

MORRIS RING INSTRUCTIONAL MEETING MARCH 1963

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WHEATLEY

The absence of some of the common elements of the Cotswold morris in the Wheatley dances as described to Sharp led Sharp to believe that the material was suspect. However the present greater knowledge of traditions such as Abingdon, Chipping Campden & various Worcestershire villages suggest otherwise.

In 1860 the team was mostly Putt's, Thoms & Gommers - later Sharp found Gommers & Thoms; the Victoria County History refers to Muntz & Curills. The last known dancer was Alfred Currill of Littleworth, who died in 1927, but the dancers seem to have scattered - Thoms to Chalgrove or Stadhampton & to Maidenhead - so some may have lived much later. There is almost certainly some memory of the morris in the village. By the turn of the century the side only appeared at Xmas & surviving mummers remember competing with the dancers.

c. 1960. Francis Fryer met the son of an old dancer as the result of a display in the Maidenhead area. (If anyone knows of the event, when, where or what, please let someone know details) He criticised the performance & showed how his father had done the stick tapping (presumably Adderbury Constant Billy & Headington Rigs had been done). He also had some words & comments on Room for the Cuckoo. Unfortunately he then declined to give his name & address as he "didn't want to get mixed up with it". The information is included below but will not be taught at the meeting.

STEPPING - all figures the same. 6 bars hopstep followed by 3 hop-back-steps & a jump

ARMS - arms well bent at elbow & swung up & down so that on the upswing the forearms are vertical. In the last 3 hop-back steps the hands circle, then straight up for the jump. (the movement has been interpreted as giving a lift of the body on the first beat of each bar - the effect is that of mild $\frac{1}{2}$ capers)

FIGURES - only 4 figures have been collected.

1. "Hey-up" or "Toe-up" = stationary foot-up. Face up throughout & jump at end to face partner.
2. "Single-hey" = whole morris hey with no pause $\frac{1}{2}$ way.
3. "Double-hey" = whole hey done twice.
4. "Half-rounds" = seems to mean whole rounds clockwise.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ = one way only.

The dancers seem not to have heard of any of the forward & back movements.

(For once to yourself it has been found natural not to do anything, as a jump does not fit with the body lift on the first beat. In the downswing of the arms the hands are taken to the top of the trousers at the side - this preserves the right angle at the elbow. In once to self it has been found convenient to stand with hands on hips. It has been found best to complete the heys in 6 bars)

ORDER OF FIGURES - order of figures determined by the foreman but starting with Hey-up & ending with Rounds & caper into the middle. Usual intermediate figures are the heys but hey-up & rounds are used. See below.

PROCESSIONAL - hopstep or spring steps ($\frac{1}{2}$ capers as at Bampton) - single file till reach ground then whole rounds clockwise (8 bars) then whole rounds counterclockwise ending by closing into the centre with a caper.

STICK DANCES - (order of figures adopted is Hey-up, sticks; Single hey, sticks; these 4 movements are repeated 2 or 3 times then end with whole rounds. The double hey is ignored. It is found more satisfactory not to clash at the end of figures)

BOBBING A JOE - the sticks were about 2 feet long, painted half red & half blue. The movement is similar to the first 2 bars of Fieldtown Bobby & Joan done 4 times. Evens turn backs to odds holding stick in one hand behind head. (turn clockwise & really end with back to partner so that stick in right hand points to the right away from body) This done on first beat of bar then odds tap downwards on middle beat. Repeated evens striking odds in second bar. These two bars repeated 4 times in all. (by standing this way there is little chance of partner being hit). Nos 1 & 3 will find that they have to do a very quick turn into the heys.

CONSTANT BILLY - Sharp does not give the movement but Fryer was told that the sticks were swung out on 1st beat & tips clashed on the middle beat, the men hopstepping throughout. It is assumed that this refers to Constant Billy but it could be another dance.

RIGS OF MALLOW - Sharp does not mention this dance. Fryer was told that evens hold their sticks horizontally & odds hit down onto the tip rather hard on the first beat. Evens hit odds on middle beat. This is repeated for 3 bars in all with the men hopstepping throughout.

CLAPPING DANCE - no handkerchiefs. Order taken as that for stick dances.

SHEPHERD'S HEY - last bar of figures, stationary & clap both hands together in front, behind body & in front again. (written thus = b. beh. b. -.)

To B music

Bar 1 - 1st beat clap hands together. 2nd beat touch outside of right ankle with right hand

Bar 2 - 1st beat clap together, 2nd touch left with left.

Bar 3 - 2 hopsteps with hands circling.

Bar 4 - stationary & clap b. beh. b. -. as in figures.

Repeat these 4 bars.

In further repeats touch 2. outside knee, 3. outside hip, 4. shoulders -- on top with tips of fingers as p.t. exercise 5. cheeks, 6. mouth blowing kiss.

HANDKERCHIEF DANCES. -- order of figures different for each dance.

OH DEAR WHAT CAN THE MATTER BE - order of figures = Hey-up, sidestep, Hey-up, Rounds; this sequence being done ad lib. Sharp indicates that the sidestep is done as Lumps of Plum Pudding. (presumably Bampton). This seems to mean the following. Face partner & sidestep on the spot - 2 bars, left foot behind, doing high twist with right hand, left hand making a small circle clockwise horizontally inside right arm at elbow level. then 2 bars right foot behind, 2 bars sidestep each way, then a 1/2 caper + 2 plain capers. It could also mean that in bars 3 & 5 a double step was done facing front with arms going up & down (This is less effective than the continual flying hands.) (The hands seem to be, in effect, counter twists done horizontally) It is probable that slightly open side steps are intended.

TRUNKIES - this does not have the usual tune. Intermediate figures single & double heys only. B music - partners face, do 6 bars of hopstep with hands going circles -- then 4 swing steps - foot swung out, forward & across (as Fo ls Jig) the toe of the free foot touching the ground. "To make your bells ring - almost a caper movement."

ROOM FOR CUCKOO - Fryer was told this was a corner dance. All step throughout the corner movement - non active men doing this in position. 1st & 2nd corners only, not middles. 4 bars hopstep across & 4 bars back to place passing back-to-back. Rounds the only intermediate figure in this dance.

JIGS.

SHEPHERD'S HEY - as set dance - hey-up between each clapping. OH DEAR..... - Hey-up, sidestep as above, 1/2 capers, sidestep, 1/2 capers & hey-up done presto.

(Starting foot - left foot for everything except sidesteps)