

THE LICHFIELD MORRIS DANCES

It was whilst giving a Morris Show with the Men of Mercia at Lichfield on Coronation Day in 1953, that we conversed with one of the older inhabitants who was able to remember the dancing of the "Lichfield Bower Processional Dance". Final details were provided by the help of Mr. W. Everett of St. Matthew's Hospital, Burntwood.

The following year we performed the dance at Lichfield Bower on Whit Monday, as a result of which, I received an anonymous letter containing instructions on the performance of the "Vandalls of Hammerwich" and "The Sheriff's Ride", with the names of the tunes. About a fortnight later, Mr. Everett received the notation for "The Shepherd's Hey Jig, Ring o Bells, and Nuts in May" and this was followed in August by the "Castlering Morris Dance".

Much work, directed by Mr. Jack Brown was put into the interpretation of these dances, and in October 1954 three of the dances were performed at the Rag Folk Dance Festival of King's College, Newcastle (University of Durham), and in January 1955, three of them were performed at the Albert Hall Festival by the Men of Mercia.

Shortly before this, the notation for the "Barefooted Quaker" had been received by Mr. Tony Phillips after the tune had been piped over the phone to Mr. Everett. Last

year a further two dances were received by Mr. Everett:-
"Milley's Bequest" and a jig "All the Winds". Much help
over the arrangement of the tunes was given by Mrs. H.
Manning.

We understand that although the "Bower Dance" was
performed as late as 1932, the other dances have not been
danced publicly since 1903. Unfortunately we have been
unable to trace anyone who has danced in the original team,
or the person who has forwarded these dances anonymously.
We gather, however, that he was the musician.

The dances themselves have names associated with the
Lichfield District, and though they bear resemblances to
both Lancashire and Cotswold Morris, they have figures
peculiar to Lichfield. They are performed by a team of
eight men, plus the usual characters. The old manuscript
notes recovered, state that the dances should be performed
"with vigour". The positions of the dancers at the start
of each set dance is shown in Fig. 1.

LICHFIELD STEPS

There are three types of travelling step:- the single
(4/2), the double (4/3) and the swagger (walk). These are
as performed in Cotswold Morris. In addition, there are
special Lichfield capers, swing back steps, galley over
steps, and a scissors step.

The Lichfield Caper

This is performed starting either with the right or with the left foot. Starting with the right, the notation is:-

Caper on to R., caper on to L., swing right foot back bending a little at the knee, and land on the right. Arms are held easily outwards to the side (as in hockleback, Nutting Girl, Fieldtown). The movement can then be repeated starting with the left if required.

Lichfield Swing Back

This is used for settling back into place (as are the hop-backs in Cotswold Morris). Arms are held out as for the caper.

The right foot is swung wide and behind the left then the left is swung wide and behind right. Two slight hops are necessary on each foot. Usually this is done twice, making four movements in all. If the swing back ends a movement there are usually three swing-backs and a feet together. In these movements the body should not swing.

Gallay Over

This is always performed in the outwards direction by a step to the side on to the outside foot. The rest of the movement can be described as an attempt to jump over one's own leg! The movement finishes with two ordinary capers the whole step takes 4 beats.

The Gallay over can be performed through half $\frac{3}{4}$ or whole turn as in Cotswold Morris. If it is part of a "foot up to foot down" movement a feint step has to be inserted so that the second set of $\frac{4}{3}$ steps facing down begins on the outside foot. As for No. 1, the $\frac{1}{2}$ gallay over after foot up is:-

Step on to L, swing R over left leg and make half-turn, in doing so, landing on R. Two capers L and R and feint step on to the left to leave outside foot (Right) free for foot down.

After foot down there is a $\frac{3}{4}$ gallay over to bring the dancers facing front ready for the chorus.

After the chorus movements in The Barefooted Quaker and Milley's Bequest the gallay over is performed through a whole turn to the right for even numbers and to the left for odd numbers finishing facing front.

Scissor Step

This is exactly as performed at the end of movements in Brighton Camp (Eynsham).

LICHFIELD FIGURES.

Dance around and Swagger around

These are the opening figures of five of the set dances.

Both normally start on the right foot and the arms swing freely. Odd numbers make a clockwise and even numbers an anti-clockwise circle. Odd numbers are on the outside for the first half. (Fig.). These figures start immediately after a chord. There is no "once to yourself".

Dance around is used only for Ring o Bells and is performed with 4/2 (single) steps. There are 14 of these, followed by a spring and feet together the dancers finishing facing front in their original positions. Circuit as for above.

Swagger Around

This is performed with a jaunty walking step.

Vandalls of Hammerwich and Sheriff's Ride. 16 steps starting on the right foot.

Nuts in May. 12 steps starting on the right foot to half way place; scissor step facing down; 12 steps home; scissors facing up.

Castlering Morris Dance. Start on the outside foot for this dance only. There are 12 steps (the circle must be kept small). Finish with a gallay over.

Stepping in Line

This movement is what is usually known as "foot up" in Cotswold Morris. It is the opening figure in 2 of the dances, the Barefooted Quaker and Milley's Bequest and is preceded by a "once to yourself".

Come in at the end of the once to yourself with four

swing back steps, all dancers starting by swinging the outside foot back.

In the Barefooted Quaker 4 double $4/3$ steps are followed by a gallay over outwards through half a turn, the stepping is then performed facing down, starting with the outside foot (feint step required at the end of gallay over) and completed by a $3/4$ gallay over outwards to face front.

In Milley's Bequest there are only 2 double $4/3$ steps in place of the 4 as in "The Barefooted Quaker".

Heading up and Heading down

Four double ($4/3$) steps take the dancers to the first position (2) for heading up, or the first position (Fig. 3) for heading down. The dancers should be as close (shoulder to shoulder) as is possible giving room for arm movements. In the stepping to position and in the swing back, the inner men must be careful not to move much, or the outer men will find it difficult to reach their positions.

The Sheriff's Ride. Start on right foot. Four double ($4/3$) steps to first position (Fig. 2 or 3), cross over side step to the left with right foot over and to the right, with left foot over. Four swing back steps to places. During the two side steps the hands are used to swing handkerchiefs down and up in the usual Cotswold manner.

The Vandalls of Hammerwich. Start on right foot. Four double ($4/3$) steps to first position (Fig. 2 or 3). Four swing back steps to places ending with 2 capers and a

jump with feet together.

Castlering Dance. Start on the outside foot. Four double (4/3) steps to first position (Fig. 2 or 3). Four swing back steps to places starting with outside foot swinging. Gallay over in the outward direction.

Heading-out

This consists of two movements. The first taking the dancers into the first position as for heading up (Fig. 2), and the second to the second position (Fig. 4). It occurs in only two of the dances.

Ring o Bells. Start on the right foot. Four single (4/2) steps to first position (Fig. 2). Four swing back steps to places. Four single steps to second position (Fig. 4). Three capers to finish on right foot with sticks crossed above the head.

Nuts in May. Start on right foot. Four double steps (4/3) into first position. Four swing back steps to places. Scissors. Six double steps into second position. Four capers to finish on left foot.

Back to Back

The track of this figure is from places back to places each time, making the usual back to back movement (as in Bucknell) then returning to places with the swing back steps.

Vandalls of Hammerwich and Sheriff's Ride. Start on the right foot. One double (4/3) step forward, one double step to pass back to back, right shoulder crossing. Four

swing back steps to places. Repeat with left shoulder crossing, again starting with the right foot, but ending with three swing back steps followed by a jump with feet together.

Ring o Bells. Start on the right foot. Two single (4/2) steps forward, two single steps to pass back to back. Four swing back steps to places. Repeat with left shoulder crossing, again starting on right foot, but ending with two swing back steps and feet together, clashing sticks together above the head.

Castlering. Start on the right foot. One double (4/3) step forward; one double step to pass back to back. Four swing back steps. Repeat the movement with the left shoulder crossing, starting again with left foot. Gallay over stepping on the left foot.

The Barefooted Quaker. Start on the right foot. Four double (4/3) steps round opposite dancer (right shoulder crossing) and into line. Four swing backs into places. Four double steps back the other way and into line, four swing back steps to places.

Milley's Bequest. As for "The Barefooted Quaker" but two steps throughout instead of four.

Doubling Up

This figure occurs only in The Barefooted Quaker and in Milley's Bequest. It is similar to back-to-back but is performed by pairs of dancers. Start on the right foot

and face in the direction of the arrows. (Fig.). Each pair (2, 4 with 6, 8 and 1, 3 with 5, 7) performs a back-to-back (right shoulder crossing) using two double (4/3) steps to reach the first position (Fig. 6.). 2 & 8 pass back to back as do 1 & 7, the leading dancers (3, 4, 5, 6) keeping far enough ahead to allow of this. Two double steps (one forward and one back) bring the dancers to the second position (Fig. 7). The figure ends with three swing back steps and a feet together.

For Milley's Bequest there are only two double (4/3) steps in place of the two in The Barefooted Quaker.

Lichfield Hey

This figure is quite different from the Cotswold Morris Hey. The track is the same for all the dances in which it appears.

The figure is in four parts, each part consisting of two crossing movements and two slight pauses for each dancer. Each part therefore divides itself into four phrases.

1st phrase: 1 crosses right shoulder with 4
5 " " " " 8
2, 3, 6, 7 dance on the spot.

2nd phrase: 2 crosses right shoulder with 3
6 " " " " 7
1, 4, 5, 8 dance on the spot.

3rd phrase: 1 crosses left shoulder with 7
2 " " " " 8
3 " " " " 4
5 " " " " 6

4th phrase: All dancers dance on the spot in positions shown in Fig. 8b.

The movement is now repeated three times which brings the dancers back to their original positions. The first crossing is always in the "first corners" position (shown by dotted lines in Fig. 8).

Each phrase as described above consists of either two single (4/2) steps (Ring o Bells) or one double (4/3) step (starting the figure on the right foot). (Vandalls of Hammerwich, Sheriff's Ride, Castlering). The whole figure thus consists of 30 single steps or 15 double steps ending with jump and feet-together. The only exception is in Castlering where 1, 3, 6, 8, start on the left foot and 2, 5, 7 and 4 start on the right foot. There are only 14 double steps ending with a gallay over into place.

Cross Over

This occurs only in The Barefooted Quaker and Milley's Bequest. Cross over (right shoulder crossing) with 4 double (4/3) (only two in Milley's Bequest) steps to partner's place. Gallay over upward direction (to the right for even numbers and to the left for odd numbers) to face front.

Repeat the cross over (right shoulder crossing again) to places, the gallay over this time being in the downward direction.

Rounds.

This figure is again peculiar to The Barefooted Quaker and Milley's Bequest. The top four men and the bottom four move round to opposite places with 4 double (4/3) (two in

Milley's Bequest) steps:-

1	passes through	2's	position to	4's	place.
2	"	"	4's	"	" 3's "
3	"	"	1's	"	" 2's "
4	"	"	3's	"	" 1's "
5	"	"	6's	"	" 8's "
6	"	"	8's	"	" 7's "
7	"	"	5's	"	" 6's "
8	"	"	7's	"	" 5's "

From the new position each man performs 4 ordinary capers and finishes in his own place as follows:-

1 and 4 and 5 and 8 cross home on capers 1 and 2
2 and 3 and 6 and 7 " " " " 3 and 4

When not crossing the men do two capers on the spot.

Repeat the whole figure in the opposite direction.

THE DANCES

- Group A The Vandalls of Hammerwich (Stick Dance)
 The Sheriff's Ride (Handkerchief Dance)
- Group B The Barefooted Quaker (Handkerchief)
 Milley's Bequest (Double Sticks)
- Group C Ring o Bells (Double Sticks)
- Group D Castlerring (Handkerchief)
- Group E Shepherd's Hey (Jig for 3)
- Group F Nuts in May (Stick)

Group A. The figures in Vandalls of Hammerwich and in

The Sheriff's Ride are:-

Swagger-round (p.)
Heading up (p.)
Heading down (p.)
Back-to-back (p.)
Hey (p.)

In these figures the dancers carry one stick in the right hand loosely by the side (The Vandalls) or a handkerchief in each hand used in a sharp up-and-down movement, as in Cotswold Morris (approaching the Bucknell style).

The distinctive chorus movements which are performed between the figures and at the end of the dance are:-

The Vandalls of Hammerwich (Chorus)

Face Front.

Strike across A (Fig. 9a) Note that 2 and 7 make the movement of striking into the air to maintain the pattern).

Strike across B (Fig. 9b) Note that 1 and 8 make the air striking movement.

Partners strike sticks three times

Side step to the right

Side step to the left

Three ordinary capers

On the last chorus face up and strike sticks across with opposite as in Cotswold Morris.

The Sheriff's Ride (Chorus)

Face front

Two sharp handkerchief movements at shoulder level towards