

THE OUTSWOLD TRADITIONS - Part 1 SIMPLICITY ?

In the 19th cent all the sides had 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. What features should be brought out at workshops? What makes each tradition different?

Many dancers are initiated to the morris through "simple" traditions which get them moving without much demand on them in terms of stepping. Such are seldom relearnt when the dancers become more experienced so they are often performed just as learnt. Of course they need as much skill to present as any other tradition especially as much must be made of what features the dances have. Comment will be made on 3 which are either recent reconstructions or based on memories of revivals such that our knowledge of the tradition may be deficient. However they are satisfying to dance and traditional dances surviving into the 20th cent were mainly simple.

WHEATLEY

Used the singlestep and a backstep. The hands went up and down, with the arm well bent at the elbow, from near the waist to above the head, with emphasis on the first strong beat of the 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 a jump, that is, no break half way. The hey can be repeated without pause and the Whole-rounds continued by dancing anti-clockwise back to place. The hey and rounds, especially in the repeats, can be danced with half capers instead of hopsteps. The order is not fixed other than starting with 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 ends 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 nice Brighton Camp derivative and Trunkles may be a Hunt the Squirrel. For a team just over the hill from Quarry who used to go around in the same gang the dances are surprisingly different.

STANTON HARCOURT

The reconstruction is based on a verbose description of Nutting Girl and over brief descriptions in another source of choruses only. Repetitions, similar moves by the opposite or mirror moves do not get mentioned. For example the handclapping in Princess Royal is given as $\begin{matrix} r+l & r+l & r+l \\ l+r & l+r & l+r \end{matrix}$ r+r b, it probably means $\begin{matrix} r+l \\ l+r \end{matrix}$ 3x, r+r 3x, l+l 3x, b 3x! Following Willains mss, there is no jump half way through Dance-Facing, Cross Over is done right shoulders but left coming back, the Forward-&-Back is facing opposite not to side as in half gip, the middles go up towards the music every time ^{in heys} and the rounds at the end open out before the caper in. The backstep in all figures is done facing opposite, including in the half hey, so that hands are out at side and almost touching in a line along the side of the set. No stick clashing on jumps in figures.

Greensleeves 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 ones opposite. The stepping in Nutting Girl is done facing up every time, it is very vigorous with larger arm movements 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 to turn when receiving. The song tune "Nightingale Sings" fits the dance, with the odds hitting the evens 3 times, the odds holding stick horizontal, the odds capering and hitting on the middle beat of the bar, then 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 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, a whole hey and 4 plain capers - and Constant Billy with sticks - like bars 3-4 of Brighton Camp done twice.

BIDFORD

Sources are Ferris mss, Graham book, Sharp mss, Stone's photos, local memories, boys side of late 1950's. Apart from Graham describing everything from a spectator's point of view, no source is complete in itself. The locals have insisted on a vigorous single step. It starts with the classical kick forward but the foot is pulled back by lifting up to produce "backpedalling" - perhaps an influence of the boots once used. There is no backstep, but the jumps are high, and the sidestep has the feet in line with no body turn. Unlike 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 using the sidestep was done to many tunes and the "Stick" dance movements could be chosen by the foreman at the time. The opening figure could be Foot-up, both long and short, Dance-facing or Rounds and the final figure "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-Key" in which the middles 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 chorus movements (4 bars) follow the halves of every figure and not just the half heys as elsewhere.

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 only "slows". We Wont Go Home Till Morning is a simple dance like How Do You Do (Headington) but it switches to the chorus of the 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 Campden but for the holding hands in the rings and the bows. Fitting the dance to the tune and trying to improve aesthetically the nods etc have exercised many.