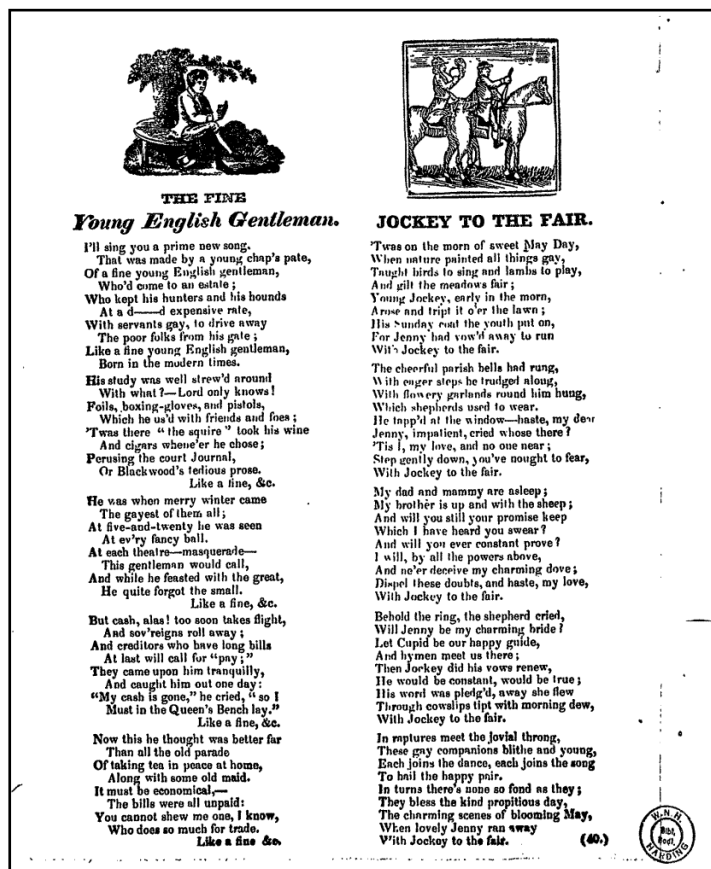


Fig. 74: Jockey to the Fair.⁶⁰²

Jockey to the Fair (Roud Number 3344) was a very popular song that was used on many Broad­sides from the 1780s to the late 1800s. The tune was used for dances from Abingdon, Adderbury, Ascot Under Wychwood, Bampton, Bledington, Brackley, Bucknell, Ducklington, Headington, Ilmington, Longborough, Oddington, and Sherborne.⁶⁰³

The question for the twentieth century is that if the musicians from the nineteenth century Cotswold villages and towns managed to use popular tunes for their dances, why are there no popular tunes of today being used? The answer is not, as Graves and Hodge suggested: "For there could be no new composers of folk dances, and each dance had only one tune, and there were only a limited number of dances."⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² <<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/05000/02095.gif>> [accessed 10 December 2014].

⁶⁰³ Details from Bacon, *Aide Memoire*.

⁶⁰⁴ Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* (London, 1940).

SICH A GETTIN' UP STAIRS.

At Kentuck, last night, a party met,
 Dey say dey going to hab a treat,
 From de old town dare come de great and small,
 To hab a dance at de Nigger Ball.

And dere was sich a gettin' up stairs,
 And playing on de fiddle,
 Sich a gettin' up stairs
 I never did see.

Massa Brown him come in him Mackintosh,
 Wid his hair all frizzle like a bumpkin squash;
 Him smoke cigar ob de best havan,
 Wid a watch as big as a frying pan.

Missa Tongue was dress'd in her Sunday clothes,
 But where her get 'em nobody knows;
 Den dere was Miss Dina Sweet,
 Coming Tagioni at de corner ob de street.

A watchman was sent to keep de peace,
 And dragg'd de party before de police,
 And in de morning how dey stare,
 To see demselves before de Mayor.

Missa Sambo Bumm was de first dey call,
 De Mayor look'd so it did her appal,
 Dat twice she fainted quite away,
 And on de ground de poor girl lay.


De Lord Mayor cried, is dat de rig?
 Him pull off him hat and throw away him wig;
 Which made de parties all declare,
 Dat 'em neber again go before de Lord Mayor.

Den away dey went to their homes straightway
 And den dere was de devil to pay,
 Missa Sambo Bumm did herself disgrace,
 She fought and tore poor Massa Brown's face.

De ladies all did scratch and tear,
 Dere clothes you must know all had a share,
 De watchman came in de poor girl to throttle,
 But she broke his head wid a blacking bottle.

Den before de Mayor dey were took again,
 And every one he did detain;
 Some to pick cockum against their will
 And others to grind wind upon a mill.

(88.)



JENNY GET DE OAT CAKE DONE.

O! lubby Jenny dear,
 Me hungry, me be quake,
 M' lub your lubby eye,
 Me see de Oat Cake.

CHORUS.

Jenny is de Oat Cake done, my darling?
 Jenny is de Oat Cake done?

My lub's like um blacking ball,
 Her eye is like de morning star
 Her teeth is like de white-wash wall,
 Her cheek like um rising sun.

You eye like um morning star,
 Cheek like um rising sun,
 Jenny is de Oat Cake baking?
 Jenny is de Oat Cake done?

Me lub you pretty shia,
 Your foot make hole um ground,
 Your head like um Bonnana,
 Your nose weigh um pound.

Your shin is like um blacking ball,
 Your teeth is like de white-wash brush,
 Your lubby lip be charming,
 Your nothing like de trash.

You know de cake is baking,
 You no tink amiss;
 Say, my lubby Jenny,
 You give Jumbo um kiss?

Now all yon Nigger come,
 De Oat Cake it be done,
 Eat and smoke de Habannah,
 For Jenny and Jumbo's sake.




Fig. 75: Getting Upstairs.

*'Sich a Gettin' Up Stairs' (Roud Number 7891) was a minstrel song that appeared in England during the Minstrel craze of the 1850s and 60s. It was used for dances at Headington and Hinton.*⁶⁰⁵

There are plenty of new dances and new tunes, but the missing word is 'popular'. The popular music of the twentieth century developed to the point where it could not be played on instruments such as the pipe, having a simple note structure, and the tunes lost their standard formation. The dances demand a regular pattern of 'A' and 'B' music (and sometimes 'C') and a recognisable tune that would encourage both dancers and audience to hum or whistle along with the musicians. Modern popular music has lost this structure and generally does not lend itself to the dance. Therefore, Morris musicians have taken to composing their own tunes, or going back to folk tunes from other players,

⁶⁰⁵ <<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/05000/04429.gif>> [accessed 10 December 2014].

outside the Morris world. For example, a musician with White Rose Morris Men has composed a new tune for the recently composed dance usually known as *Skirmish*. The dance was originally constructed around the tune *The British Grenadiers*, but the new tune *Nick's Maggott* puts the correct emphasis on the dance's movements. As an example of tunes from outside the Morris world, one of the East Suffolk musicians uses a French tune, *Plante un Chou*, for the Bampton dance *Step and Fetch Her*, which again accentuates the movements of the dance more effectively than the original tune.

This is a fascinating and crucial area that deserves closer attention. Many dancers can be heard saying that they are going to perform a jig for 'one man'. There can be no such thing; there must be at least two performers – a dancer and a musician.⁶⁰⁶ But for one dancer or a team of dancers the musician is a vital part of the whole team, and excellent dancing can only be experienced when they are in complete harmony.

⁶⁰⁶ Except for the very few musicians who can accompany themselves.

Appendix 6.

“It’s street theatre really!”

Norris Winstone said that he thought Morris Dancing was a form of street theatre. Although Des Herring agreed with him other interviewees rejected this assertion. Some insisted that Morris was entertainment but not street theatre, while a few suggested that the dance was not an entertainment, but it was simply Morris. This raises questions that could not be addressed in the main study, perhaps most importantly ‘what is street theatre?’ Unfortunately the two men listed at the beginning of this Appendix cannot be asked to enlarge on their statements as Norris Winstone died shortly after being interviewed, and Des Herring first suffered a major stroke which removed his power of speech and later died. Therefore the following notes are a combination of the my thoughts, and some observations made by dancers during the course of the study, and they are only included as a brief explanation of the phrase in the title – ‘it’s street theatre’.

A popular definition of street theatre would probably be based around the type of acts that can be seen on the main piazza of Covent Garden in London. These cover a range of skills – juggling, escapology, fire-eating – that might once have been called circus skills. But at other sites around the Market there are musicians, human statues and comedy acts that might prefer to be classed as street performers, rather than street theatre. The more complex acts that require a static (and preferably large) audience in order to succeed are generally only seen at major sites, like Covent Garden, but most towns have examples of street musicians, usually known as buskers. Therefore, while a dictionary definition of street theatre might include dance and theatre among the other disciplines, in practice the majority of street theatre performances today are circus-based, with music acts being widespread but outside the generally-accepted term ‘theatre’.

To include Morris in this is an interesting suggestion and one that does not fall outside the basic definition examined above. Dancers provide an entertainment, there is music, and often a fool or beast to provide a comic element. Fools have been seen juggling, at least one rides a unicycle, and many engage the audience in comic patter. All of the elements of street theatre are present. Historically this is accurate, as it is recorded that some Cotswold sides used other forms of entertainment alongside the dance, and Chipping Campden Morris Men are shown in a rare photograph with a dancing doll. Yet some modern dancers still reject the suggestion that Morris is a form of street theatre, while agreeing that it is an entertainment. The dancers of Gog Magog interviewed in Cambridge immediately rejected the idea that they were a form of street theatre, saying that they were an entertainment, and yet, in a discussion with some members of East Suffolk Morris Men, one commented that Gog Magog (and Pig Dyke Molly) were indeed street theatre. He went on to add that they were street theatre rather than Morris. Tony Ashley of Anker Morris Men, after watching a team performing at the Saddleworth Rushcart, said: "But it's not Morris is it? It's street theatre."

Clearly this is a complex issue that would stand further investigation. It is unlikely that dancers would ever reach agreement as to a simple classification for Morris Dancing, but Winstone's comment does provide a basis for enthusiastic debate.

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- Maurice Halbwachs: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Halbwachs> [accessed 10 January 2012].
- Oral tradition: <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oral_tradition&oldid=471468738> [accessed 17 January 2012].
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Other Web Sites:

Only a few Morris teams have produced booklets, but many have web sites containing details of the club's history. The following sites were consulted regularly during the course of the study:

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| Abingdon Morris Men | http://www.abingdonmorris.org.uk |
| Anker Morris Men | http://www.ankermm.co.uk |
| Bathampton Morris Men | http://www.bathampton-morris-men.org.uk |
| Bath City Morris | http://www.ukppg.org.uk/bathcitymorris.html |

Bristol Morris Men <http://www.bristolmorrismen.co.uk/horse/2005/index.html>

Cambridge Morris Men <http://www.cambridgemorrismen.org.uk>

Colchester Morris Men <http://www.colchestermorrismen.org>

Coventry Morris Men <http://www.coventry-morris.org.uk>

East Suffolk Morris Men <http://www.eastsuffolkmorris.com>

East Surrey Morris Men <http://www.esmm.org.uk>

England's Glory Ladies Morris <http://www.englishglory.org.uk>

English Folk Dance and Song Society <http://www.efdss.org>

Fleet Morris <http://www.fleetmorris.org.uk>

Fool's Gambit <http://www.foolsgambitmorris.co.uk>

Foresters Morris Men <http://www.chezfred.org.uk/for>

Gloucestershire Morris Men <http://www.glosmorrismen.org>

Gog Magog Molly <http://www.gogmagogmolly.org.uk>

Greensleeves Morris Men <http://www.greensleevesmorris.org.uk>

Hartley Morris Men <http://hartleymorrismen.btck.co.uk>

Headington Morris Men
http://www.headington.org.uk/history/famous_people/kimber.htm

Helmond Morris Men <http://morrisdans.nl/helmond/index.html>

Hop Hoodening <http://www.hoodening.org.uk/hoodening-history1.html>

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Kemps Men <http://kempsmen.org.uk/wp>

Leicester Morrismen <http://www.leicestermorris.co.uk/home>

Mersey Morris Men <http://www.merseymorrismen.com>

Monkseaton Morris Men <http://www.monkseatonmorrismen.co.uk>

Morris Offspring <http://www.morrisoffspring.org.uk>

Ravensbourne Morris Men <http://www.ravensbourne.org>

Saddleworth Morris Men <http://www.morrismen.saddleworth.org.uk>

Seven Champions <http://www.sevenchampions.org.uk/gallery/pages/claygate.html>

Sidmouth Festival <http://www.sidmouthfolkweek.co.uk>

Silurian Morris Men <http://www.silurianmorris.org.uk/home.html>

St Albans Morris Men <http://www.stalbansmorrismen.org.uk>

Stafford Morris Men <http://edwardsce.netfirms.com/staffordmorris/index.htm>

Thaxted Morris Men <http://www.thaxtedmorris.org>

The Bo Diddlers <http://www.thebodiddlers.co.uk>

The Brackley Morris Men <http://www.thebrackleymorrismen.org.uk>

The Gloucestershire Morris Men <http://www.glosmorrismen.org>

The Jockey Morris Men <http://www.jockeymorris.org.uk>

Thelwall Morris Men <http://www.thelwallmorris.org.uk>

The Mary Neal Archive <http://www.maryneal.org>

The Morris Federation <http://morrised.org.uk>

The Morris Ring <http://www.themorrisring.org>

The Open Morris <http://www.open-morris.org>

The Shropshire Bedlams <http://www.shropshirebedlams.co.uk>

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library <http://library.efdss.org/cgi-bin/home.cgi>

Wicket Brood Border Morris <http://www.wicketbrood.org.uk>