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THE PERSHORE MORRIS

A Review of Dance Notations Graham Baldwin Vancouver Morris Men

Pershore is a town in the English South Midlands, in the county of Worcestershire, situated on the River Avon half way between Worcester and Evesham.

The Morris in Pershore appears to have been first reported formally in 1928 by Maud Karpeles, whose informants were a Mr. Cosnett and a Mr. Annis. Karpeles reported that the dancers went out every Christmas until 1924 or 1925. They wore any kind of old clothes decorated with ribbons, and some even wore women's clothes. Only the Fool blacked his face, and he had a bell on each knee. There were eight dancers, four per side. In one move, the bottom pair cast out and danced to the top of the set while the other six moved together into a single line. They danced with short sticks, hitting first tips, from right to left, and then butts, from left to right.

In 1963, E.C. Cawte published information provided by Jesse Salisbury in 1893. Cawte reported that the Pershore team was remembered at Christmas in the 1840's and later years. There were six or eight dancers decorated with ribbons, and that the Fool had a bladder, wooden spoon and a hidden bell. Music was by mouth organ and drum. There were several dances, some stick hitting and some waving coloured handkerchiefs. Cawte also reported that Sharp's manuscript indicated that the dancing in Pershore stopped in 1890.

In 1974, Lionel Bacon published notes for two Pershore dances: a stick dance and a handkerchief dance. He relied primarily on Cawte's reporting, Roy Dommett's interpretation of the Karpeles and Sharp material and additional comments by Dommett. These additional comments were based on information from two personal informants made in the early 60's; the best one, a Mr. Jones from Pershore, reported that the stick tapping was vigorous, the handkerchiefs were waved in large horizontal circles over the head, and that there were many different figures. Dommett also reported the use of the fiddle, concertina, tin whistle, tambourine, triangle and bones as musical instruments. The two dances assembled by Bacon are very similar, and include two cast moves, a cross over move, and a hey to the top move.

In 1978, Dave Jones assembled additional unpublished notes on the Pershore dances. (One is tempted to wonder if he is related to Dommett's informant from the early 60's.) In these notes, Jones indicates that the evidence of Messrs. Cosnett and Annis agrees substantially both with each other and with that given by Cawte (from Jesse Salisbury). Jones taught these two Pershore dances to his side at that time, the Silurian Morris Men, who still perform them to this day.

In October 1985, a year after he ceased dancing with Silurian MM, Jones was introduced to Bill Scarrott, who danced with a side known as the Pershore Not-for-Joes before World War 1. Indeed, according to Scarrott, the dance performance was known as "No' fo' Joeing". Scarrott proved to be a very informative source on the Pershore dances, and provided Jones with considerable additional comment on their form and nature, all of which is documented in Jones' booklet "The Roots of Welsh Border Morris". Scarrott died in 1986, but not before Jones had shown him some dance moves he had re-constructed based on Scarrott's comments, and received Scarrott's approval of their historical authenticity. Jones subsequently formed a new side, Old Wonder Not-for-Joes, with the intention of focusing on the development of a suite of Pershore dances, based on Scarrott's evidence.

In 1990, the Vancouver Morris Men met with Old Wonder Not-for-Joes at the Butcher's Arms at Woolhope, Herefordshire, where Old Wonder performed six stick dances, all based on Scarrott's information. Old Wonder's performance was captured on video. Old Wonder was a unique side with a very casual style, who membership included Jones' schoolboy son, Gareth, and many of his school friends, while Jones and the rest of his family provided much of the music. They wore black trousers, coloured shirts with long ribbons, floppy hats and had their faces blackened.

In 1991, Jones died, leaving Old Wonder without its mentor. Old Wonder continued to dance, albeit somewhat rarely, until 1993 under the leadership of Jones' widow, Annie. The side's main venue was the annual Bromyard festival. However, many of the boys, who had formed a significant proportion of the Old Wonder side, eventually moved on to college and careers elsewhere. One or two of the older dancers eventually joined Silurian MM and still dance with them. However, Silurian MM have never performed Scarrott's Pershore dances. Recognizing that these dances may be lost, the Vancouver MM decided to focus on them.

While Jones' booklet is considered one of the essential sources of information on traditional Welsh Border Morris, it does not contain notation for all of the Pershore dances. This article is intended to fill this void, and ensure that the Pershore dances, as interpreted by Dave Jones, mostly from the evidence supplied by Bill Scarrott, will be available for all to enjoy well into the future.

Since the Vancouver MM have been performing the Pershore dances for over seven years, there is no doubt that we have added our own additional "layer" of interpretation to Jones' material. Indeed, we did not know the names of some moves, and were thus obliged to invent names. We also found some of the known names of moves to be confusing and, in the interests of simplicity (an unfortunate, but necessary, requirement for the Vancouver MM!), modified them. The "free form" style of dancing, in which the caller can call any move during the dance, can also be quite challenging, particularly for beginners. We have also added some additional verses to some of the songs.

For music, the Vancouver MM use a band wherever possible comprising melodeon, tuba, trombone, banjo, whistle and various percussion instruments such as drum, triangle and tambourine.

The Vancouver MM can be seen performing the Pershore dances routinely in Vancouver BC between the months of October and March each year. We also performed these dances during our 1994 England tour at Saddleworth Rushcart, Chester, Goathland and Carlisle.

DANCE FEATURES

The distinguishing dance feature of the stick dances is the style of "napping" (or stick clashing). According to Scarrott, the dances were "free form" - any move could be called between the napping sequences. In the words of Dave Jones, "the figures danced were always those called at the time, so there was never any one set way of performing a dance..."

From the Vancouver MM's experience, the lack of structure in the free form style was found to be confusing. Therefore, we decided to apply a rudimentary structure and fix certain moves to certain dances. Indeed, it is only in the last year that we have begun dancing truly free form. Hence, the sequences presented herein are those adopted by the Vancouver MM purely in the interests of simplicity. Those sides interested in performing the Pershore dances in the traditional free form way are encouraged to do so. Good luck!

FEATURES COMMON TO ALL DANCES

Set

8 dancers in a longways set facing front (i.e. across the set, facing partners), thus:

Each dancer changes his position in the set continuously throughout each dance, and will not necessarily finish the dance in the original position. Thus, all dancers need to know all positions.

Step:

Single step throughout, right foot lead, knees up

Bottom to Top/Half Hands:

Dancers in positions 1 through 6 form a single line, right shoulders, while dancers in positions 7 and 8 cast out and dance to the top of the set. On the first beat of the last bar, the casting dancers occupy positions 1 and 2, while the dancers in line step back and down the set to re-form the standard 8-man set, now with a new top couple in positions 1 & 2.

Half Cross-Over:

Partners cross over passing right shoulders, turning right and returning to partners position.

FEATURES COMMON TO THE STICK DANCES

Sticks:

One short stick is held in each dancer's right hand

Once to Yourself (OTY):

For stick dances, tap sticks (R > L) on last beat. (Also, tap sticks like this on last beat of every figure.)

Napping:

(Stick clashing)

Different napping styles identify the dances. Stepping continues throughout napping.

Wheel:

Clockwise rotation of entire set while napping.

Full Cross-Over:

Partners cross over passing right shoulders, turning right and returning to pass right shoulders again with a leap, yell and clash of sticks on beat 8 (half-way through the music sequence), turning right again to return to original places.

Back-to-Back:

Standard morris back-to-back feature, passing partners right shoulder first, moving to right and backing up passing left shoulders with partners to return to original place, stick clash, repeat by left shoulders.

Hands Round:

Transfer sticks to left hand, link right arms with partner and circle round to right, with sticks held out in left hands. Halfway through the music, switch sticks to right hand, link left arms and return to original place.

Long Corners:

Corners switch places, passing right shoulders, in the following order: 1 with 8 followed by 2 with 7, then back again - i.e. 1 with 8 followed by 2 with 7 again. Half way through (i.e. after 2 switches with 7 the first time), all clash sticks with partners.

Short Corners:

Corners switch places, passing right shoulders, in the following order: 1 with 8, 2 with 7, 3 with 6, 4 with 5. Half way through (i.e. after 2 switches with 7), all clash sticks with partners.

The Dash:

Dancers 2 and 8, and 4 and 6 switch places, as follows:

2 moves in front of 8, then 8 moves to position 2 (and 2 steps back to position 8). All clash sticks with partners.

4 moves in front of 6, then 6 moves to position 4 (and 4 steps back to position 6).

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The Mad Dash:

This is similar to the Dash, but occurs twice as fast (i.e. within 8 bars) and involves both sides of the set, one after the other.

Dancers 2 and 8, and 4 and 6 switch places, as follows:

2 moves in front of 8, then 8 moves to position 2 (and 2 steps back to position 8).

4 moves in front of 6, then 6 moves to position 4 (and 4 steps back to position 6).

All clash sticks with partners.

Dancers 1 and 7, and 3 and 5 switch places, as follows:

1 moves in front of 7, then 7 moves to position 1 (and 1 steps back to position 7).

3 moves in front of 5, then 5 moves to position 3 (and 3 steps back to position 5).

Zig-Zag (Scarrott called this move "Dance Across"):

Initiated by the dancer in position 1, this is a sequence of position changes where each dancer "pushes out" another dancer from that dancers position. Sequence is as follows:

1>4 4>5 5>8 8>7 7>6 6>3 3>2 2>7

Each move is typically accompanied by a grunt.

Rounds (Scarrott called this move "Circles"):

In Whole Rounds, dancers go clockwise around set to original positions. In Half Rounds, dancers go half way around, clash stick tips with partners, then return anticlockwise to original places

Three Times Round Your Dad:

Dancers in positions 1, 3, 5 and 7 dances three times around their respective partners (in positions 2, 4, 6 and 8).

Three Times Round Your Son:

Dancers in positions 2, 4, 6 and 8 dances three times around their respective partners (in positions 1, 3, 5 and 7)

Longing Shank:

On the first beat of the first bar, the dancer in position 7 sets off to dance up the outside of the set (often travelling some way from the set). The objective is to give this dancer the opportunity to "show off" his dancing ability - so improvisation is encouraged. The dancer returns down the middle of the set (from the top end) to occupy position 5 on the penultimate beat of the 8 bar music sequence. (The last beat is used for the OTY stick clash.)

Meanwhile, all the other dancers move one position to their left (i.e. in a clockwise direction), one after the other, on the first beat of each bar, initiated by the dancer in position 5, who starts on the first beat of the second bar. Each dancer lunges forward and to the side (with a grunt), in front of the position about to be occupied, and falls back into that position as soon as it is vacated (i.e. on the first beat of the subsequent bar).

Bicycle Chain from the Top:

A full reel for each column, initiated by dancers in positions 1 and 2 who begin facing down the set, while other dancers start by facing up. 1 passes right shoulders with 3, left shoulders with 5, and right shoulders with 7. Simultaneously, 2 passes right shoulders with 4, left shoulders with 6, and right shoulders with 8. All turn right at the ends of the set. The dancers starting in positions 1, 2, 3 and 4 return to their original places, while the dancers in positions 5 & 7, and 6 & 8 switch places. Another way to remember this is that the dancers in positions 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 progress 6 places, while the dancers in positions 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 progress 5 places.

Bicycle Chain from the Bottom:

As for Hey from the Top, but initiated by the dancers in positions 7 & 8.

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Apples:

Simultaneously:

- 1 dances three times round 5 and drops back to no.6's position
- 3 dances three times round 7 and drops back to no. 8's position
- 8 dances three times round 4 and drops back to no. 3's position
- 6 dances three times round 2 and drops back to no. 1's position.

Pears:

Simultaneously:

- 2 dances three times round 6 and drops back to no. 5's position
- 4 dances three times round 8 and drops back to no. 7's position
- 7 dances three times round 3 and drops back to no. 4's position
- 5 dances three times round 1 and drops back to no. 5's position.

Apples and Pears:

Both Apples and Pears movements performed simultaneously.

Diamonds:

Simultaneously:

- 1 dances three times round 2
- 4 dances three times round 6
- 8 dances three times round 7
- 5 dances three times round 3.

On the first step, 6 and 3 move back to make the diamond shape. Otherwise 2, 6, 7 and 3 dance on the spot.

FEATURES COMMON TO THE HANDKERCHIEF DANCE

Handkerchiefs:

Two handkerchiefs, one in each hand.

Wave – circular waving over the head in a flat plane, right hand anticlockwise, left hand clockwise.

Performed when dancing on the spot (i.e. not travelling)

Swing – arms swinging freely, up high (above the head) and down (behind the waist), in front of the body (right arm up when left foot is up, and left arm up when right foot is up, etc.) Performed when travelling.

Once to Yourself (OTY):

No action (other than optional singing).

Face Across:

All dancing in position, facing front, waving handkerchiefs.

Half Hey from the Bottom:

A half reel for each column, initiated by dancers in positions 7 and 8 who begin facing up the set, while other dancers start by facing down. 7 passes right shoulders with 5, left shoulders with 3, and right shoulders with 1. Simultaneously, 8 passes right shoulders with 6, left shoulders with 4, and right shoulders with 2. The dancers in positions 7 & 8 and 5 & 6 advance 3 places (so that 7 & 8 are now at the top of the set), while the dancers in positions 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 advance 2 places.

Bottom to Top/Wave:

Dancers in positions 1 through 6 continue stepping and waving, while the dancers in positions 7 & 8 cast out and dance up the outside of the set, arms swinging, to occupy positions 1 and 2.

THE DANCES

JOHN PEEL

Tune: John Peel (time signature 2/4)

This dance starts off with singing (without music) in the OTY.

OTY: The words to the song, the first two lines of which were reported by Bill Scarrott, are reproduced below. They are not the commonly reported words to this well-known tune, and appear to be rather typical "morris doggerel":

> "Ken John Peel at the break of day His horse stood still and he ran away You can hear him cry out all the day As the fox chase the hounds in the morning"

Partners strike tips from right to left (R > L) as follows (2 beats to the bar): Napping:

```
Beat 1
                       5
                           6
             3
Step R hr L
           hl R hr L
                    hlRhrLhlRhrLhl
               T T
Nap T
         Т
             Т
                       Т
                           Т
Beat 9
         10
             11
                  12
                       13
                           14
Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl
             T T T
                       Т
Nap T
         Т
                           Т
                                Т
                                  ТТ
```

Sequence:	OTY with singing	Music:	(A)
	Napping		Α
	Wheel		В
	Napping		Α
	Bicycle chain from the Top		В
	Napping		Α
	Full Cross-Over		В
	Napping		Α
	Bicycle chain from the Botton	n	В
	Napping		Α
	Short Corners		В
	Napping		Α
	Bicycle chain from the Top		В
	Napping with singing		Α

GIRL WITH THE BLUE DRESS ON

Tune: Girl With the Blue Dress On (time signature: 2/4)

Napping: For the first four bars, odds strike evens (tips, forward F and Back B).

For the second four bars, evens strike odds (tips, forward F and Back B) as follows:

```
Beat 1
          2
                          5
                               6
                                          8
               3
Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl
Nap F
          В
               F B F
                          В
                               F
                                    B F B
```

(odds on evens)

```
Beat 9
         10
              11
                   12
                        13
                             14
                                  15
                                      16
Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl
Nap F
         В
              F B F
                        В
                             F
                                 B F B
(evens on odds)
```

Sequence: OTY Music: (A)

Napping Α В Wheel Α **Napping Short Corners** В **Napping** Α Back to Back В **Napping** Α Short Corners В **Napping** Α Three times round your Dad В Napping Α Short Corners В Napping Α В Whole Rounds

THE ASH GROVE

Tune: The Ash Grove (time signature: 6/8)

There are many words to the Ash Grove tune which can be sung during the OTY – those interested can find them all on the Web at http://www.wco.com/~gailg/ashgrove/. However, probably most in keeping with the supposed "degenerate" nature of Welsh Border is the fairly vulgar "Major of Bayswater's Daughter", available on the Web at http://www.wco.com/~gailg/ashgrove/mbd.html.

Napping: 8 clashes in sequences of 2 with different partners, as follows:

2 clashes: 1 with 2, 3 with 4, 5 with 6, 7 with 8 2 clashes: 1 with 3, 2 with 4, 6 with 8, 5 with 7 2 clashes: 1 with 2, 3 with 5, 4 with 6, 7 with 8 2 clashes: 1 with 2, 3 with 4, 5 with 6, 7 with 8

Dancers turn to face each clashing partner in turn, and all clash tips (R > L)

Stars: 3-man Stars at both the top and bottom of the set, with the remaining 2 dancers in the middle doing half of a Hands Round (i.e. going one way, clockwise, only), as follows:

Top Star: 1, 2 and 3
Bottom Star: 6, 7 and 8
Middle Hands Round: 4 and 5

All dancers end this sequence by taking up the next position clockwise around the set, as follows:

1 moves to 2 2 moves to 4

```
4 moves to 6
6 moves to 8
8 moves to 7
7 moves to 5
5 moves to 3
3 moves to 1
```

Then, all dancers clash stick tips (R > L) with their new partners on the last beat of the bar.

Sequence:	OTY (with optional singing)	Music:	(A)
	Napping – Stars		В
	Napping – Stars		В
	Half Rounds		Α
	Napping – Stars		В
	Napping – Stars		В
	Full Cross-Over		Α
	Napping – Stars		В
		В	
	Half Rounds		Α
	Napping – Stars		В
	Napping – Stars		В

At the end of the dance, all dancers will have moved completely around the set and will be back at their starting positions.

SAILOR'S POLKA

Tune: Sailor's Polka (time signature: 2/4)

Napping: For the first four bars, odds strike evens (tips, forward F and Back B).

For the second four bars, evens strike odds (tips, forward F and Back B) as follows:

```
Beat 1
          2
                         5
                              6
Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl
Nap F B F
               B F B
                         F B F
(odds on evens)
               11
                    12
                         13
                                    15
Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl
Nap F B F
               B F B
                         F B F
                                   B F B
(evens on odds)
```

Sequence:	Napping Longing Shank Napping Full Cross-Over Napping Longing Shank	Music:	(A) A B A B A B
	Napping		12
	Three times round your Dad Napping		B A
	Longing Shank		В
	Napping		Α

Whole Rounds В

THE BLACK BOY

Tune: *Not for Joe* (time signature: 2/4).

> Norman Stanfield (of the Vancouver MM) discovered that this Not for Joe tune (which is quite different to the one reported in Bacon for the Much Wenlock dance) is an apparent derivation of a quite well known music hall era tune "Not for Joseph", composed by Arthur Lloyd, a minor figure in the English music hall. Arthur Lloyd's version can be found in the Harold Scott's English Song Book (1925).

Bill Scarrott reported many variations on Lloyd's original chorus, but did not report any tune or words for the verse. Old Wonder sang one of Scarrott's chorus variations when they danced. The Vancouver MM sing Lloyd's original verse with one of Scarrott's chorus variations tacked on.

Old Wonder also used the Not for Joe chorus tune, plus singing, as a final Rounds and Dance Off at the end of whatever was their final dance.

The full song is as follows:

During the OTY: "Joseph Baxter is my name, My friends all call me Joe (Music A - Verse) I'm up you know to everything, and everything I know

Ah, but I was green as green can be, I suffered for it though

Now if they try it on with me, I tell them Not for Joe"

During the 1st, 2nd & final Napping: (Music B - 1st half of Chorus) During the 1st Half Rounds: (Music C - 2nd half of Chorus) "Not for Joe, Not for Joe, Not for Joseph if he knows it Not for Joe, Not for Joe, Stick him the garden let him grow"

"If I had a penny, I'd buy a penny gun

Fill it full of powder, and make the buggers run"

The tune with the words, as performed by the Vancouver MM, is included as Appendix A.

Napping: All tips, but alternating, with odds striking evens first (O), followed by evens striking odds (E). The recipients hold their sticks up in front with one hand.

> Beat 1 4 6 Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl Nap O Ε 0 Ε 0 Ε 0 Song Not for Joe Not for Joe Not for Joseph if he knows it

Beat 9 12 10 11 13 14 15 16 Step R hr L hl R hr L hl R hr L hl Nap O Е 0 Е 0 Е 0 Ε Song Not for Joe Stick... garden let him grow Not for Joe

Sequence: OTY Music: (A) singing only

Napping B with singing Half Rounds C with singing B with singing Napping

С Zig-Zag В Napping Back-to-Back С В Napping

Zig-Zag	С	
Napping	В	
Short Corners	С	
Napping	В	
Zig-Zag	С	
Napping	В	with singing

MONKEY COCKED HIS TAIL UP

Tune: The Keel Row(time signature: 4/4).

This is the basic "Pershore Stick Dance", virtually as reported before Jones met Scarrott. The "Monkey..." name is Scarrott's – he also specified that the stepping should be continuous throughout the dance.

There are well-known words to the tune *The Keel Row* which can be sung for the OTY. Those interested can find them on the web at http://www.acronet.net/~robokopp/english/asicathr.htm.

Napping: Alternating tips (R > L) and butts (L > R), with a strong emphasis on the tips, as follows:

Beat	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
Step	R	hr	L	hl												
Nap	Т		В		Т		В		Т		В		Т		В	

This napping style is referred to by Scarrott as "double batting".

Sequence:	OTY	Music:	(A)
•	Napping		À
	Half Cross-Over		В
	Napping		Α
	Half Cross-Over		В
	Bottom to Top/Half Hands		Ā
	Bottom to Top/Half Hands		В
	Napping		A
	Half Cross-Over		В
			A
	Napping		
	Half Cross-Over	,	В
	Hands Round (1 st half - right arr	ns)	Α
	Hands Round (2 nd half - left arm	ıs)	В
	Napping		Α
	Half Cross-Over		В
	Napping		Α
	Half Cross-Over		В
	Dash (1 st half)		Α
	Dash (2 nd half)		В
	Napping		Α
	Half Cross-Over		В
	Napping		Ā
	Half Cross-Over		В

THE HANDKERCHIEF DANCE

Tune: Kafoozalum (time signature: 4/4)

This is the basic "Pershore Handkerchief Dance", as reported before Jones met Scarrott. Old Wonder were not seen performing this dance.

There are words to the tune *Kafoozalum* which can be sung for the OTY. The Vancouver men sing the following delightful ditty, gleaned from Carlisle Morris & Sword during their 1994 England tour:

"Old Mrs. Huddledee, Came to bed to cuddle me Threw her right leg over me, To keep her belly warm-O".

There is a repeated Distinctive Feature in this dance, as follows:

Distinctive Feature: Face Across Half Cross-Over B
Face Across A
Half Cross-Over B

The full dance sequence, including the Distinctive Feature outlined above, is as follows:

Sequence: OTY Music: (A) Singing Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B Half Hey from the Bottom Α Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B Bottom to Top/Half Hands Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B Half Hey from the Bottom Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B Bottom to Top/Wave Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B Half Hey from the Bottom Distinctive Feature A/B/A/B

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Appendix A

Not For Joe

(As performed by the Vancouver Morris Men)

"Not For Joseph" was written and composed by Arthur Lloyd. It can be found in Harold Scott's 1925 English Song Book. The Verse below is directly from Lloyd's composition. The Chorus is a modification of Lloyd's composition, as performed by Old Wonder Not for Joes in 1990, and transcribed by Norman Stanfield.



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Old Wonder Not for Joes, circa. 1990 - Dave Jones in the middle, with accordion