

Why "From Two Barns"?

After moving to West Oxfordshire in 1959 we became associated with a small country dance group organized by Dr. Kathleen Briggs and her two sisters. We met on a Wednesday evening in the library of Barn House, next to The Countryman Office in Burford. Several people "called" for these evenings including Nibs Mathews who at that time was living in Cheltenham. Music was provided by Mrs. Brenda Mc Greggor of Leafield playing a Dulcetone. One had to dance quietly or you could not hear it!

The library at Barn House contained a number of ORIGINAL dance collections such as Thompson, Johnson, Rutherford and Walsh. There were even facsimiles of Playford's Dancing Master. Also on the shelf were two copies of "Wilson's Companion To The Ballroom dated 1810" or thereabouts. One evening, after we had finished dancing, Dr. Briggs presented me with one of these books saying "I don't think this collection has been mined. Perhaps you would like to have this book and see what you can find in it".

Over the next five years or so I took several dances, or ideas for dances, from the book and played through most of the tunes. Then T.S.R.2. was cancelled, and they would have cancelled Concorde too, if they could, and this activity was put on hold until one Thursday evening at a Witney Club dance Blackie Blackwell produced a mint copy of Thompson's Compleat Collection Volume 1 and Sun Assembly came to light. The dance was tried out, first as a triple minor, and then introduced at a dance in Long Compton in the mid 1970s. It took off, and when in 1981 Miss Marjorie Fennessy asked me where I got it from, as the Kenton Ramblers were thinking of recording it, I thought it was about time that this and some of the other dances from Wilson and Wright were re-published.

By this time we were living at Eynsham having restored a 1720s Oxfordshire barn which, because of its central galleried hall, had been named Hall Barn. Thus a gift from Barn House, Burford, started a chain of events which has led to the publication of 100 dances from Hall Barn, Eynsham.

Hence "From Two Barns"