

## THE TRADITIONS STYLISED

In the 19th century all the sides appeared to have a common repertoire of tunes and dance movements through sharing musicians, dancers and meeting at Ales and competitions, yet each achieved individuality. Today we chose to emphasise certain aspects of a tradition and to stylise it to distinguish between them in practice and outside performance. What features should be brought out? What makes each tradition different?

Many dancers are initiated to the morris through learning "simple" traditions which get them moving without much demand on them in terms of technique. Such are seldom relearned when the dancers have become more proficient, so they are often performed just as first learnt. Of course they need just as much skill to present as any other tradition, especially as much must be made of what limited features the dances do have. Equating of complexity with desirability of performance is a product of the practice room, because simple dances have been found satisfying to dance to the public and most of the tradition that survived into the 20th century was simple.

### BIDFORD

The sources are the Ferris mss, Graham's book, Sharp's mss and book, Stone's photographs, local memories and the performance of the local boy's side in the late 1950's. Apart from Graham describing everything from a spectator's point of view, no source is complete in itself. The locals insisted in the 1950's on a vigorous single step, which starts with the classical kick forward but then the foot is pulled back by lifting up to produce a "back-peddalling", perhaps an influence of the boots that were once worn. There is no backstep, but the jumps are high, and the sidestep has the feet in line with no body turn.

Unlike most other traditions, there was flexibility in the figure order, the choice of figures and the performance of the choruses. Informants said that the "handkerchief" dance which used the sidestep was done to many tunes, and the "stick" dance baton tappings could be chosen by the foreman at the time. The opening figure could be foot-up, both long and short, dance-facing, or rounds. The final figure could be "spiral", foot-up, perhaps fast, whole or half-rounds. The intermediate figures could be done ad lib, even the same one over and over again. Besides the spiral, which is a morris-off that doesn't, the interesting figure is the "in-&-out-hey" in which the middles only move forward and back to avoid the ends doing a normal hey. There is of course also a normal hey. Locals have insisted that the 4 bar chorus movements follow the halves of every figure and not just the half heys.

"Devil Among the Tailors", and "Heel and Toe" ("Monks March") tunes have been obtained but not the dances. Some of the dances are unusual. "Princess Royal" is a jig adapted for a corner dance and includes the tradition's only slows. "We Wont Go Home Till Morning" is a simple dance like "How Do You Do" (Headington Quarry) but it switches to the chorus of "Cuckoo's Nest" at the end for handshaking instead of having a reconciliation corner movement. "Bluff King Hal", a major version of the "Staines Morris" tune, is very unusual for a Cotswold dance, having a logical structure going from column to line of 6, to ring of 6 and rings of 3 and back to line of 6 and column. It would not have been out of place at Chipping Campden, but for the holding

hands in the rings and the bows. Fitting the dance to the tune and trying to improve the nods aesthetically have exercised many modern sides.

The Shakespeare Men have developed another satisfying way for the tradition and interpreted the uncertain dances. They have copied the old costume and dance in the village on the former celebration date of Trinity Monday.

## STANTON HARCOURT

The reconstruction is based on a verbose description of "Nutting Girl" in one mss and over-brief chorus descriptions in another. Repetitions, similar moves by the opposite, or mirror moves do not get mentioned. For example

the handclapping in "Princess Royal" which is given as  $\begin{matrix} r+l & r+l & r+l \\ l+r & l+r & l+r \end{matrix}$  <sup>r+r</sup> b

probably means  $\begin{matrix} r+l \\ l+r \end{matrix}$  3x, r+r 3x, l+l 3x, b 3x!

Following Williams mss, there is no jump half way through dance-facing, cross-over is done right shoulders but left shoulders coming back, the forward-&-back is facing opposite not side-by-side as in half-gip, the middles go up towards the music every time in the half heys and the rounds at the end open out before the caper-in. The backstep in all the figures is done facing opposite, including in the half heys, so that the hands are out at the side and almost touching in a line along the side of the set. It is deduced that there is no stick clashing on jumps in the figures.

"Greenselves" and "Nutting Girl" are "goey" dances, the former is not a usual tune for a set dance. Attention should be given to standing upright in hitting one's opposite stick. The stepping in "Nutting Girl" is done facing up every time, it is very vigorous with larger arm swings than normal, and the step is like Eynsham with possibly a pronounced slap down of the forward foot in the "sidestep". In the "Nightingale" there is a choice of to turn or not when receiving hits. The song tune "Nightingale Sings" fits the dance, with the odds hitting the evens 3 times, the evens holding their stick horizontal, the odds capering and hitting on the middle beat of the bar, then a half hey and in the repeat the evens hitting the odds. A suitable tune for the "Clock" is "Grandfather's Clock", but as said before the clapping intended is uncertain. "Beanplanting's" tune is something like Badby. "Brighton Camp" is a piece de resistance, but it must be learnt from different positions. It is recommended that dancers keep turning to their right between clashes. Invented dances are "Jockey", 4 bar sidestep like "Nutting Girl", a whole-hey and 4 plain capers, and "Constant Billy" with sticks, like bars 3-4 of "Brighton Camp" done twice. Datchet and Pilgrim have created new Stanton dances.

Most dances will be seen in variants. The commonest change is to "Princess Royal", quite often filling the B out with a whole-hey rather than the next figure.

## WHEATLEY

The sources are Sharp mss, Major Fryer mss and the current side. It used the singlestep and a backstep. The hands went up and down, with the arms well bent at the elbow, from near the waist to above the head, with emphasis on the first strong beat of each bar. The lift that this gives the body is

exaggerated in the half-capers, which are always off the same foot. Because the first move is a "lift", there is nothing in O2YS. The figures are only foot-up, whole-rounds and whole-hey. Each is danced with 6 bars of hopstep and then the backstep and jump, that is, no break at half way. The hey can be repeated without pause, and the dancers can change to half-capers, and the whole-rounds continued by dancing back anti-clockwise to place, this also can be switched to half-capers. The order is not fixed other than starting with a foot-up and ending with whole-rounds and all-in.

Some of the dances were described to Fryer in criticism of Wargrave doing Adderbury and Headington versions. "Room for the Cuckoo" is the simplest dance and used for the boys and beginners. "Shepherd's Hey" is interesting because of the stepping inserted in the clapping chorus and the clapping instead of stepping at the end of figures. The stick dances have simple bold movements, without half heys! The tunes are all a little different from the norm, the "Processional" is a derivative of "Brighton Camp" and "Trunkles" may be a "Hunt the Squirrel". For a team just over the hill from Quarry and who used to go around in the same gang, the dances are suprisingly different.

The current side shows how well these dances can be presented. They have created "Ladder Hill" and "Windmill".

In its last days the side went out with a concertina, drummer and only three dancers, which could explain the limitations of the collected dances.