

Morris Matters



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to 1998. It was fun compiling this issue in that I had to do a lot of phoning round to folks asking them at pretty short notice to contribute something - my work rather overtook me and suddenly it was my copy deadline! So, many thanks to the noble few who rallied round amid all their own work deadlines.

There seems to be a theme, not quite accidental, to this volume - of "longevity" or whatever you choose to call it. Morris teams, morris dancers and how long they can last for. Hence the Peter Pan cover design. I enjoyed a lot of the contributions - I hope you do too. Talking of longevity - I noticed in a recent Gallup Poll (November 1997) that Morris Dancing *just* beat the Spice Girls as an icon of British culture! (although I guess if the poll had been taken two months previously, they would have still been in vogue enough to win).

While typing this lot up, I also enjoyed my word processor's spellcheck.. It came up with the following offers when challenged by a word - correct answers after noticeboard if you can't guess them all.

Pontoon Dimmers;	Hernia Morris;	Holiness Godliness;
Elderberry Morris;	Karachi;	Giblet and Sultan.

On this subject - another comment made to me was that what do you do for a name when you form a new team and find that you are then the fourth morris team in your area? The others have already taken names from the local brewery, the local landmark, their favourite morris tuneit was easy when the Ring was formed - you just called yourselves after the town you danced in. But now with so many teams- how inventive can you be?

Enjoy the new dancing season.

Beth

**IS YOUR TEAM PAST ITS "SELL-BY" DATE?
OR, "OLD MORRIS DANCERS NEVER DIE" - BUT SHOULD THEY??**

This is a topic prompted by conversations I've had during the past year or two - noting how many of the "good" teams which have been around for 15 to 20 years or so have finally ceased to exist. Some go out in a blaze of glory - others fizzle out. Why?

One good example is Bantam Cocks - for anyone who doesn't know, they were an excellent Cotswold team made up of athletic schoolboys. But as they grew up....the team ceased - there were one or two occasional "reunions" but I think they are officially defunct. I guess it was that or change their name.

What should a team do if faced with diminishing numbers/ enthusiasm and increasing age/responsibilities/injuries.? Stop while some are still keen and can find another outlet for their energies? There doesn't seem to be a dearth of new teams starting - although whether they do what the "older" teams want to do may not be the case.

This presupposes the worst scenario- there will be teams out there who manage to avoid all these; recruitment (particularly at the young end) isn't a problem, enthusiasm is as high as ever, injuries are of a minor and not long term nature, work doesn't get in the way of attending practices etc. etc. But in what proportion are these types of team??

I canvassed the opinion of a few folks who have been on the morris scene for some time - the following represent some of the views I obtained. Anyone else is invited to contribute.

Tony Forster:

What can we say with a degree of certainty about team histories in the pre-revival past? To me, and with grateful thanks to Roy Dommett and Keith Chandler's book ("Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles"), it seems like this: Teams in the Cotswolds started after a break of some years, for a particular occasion or because a particular person moved into the area. The team danced intermittently - perhaps at Whitsun, for the Feast Day, perhaps a special occasion gave the impetus - say three or four times a year at most. After a few years - six? fifteen? the dancers got old, married, had responsibilities and the team ceased to dance - till the next re-start.

By contrast, modern teams are leisure activities, pursued with a degree of obsession by a core of enthusiasts, and a wider cast of those who pass through for a year or two. Clubs (the older Ring teams especially) have a proud history and scrap books for 30, 50 years to prove it. Has modern Morris discovered perpetual motion?

Well, up to a point. It seems to me that present-day teams on average last longer - and certainly dance more - than the pre-revival teams ever did. The average dancing life of the enthusiast is surely far longer than ever imagined 100 or 150 years ago. There are many of us around who approach 20 or even 30 years of dancing.

But what is the cost? Perhaps that's the wrong way to think of it; we just have a different sort of Morris team. It has to meet the purpose demanded of an "Am. Dram." (Amateur Dramatic) theatre company, a choir, a Women's Institute etc. Its primary function is the social entertainment of its members

And yet this social club inflicts its results on the general public. Like the Am. Dram. or choir, it performs. How does the primary social function affect its performance? Let's start by identifying one distinct difference between the Am. Dram. or Choir and a Morris team. Every performance is different for the first two: new material is automatic. For the Morris team it recycles what it did the last time and last yearand five years ago.

Let's take the pinnacles.. Even our 'cutting edge' teams - the one who get booked at the big festivals, the ones which open the eyes of fellow dancers and the general public -are motivated mainly by the satisfaction of their members - not by pride in the community, the expectations of their neighbours or the need to augment their incomes. As a result, the team will inevitably face its own middle age - comfortably settled in its ways, disinclined to question what has worked very well in the past.

There is an all-but-inevitable life history to the most creative teams, as for the followers in their wake. Accordingly we are unrealistic if we expect the teams which transformed our ideas of what is possible ten or fifteen years ago still to be doing it now. Teams have a creative prime, then settle into a middle age growing plump and comfortable on the credit of those exciting years. If a team had a Big Idea, 15 years ago, which left the Morris World gaping at their originality or their professionalism, they are probably still dancing like that. They are still good, but they are the respected elders now. Don't expect the hair to rise on your neck when you're watching them now. They will be professional, will do the business, what they won't do is excite you.

Is there an alternative? Perhaps. Here are some that might be worth trying; if the team wants to, which it may well not!

☞ Perpetual revolution.

Analyse what has made the team successful for the past decades - and then change it. Abandon what has served you well - and throw it away. Do something new and daring. Start again.

☞ Abdication or regicide

Who are the people who have led the team through its most creative period? Identify them, praise them, make them life president, then ensure they have no further power - or row with them and force them out. Who are their automatic successors - the people who will continue their work? Break their legs, forcibly extract their vocal chords. Who are their sworn enemies, the malcontents, the plotters in corners? Make them your leaders: you will at least get new ideas.

☞ Suicide

If all else fails, evaluate your team. Is it coasting, repeating past triumphs, glorying in its reputation? Time to kill it then. Take out of the bank all that carefully accumulated capital and swap it all for a copy of "The Big Issue". Read the scrap books one last time, place them carefully on a wigwam of your best sticks, apply a match. Take up macramé, line dancing or karaoke.

Does this seem harsh? For those of us who never were interesting, perhaps it is. But it may be the only answer for the team which used to excite and now merely rides you again and again along its own well-worn ruts. The teams of the 'tradition' had their day, and then rested, until a new creative impulse gave a reason to start again.

By trying to present over and over again the same material, in the same way, most of the year, year after year, we make hardened creative arteries almost unavoidable. Even the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, with a repertoire of 13 operas to recycle, has ten years or so between performances of the one work, during which time people and fashions change, to produce a fresh interpretation.

If a team is happy to settle into a comfortable rut, there is no problem, except for those members of its audience who come expecting creative excitement. But if the team's pride is tied up with leading the field, violent change is the only option. Vive la Revolution!

Jill Griffiths:

It must depend partly on the team: if the team style requires a degree of energy then this style may have to adapt when 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak!'

Circumstances within the team may affect commitment e.g. young children, blossoming careers and the team may have to re-evaluate how often it dances out; restricting number of changes over the practice season so that dancers can afford to miss the occasional practice.

Where numbers are low, it may be worth considering almagamating with another local team. I know of a local men's team which ran an evening course to attract new members. Several women attended, so the team is now mixed.

If all else fails and the team has to fold, send the information to an archive group. Maybe another team will wish to carry on the good work! Roy Dommett still teaches Bantam Cocks' Raglan and Belles & Broomsticks dance their version very well.

Maintain the social set-up within the team – not 'All dance and no play'. Allow non-dancing members to still be a part of the team – they may swell the audience. However, watch that the social side does not take over at the expense of the dancing skills – this must be a definition of a 'team past their sell-by date'.

Sally Wearing:

Is there a natural life-span for a morris team? How do some teams manage to keep going for many years or even generations, while others grind to a halt after a relatively short time? And, more importantly, why do some teams keep limping on, when they have clearly passed their "Best by" date? Why don't they do the decent thing and caper off into the sunset, leaving their audience remembering them in their prime, wanting more?

I won't pretend that I can give good answers to any of these questions, so the most I will attempt is a few, fairly random, thoughts on why morris teams, if they don't have the right gene for longevity, should grow old gracefully. My credentials for writing this are reasonably good, as one of the teams I dance with is discussing the possibility of disbanding after 21 years. Not long by some teams' standards, but not a bad innings. It's the same old story; not

enough dancers, too many injuries and too many resurrections in the past, which have worn down our enthusiasm to go out there and drag more unsuspecting morris virgins in off the street.

But *if* Phoenix folds, at least it will be with dignity. Our last few dance outs were enjoyable and of a good standard. We may not be in the same league as some of the other teams who have risen and fallen since I started dancing 25 years ago and whose passing I regret, such as White Boar, Derby Crown and Stony Stratford but, if we do have to disband, at least we will join them in going out before we let our performance decay to the point when it becomes embarrassing. Those three were all brilliant teams who I wish were still going strong, but who had to accept that not even the best teams can keep going for ever.

So how come some teams continue long after they should have gracefully faded away? I can understand some of the answer to that - it is very hard to accept that something you have enjoyed and worked at for years has to finish. But sometimes, that's the only sensible thing to do, however unpleasant it is. I don't want Phoenix to die, but if it has to, I'll just have to line with that and move on to other things.

If I, after 21 years of teaching Phoenix, can learn to cope with that, then just about anyone can. If you have the misfortune to belong to a team that has clung on too long, do something about it. Don't just inflict yourself on the unsuspecting public, they deserve better. So does the morris.

I must confess that I'm lucky - I've joined the rapper world in the last few years (I recently made my debut as a Betty) and I belong to another Cotswold team. But this isn't just luck, it's partly intentional planning - finding other things and teams in the morris that I enjoy and could get involved in. Could that be the way out for morris dancers who find it difficult to let go? Should the Morris Federation start a "re-employment" service for ex-morris dancers? But who on earth would want us when we're really past our best?

Simon Pipe (verbal communications - I hope I've transcribed them correctly Simon!):

One of the things which springs to mind in the teams which are "lasting" is that they have something to offer apart from the morris dancing. After a session dancing outside the pub, they will repair inside and get on with some

singing or playing music - partly for the pub crowd, but also for themselves. Maybe it's the something else that helps to keep them going.

Another aspect is moving on. Will a team which is still doing all the same dances as ten years ago be getting much out of it - doing those dances every week or so? It was different when they only got performed (and practised) a few times a year. The members need something to keep their enthusiasm running from year to year.

Jigs as a means of keeping interest up! Or allowing teams to exist on low numbers?

PUB MORRIS

'Least it was a better turn-out than last times' practice!



DANCING THE MORRIS : WHAT DO WE DANCE?

As a new subscriber to Morris Matters I am much enjoying it and am glad to find there is still concern about what authentic Morris is and about what we should be dancing. This is a central issue that needs to be continually considered and to try to be clear about, especially as interest in Morris continues to grow and it may be given a boost by school curriculum schemes. When it ceases to be discussed then this will be a sign that 'traditional' Morris is no longer of interest.

After a lot of meandering in my thoughts, listening and reading here and there over a few years, I feel I have arrived at certain conclusion that I hope may be of interest to some others and I offer them as a contribution to establishing some basis of consensus in the debate.

Although the essential points may apply to various types of Morris, I have the so-called Cotswold Morris principally in mind.

The Origins of the Morris

This is not clear. References of some sort or another can be found from the 15th century onwards. Clearly it was a distinctive form of dancing and in earlier centuries the cost of costumes often required support of a private or public patron.

Whatever its origins and occasions of performance, it has been both an entertainment and come to be associated with certain seasons and a variety of traditional festivals and celebrations.

There is no evidence that the Morris was 'an ancient fertility dance' in origin stemming from early medieval or prehistoric times, but this does not prevent it becoming linked with, and accruing much meaning from ancient rituals and beliefs; much in the way that our Christmas customs and rituals are an accumulation of practices linking into a variety of ancient and modern, Christian and non-Christian traditions, only partly consciously understood by many people.

Morris has not been static and over time has clearly varied in its geographic spread, in its traditional season, in its gender rules and in its purposes and meaning.

Traditional and Authentic Morris

Except in the vaguest terms, we do not know what the Morris dance was in the fifteenth century, nor what Will Kemp jiggled, nor what the pastoral dancers in an eighteenth century painting were doing. What we have is a record (with possible distortions arising in the collecting and editing situation) of what certain 'classic' sides were dancing or could remember at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as they were continuing a tradition coming from earlier in the century or before.

The recorded 'tradition' shows a certain common core, including a colourful style of costume, the use of handkerchiefs and sticks, a style of stepping and capers and a pattern of dance composition and movements. It also shows a process of change as sides forgot and remembered, made adjustments and as new generations and revivals developed. For the differences between Headington Quarry, Sherborne, Fieldtown and others, both dance and music illustrate variations on a common core tradition.

What should we Dance?

We can choose, but we should be clear about what we are doing.

If we are interested in dancing 'traditional' Morris as learnt from the 'classic' sides then that is what we should do. Thus, if we announce a dance as "Jockey to the Fair" from Brackley, then we should dance according to that tradition. It is incumbent upon us to find out as best we can what the style of dancing should be. We should not feel free to amend and do what we like with someone else's dance tradition using their name.

There is also a responsibility resting with the 'classic' sides themselves. If they accept that their dance traditions are in the public domain (and they might not, of course), then they should also research, record and teach their dances, as in an excellent workshop Brackley ran a couple of years ago. Indeed, if care is not taken, the 'classic' sides themselves can allow their 'tradition' to deteriorate,

Since dances evolve to a certain extent, as a fascinating Roy Dommett workshop once showed me, there might be a number of different phases of a tradition whose evolution is known, for example, a Bledington 1, 2, 3 or more. This is not a handicap, but an enrichment, for we can know, and announce that we are dancing a Bledington dance from the 1890's, 1930's, 1950's or whatever. To have this level of dance consciousness should also be an

enrichment for the 'classic' sides themselves if they are interested in Morris tradition.

Some 'classic' sides might feel that to historicise their dances in this way is to turn them into museum pieces and that, as a living tradition, they are simply concerned to continue to evolve as they have always done. This may be acceptable, but the Morris revival and its attraction clearly has an historical and traditional aspect to it, both for many dancers and spectators and we shall be losing an historical depth to our heritage.

A different choice would be to dance in the Morris style, but not strictly according to that of the 'classic' sides. We could feel that a tradition has an evolving element, indeed, was at some time itself invented; that Morris dancing as a style is not the property of any particular side, and that we should not be hidebound by a tradition to the extent that not an iota of amendment or development is permissible.

Some 'Black Book' sides are themselves reconstructions and not strictly derived from continuous extant traditions. Thus a side might announce it was going to dance a Shepherds Hey and do it in its own style, but not claim it was dancing a Shepherds Hey, Ilmington, if it isn't.

Some sides, such as my own (Kemps Men) have developed their own named tradition, as have some other local sides. But I do not want to see other sides dancing a Norwich -upon- Wensum dance in their own garbled fashion and doing what they like with it.

As innovation and amendment occur, however, although the name remains, the dance may come to substantially change and the question then arises as to whether it should be called 'traditional Morris' or 'Morris' or 'Molly Morris'?? or some other name that may emerge or be given to it.

For those, such as myself, who have some interest in 'traditional' Morris as a dance form of distinction with accumulated layers of cultural meaning, it will be (is) painful to watch the disappearance of Morris stepping as it decays into a rant-type step or a lackadaisical shuffle, to see side-steps decay into side chasseees, galleys becoming a vague wiggle of an ankle, the discipline and feel of a Morris style become dimmer.

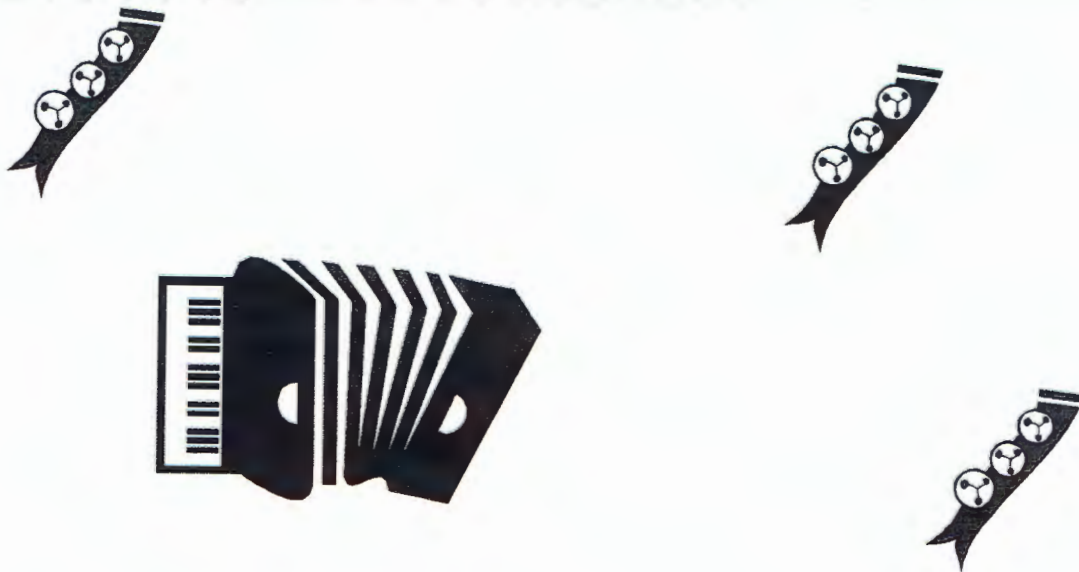
In Conclusion

What I would say is that if we claim to be dancing Morris, we should try to find out what that is, seek to be taught it properly by someone in the tradition and insist that new dancers have a concern to learn it properly in their turn. Otherwise Morris will be lost, whatever may have taken its place. Indeed, the nineteenth century tradition we have inherited might well make sixteenth century dancers weep if they could but see it. However, this is what we now have and is a valid tradition in its own right.

If we look at societies and groups interested in preserving a tradition, this is not left to chance. There is a strict system of socialisation and training insisted upon. To claim that a so-called 'evolving tradition' means you can do what you like, is a misinterpretation, in fact, a contradiction - and it is to use the term to attempt to hide either ignorance, laziness or a lack of genuine interest.

We should be clear whether we are dancing 'classic' side Morris, our own developing tradition in Morris style, or something else. We are permitted to do any of these things.

Nigel Wimhurst
January 1997



YES, BUT IS IT MORRIS?

- a discussion led by Tony Forster at Sidmouth Folk Festival, August 1997.

If you want a really enthusiastic discussion, copy the circumstances of this one... No-one wanted to go at the end of the allotted time - the incredible thunderstorm outside may have had something to do with it, but I prefer to credit commitment to the subject, which was classical navel-gazing. Who cares? In terms of the Zen of Morris, what is it, why is it...what's it for - this was designed to stir up a little thought, which it accordingly did.

We brain-stormed at first; what does the word Morris mean. - to us, to our audience, to the world at large? Some of the answers...

✓ all the clichés

- sticks, hankies, flowered hats, bells, drinking, naffness

✓ heritage answers

- the full range of the tradition (mummers plays, sword, clog, Molly) associated with celebration of particular occasions; perhaps a sense of place or history, accompanied by 'folk' instruments and involving collecting money

✓ analytical answers

- dancing by small groups, aiming to entertain, usually out of doors, involving choreographed (or at least structured) patterns, hopefully energetic

✓ answers focussing on the dancers

- extrovert, non-conformist, overwhelmingly middle class but oddball; not conventionally careerist, seeing more to life than work, attracted to Morris because it seems to them, slightly anti-establishment, even disrespectful; for them, Morris is an obsession, not a hobby.

Discerning readers will notice that many of these insights are mutually exclusive. Never mind - not an exact science.

There was some tiptoe-ing around whether we should get into analysing good versus bad Morris on the whole we thought not.

We next considered a list of random questions - aspects or types of Morris about which we may ask, "yes, but is it Morris?" This follows:

Some categories were universally agreed not to be : Highland sword, Appalachian and step clog came into this category. Deciding why took us further.

Some people saw the essential factor as origin e.g. it must be English (discussion of chauvinism and whether new 'Cotswold' dances written in America can count....), or at least based on something known as Morris in history.

Some saw the essence as purpose - for display (a diversion ensued, exploring why some early '70s women's teams used 'ritual' as term for morris....) This raised the question of whether Morris is still an appropriate term for dancing between consenting adults in private e.g. Morris Ales (or, as Fiz Markham memorably called it once, the Morris Disco)

History was explored - Sharp's definition for us all of what he saw Morris to be, the links and differences between Morris and stage performance (is Morris still Morris if done on a professional stage?)

We ruminated sadly on the fact that the public isn't on the whole interested in the standard of our dance. Morris - the occasion, not the dance - may be social for the dancers, entertainment for the public (why then do so many teams dance at dawn on May 1st, particularly as it is a recent 'tradition' with very little historical justification?), social for the community (Carnival - fluffy - morris was spoken of enviously for its community roots)

Perhaps the least rigorous but most satisfying answer was that, if the dancers claim to be doing Morris, they are. (Digression to explore Seven Champions, Fezheads and most rapper teams... who don't claim this.....)

Eventually hunger called and people squelched off. Non of this mattered, but it stirred the odd brain cell.

Anyone out there disagree - or care??

Tony Forster.

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE MORRIS - PRESENTATION

- a discussion at Sidmouth Folk Festival, led by Simon Pipe : August 1997

This discussion was in two senses a combination. It immediately followed from Simon Pipe's analysis on dealing with the Media and both sessions were in a sense a continuation of the Sidmouth 1996 discussion on the Public Image. That event led indirectly to the formation of the Public Image group (PIG - could there be a better acronym, I wonder? Ed) which brings together the three Morris organisations through the impetus of Janet Dowling, who talked a little on the work of that group, in guiding teams as to their relations with the Media and in encouraging young people to join morris teams. The discussion focussed on our own responsibility for the public image of the morris, through the way we present it. All present at the 1996 discussion were agreed that Presentation was the key responsibility of the morris teams; it is likely they all meant different things.

The assumption of the discussion was that we wanted to show our performance to other people. 'Present' has synonyms such as, 'offer', 'give', 'honour others'. We took it that the key characteristic of Morris was that it is done in part for someone else. We are responsible for our own image.

There is no single answer, we agreed; what was important was that teams should think about aspects of presentation and decide their actions in accordance with their decisions. Many teams do what they do simply because others have done so before them. We can each take our own decisions on any aspect of what we show to others. Every part of our presentation may be changed: the key question is the extent to which what we do supports the aims we have for our Morris.

We considered Appearance first (see appendix to this article). We considered where the 'standard' Cotswold kit came from and why it dominates team appearances now. We talked about how far we saw what we wear as confirming or challenging the stereotypes - and whether we wanted it to,.

Moving to the Show, we shared experiences on what we say (the role of the announcer, the handout), fools and animals, humour, what music and what instruments we use, developing a repertoire. Dave Dye of Seven Champions talked of the ways they developed their own style - in dances, in appearance, in image - and why.

We looked at recruitment issues and considered the balance between internal and external purposes -i.e. the extent to which a team is for its members and the - sometimes contradictory - obligations that appearing in public lay upon us. What do we do with the enthusiastic dancer who stands out in public performance because of his/her awkwardness/poor timing/forgetfulness?

The essential question behind most of this is the purpose of presentation. It comes down to sort of team we are and what we are trying to say. The discussion, we hope, prompted those present to ask some questions of their own team - to ensure that every aspect of their own performance was premeditated, planned with a view to its effect and the extent to which it forwards their essential purpose. The topics could occupy a weekend, or a lifetime.

Does your team know what it's doing, and why?

Tony Forster

APPENDIX - "PRESENTATION" - WHAT DO WE MEAN?

***Appearance**

- uniform kit (how uniform before it becomes twee? Do heights, weights, beards, boobs, hair or skin colour need standardising? Consider Russian teams or Border blacking-up)
- clean kit (what about faded colours, worn ribbons?)
- Kit that communicates (what? why? does it say what you want it to?)

***The Show**

What we say - entertain, inform?
entries and exits
structure and variety
repertoire - what do we do with the standard dances?
innovation and entertainment
smiling/stern/something deliberate
before and after dancing behaviour (music in the pub? entertainment troupe?)
fools and animals
getting the public involved - participation, entertainment?
handouts/programmes
how we dance (energy, life, togetherness)

✳ **Recruitment, selection**

do we audition, select?

how soon do our beginners dance out?

what do we do about the enthusiastic weak dancer?

✳ **Are we**

entertainers?

part of the Heritage industry?

dancing for ourselves or for the audience?

dancing for other dancers or the general public?

part of the past, the present or the future?

✳ **Having something to say**

fun, friendliness, our enjoyment

skill, fitness?

energy, vigour, height, excitement?

culture, historical recreation?

tradition, ritual?

entertainment?

***FROM EDITORIAL PAGE -
ANSWERS TO THE SPELLCHECK SILLIES:***

Pontoon Dimmers - Poynton Jemmers

Hernia Morris - Herga Morris

Holiness Godliness - Holdens Goldens

Elderberry Morris - Adderbury Morris

Karachi- Karaoke

Giblet and Sultan - Gilbert and Sullivan

TWENTY (OR SO) YEARS ON - A PERSONAL VIEW

Some background - like so many early women morris dancers, I was involved with the local folk club - Herga - and the local male morris side - Herga Morris, with whom my husband danced. We went to Sidmouth in 1975 where I and several other Herga "widows" attended the women's ritual workshop. In "our" set were not only the nucleus of my own side, Flowers of May, but the creators of Poynton Jemmers, Sandgate and at least four other subsequent sides. That first major workshop for most of us had, as far as I can recall, about 50 members, only a few of whom were in sides like England's Glory and Windsor. The next year attendance was more like 150 and very nearly everybody was part of a morris side.

Those of us who started dancing in the early and middle 70's had experiences that the current dancers do not have. The degree of caution that had to be exercised to avoid hurting the tender male egos would be unbelievable now. For example, we decided to dance North West because our local men danced Cotswold; one of our later members who was in Yorkshire taught Cotswold so as not to compete with *their* local men's side!

The Herga men were generally helpful and sympathetic and where individuals had their doubts about the validity of women dancing morris, they just kept quiet. (One of these doubters was later heard fiercely defending our right to dance if we sincerely wanted to).

Sincerity was part of the scene. IF we were to dance, we would dance well, be on time at bookings, we would always be immaculate, never argue in public; always take our dancing seriously. In fact, we would avoid all those faults we saw in many male sides.

The advent of women's sides had a salutary effect on the less organised male sides. The untidy drunken ill-behaved side had become all too common, both traditional and revival. Suddenly ceilidh and festival organisers discovered that there were sides who were well presented and danced with excellence and not surprisingly, there were men who were put out. Flowers of May did a ceilidh where the male side booked walked out because we were there. (Some years later that same side invited us to their Day of Dance; all their MCP members had left, they said).

We joined WMF (as it was then) but for various reasons I don't think we ever got to an AGM. There are those who chug along quietly, doing PTA's and school fetes and never getting out of their own area. Some are fiercely

ambitious, driving hard to get invited to major festivals and paid up trips abroad; sometimes they are worth it, sometimes not. Most sides have their ups and downs, both in numbers and success. Looking through the MF publication, 21 years on, it is striking how many sides have had their moment of 'fame' and later stopped. But, like bands, the driving force is usually an individual - when they go, the group disintegrates. How very traditional!

Moments of nostalgia about early teams:

Bourne Bumpers - danced with them at Christchurch, our first festival - one of our members had a small boy who was incubating chickenpox - he spent a whole day playing with a local Brownie pack - we never dared to check whether they all popped out with the pox.

England's Glory - the first proper women's side I ever saw. Herga man Hairy Remmer was friendly with Ruth Fraser. My younger son Andy later played with Ruth's daughter Jo in Blowzabella and still works with her. Jo was a brilliant dancer as a teenager.

Holdens Goldens - three of Flowers of May danced a procession with them at Sidmouth in 1976 - a reel, as I remember, invented on the spot by the musician.

Water-cum-Jolly/Derby Crown - when I danced with Lord Pagets morris, spent a superb weekend with them - best kit in women's morris.

Windsor - if I had started dancing morris ten years younger, I'd have wanted to dance with Windsor. The earlier skirts and hats were stunning but one sees why jeans etc. are preferred.

Flowers of May have just celebrated their 21st birthday - I am the last member of the original side to be dancing with them (although others are still dancing elsewhere)...a combination of events mean that this will probably have been my last season, so I have been in retrospective mood.

Olive Cutting
August 1997

LETTERS

- **Morris and the Media** (MM volume 16-2)

I can understand the media taking the mickey after reading "The thrilling adventures of the Outlaw Jinky Wells". Can you imagine traditional Flamenco dancers - or dancers from India or Thailand - getting up to such pranks? I know we dance morris for fun now, but it is our English tradition and we should respect it. It is fun, not funny.

Re : Festivals and morris

1) I have just returned (summer 1997) from the Buxton festival hosted by Chapel en le Frith and Derby Morris. Visitors included - apart from Kemps Men, Exeter morris, Man Friday and Green Ginger. Traditions danced included Ascott, Bledington, Bampton, Adderbury, Headington Quarry, Ilmington (Robin of Chapel used to dance with Ilmington) and Kemps Men own Norwich-on-Wensum.

Only two musicians were playing ordinary pokerwork G/D melodeons. The others used Gino Baffetti, Castagnari, Salterelle - all extremely costly and not really having enough "punch" for morris. The Saturday evening ended with a torchlight procession from Spring Garden to the Opera House followed by ad lib dancing. Kemps

Men musicians between them can play a large variety of traditions and Jill Bennett (fiddler) played for a rather curious version of Fool's Jig danced by two Man Friday men.

2) No, not another re-enactment! Kemps Men's bagman, Steve Connelly helped the Norwich Union's Group Chief Executive Officer to jump over the wall at St John Maddermarket church to launch Kemps Jig, a project involving 200 local children as part of the Norfolk and Mid Norwich festival in October 1997. A news report said,

"He recreated Kemp's sixteenth century leap which happened in *1600*"

(as Beachcomber would have said, "the italics are mine")

Norris Winstone, July 1997

Re: You can dance a jig on top of a beer barrel (MM volume 16-1)

It was a bit of a surprise to find myself mentioned in Adrian's article - in fact the idea that a Fieldtown jig could be danced on the top of a beer barrel is a direct quote from Roy Dommett. My experience is that this is easier than in a telephone kiosk as galleys can be executed without cracking one's knees on the apparatus.

Brian Mander, January 1997

NOTICEBOARD

BACK ISSUES OF MORRIS MATTERS

New or renewing subscribers ask about back issues - so I have gone back to check what I actually have back issues of. If you're really desperate I can photocopy my original. There are no back issues of anything before volume 6.

If you weren't an early subscriber (in those days I was a subscriber and occasional copy typist rather than editor), to help you decide if you have got all the copies you want, at first the editors managed to produce four copies a year, then (at volume 6) it drifted to three - then finally (volume 9) to two -- after which it stopped in 1987! I resurrected it at two a year with volume 10 in 1991 - hence the odd year dates for publication..

1983	6 (1) (2) (3)	none none	1994	13 (1) (2)	none
1984	7 (1) (2) (3)	none none	1995	14 (1) (2)	
1985	8 (1) (2) (3)	none none	1996	15 (1) (2)	
1986	9 (1)		1997	16 (1) (2)	
1987	(2)				
1991	10 (1) (2)				
1992	11 (1) (2)				
1993	12 (1) (2)	none			

Please contact the editor if you want any back copies - £2 each including postage (for EC countries)



STATIONS OF THE SUN

This tome by Ronald Hutton was widely publicised a year or so ago - but it was a heavy hardback. I got to see it by joining my library reservation list - there were two copies doing the rounds in the whole county.

Anyway, I spotted that it's now out in paperback - Oxford Press, £9.99 - at which if you like the historical aspects of morris and all the associated things we seem to get up to (or have done in the past) - it might be worth getting hold of your own copy.

There have been some mixed reviews of it - some query how valid his assertions are. I must confess to not having enough background knowledge to know if all he said was accurate - but I found it interesting.

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Editors Note - I did look at the extra details sent out - they're fairly sketchy - but it may be worth pointing out that while the folksy bit is "in costume" - there seems to be a high naturist aspect to the camp. I quite like the idea of keeping some of the magic of the morris in leaving something to the imagination - when someone sheds not only their melodeon but ALL the kit as well once the dancing's over.... But - let us all know if you go!

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