

The Lichfield Morris Dances

facsimile reprint



The Lichfield Morris is unusual in that the dancers number eight, compared to the six of other parts of the country. The dances are virile, even wild, and possibly not as debased as many of their relatives. We have references to eight-man Morris dances being performed in Birmingham, Nantgarw (the potteries of which were staffed by South Staffordshire workmen) and Herefordshire. It would appear that the eight-man Morris was particular to the West Midlands.

“Although little mention of the Lichfield Morris is made in any works of reference, the Bower in which they played a prominent part (known either as the Greenhill Bower, from its location, or the Whitsun Bower, from its date) is held annually on Whit-Monday and is associated with the Court of Array, the yearly inspection of the military equipment as demanded by the Statute of Westminster in 1285. The Corporation and trade guilds, bearing evidence of their craftsmanship, with Morris dancers in attendance marched in procession to the Greenhill, where all men answering to their names were regaled with cakes and ale in the Bower-house which was erected and decorated with elm branches for the occasion.”

By 1884 the dancers had ceased to participate in the “Bower” ceremonies, but in 1890 a “bevy of boy dancers” from the Midland Truant School revived the dances and performed them to the music of the traditional flute. They ceased dancing in 1907, and the Morris was only performed intermittently up to 1936 when it finally disappeared.

The dances had been noted in 1898 and copies were made by the dancers. It was from certain of these that most of the dances have been reconstructed.

A contemporary revival has been made by the Lichfield Morris, and their dress consists of: Black Shoes, White Stockings with bells attached, Black Trousers, White Shirt with Green Over-jerkin and a White decorated Straw Hat.

There has been some mystery attached to the recovery of the dances and their music. Most of the dances and tunes were communicated anonymously by post and telephone, as the result of public appeals.

There is a very plausible reason for this. The last of the “traditional” dancers were boys of the Midland Truant School — what we would call a Reform School — and it would not be unnatural for them to want to avoid undesirable publicity about their distant past. Several notations were also made from patients of St. Matthews (Psychiatric) Hospital, Burntwood.

Note:

The dances and tunes that follow were collected and collated by Alex Helm and his associates. They were first published in the 1956 *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, in which can be found a full description and analysis of the dances by Alex Helm. The original manuscripts have unfortunately been lost since the date of their first publication and we appeal to anyone who might know of their whereabouts to get in touch with the EFDSS., at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park

MILLEY'S BEQUEST

Milley's Hospital stands in Beacon Street, Lichfield. Over the door a plaque reads 'This hospital for fifteen women was founded by Thomas Milley D.D., Canon Residentiary of the Cath. Church of Lichfield, 1504'.

The tune, 'The Wild Rose', was provided by the musician to the old team—by telephone.

Play AAB AB AB AB AB



Milley's Bequest. Morris dance performed by
the Lichfield men.

Tune:— The wild rose.

each man holding two sticks.

Double steps, swing backs to end movements,
with Galley over steps.

Movements as for the barefooted Quaker

2nd parts:—

hit ground with R. stick; butt end	} bar of music
partner " L. " " "	
" " R. tip " "	

repeat all that.

Side step R.
" " L.

Galley out.

last time to capers up.

CASTLERING

The Castling is a pre-Roman encampment and the highest point on the Cannock Chase. It was part of the Beaudesert Estate of the Marquis of Anglesey. On Good Fridays at the Castling Wakes, the Marquis distributed clothing to the poor, and the main events of the day were duck egging (a game with stones) and Morris dancing.

From the MSS. of the late Mr. Phillip Meacham.

Play A AB AB AB AAB

Castling. Morris Dance.

The tune is somewhat like Bobby Shafto, but especially altered in 2nd part

Handkerchieves with up & down movements, circling in capers

Double steps and gallay over to end movements.

Gallay over performed always in outward direction, commencing with outside foot, e.g. step wide to side with R foot, jump over it with L.ft. turning half about. Rt. Knee will now be bent with L ft. behind

Step to Rt. behind L Knee bent forward, and caper upright 2nd movements needing 4 capers.

- (1) Swagger round, gallay over at home places.
- (2) Heading up | without cross-over Steps and being in home
- (3) Heading down | places before the gallay over.
- (4) Back to back & into line performed both ways.
- (5) Hey

2nd parts performed 1st by 1. 2. 8. 7 2nd by 3. 4 5. 6 3rd by all together on the spot.

- (2) advance R.L. R.L stamping feet, Gallay over to places
- (3) advance with jump R in front L behind together Caper high feet apart sideways. together Repeat opposite feet, gallay over to place.
- (4) Advance R. L. R. back caper onto it L.R. L back, caper on to it. gallay over to places.
- (5) As in No. 1.
in second parts 1. 3. 6. 8 use opposite feet to the above.

The Castling is one of the five major dances using gallay over steps and must be executed with vigour.

THE SHERIFF'S RIDE



A Corporation Charter granted or confirmed by Charles II provided that 'the bailiffs and common councilmen shall annually on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (September 8th) perambulate the boundaries of the city and county of Lichfield and the precincts thereof'. This observance has been maintained unbroken since the reign of Queen Mary.

From the MSS. of the late Philip Meacham.

Play AB AB AB AB AAB

The Sheriff's Ride. Handkerchief Morris Dance.

June - The Wrangle Tangle Gypsies

Movements as overleaf, with up and down hand movements, arms outstretched for swing back steps.

Heading up and down includes crossover side-step Right and Left when in line.

Chorus twice after each movement

A. Two sharp handkerchief movements from shoulder level to face of opposite

B Repeat

All drop back R. L. Swing R foot back and caper forward on to it

Last time four capers up

Mr Manning

146 Field Lane

Boston on Trent



This was among the late Mr T. George's papers & hope it has some meaning for you

VANDALLS OF HAMMERWICH

... a certain heath was burnt by the villis of Hamerwich, to the injury of the King's game ...

Staffordshire Pleas of the Forest, 14th January, 1262. (See *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, Vol. V, part (i), page 136.)

Music: As for the Bower Processional, either tune.

Second Version—

Noted by F. C. Phillips. As remembered by many citizens.

Play ABB ABB ABB ABB AABB



Vandalls of Hammerwich Morris Dance
Tune:— The Bower

1. Swagger Round

2 4 6 8
3 5 7

2. Heading up.

2 4 6 8
3 5 7
1 3 5 7

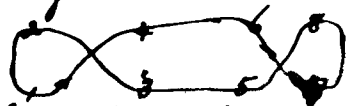
3. Heading down

2 4 6 8
1 3 5 7

4. Back to back and into line
performed both ways

Double footing
each movement ends
with swing back steps.

5. Hey



Chorus after each movement, performed twice.

2 4 6 8 2 4 6 8
1 A 3 A 5 A 7 1 B 3 B 5 B 7

Stride A

Stride B

Partners - three strides

Side Step R

Side Step L

3 Capers

THE BOWER PROCESSIONAL

Tune also used for 'The Vandalls of Hammerwich'.

First Version—

Collected from Mr. L. Parkes, leader of the British Legion Band, Lichfield; member of city band for 30 years.



1897-1934 Version of the Dance

Noted from Mr. T. Skelton (aged 36) in 1947.

Formation: 24 boys in six rows of four.

		Top			
A		1	1	2	2
B		1	1	2	2
A		1	1	2	2
B		1	1	2	2
A		1	1	2	2
B		1	1	2	2

Lines indicate centre of the road. There are A rows and B rows of odds and evens

Steps: Double steps as in Cotswold Morris. Walking steps.
Side-steps are open, e.g. when making side-step right, the right foot side-steps first.

Each boy carries two sticks, one in each hand, decorated with ribbons and bells. Sticks held upright and still, except at XX, when they are waved with an inward circling motion, during the movement.

- Fig. 1 (1 bar) Side-step L.
- (1 bar) Side-step R.
- (2 bars) XX Walk L.R.L.R. turning to the right.
- Fig. 2 (2 bars) A Rows: Side-step L. double step forward. } First time
- (2 bars) B Rows: Two double steps forward.
- (2 bars) XX All walk four steps back into line.
- (2 bars) A Rows: Two double steps forward. } Second time
- (2 bars) B Rows: Side-step right, double step forward.
- (2 bars) XX All walk four steps back into line.

The pattern of these two movements will be:—

		Top			
First time	A	1	1	2	2
	B	1	1	2	2
	A	1	1	2	2
	B	1	1	2	2
		Top			
Second time	A	1	1	2	2
	B	1	1	2	2
	A	1	1	2	2
	B	1	1	2	2

Lines indicate centre of the road.

RING O'BELLS

Play AB AB AAB B

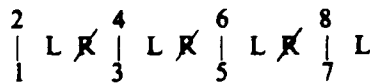


Ring O bells Morris Dance

Tune, Farewell Manchester.

Single Steps, each man with two sticks
swing back steps end each movement.

- Movements (1) . Dance around
(2) back to back and into line both ways.
(3) Hey.
(4) Heading out to finish stick striking after each movement.



A.



B.

one

- A. Strike R with R once
partners strike L with L once
B Strike R with R once
Partners strike L with L once

Repeat

Four capers turning out in a circle
Strike R hand mans, L stick 3 times





LICHFIELD "GREENHILL BOWER," ON WHIT-MONDAY.—THE PROCESSION CARRYING THE STATUE OF DR. JOHNSON.

ALL THE WINDS

"All the winds" Solo Morris dance.

there is no music to this dance; it is performed to the rattle of the bones. "pop goes the weazle" is whistled at practices. A hat is placed at each position elevated so the foot can slip under the brim.

1st parts.

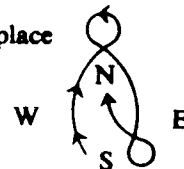
Start inside, double step twice, gally over, repeat to place

1st to N. followed by A.

2nd „ W. „ „ B.

3rd „ S. „ „ C.

4th „ E. „ „ D.



2nd parts

A to N. $\times \times$ jump. knees bend. hands on knees, thumbs outwards. Spring to L.

„ E. repeat

„ S. „

„ W. „

N.B. $\times \times$ = two very small jumps. hardly perceptible.

B to W. $\times \times$ jump high. soles of feet together, knees bent, arms out. Spring to L. ft

„ N. repeat

„ E. „

„ S. „

D to E. kick ft under hat. lift it waist high quickly place it on head.

„ S. repeat

„ W. „

„ N. „

and throw all the hats high in the air
Kick backwards first

SHEPHERD'S HEY

Play A AABB AAA BBB AAA BBB

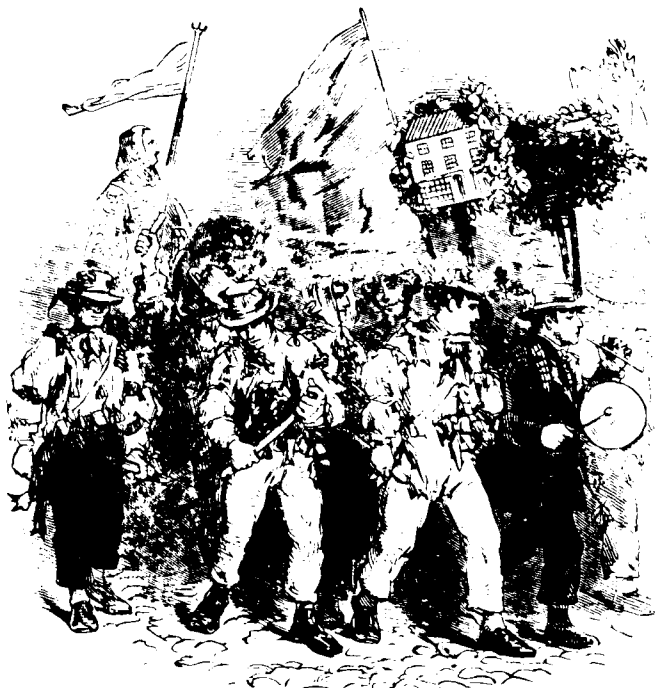


[This dance and 'Ring O'Bells' are both on the reverse of the sheet describing 'Nuts in May'].

Shepherd's Hey Morris Jig for Three Men
Shepherd's Hey Tunes

1
2 3

- (1) 1st part Double Step, twice R.L. R back Swing back.
caper onto R.
Repeat opposite feet
2nd part hold hands pushing in to centre Cross R
side step L Cross R sidestep L. R. L.
R back Caper onto R
Repeat opposite feet
- (2) 1st part As 1st part (1) with cross over steps.
2nd part 1st man turn out double step twice
2 and 3 join hands. Swing 1st man forward.
back, throw him forward but on his feet.
Repeat 2 and 3.
- (3) 1st part As first part No. 2
2nd part. 1st man only, double step twice, Caper R. together
hands on Shoulders of 2 and 3 Caper high, feet apart
pass through and all turn in with a caper
2nd and 3rd man Repeat.
Finish 3rd man held high



THE BAREFOOTED QUAKER

George Fox wrote in his *Journal* in 1651, 'I was commanded by the Lord of a sudden to untie my shoes and put them off . . . so I went, up and down the streets crying with a loud voice "Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield"'.

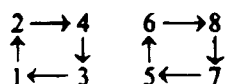
Play A AAB AAB AAB AAB AAB

A Once to yourself.

The Barefooted Quaker Morris Dance, also called the "Black Joker" which is the name of the music

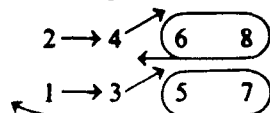
Handkerchief Dance, Double Stepping movements:—

- 1 Stepping in line, facing up
Gally over outward direction, caper to face down
Repeat in reverse direction
- 2 Back to back and into line
Performed both ways, swing back steps to places
- 3 Cross over four bars double step to partners place
Gally over, caper to face (upwards direction) Repeat
to places, Gally over downwards
- 4 Rounds



four bars, double stepping to opposite places.
four capers 1 - 4 and 5 - 8 cross home
in capers 1 and 2, 2 - 3 and 6 7 cross home
in capers 3 and 4
Repeat, reverse direction

- 5 Doubling up



1 2 3 4 face down, odds and evens moving in pairs around each other (in the manner of a back to back) swing back steps to places
2nd parts performed after each movement
side step movement forward & back to places, completed in two bars
1 - 4 and 5 - 8 back to back and home
2 - 3 and 6 - 7 back to back and home
caper R L Rt back, forward, caper on R
caper L R L back, " " L
(facing in)

Gally over and caper without turning and facing up

The gally over should be interpreted as an attempt to jump over your own leg
Swing back steps performed by two slight hops on one foot while the free foot swings wide and back

The body must not swing