





# American Morris Newsletter

## From the Editors

American Morris Newsletter  
a chronicle of North American morris activities?

I have had several conversations with people recently about the future direction of AMN. There has been a stream of private comments ranging from how nice it is that AMN stresses local news to, AMN does not carry enough scholarly work, and, how can we call ourselves the "American" morris newsletter when we do not represent all sides. On our part, we have been making some decisions as to the future of the newsletter. Plans are underway to refine the new format of the newsletter beginning with next April's issue. We are in contact with individuals in Britlan to prepare articles on Northwest Morris, Molly Dancing, and other branches of the morris tradition. Also, beginning in April, AMN plans a new feature on the origins of current sides in North America. Sides will be invited months ahead to prepare material. The project is an extension of the "Morris in North America History Project" initiated by myself in conjunction with AMN. The Newsletter, however, will always reflect the quality, seriousness, and humor of those who submit material. -- James C. Brickwedde, co-editor, AMN

### RATES GO UP

### BULK MAILING TO BE USED

Beginning with all renewals in January, the annual subscription rate will increase to \$4.00 per year - an increase of \$1/year. Overseas subscribers need to add \$4.00 extra for air mail delivery. Team subscriptions are to raise to \$2.50 for a minimum of six copies sent to the same address.

AMN will be mailing the January issue out on a bulk permit. This is an experiment which will require your feedback. We need to know: 1. that you received the newsletter in the mail, and 2. that you received it in a reasonable amount of time. If too many problems are caused, the permit will be dropped. You need to let us know of any problems that occur. All subscriptions outside the USA will continue to be mailed 1st class.

### BIRTHS

Congratulations to former AMN editor Fred Breunig and his wife Dinah on the birth of a daughter, Katharine, in July of this year.

### FAUX PAS

A very bleary-eyed editor of AMN, who shall (for shame) remain nameless, pasted up Scott Bartell's article on the Hobby Horse in a rather creative manner. We reprint the article again in its intended order. Mr. Bartell also resides in Richfield, MN and not in St. Paul. We offer our apologies to the author.--J.C.B. and L.M.D.

WOMAN, 37, CHARGED IN DEATH

The "Minneapolis Star & Tribune" and Associated Press reported on September 3, 1983 that a 37-year-old Minneapolis woman was charged with the death of her 68-year-old boyfriend. The woman allegedly stabbed Young Collins during a quarrel in their Blaisdell Ave. apartment. Collins died of multiple stab wounds to the chest.

BOOK REVIEW

Josie Giarratano of New York City sent AMN a copy of a book review that appeared in The New Yorker Magazine (May 2, 1983, p.129.). The book, My Search For Warren Harding, is written by author Robert Punkett (Knopf; \$13.95). This mystery? stars a hero described by The New Yorker as being "...a product of the Pittsburgh haute bourgeoisie and of two Ivy League universities, a former development director at a major New York zoo, and the current vice-president and booking agent for a Manhattan-based group of Morris dancers..." (emphasis supplied). Morris dancers have always been noted for their more extravagant nature, however, to be in league with the memory of Warren Harding?? Read it and find out.

TEAM NEWS

EDITORS note: The following letter was kindly submitted by Mr. Hogan of the Armonk Traditional Morris. He mentions several morris sides which have gone unnoticed by AMN. However, Mr. Hogan failed to give us a return address so we have no way of following up on those sides. DO YOU KNOW how to get back in touch with Armonk Morris or any of the other sides listed here?

Armonk Traditional Morris (Westchester, NY)

The Armonk Traditional Morris has been dancing and touring in Southeastern New York and western Connecticut for the past four years. In this time our emphasis has been on touring in rural, semi-agricultural towns of our local region. This reflects our interpretation of morris from its earliest roots in agricultural fertility rites. Our contact with other teams has been limited to tours with other teams of our region.

For the past two years we have co-sponsored, with the Catskill Morris Men of New Paltz, the Lake Candlewood ITM tour with our guests, the Paramus Morris Men of northern New Jersey and the Dingman's Ferry Men of the Delaware Water Gap region of eastern Pennsylvania. Next year we may expand the ITM to include other teams, although this is merely conjecture at this point.

In the past we have preferred to remain relatively obscure, contacting other teams in person only rarely. However, we have begun to feel that there are some important interpretations of morris which we would like to share with AMN readers. We'll keep in touch.

Dan Hogan (Squire)

Kingsessing Morris Men (Philadelphia, PA)

Readers of AMN might enjoy seeing a reproduction of our latest recruiting leaflet. We've gotten an excellent response to it. Now let's see if we get any new dancers!

Jamie Watson, Squire, 6925 Greene St., Philadelphia, PA 19119

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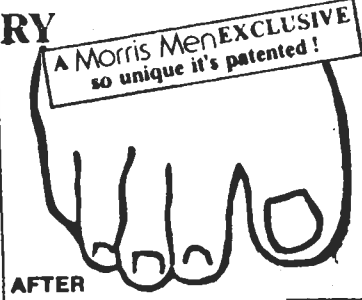
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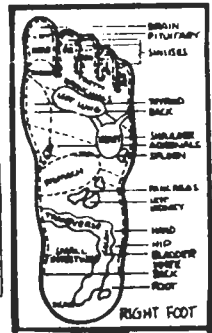
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4. Mason-Dixon Border Morris (Clearville, PA)

Things are the same with us this year. The usual touring and tipling. But gee -- it's still fun. Oh, any travelling morris men passing through Pennsylvania and thinking of stopping by must give us a week's notice, and please, only those with a little experience under their belts (or bells).

A note to Jim Brickwedde, the morris man who's been writing from England. About the line in your last article that states, "In America...to find six people of any sexual preference to dance morris at all is sometimes a great effort," do you mean to say that some of these people have no sexual preference? Please let us know. Whatever problem these dancers have, we think we've got the cure.

Larry Shute, Rt. 1, Box 63, Clearville, PA 15535

Minnesota Traditional Morris (Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN)

MTM toured in early August to the week-long Ethnic Days at Minnesota's Iron Range Interpretative Center (yes, grammarians, that's how they spell it!) in Chisholm, MN as part of their British Isles Day. Although "da Ranche" was settled primarily by Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Scandinavians, we discovered a surprising number of (aging) natives of Wales and Cornwall as well. We also were told that morris dancing was taught in the Iron Range Elementary schools around 1940.

The rest of our Autumn was taken up by the Minnesota Renaissance Festival, the apex of which was our now annual Renaissance Tour over Labor Day with the Bells-of-the-North and Oak Apple Morris. We were also joined by newcomers Prairie Waves (Omaha, NE) who so captivated a Cornhusker native on holiday at the Festival that they found a new member, and the Windy City Women (Chicago, IL) who taught us enough Sherburne to help fill out their set. Recently returned member Jim Brickwedde taught us two weeks of Longborough ala Hammersmith Morris Men to give us a taste of something we may try next year. Around press time the team is also sponsoring a concert by Hammersmith alumnus John Kirkpatrick with Martin Carthy and Howard Evans at the Coffeehouse Extempore.

Stephen Parker, 438 NE 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55413

Muddy River Morris (Boston, MA)

Muddy River Morris of Boston has enjoyed a fascinating year of dance tours and culinary adventures, including dancing at school festivals, museums, May Day and the like. A weekend in New York City featured Central Park with Ring O'Bells and Ha'Penny on Saturday and bumper-high puddles on a soggy return to Boston on Sunday. Since the morris has traditionally accompanied festive occasions, it seemed suitable that when not attending the festive occasions of others, we should create a few of our own. A combination Chinese New Year/Lincoln's Birthday/Valentine's Day brunch was held with appropriate refreshments, and at the Marlboro Ale we dispensed with our former and infamous menu of tofu and bean sprouts in favor of cholesterol, garlic and frozen strawberry daiquiris. Yes, folks, that noise coming from the music shed was indeed the sound of blenders. Not to neglect our dancing, we continued with Fieldtown as our main tradition, with some Litchfield, Bucknell and Ducklington thrown in for variety. At the fore (there is always, dear reader, a way around a controversial word) Kathi Tighe energetically coached, corrected and encouraged, while during business meetings Squire Eileen Gorss skillfully juggled multiple discussions of dance schedules, footwear, hats and foodstuffs, all without use of gavel or bullhorn. On dance tours of late, Muddy River has been frequently seen being followed by a beast of dubious ancestry. As the beast first made its appearance at the Worcester Armory Museum tour, we speculated that it had been hibernating for 400 years inside a suit of armor and was awakened by the sound of sticks clashing. The current theory is that, because the beast wears a Muddy River kit with a dancing woman on the Dancing Unicorn emblem, the animal is none other than the rare Unicorneous Footseum Gigundicus, never before seen in the Western Hemisphere.

Our summer schedule included a variety of street touring and the not-to-be-missed Phoen (Phome? foume? fowam?), that weekend of dancing and revelry in western Mass., hosted by our compatriots of Ha'Penny.

Alice Feiring (Bag) 136 Huron Ave, Cambridge, MA 02138

Eileen Gorss (Squire) 257 Trapelo Road, Waltham, MA.

Rainy Capers Morris (Portland, OR)

The rumors are true: there is a mixed morris team in Portland, Oregon! After two years of practice by a few highly dedicated (and frustrated) individuals, we finally went public last spring when at last we had enough dancers for a side, plus a musician on pennywhistle or accordion. We are now twelve, as some promising newcomers have recently joined the team. Deciding on white knickers and blue vest for our kit wasn't hard. But deliberation over the name was beginning to approach the intensity of the SALT talks. After as many suggestions for names as pitchers of beer consumed at the discussions, after we eliminated all the slug puns, and after vowing not to do one more single step until we had a name, we finally christened ourselves "Rainy Capers Morris". Our motto is "Weather or not".

We dance mostly Bampton and Adderbury, with some Headington and Ducklington. We celebrated a joyous May Day on Bainbridge Island, sharing dances with teams from Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. The highlight of the year was performing at Seattle's Folklife Festival, and subsequent touring and partying with the Mossyback Morris Men, Misty City Morris, and the Vancouver Morris Men.

We occasionally invade Portland's Saturday Market and the adjoining Old Town and waterfront areas. (The bums love us, but don't quite know what to do when we pass the hat.) One of our best city tours concluded with being invited into a new downtown restaurant/tavern, where they pushed the tables aside and risked their glassware for the pleasure of our stick dances.

We've enjoyed visits from members of Minnesota Traditional Morris and Vermont's Midnight Capers. We always welcome travelling morris people to Portland and our regular Wednesday evening practices.

Jan Chappell (Squire) 8975 NW Lovejoy, Portland, OR 97229; (503)297-6505  
Edith Farrar (Baglady) 4551 NE 32nd, Portland, OR 97211; (503)282-8163

Rocky Mountain Morris and Sword (FT. Collins, CO)

We had a busy spring and summer dancing for various events - some nursing homes on Mother's Day, various mini-festivals, the 4th of July city celebration (the event of the year for the City of Ft. Collins) - and just for fun dancing. We ended the summer with a jaunt to the Colorado Morris Ale ably put on by Boulder's morris team (Maroon Bells). We continue to suffer from our perennial problems of having barely adequate numbers of dancers and barely adequate music (me), but we make up in enthusiasm what we lack in numbers. It's a very nice group and we do have fun.

Elaine Regelson, 1707 Norwood Lane, Ft. Collins, CO 80525; (303)223-6013

Spruce Hill Morris (Philadelphia, PA)

Spruce Hill Morris had a great spring and summer starting with a dawn May Day celebration at Bryn Mawr College with Kingsessing Morris. The following weekend we hosted Ring O'Bells with a walking tour of Old City Philadelphia, with a grand finale at the Philadelphia Zoo where we met Kingsessing and Foggy Bottom. Feasting and festivity followed and the tour ended Sunday morning at Independence Mall. Other highlights included a trip to D.C. to sing and dance in the rain with Rock Creek, a performance for the Philadelphia Dance Alliance, another at the Sckuykill Valley Nature Center, and yet another for the Bucks County Celtic Society at their Medieval fair. And, of course, last but not least, the Ph'abulous Ph'ome - Our hats off to Ha'Penny for making it happen once again.

6. We are looking forward to hard work this fall with our foreman, Ann Dixon, teaching us Ducklington to add to our repertoire of Field Town, Headington, and Bampton. We regret the loss of Judy Erickson while we hail our new Squire, Phyllis Rubin.

Marilou Raines Kaubin, (Bag), 431 Covered Bridge Road, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08034

Westerly Morris Men (Westerly, Rhode Island)

"The following article appeared in the Standard, Times & Echo, Emg; and on Friday August 19, 1983 concerning Westerly Morris Men's tour of England. The headline reads: "International Flavour" and states:

"There was an international flavour when Morris men gathered for a weekend of cricket and dancing at the Three Pignons pub in Witney.

"On Saturday afternoon the Westerly Morris team from Rhode Island in America danced outside the pub on Wood Green, accompanied by the Bampton Traditional Morris team.

"The following day they joined locals for more merry-making and to watch the pub's annual crazy cricket match between Three Pigeons and the Angel Morris team from Islington in London.

"The sunny weather brought out the crowds and the Witney pub was packed throughout the afternoon with customers enjoying the specially extended drinking hours and the old English tradition of Morris dancing.

"Spectators were in for a treat when after the cricket the Islington Morris men were joined by members of the American team for an impromptu performance.

"The Westerly Morris men are on a second tour of England and over the weekend they stayed with members of the Bampton Traditional Morris team who last year visited Westerly during their American tour.

"The Americans' visit to the Three Pigeons was part of a busy four-day schedule which included a trip to Morrells Brewery in Oxford, a reception given by Bampton parish council, a barn dance and folk night in the village, and a sight seeing tour of the Cotswolds.

"We have had a great time - everything has been so hectic but very enjoyable" said Son Townsend, Bampton's Bagman.

The Westerly Morris Men are continuing their English tour to Ilmington, Northampton and the Manchester area before flying back to the States on August 22

George Utter, 54 Elm Street, Westerly, RI 02891

OVERSEAS MAILBAG

Mansfield Morris Men in Nottinghamshire, England writes:

"To further the spirit and friendship of the Morris we would like to extend an open invitation to any mens Morris side/team who are planning a tour or would like to consider a visit to the Sherwood Forest area of the U.K. Accomodation in our members' homes would cut the cost of any planned visit.

Ta!

Keith H. Davis, 295 Eakring Road, Mansfield, Notts., England

Traditional Bampton Morris Dancers (A. Woodley's side) dropped us a note indicating that yet another US female morris dancer has fallen into the romantic sway of the ever charming men from Oxfordshire. They write:

"Brian O'Rourke is intent on robbing Rose 'n Thorn of the dancing and sewing talents of Barbara Prentiss. Rumours that he is so poor at sewing buttons on his pants as to need the services of such an excellent needlewoman as Barbara are, he says, totally without foundation.

"Plans are still a little hazy, but the indications all point to their getting hitched in Detroit sometime this summer."

Ilfracombe Red Petticoats, a women's Northwest Morris side from North Devonshire, England writes:

"I am writing to you because I am hoping to organise a trip to your country for my team of dancers.

We are North West Morris Clog dancers and our dances are done with sticks and garlands and originate from the north of England. We practice at Ilfracombe Community College during the winter and start dancing through the summer at fetes, festivals, and carnivals and give a very colourful display of dancing. This year in May we had a very successful trip to Germany and we hope next year to host the German dancers from Herxheim - our twinning town.

I personally have a burning ambition to bring our dancing to your country as I believe in upholding the old traditions of England and would like to share the joy I get from dancing with people in other countries and other walks of life. I would also like to bring back to this country more knowledge of dancing in America. Dancing and music does not seem to have any barriers and I would like to think that I could pass on inspiration to dance and the joy of music to children and adults alike. I had cancer a few years ago and I feel that by giving pleasure with my dancing I can give back something to life for the good health which I now enjoy.

I do not have any preconceived ideas about a tour as yet because this plan is in very early stages. The dancers are just ordinary working people and could probably only manage a two week trip. My thoughts are on Kentucky, Louisiana, The Rockies but I am not sure of the folk circuits in your country but I have heard of Berea College. I am looking for hosting in your country, sponsorship, grants, and any other help which would give my dancers "an offer they can't refuse"!

Would you please be kind enough to pass this information to anyone who you think would be able to help make a dream of mine come true.

Next year is National Heritage Year and as time and life are very precious to me I would like this trip to take place in 1984 and probably August would be a suitable time.

Doris Chisholm, Squire, Ilfracombe Red Petticoats, The Barn, Combe Park,  
Ilfracombe, N. Devon, England



## MORRIS IN BRITAIN AND NORTH AMERICA

by James C. Brickwedde

(This is the last in a series of four articles about morris dancing in Great Britain. Having taken a look at the three national organizations representing the morris in Britain, co-editor James Brickwedde takes a look at the dancing itself and compares it with that found here in North America.)

Douglas Kennedy in 1939 wrote that, in regard to dancing styles between England and America:

This (distinctive American style) does not apply to Morris and Sword dances. These traditions were evidently never carried over by immigrants. In America, the men's dances are danced as in England. In time, no doubt, a distinctive transatlantic style will arise in the morris and sword dancing, too.


Kennedy, Douglas, "To the Dancers-  
English and American Dancing," English  
Dance & Song, Vol. III no. 6, July-  
August 1939, p. 101

Have time and events begun to foster the growth of a distinctive "transatlantic" style(s)? After having spent a year living and dancing in England, my answer to that question is yes. I had the opportunity to observe over 150 morris sides in England including Cotswold, Northwest, Border, Molly and the singular Abbots Bromley dance; these included men's sides, women's sides, and mixed sides. Seven of those sides were "traditional" Cotswold village sides: three from Bampton, two from Abingdon, Headington Quarry, and Ducklington (revival). I danced in kit with the London based Hammersmith Morris Men (Longborough and Fieldtown primarily).

Once beyond the initial impact of culture shock, I soon realized that I was witnessing Cotswold morris dancing with a different range of subtle technical qualities than I had seen in my travels and dancing in America. As the year progressed, I was able to discern more clearly a few of these subtle variations. The purpose of this article is to talk about the emerging differences in technical style and philosophical attitudes on the two sides of the ocean.

From this point onward, I will be referring to Cotswold morris only, unless otherwise noted, as few American sides dance anything else. In addition, I will not be talking about the quality of the dancing per se. Both England and North America have their fair percentage of bad dancers. Also eliminated from this discussion will be comparisons of village styling done by local sides. Rather, I wish to stress the footwork, posture, musical accents and musical tempos that a side uses as a basis for constructing a dance tradition. Decisions of aesthetics are an individual side's prerogative and not for discussion here.

To begin with, there is not any one dominant style in England. I began to discern at least four distinctive styles. Some would say as much about American sides as well. However, I will venture to say that there is only one basic style of morris being taught in America. A great deal of variation certainly exists within that style, nonetheless, the teaching influence in morris dancing in North America can be reduced to a handful of people who are, by and large, teaching the same basic technique. Again, I stress not the teaching of individual village traditions, but rather the footwork, posture, and music that a side uses as a foundation of performing those traditions.

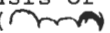

The four English styles (Styles A - D--see chart) may be categorized by their performance of the double step, their height off the ground, body posture, and the corresponding musical phrasing and tempo. The common usage of a double step (lift,1,2,3,hop) with the musical syncopation of (slow, quick, slow, quick) and the consequential lift of the body of (<sup>1</sup>) is the basis of three of the English styles and the North American style. Further distinction can be made by analyzing the musical tempo, how much lift off the ground is desired and the use of the upper body.


The choice of the musical tempo has become, in England, a definite stylistic decision. The choices are, simply: fast (95-100+ beats per minute), medium (80-95 beats per minute), and slow (60-80 beats per minute). In the Spring 1983 issue of Morris Matters (Vol. 5 no. 4, pp. 26-27) both John Swift of Kesteven Morris and Jill Griffiths of Windsor/Morris Matters staff talk about the changes in the use of tempo among English sides. Two things are evident: many sides have slowed down over the last two decades, and the choice of musical tempo will affect the entire use of the body in terms of height and energy level. As an example, Jill Griffiths notes the following variations in the use of tempos among sides:

<u>Range</u> (beats/min.)	<u>Team</u>		<u>Primary Tradition</u> (my addition)
60-70	Old Spot	*	Longborough
70-80	Windsor	*	Windsor/Brackley & Badby
	Adderbury	*	Adderbury
80-90	Bampton	*	Bampton
90-100	Broadwood	*	Horsham & ?
+100	Albion	*	?

Contrast this to the metronome measurement of Bampton with the original tempo markings listed in Bacon's A Handbook of Morris Dances. The measurements are in the recommended range of 88 beats per minute for "Shepherd's Hey" to 132 beats per minute for "Bacca Pipes," with most to be danced in the range of 96-100 beats per minute. This reflects the ever-changing nature of morris dancing, particularly with the infamous Bampton sides.

Ron Smedly noted to me in a personal letter following his recent trip to the U.S. that "Americans dance, at the moment, too slow." It would be interesting to do a metronome survey of North American sides. My intuitive guess is that most sides dance in the middle range of 80-90 beats per minute. I have yet to see an American side dance with the deliberateness of Old Spot or even of Windsor. Neither have I seen the cut-time tempo of morris danced by Broadwood, Dartington (Devon) or Albion.

By choosing a particular tempo, a side affects its posture and height off the ground. Those sides dancing at a faster pace (English Style A--see chart) cannot be as concerned with great height off the ground as are those who choose the slower pace. Faster sides are after a quick and sharp response and horizontal or lateral surging capabilities. The newer interpretations of Longborough, Kirtlington, Ducklington and Oddington stress a slow musical tempo and enormous height with all double steps and jumps (English Style C--see chart). In fact, the emphasis of the double step is changed so that the greatest lift is on count one () instead of the more common lift on count three (). Such an alteration affects the syncopation of the step from the more common (slow, quick, slow, quick) to the newer (slow, quick, quick, quick). This style of morris is highly athletic. Changing from a

<sup>1</sup>The symbol() being used here is borrowed from Roy Dommett's unpublished manuscripts. Each hump represents a beat of music, the height of which indicates the comparative height of the dancer off the ground.

10. fast to a slow musical tempo creates different demands on the body's muscular structure and affects posture, musical phrasing, etc. Old Spot, Hammersmith and Windsor are very much a part of this newer interpretation. They are, however, a minority among English sides. The introduction of such styling in America is very recent and it is not clear whether it will affect overall styling or simply the particular village traditions of Longborough, Oddington, etc.

To return to the more common treatment of the double step, with the greatest lift coming on count three of the musical bar, the most singular distinction among the styles is the height off the ground and, added to this, the use of the upper body. Here I will concentrate on styles B and D and the North American style listed on the chart.

Style B (Beaux of London City and Westminster are examples) barely leave the ground while dancing. This softer treatment of the morris is extended by the use of a very "balletic" carriage of the upper body and a similar use of handkerchieves. It is a highly graceful style in sharp contrast to the athleticism of the slower tempo sides. If performed well, this styling can still bring to the morris the necessary ambiance of power and ceremony.

Americans, with a few counterparts in England (Style D--see chart), place more emphasis on height, athletic vigor and clarity of footwork, yet retaining a smoothness and gracefulness of movement. This is the legacy of the Country Dance Society of America's teaching staff over the decades. Americans take the technique of morris dancing very seriously, spending more time perfecting the steps in practice than do, from my experience, the English. Americans also spend more time dancing in both rehearsal and in performance than do the English. This highlights a whole range of cultural attitudes between the U.S. and England, and, I suspect, even between the Canadians and the English, although to a lesser degree.

Thus, Americans hold the middle ground between the English extremes of Style B and C (low height--great height) and dance far more slowly than the fast-paced tempo of Style A. Americans, by and large, grapple with the dancing more than with creating a range of stylistic and technical options. In England, because there is such a plethora of sides (well over 500 sides in an area equivalent to the six New England states) groups consider differences of style and technique as a means of distinguishing themselves from the crowded field of participants. This encourages more creativity and tolerance for differences among English sides. Sides are usually quite clear about their way of dancing a tradition. Other sides are free to embellish (or not) as they see fit. Americans quote Bacon as if he were the final word. What is in print must be true. Americans would do well to re-read Sir Lionel's Foreword to A Handbook of Morris Dances to understand the reason for that book's creation. Rarely did I hear in England the classic American argument of what is right or wrong. The English seem to be more creative in their approach to the morris.

Another strong difference between the cultures has to do with the reason for dancing the morris. The average American dancer comes to morris first out of a recreational sense. If he/she were not morris dancing, they would be out dancing with the Hungarians or out with the local bowling league. To the English it is much more of a social event, a night's outing and, in some villages, a tradition. Americans dance more; the English drink more. The English clubs sing after a day's outing; Americans folk dance (due largely to the fact that more American morris events have sides of both sexes present, therefore making social dancing possible). This is impossible at Morris Ring or Women's Morris Federation events when the opposite sex is banned. Open Morris is closer in behavior to American sides than to the English counterparts.

The differences between English and American women dancing the morris is quite significant. I am strongly biased with the view that if a woman is going to dance morris she must give to the dance the vitality and strength that is required. It is what morris is all about. It has nothing to do with biology or even with skirts or trousers, or beer or tea for that matter. It has to do with the attitude one brings to the dance. I heard too many English women's groups talk of the need to dance Cotswold or Northwest Morris in a "feminine" manner. The result was, unfortunately, wimpish dancing, devoid of any energy at all. "Aping the men" was the accusation leveled at those women's sides who added the necessary power to their movements. It is an accusation I don't understand. Morris dancing is about the power of ceremonial expression of the dancer to her/him -self as well as between the dancer and his or her audience. A wimp is a wimp is a wimp whether or not the wimp is a male dancer or a female dancer!

This is the greatest cultural gulf separating the two sides of the ocean. The topic of sex is not an issue in America. How well the dance is danced is. I think all dancers would do well to view the photograph of Maud Karpeles dancing the jig "Princess Royal" at the first American summer folk dance camp held in Eliot, Maine in 1915. Look at how high she was off the ground! There is no question about that Englishman's capability to dance the morris.

It is simply a question of the attitude of a dancer toward her or him -self and toward the dance as a whole. The fear that "what the women dance the men won't dance" does not apply to this side of the ocean. The "tradition" in America since morris dancing was first effectively introduced (at least as early as 1909) has been the mutual acceptance of men's sides and women's sides.

English dancing versus American dancing is not a question of better or worse, right or wrong. It is a question of stylistic and technical differences emerging over time as the three cultures (English, Canadian and U.S. American) become more distinct from one another. Even our language now causes problems in understanding one another. Just have an unwary American ask an English morris dancer why they chose to wear "knickers" instead of "pants." If you can understand the difference in the cultural origins of those two simple words, you can begin to understand the emerging differences which affect the dancing.

#### CHART I

Style	Musical Emphasis & Body Lift	Syncopation of Double- step	Degree of Emphasis On Bell Shake	Musical Tempo	Energy Level	Stylistic Effect
English Style A	beat 3	slow, quick, slow, quick	moderately emphasized	fast	high	sharp & crisp
English Style B	beat 3	slow, quick, slow, quick	little emphasis	moderate	low	balletic
English Style C	beat 1	slow, quick, quick, quick	very little emphasis	slow	high	highly athletic
North American	beat 3	slow, quick slow, quick	highly emphasized	moderate	high	athletic yet graceful
English Style D	(This is basically the same as the North American style, yet only a few sides I saw actually fit the description.)					

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### Horseplay Is More Than Just "Horsing Around!"

By Scott Bartell

Most of us played with "hobby horses" as children, if only by straddling a broom and pretending to chase the rustlers across the prairie, six-guns blazing. Or perhaps you chose the more direct route of actually pretending to be the horse, tying a dish towel behind you and stamping and snorting while someone offered you a handful of grass. Remember how powerful and free you felt? You were participating in an ancient and honorable tradition that goes right alongside the morris dance: the horse plays.

Most readers of this newsletter undoubtedly have encountered the horse as a figure of fun and mischievous interference, weaving in and out of your figures and generally causing a charming mess. In the two rituals described here, the horse is the central figure and everyone else an accessory; though humor is still present, deeper currents of power run through the drama.

The two I have seen and participated in are the "Padstow 'Oss" and the "Mari Llewyd"; the first comes from the Cornish village of Padstow and the other from the mining areas of Wales, and both go back into the uncharted reaches of antiquity. (My attempts to write about them here are meant only as an experiential introduction by someone who has enjoyed them, not as a scholarly analysis. If any reader can correct or expand on my lovingly supplied misinformation, please do!)

Several years ago I was attending a musical and cultural camp-out in northern California called the Bardic Weekend. This annual event was organized by the Institute for Celtic Studies, a Bay Area group of which I was a member and officer. Along with classes in playing pennywhistle and harp, Gaelic and Welsh language lessons, history and mythology lectures and a lot of traditional feasting (roasted salmon in butter and honey) and drinking (Guinness and claret, mead and metheglin) we did large dances and rituals, such as the morris (led by Terry O'Neal), the mummings' plays, the wren boys and--new to me--the horse plays.

The "Mari Llewyd" (Welsh for "white mare") is a play done by the miners each year at Easter in a procession from house to house within their village, presenting the ritual for the general good luck of the household in return for cakes, ale, money and so forth. A Foreman (in top hat with ribbons) sings the whole way through the proceedings, invoking the Fair Folk to see the play and naming each of the other characters as they perform their parts. (Unfortunately I must operate from memory here.) There are a sergeant and a corporal who make music on instruments, Punch and Judy who fight and make up, a Doctor who brings Punch back after he is knocked out by a blow from Judy, and the Horse. This horse is a pole with a head, which in times past used to be a real horse skull, with a clapper jaw worked by the player who carries the whole contraption elevated with a white sheet covering him. He dances and capers with the other characters but periodically runs wild and lunges after women in the audience. They are supposed to pretend to be frightened and run but also are supposed to be caught and nipped by the horse--this brings them "good luck" for the coming year, which meant more specifically, I am told, pregnancy. The dance was taught and led by the late Greg Poole, a fine singer and promoter of Welsh customs in the Institute; he had many verses for the song which in this instance he had set to a very singable Irish air we all knew. The play was short and not too demanding; the total effect was light and whimsical and both performers and audience enjoyed it greatly.

Several elements appear to have been brought together in this play: the death and rebirth cycle by Punch and Judy and the Doctor, and the general fertility magic by the horse. It seems a contradiction for the horse to nip the women and instill fertility when it, too, is female; this may have crossed over from an old Irish ritual in which the king at his elevation went through a ceremony of ritual or actual copulation with a white mare which embodied the magic spirit of the whole tribe. Without this mating, the king was not properly invested with the magic energy. In some versions, the mare was then sacrificed and the meat cooked in a huge cauldron; the king had to bathe in the broth and then all the tribe partook. That may reflect glimmers of the oldest use of the horse: as a hunted source of food. The white mare shows up in other old mythic contexts too. The capitol of one Northern Irish dynasty was at Emain Macha, named after a goddess who turned into a white horse. The Angles and Saxons carried white horse tail banners and two of their legendary leaders who invaded Celtic Britain were Hengest and Horsa-- both words for horse. I don't know if "Mari Llewyl" is still done in Wales.

The "Padstow 'Oss" definitely is still done in Padstow. There is an excellent film of it being performed as a continued living May Day tradition a few years ago.

This is a much simpler ritual and, as I experienced it, a much more powerful one. In Padstow, several teams start from different ends of the town at daybreak and go all day, pausing only to eat and drink as they process. Each team has musicians, but the only real characters I recall are the 'Oss and his Teaser.

This horse is pretty clearly a stallion, acting the same way as the horse in the "Mari Llewyl" but catching young women under its costume drapes and marking them with soot or pitch before they are released, now bearing good luck. The costume is quite cumbersome; it consists of a huge, heavy iron hoop about five feet in diameter suspended by straps from the shoulders of the player. The hoop is filled in with black cloth with red geometric patterns and long black skirts sweeping down to the ground. The player's head is covered by a tall, pointed black hat with a red demonic face painted on the front, very grim and much larger than the player's own face. A very small horse head is mounted on the front of the hoop and a tail on the rear. The player must leap and caper and sweep the hoop about with great vigor as he processes, run into the crowd and lift the hoop to ensnare a victim with care and agility, smudge and release her and not knock anyone unconscious with the hoop. This goes on and on while the player is hidden inside the heavy, sweltering outfit. (I know this because I danced it.)

He is led by the Teaser, a Fool who dances before him carrying a wand with a little heart-shaped silk cushion, from which dangles a fringe of ribbons. This is held before the horse's nose and seems to be the only thing that can attract his attention besides the women in the crowd. When looked at with a squint, the teasing-stick is a pretty clear symbol of female genitalia.

As they move forward, the players sing a song whose chorus is "Unite and unite and let us all unite/For summer is a-come today/And whither we are going, we will all unite/On this merry morning of May." The effect is very jolly and lusty and spectators follow along, mimicking the troupe; when the 'Oss catches someone, male spectators grab women and mime intercourse from behind with them (shown in the film and attested to) in spite of great diversity of age and station.

Luckily for the poor 'Oss dancer, he gets to "die" at intervals, sinking to the ground while the others sing some slow, complex, obscure verses with a lot of historical references in them. Finally he is revived and brought to his feet by a maiden with a cup of drink who first puts the horse-head muzzle into it, then brings it to the player's lips. With that, the music picks up again and the troupe is on their way. At the sunset, the team goes to the edge of a body of water where the horse stoops to drink and the ritual is over.

The total effect of this dance is heavier and more insistent. While it is still quite sexual (and some of the women remain hidden under the horse drapes for a long time) and most everyone seems to enjoy it, it is very hard work and people sometimes get into a trance-like state with all of the repetition and effort. There is also a somewhat sinister tone with the huge black horse and the demon mask. This latter is allegedly descended from an African witch doctor's mask brought back in the late 1700's by a sailor, and many women at our gathering found themselves frightened, repulsed or unwilling to get too close. On the other hand, many reported strong sexual feelings around it after a number of repetitions.

I had assumed at the time I saw these (and danced the horse in both) that they were probably well known to most morris and ritual dancers, but I have since found that not to be the case. I have lost my written materials and would love to hear from any who have more knowledge of these dances. (For that matter, at the Minneapolis May Day Parade and picnic, a group of pagans sang the whole Padstow song but had no knowledge of the dance.) Nevertheless, these dances live for me in a meaningful way.

(Editors' note: Scott Bartell is a piper, harper, singer, pagan, therapist and friend of the morris in Minnesota. He resides in St. Paul and writes occasionally for several local papers.)

The American Morris Newsletter is published four times per year, typically in April, July, October, and January. Individual subscriptions are available for \$4 per year (overseas subscribers should add \$4.00 for air mail postage). Team subscriptions are \$2.50 per copy for a minimum of six copies sent to the same address. Back issue are available for 70¢ each plus postage. Please make all checks or money orders payable to American Morris Newsletter. Copy deadlines for submission of articles, letters or team news are the fifteenth of the month preceding publication. After that date, contact us by telephone at 612/379-2286 (Steve Parker) or 612/721-8750 (James Brickwedde).

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English Morris & Sword Dancing**

**Vol. VII no. 3**