

The American Morris Newsletter

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Minneapolis, MN 55413
U.S.A.

**a publication devoted solely to
English Morris & Sword Dancing**

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American Morris Newsletter



Volume V Number 2

July 1981

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

With the coming of summer (and tornadoes - 3 MN Morris dancers had very close calls) comes an increase in Morris activities. Two ales have just occurred in recent months, the Marlboro Ale and the Midwestern Ale. These gatherings have allowed time simply to have fun dancing, exchange ideas and refresh our spirits. Too many times one hears of people burning out over heavy dancing schedules, obligations and money. It is refreshing to meet other dancers without an air of pressure. Thus the role of the ale and may such events continue.

This edition of the newsletter is being sent to press without co-editor Steve Parker, who is preparing to caper his way up the mountain peaks of Peru. Apologies in advance for slow answers to mail requests as AMN mail will be tied up for awhile in Steve's mailbox.

EDITORIAL

Minneapolis may be far removed from the center of Morris gossip, but jingles in the grapevine seem to indicate that AMN has caused a stir within sections of the English Morris sides over the recent publication of "ABC'D... XYZ of Morris" by Dr. Anthony Barrand (see AMN Jan. 1981, Vol. IV no. 4). The American Morris Newsletter's purpose is to keep all morris sides in North America in contact with one another, to act as an exchange of information, and to offer a forum on the development of morris dancing - both past and present.

The editors cordially invite anyone - American, Canadian, British, or Australian - who wishes to present scholarly works on the origins and current developments of Morris to do so. AMN is a vehicle of opinions, not of one particular opinion.

The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are wide but certainly mail service has not deteriorated that badly.

Welcome. -- James C. Brickwedde, co-editor, AMN

TEAM NEWS

A feature of the American Morris Newsletter dependent upon your letters postcards and telephone calls. The response this quarter reflects the flow of that constant open communication. The names of the correspondents appear at the end of each club's news.

BELLS-OF-THE-NORTH: Minnesota

New costumes, new T-shirts, new members and our very own new dance tradition have marked the start of this Morris season. May 1 saw us once again dancing down Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis to keep the IDS Tower erect one more year. We met the men's side in front of the Tower for mass dancing, followed by festivities at a local ale house. The month of May closed with us dancing at the wedding of Squire Laurie Levin to Foreman Jim Brickwedde. At the wedding, BNM made its debut of our very own local morris tradition. "Lady From Putney" is the first of at least five dances to be added this year under the tradition to be known as Minneapolis-on-Mississippi. We performed at the Midwestern Morris Ale in Madison, Wis. and at the St. Anthony Main Heritage Festival in Minneapolis. Alice Love, formerly with Court Square Dancers in Virginia, stopped into town to teach a new Bampton dance and a ribbon workshop.

Denise Kania, 4000 20th Ave. So., Mpls, MN 55407

BERKELEY MORRIS: CALIFORNIA

Berkeley Morris has gone through a fair number of changes within the last year. At the end of the 1980 touring season, our club foreman/founder, Brad Foster, informed us he was no longer able to make the long drive from his home in Cupertino to the big old studio in the North Berkeley Hills where we have our weekly practices. Several South Bay Morris commuters elected to go with Brad and to form a new group in Palo Alto, Deer Creek Morris. A couple of other regular North Bay members, perhaps, dispirited at the loss of our excellent teacher, dropped from the group.

Moreover, several members of the Sunset Morris moved to San Francisco and were working hard to establish a men's team there. We were faced with the possible loss of some members in that direction and with competition for recruits at a time when we could ill afford it. We were reduced to nearly half our previous strength having five women and seven men. Oddly, there were more than enough musicians. At this level, we continued to practice and slowly developed unity. Terry O'Neal was appointed new club foreman. Later, Jim Bull came on as Men's Squire. Terry's force and enthusiasm combined with Jim's thorough grounding in style and detail created an increasingly useful collaboration.

As we continued plodding away at the practices, another small but important thing occurred. We realized that we were IT, and that if the Morris was to continue in Berkeley that it would be up to us. We fought over a number of issues, and especially that of mixed sets. It had been our custom to practice mixed and to perform in separate sets. This, in lieu of the numbers situation, was looking increasingly impractical. Jim and I met, trying to work out formulas to alleviate the situation and please everyone, to no end. We all wondered how long it would last. It did seem that our collective resolve held us together. No one wanted to give up.

Then we got a few breaks, many of them provided by Dick Bagwell, dancer, pipe and tabor player and publicist extraordinaire. Dick submitted a beautiful article to the San Francisco Examiner which agreed to print it with photos in their Easter Sunday issue in the California Living feature section. Dick did other fine publicity for us as well. As a result of Dick's efforts, our May Morning Dance Out in the Berkeley Hills, dawned on a crowd of at least seventy--five people, some of whom said that they had been up all night in order to see us. Never had we experienced such a warm welcome. Our small group danced with all our heart. Perhaps half of the group remained after dancing to sing and breakfast with us. Many inquired as to the possibilities for joining. Others having resources to share, exchanged phone numbers with us.

May 2nd & 3rd, we made our annual tour of Berkeley, again to some of the largest, friendliest crowds we'd seen. The bags were record size and more recruits announced themselves.

To add to our delight, three nostalgic former members emerged from the woodwork to dance in with us, at least two of whom will return to membership.

Although we have a lot of work ahead in terms of shaping ourselves up as dancers and creating a strong supportive environment for the new dancers, I am beginning to feel that we have turned the corner, that there is a future for our group, and that it's a bright one.

Mary Perner, Bagman & Women's Squire, P.O. Box 95, Rheem Valley, CA 94570

BINGHAMTON MORRIS MEN: NEW YORK

(BMM sent the newsletter a further update on their performance schedule this summer. Dates include: August 15-23 - 6th American Traveling Morrice; September 12 - Roberson Center's Holiday; September 11 - a team wedding; October 24 - BMM Harvest Home Festival)

Ken Kearns, Bagman, 4 Livingston Street, Binghamton, N.Y. 13903

BLOOMINGTON QUARRY MORRIS (Under the Fish): Indiana

Jim Brickwedde and I were talking on our tour in Madison, and he suggested that I send our little verse about the Hobby-Horse to the Newsletter (ed.: see following feature after Team News). It's enclosed, a long with a small explanation of which you are free to use as much as you want or need. It's sort of a trivial little piece, but it fills a need for our team. Hope you can use it.

It was great seeing folks dancing at the Madison Ale. What an experience! All these Midwestern teams growing up in isolation, then suddenly thrown together. I'm sure everyone learned a thing or two. Besides which, it was exhilarating! (We've never been to an ale before). I'm sure we'll all be pressing the Madison Folks to do a repeat of a great organizing job next year.

Mark Feddersen, Rt 3 Box 272-A, Morgantown, IN 46160

KESTEVEN MORRIS: LINCS, ENGLAND

Our group would like to subscribe to your American Morris Newsletter....

Last year our group had a successful trip to West Germany and is now contemplating a dance trip to the USA for either 1982 or 1983. The intention would be to finance the tour from the dance displays, lectures, instructionals and any other appropriate events that could be arranged. Would it be possible for you to tell us whether anyone has tried this sort of tour before and if you know any contacts who might be able to help us? The Morris Dance scene in the United States seems to be very interesting. We were hosts to Ring O'Bells from New York City when they were here in 1979 and have read with interest articles on Morris in America published over here. Enclosed is a copy of our publicity handout which we hope will be of interest to you.

John Swift, 40 Allington Garden, Boston, Lincs PE21 9DW, England

MINNESOTA TRADITIONAL MORRIS: MINNESOTA

The schedule of performances for MTM has been quite full as usual. May began with the traditional dancing up Nicollet Mall and associated carousing afterwards at a local drinking establishment. Another wedding (the third this year!) was blessed by Morris dancing at the end of May. Then it was off to the Midwestern Morris Ale in Madison, Wis. which ended Sunday afternoon joining up with Oak Apple Morris (Madison) for a few dances in the fountain on the UofW's Campus. Thunder Bay, Ontario shipped us up to perform at the Solstice Festival. The weather was wet, the border a pain, the mosquitoes large, but the people were lovely as always - well worth the visit. A Renaissance Fair in Duluth over July 4 weekend proved to be interesting...try dancing on a ski run, in the rain, blistering heat, etc. Again, fun was had by all, especially the enforced heat break in the ski resort's swimming pool.

MTM had its annual ale in early June to elect new positions for another year - our ninth as a team. Steve Parker is again Squire. Larry Paulson was elected Bagman (in charge of finances) and Larry Klueh was elected "Ragman" (in charge of physical plant).

A new mummings play written by side mate Rudd Rayfield, called the "Lowery Hills Wooing Ceremony", saw its debut at the Midwestern Morris Ale. A roaring approval was given by all.

The rest of July will be taken up with performances in New Ulm and Chisholm, MN and in Ironwood, Michigan. The Renaissance Festival will fill out the summer (and bag) for six weeks straddling August and September.

Steve Parker, 434 N.E. 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55413

THORNDEN MORRIS: SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

Our debut was May Day's dawn on Thornden Hill, where the warmth from those wonderful folks who surprised us by coming to watch us dance (by even knowing about us!) made the winter's formative struggle disappear with the Darkness. Our dancing at Baltimore Woods Pioneer Days Festival on June 7 was a real rouser, and made it apparent to ourselves and others that we are off a-flying.

Yet to come this summer are Syracuse Downtown Days, July 11; and the Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance in Sterling, N.Y. (up on Lake Ontario) the weekends of July 4-5 and July 18-19.

We are a group of women dancing Bampton, enraptured by the momentum we all generate in the merging of our strengths. People in our city seem to be feeling the same way. Our teacher is John Bramka of Binghamton Morris Men. Squire is Sondra Etheredge.

Sondra Etheredge, 416 Columbus Ave., Syracuse, N.Y. 13210

WESTERLY MORRIS MEN: RHODE ISLAND

(ED.NOTE: AMN regularly receives Westerly's weekly newsletter. The following are excerpts from several of them)

"Rehearsal will be Tuesday night at the Knickerbocker in Westerly. We will be working on our demonstration dance for Marlboro which will be "Flowers of Edinburgh" which we saw and learned last summer when we danced with the Headington Quarry Morris in Oxfordshire."

"Perfect weather with a few bugs at dusk and a busy schedule kept everyone happy at the Marlboro Ale. As usual we had our exclusive camp site. Each year the campers seem to move farther away from us. Herb and George stuck around for the Morris Olympics but didn't participate in leg races, leg wrestling, and relays."

"Practically all members were present for a good tour in the rain and fog on the campus of Connecticut College (May 12). The darkness and dampness gave the new men a good chance to get bold and try new dances, etc."

"August 1-2 - Westerly's Lobster Ale - This is to be a dry run for a bigger Ale which we could have in 1982. More on this later"

George H. Utter, Bagman, 54 Elm Street, Westerly, R.I. 02891

THE WETLAND STOMPERS MORRIS & SWORD: WEST ACTON. MASS.

Nancy Nichols passed the word on to me that the American Morris Newsletter was doing some investigative reporting on rumors of hanky-panky in the western suburbs. Who the Deep Throat is I have no idea but after all these furtive years, it's nice to be noticed. We are a small mixed team doing mostly Adderbury and Headington with some Bledington. In the winter we do longsword for some mummer's plays. Our kit is white pants and shirt with an unornamented kelly green tabard and green bell pads. We wear no hats except the musician who has a straw boater. Having evolved somewhat apart from the mainstream of local morris our team has its occasional quirks of style including some bits derived indirectly from Welsh Morris by way of the Dublin Morris.

Dennis J. Ahern, 298 Central Street, West Acton, Mass. 01720

THAMES VALLEY MORRIS: LONDON, ONTARIO,

I'd like to announce the existence of a second morris team in London, Ontario. We are the Thames Valley Morris and we've been organized as a team since New Year, though most of us have been dancing for 2-3 years.

Currently, we are concentrating on Fieldtown and have plans for Brackley and Hinton next year. Our kit is whites, blues braces (suspenders), dark and light blue rosettes and ribbons and top hats.

We'd be happy to hear from any teams about Ales and suchlike.

Paul Handford, Dept of Zoology, Univ. of Western Ontario, London, Canada, N6A 5B7

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

May we, through A.M.N., say thank you to all the people who made our recent visit to the States such a success? We were overwhelmed by your kindness and hospitality, impressed by your dancing and we really enjoyed meeting you. (We also loved your weather - we are now in the middle of our Typical English Summer, cold and wet.) It was a marvellous experience for us to meet so many different teams and we've come home with lots to think about.

Thanks for a great time - hope to see you again some day.

Windsor Morris, 24 Alexandra Rd., Windsor, England

AMN recently received a letter from former AMN editor, Fred Breunig, who reports to us of activity on the West Coast and Morris Dancing. He mentioned hearing of rumors of a Morris side beginning to form in Eugene, Oregon and that folks in Portland, ORE. are also working on getting some morris going. The Portland Morris contact person is: Dick Lewis, 2907 N.E. 11th, Portland, Oregon 97121.

Thanks for the info, Fred.

Letters on Morris Dance activities in North America are greatly encouraged. Be it historical or hot off the press, AMN would love to hear from you. Please send along names, addresses, phone numbers, or reference listings with the materials so further follow up can be made.

Thank you.

ALES

THE SIXTH ANNUAL MARLBORO MORRIS ALE: MAY 22-25, 1981

Although direct communication with the organizers of this year's Marlboro Ale has been by phone only, the report was that the Ale was fun as usual. Some changes from the past were made which seemed to have been successful ones. The mass dancing in Newfane was moved off the green and across the road in front of the old church making viewing of the dancing a bit more intimate. Also, instead of the usual workshops on Monday morning, a Morris Olympics was held on the College grounds. No scores or list of winners were available to the editors of AMN as we went to press. The event, we were told, was quite amusing.

THE FIRST MIDWESTERN MORRIS ALE: JUNE 5-7, 1981

Oak Apple Morris of Madison, Wisconsin host^d the first gathering of morris teams from the nations' heartland. Teams present were Bloomington Quarry Morris (Indiana), Sourwood Morris (Tennessee), Ann Arbor Morris (Michigan), Bells-of-the-North & Minnesota Traditional Morris (Minnesota), Ladies of Pleasure & Wild Onion Morris (Chicago, Ill). Touring on Saturday had three groups of sides traveling the small towns surrounding Madison. A mass dance culminated in Viljas Park in Madison before a large crowd and T.V. cameras. As distance is a greater factor in the Midwest, most teams left first thing Sunday morning. A few diehards remained to dance on the steps the the State Capitol and in the fountain on the U of W Campus. Plans for another ale next year are also in the works.

DANCE DESCRIPTION

OFF SHE GOES-- a composed ribbon dance, written Sept. 1980 for the Court Square Dancers, Charlottesville, Virginia, by their foreman Katie Kellett.

TUNE: "Off She Goes"

SET: Four pairs in longways formation

STEP: 1-2-3-hop

- A1 Corners cross--first corners pass left shoulder, second corners pass right, forming star with ribbons. Turn star clockwise.
- A2 Turn in to come back c-clockwise. Second corners return home passing left shoulders, first corners home passing right.
- B1 Dip and Dive--pairs face and go under and over the complete length of the set and back. Always go under coming in at the top and over coming in at the bottom.
- B2 First couple cast out and down to below fourth couple, followed by couples two and three. Each couple in turn cast up under arch made by the fourth couple.
- A3 Scissors and Arches--Couples one and three dance to the left while couples two and four dance to the right, forming two small side sets. An 'arches' figure is done, with top couples in the side sets casting in and down while the bottom couples come up forming arch, then repeat back to place. Then all dance back into original lines, top two couples changing places, and bottom two couples also.
- A3 Scissors and Arches--Couples one and three dance to the left while couples two and four dance to the right, forming two small side sets. An 'arches' figure is done, with top couples in the side sets casting in and down while the bottom couples come up forming arch, then repeat back to place. Then all dance back into original lines, top two couples changing places, and bottom two couples also.
- A4 Movement continues across to reform side sets, repeat arches figure, and all dance back to original places.
- B3 & B4--same as B1 & 2
- A5 Big Star and Circle--Top and bottom couple form a star passing left shoulder letting ribbons out to their full extension, and turn it clockwise while middle two couples circle right.
- A6 Big Star comes back c-cwise, and top and bottom couples come back to place passing right shoulders, while middle couples circle back to the left.
- B5 & 6--same as B1 & 2

A RECITATION

(The following recitation has been graciously submitted by the Bloomington Quarry Morris from Indiana. The editors wish to thank them for sharing this work)

A central part of the Morris Dance as we perform it in Bloomington, IN, is the passing of the Hobby-Horse's feed bag through the audience. Some onlookers contribute gladly, feeling perhaps that this is the best way to show their appreciation. Yet others seem perplexed, even offended, when the bag approaches them. Asking for money in public places is seen by certain elements of our society as scurrilous, low-down behavior suitable only for beggars, hoboes, college students, and other undesirables. Just for example, shopping malls, the latter-day Agoras of America, announce at every entrance in primly puritanical tones "NO SOLICITATION." In such an atmosphere, it is hard for audiences to understand that, when Morris dancers pass the bag, they are motivated, not merely by need or greed (important factors, mind you) but by a desire to bring the audience into the performance. The gift of money is the traditional means by which the spectator becomes part of the excitement, vitality, and good fortune of the Morris. As the saying goes, "it's lucky to feed the horse"

The traditional solution to the stand-offish (or tight-fisted) audience is humor. As any fool knows, a bit of laughter goes a long way toward bringing down the barriers between dancers and on-lookers. It also fattens the bag, a crucial measure of success. In this light, we have composed these few verses, partly derivative and mostly doggerel, in an attempt to remind the audience, in a suitably light tone, that bells and ribbons, oats and beer are none of them cheap. This being a problem common to all Morris Sides, we present these verses for your perusal and (we hope) amusement, with full license to use all, part or

These verses were originally presented on the occasion of the Oliver Winery Festival in Bloomington in May of 1980. Since then, we have used them in a variety of settings, most recently at the Mass Dance in Vilas Park during the Midwestern Morris Ale this June. We have lately been dancing the Nutting Girl Jig, in which the Horse stands behind the dancers and mimics their capers, hankerchiefs and all, to the amusement of the audience. At the end, the Reader steps out and calls:

LORDS AND LADIES! GENTLE KNIGHTS AND TRUE SQUIRES!
SWEET DAMSELS! BABES-IN-ARMS! And you Beer Drinkers
as well! PRAY LEND ME YOUR EAR!

While I tell a sad tale of sorrow,
Our scribe has inscribed with a tear.

We are dancers from Bloominton Quarry,*
Full of spirits so light and so clear;
And our lives they were filled with sweet sunshine
"Til we hired this Horse you see here.

You've never seen anything like him
In the North, East, the West or the South;
They call him a Quarter-Horse truly,
For he carries Two Bits in his mouth.

Our steed here may seem a bit simple
With the wisdom and wit of a mouse;
Though his brain it is naught but a pimple
Still his belly's as large as a house.

We dance day and night to earn riches
But the cost of his feed takes it all;
He dines from a trough so podigious
It makes Oliver's Gas-Bag** look small.

His favorite color is golden,
The color of ale and of beer;
But should he see green from your pockets,
He'll find comfort there too, never fear.

So..As our feed bag passes before you
Remember our story of need;
Your gold will buy oats for our dancers
And beer for our beautiful steed.

We hope we have lightened your heartache
With sweet po'try and rinaling bells;
And, since gold is the root of all evil,
Pray, lighten your purses as well.

If our doggerel rhyming sounds bogus,
We Pray you will not take offense;
Though sometimes our meaning escapes us,
We're here to make Dollars, not Sense.

*Sceptics will note that there really are large and famous limestone quarries in Bloomington, source of the stone for the Empire State Building and the top two-thirds of the Washington Monument...Substitute own side's name.

**refers to the Oliver Winery Hot Air Balloon. Any large object from your locality will do as a substitute.

Submitted by: Mark Feddersen, Scribe, Bloomington Quarry Morris (Under the Fish

NOTICE

Just in case you hadn't noticed, an article on the Marlboro Ale and Marlboro Morris Team appeared in the May 1981 edition of the Smithsonian Magazine. The colored pictures were spectacular especially those of the mass processionals.