Cogs & Wheels Ladies Morris

**Dancers Handbook**

3rd Edition

2017 update

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While I have endeavoured to be accurate with the contents of this handbook it is my interpretation and understanding.

These are not rules, merely guidelines to help dancers with the ‘bigger picture’.

I hope that you will find this booklet useful, informative and interesting. If you have any comments/corrections/additions please let me know.

Fiona

A brief history of Cogs and Wheels Ladies Morris

In the beginning:

Cogs and Wheels Ladies Morris started in 1996. There were 9 of us – Brenda Tombs, Fiona Elsworth, Libby Watson, Sallie Reason, Shirley Denford, Sue Pritchard, Yvonne Reason and Shelagh Palmer. Later that year Annabel and Audrey joined. After seeing Heather and Gorse dance at Finch Foundry St Clems Day Brenda and Yvonne thought ‘we could do that’, so we asked Shelagh and Mike to come and teach us. The silhouette image previously used on our programme and poster shows 6 of the original dancers 1 & 2 are Shelagh and Shirley, in the middle at 3 & 4 are Libby and Fiona, and at the end in 5 & 6 are Sallie and Yvonne.

We began our practices in the gallery of Finch Foundry. The floor was a bit bouncy and the display screens would dip in and out as we danced. The people working in the shop the next day would comment on the level of dust we generated. Mike was our solo musician as well as Foreman, ably assisted by Shelagh. Our first dances were Jenny Jones, Haste to the Wedding, Shepherd’s Hey, Bumpus o’ Stretton and even Bonny Green Garters. Our kit was discussed by us all and decided upon – to reflect the colours of Dartmoor; then there was a workshop for those who could attend and skirts, waistcoats and blouses were made. Most of the hankies were hand-stitched by Yvonne’s mum.

Officials and musicians over the years:

Squire – Yvonne, Jenny, Margaret, Shelagh, Sallie, Pam, Alison, Ania, Ann

Assistant Squire Margaret, Christine, Pam, Alison, various

Bag – Shelagh, Fiona, Shelagh, Alison, Alexa, Enid, Ann, Janet, Debbie

Assistant Bag- Shelagh, Alexa, Alison, Alexa, Libby W

Ragbag – Lyn, Christine, Sarah

Treasurer – Brenda, Libby, Pam, Anne

Archivist – Brenda, Liz & Ania

Publicity- Alexa

Foreman – Mike, Fiona, Ania

Assistant foreman – Shelagh, Fiona, Mike

Musicians – Mike, Shirley & Dave Denford, Morris, Dora, James,

Mick Bond, Mike Webber, Jacqui, Derek, Sally, Kim, Di, Fiona

As a group we have generally danced close to home. With new blood has come the desire to be more adventurous and we have enough dancers who want to go to festivals and enjoy performing more often than merely Thursday evening at a nearby pub. Our practice venue has moved from Finch Foundry, to Church House, to Sticklepath Village Hall and currently at South Zeal Victory Hall. We have also used The Methodist Church Hall in Okehampton, Throwleigh Village Hall, Whiddon Down Village Hall and Meldon Village Hall.

In 2001 we held our ‘Grand Day Out’ to celebrate 5 years of dancing. The invited sides all came! Winkleigh Morris, Wreckers Morris, Raddon Hill Clog Morris. In 2006 we hosted ‘A Decadent Day Out’ to celebrate 10 years. This time we needed 2 coaches for our invited sides.

Other events have included workshop weekends with Sompting Village Morris when we concentrated on Maids of the Mill and Portsmouth, then Old Molly Oxford; a day workshop to learn ‘Banks of the Dee’; a day with Wreckers; a weekend with Beltane.

We have managed a tour to foreign lands when in 2009 several members went to France and again to France in 2017 when we joined in the twinning visit.

2010 - 2011 was a sad season for us. Our Squire Sallie fell victim to cancer at such an early age, depriving us of many years of fine leadership. We also said a sad farewell to Jeanette’s husband Terry after he too was claimed. This inspired Alexa to celebrate a significant birthday through a massive fundraising event for FORCE (Exeter based cancer support charity). On a weekend in May we were sponsored to walk and dance from Sticklepath to Launceston Castle. We called this event ‘ Westward Hey!’ We raised over £7000 during the year. We were supported by several other sides, received lots of publicity and many sides donated their yearly collections to us for FORCE. We were struck again when Shelagh, our founder foreman/squire/bag and leader was taken from us. And then in 2017 we again had to support each other when Di was taken. Fiona has written several dances in memory of much missed members.

If you want to know more, or just reminisce then look at the vast archive that Brenda has kept. (Generally available at AGMs).

The origins of The Morris

William Kempe Morris dancing from London to Norwich in 1600

Before the English Civil War the working peasants always danced, especially at Whitsun; but the Puritan Government of Oliver Cromwell suppressed Whitsun Ales and other such festivities. When Charles II took the throne he restored springtime festivals (which coincided with his birthday).

Morris dancing has been traced through the Industrial Revolution. Four teams claim to have continued dancing since this time – Abingdon, Bampton, Headington Quarry and Chipping Campden.

The revival and recording of Morris dancing has been claimed by several people including Cecil Sharpe, Maud Karpeles and Mary Neal. Morris as we know it is reputed to have begun on Boxing Day 1899 when Cecil Sharpe collected several tunes from Headington Quarry’s musician William Kimber. Mary Neal’s Esperance Club for young women in London began performing the dances and ten years later, prompted and assisted by Mary Neal, Cecil Sharpe began collecting dances.

At the beginning of the 20th century several men’s sides formed and in 1934 the Morris Ring was founded. There was an increase in sides in the 1960s and 1970s, some of them mixed and some women’s sides. At this time there was ‘heated debate’ over women dancing the Morris; an outcome of this was the formation of The Morris Federation and Open Morris. All three now co-operate on some issues but maintain their distinct identities.

Cogs and Wheels are members of the Morris Federation. Through the Federation we have personal injury insurance. Our Bag has done a full Health and Safety Risk Assessment for the side.

Who does what?

The titles of officers will vary from side to side, but most sides have at least the following:

* The role of the **Squire** varies. In some sides the squire is the leader, who will speak for the side in public, usually lead or *call* the dances, and often decide the programme for a performance. In other sides the Squire is more of an administrator, with the Foreman taking the lead, and the dances called by any experienced dancer.
* The **Foreman** teaches and trains the dancers, and is responsible for the style and standard of the side's dancing.
* The **Bagman** is traditionally the keeper of the **bag** — that is to say, the side's funds. In some sides today the Bagman acts as secretary (particularly bookings secretary) and there is often a separate treasurer.
* In some sides a **Ragman** manages and co-ordinates the team's **kit** or costume. This may include making bell-pads, ribbon pads, sashes and other accoutrements.

Cogs and Wheels:

**Our Squire** decides what dances we will do and who will do them. During the ‘dance out’ season the Squire makes all the decisions about who does what, when, where and how – this is based on observations of the dancers during the practice season so that strengths and preferences are taken into account, which is why the Squire watches you when you are dancing! The Squire liaises with other Squires at joint stands and festivals etc. The Squire ‘calls’ the dances when she is dancing.

**Our Bag** is the secretary of the side. She takes bookings and presents information to the side during Bag Sessions, which take place every time the side come together during both practice season and when dancing out. The Bag draws up the programme for dancing out following consultation with the side. The Bag Session happens in the middle of the practice or at the end of dancing out and is vital to the smooth running of the side. The Bag maintains the data base of address/email/phone number/birthday etc. The Bag provides a ‘sign up’ sheet for all stands other than weekly pub stands, which is passed to the Squire shortly before the stand.

**Our Foreman** is the instructor/teacher for the side. The Foreman, in consultation with the Squire, Bag and members, decides which dances will be chosen for the season. The Foreman devises the practice season programme, ensures fitness, and teaches the dances. The standard of dancing is her responsibility and she will ensure accuracy by telling you if you are doing it right or wrong.

**Our Rag-Bag** keeps the patterns and materials for the kit and will advise members about choice of colours, what has been agreed by the side and what shouldn’t be worn.

**Our Treasurer** keeps the accounts, writes the cheques and collects the money.

**Our Archivist** keeps a record of the side’s history in the form of photos, press clippings, programmes, letters and cards. The Archives are always available at the AGM for everyone to see. Any information about the side should be given to the Archivist

More than just the dancing

After practice several of us go to the pub to refresh ourselves with a soft drink. We don’t all, always go. Of course this is not compulsory but if you are new to the side it is a good way to get to know everyone. We sometimes talk about the dancing; we share ideas and strategies and techniques.

After dancing out at a pub the Landlord expects that members will partake of some refreshment, and many of them provide food too. Some people entertain with music and a song or poem, but joining in is not compulsory, although it is wholeheartedly encouraged whatever your standard. The music session in the pub is a part of the stand.

At an event the side will spend the majority of time together or in small groups. We usually find something to do (like shopping or having tea!). Quite often our musicians will provide some entertainment for us and for the audience/public.

At our Christmas party and at our last stand of the season we enjoy our own entertainment. Some people put in a lot of effort to provide a ‘turn’, but any contribution is well received.

The purpose of this time is to bond together as a team. It is important and reflects upon our performance as a group of dances.

What is good and what is not – this is a tricky issue.

Good:

* Telling Foreman beforehand if you can’t make it to practice
* Telling Bag/Squire beforehand if you can’t make it to dance out
* Listening during Bag session
* Calling a dancer’s name to help them to go the right way
* Getting into position in the set before walking on at the beginning of the dance
* Dancing off – continue dancing until all the set have left the dance area (avoiding the dominoes effect)
* Knowing a dance in several positions, not just one
* Being keen to get up and dance every dance
* Thanking the musicians for playing
* Taking the collecting bag around and giving out programmes
* Watching other sides
* Sharing ideas about improving performance

Not good:

* hitting hard when sticking
* Gossiping during bag session
* Pushing a fellow dancer to make them go the right way
* Wandering off or adjusting your kit once you have walked on at the beginning of a dance and the rest of the set are standing ready
* Talking, waving etc to members of the audience when in the middle of a dance
* Insisting on standing out of a dance thereby preventing a set being complete
* When not dancing, standing in front of any audience preventing them from watching
* Dancing every dance (excluding others who may want to dance)
* Wearing your bells when not dancing
* Being late for practice and not warming up
* Talking loudly when someone is singing or performing in the pub session after dancing.

What does that mean?

**A+B music** – ‘A’ music is usually the figure music and ‘B’ music is the chorus music. While standing waiting to begin dancing the musicians will usually play an ‘A for nothing’, which sets the tempo for dancing and gets the dancers ready. It is usually a solo by the lead musician.

**Bag** – the ‘Secretary’

**Bag session** – when the Bagperson passes on information and notices to the Side. In practice sessions this happens half way through the evening. Everyone is expected to sit down and listen quietly. When dancing out in the summer bag sessions usually take place after the dance and before going into the pub.

**Bottoms** – numbers 5&6 or 7&8

**Call** – to call a dance – call out the moves (figures) of a dance while dancing

**Dancing out** – either at a regular (weekly) pub stand, or a paid stand, or a festival of some sort.

**Down** – away from the music

**Evens –** numbers 2,4,6,8

**Figures** – the moves in a dance

**Foreman** – the teacher

**Jig -** a dance performed by one (or sometimes two) dancers, rather than by a set

**Joint stand** – when 2 or more sides dance out together, usually taking it in turns to dance.

**Kit** – what we wear

**Middles** – numbers 3&4 in a set of 6 or 3&4, 5&6 in a set of 8

**Number**: each dancer in a set is identified by a number, based on the initial position:

 2 4 6 8

 Music

 1 3 5 7

**Odds** - numbers 1,3,5,7

**Once to yourself** – poised ready to start, Squire calls ‘this time’ bounce step from one foot to the other depending on right/left foot dance

**Programme** – calendar of events, where and when the side is dancing

**Ragbag** – the person who keeps the patterns etc for the kit

**Set** (which can also be referred to as a *side*) is a number of dancers in a particular arrangement for a dance. Most Cotswold Morris dances are danced in a rectangular set of six dancers, and most Northwest dances in a rectangular set of eight; but there are many exceptions.

**Side** - a group of Morris dancers and musicians

**Squire** – the ‘Leader’

**Stepping** – single step e.g. step/hop/step/hop; double step e.g. step/step/step/hop

**Team** – same as side

**Top** - of the set is where the musician is

**Tops** – numbers 1&2 (traditionally Squire or Foreman dances 1 and Bag or Foreman dances 2)

**Tradition** – dance style collected in a particular village

**‘This time’** – Squire calls to dancers in set ready to start dance

**Up –** towards the music

Are you well enough to dance?

Why we warm up and stretch down

Some studies have shown that athletes who are aggressive, tense, and compulsive have a higher risk of injury than their relaxed peers do. Tension may make muscles and tendons tighter, increasing the risk that they will be harmed during workouts.

Many injuries are caused by weak muscles which simply are not ready to handle the specific demands of Morris dancing. This is why people who start dancing often do well for a few weeks but then as they add to their repertoire they suddenly develop foot or ankle problems, hamstring soreness or perhaps lower back pain. Their bodies simply are not strong enough to cope with the demands of the increased training load. For this reason, it is always wise to couple resistance training (warm up) with regular training (the dancing).

1. Avoid dancing when you are tired
2. Any increase in dancing regime should be preceded by an increase in strengthening
3. Treat even seemingly minor injuries very carefully to prevent them becoming a big problem
4. If you experience pain when dancing STOP as soon as possible.
5. Never dance hard if you are stiff from the previous session
6. Pay attention to hydration and nutrition
7. Check dancing areas are clear of hazards
8. Check equipment is appropriate and safe to use
9. Allow lots of time for warming up and cooling off
10. Aim for maximum comfort when traveling
11. Be extremely fussy about hygiene in hot weather
12. Monitor daily for signs of fatigue, if in doubt ease off.

The talk test is a good way of establishing how hard you are working, if you find it difficult to say a few words, you are probably working out anerobically.

For a good indication of aerobic exercise, you should be able to say a few words, catch your breath, and then carry on talking.

If you are talking all the way through your workout, it's a good bet that you're not working hard enough.

Traditions and their characteristics

Some traditions have very distinctive characteristics which we try to incorporate into our own Cogs & Wheels style:

Bampton – flicking hankies; high stepping and jumping

Border – lively and with attitude; single stepping; individual interpretation of whirling, brandishing and shouting

Four Counties & SV – high hankies

Horsham – sticks held low

Stroud – left foot; high stepping; swirling

Adderbury – sticks in candlestick hold; half hankies; right foot

Badby – all double step

Ilmington – left foot

Cogs Repertoire

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Cotswold style dances:****Adderbury tradition*:Jenny JonesShepherd’s Hey*Bampton Tradition*:Banbury BillBonny Green GartersFurzefieldMyrtle TreeRigs of Doon*Broadwood tradition*:Old Dan RobertsTinsley RingRusper PumpLucy of Lyne*Cogs own tradition:*Chase the RabbitWiddecombeShelagh’s FerretHooligan’s Jig*Headington tradition:*Old Molly Oxford*Ilmington Tradition:*Bumpus of StrettonGrenadiersHaste to the WeddingMaids of the Mill | *Lichfield tradition:*Ring O’ Bells*Sompting tradition*:PortsmouthHighdown*Stanton Harcourt tradition:*Nutting Girl*Stroud tradition*:Hel’s Hop*Upton tradition:*Jenny LindUpton Stick dance*Winkleigh Tradition*:Anne’s WellMorning Star**Border style dances**:Tinner’s Rabbits (Grimspound)Turkey Tump (Widders)Anne’s Well (Winkleigh)St Clement’s Circle (Cogs)Tolmen Stone (Beltane) |

What we look like

What you need to have for dancing out / practice nights

For practices

* Substantial underwear!
* T shirt etc.
* Warm top (when sitting still)
* Trousers/skirt – something comfortable.
* Trainers or supportive flat shoes – Sorbithane insoles. Your dance-out shoes should be worn sometimes to ensure comfort.
* Hankies.
* Sticks.
* Diary.
* Water.
* Paper/something to write notes on
* Something to write with

Dancing out at a pub or stand

* Substantial underwear!
* 3 sticks – one short, 2 long, with brown, green, blue tape at both ends; put your name on or an individual design. (Pyrography detailing ask Morris)
* Stick bag – in suitable material (e.g. denim/see examples from members); adorned individually for ease of recognition.
* Bells – either threaded on boot laces or sewn onto elastic to go around your ankles.
* Dance notation cards.
* Musical instrument.
* Tankard
* Insect repellent!

From head to toe:-

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hat | Coloured. Hats may be worn when sunny or cold, but must be secure when dancing.  |
| hankies | 2 hankies – 20 inches square; material from Ragbag, taken from left-over material from blouses; loops on hankies to attach to skirt waistband. |
| Ribbons | 2 sets comprising 6 lengths of 30cm |
| jewellry | No strung beads. |
| Raggy (or Tatters) | Coloured. May be required when dancing in cold weather. Find your own material mixes in appropriate colours Ask others (Christine/Fiona) for advice on the easiest way to make. |
| Fleece | Burgundy with gold Cogs logo. |
| Blouse | Coloured. Adjust size to compliment. Elasticated wrist or button-up sleeve to shorten. Multi-coloured buttons.Choose a colour that reflects the ‘hues of Dartmoor’ and is not the same as anyone else’s - check with Ragbag, she has a swatch of colours already in use. If the weather is really cold some people wear a t-shirt under their blouse – please ensure it doesn’t show and that the colour is coordinated (e.g. not a black polo neck). |
| waistcoat | Front panel material from Ragbag plus 2 different colours for back panels and lining; embroider front with logo – design for copying included; badges can be worn (but not too many as they make the waistcoat hang badly!).May be removed in hot weather Squire permitting |
| Skirt | Brown – pattern & material from Ragbag. Bias cut; 2 buttons on waistband to attach hankies. Hem not less than 2 inches below knee; must cover bloomers when standing still. |
| Bloomers | Cream polycotton, cream lace edging. Length - not showing below skirt hem. Must cover top of socks (if worn). May be removed in hot weather Squire permitting. |
| Socks/tights | Coloured/black, not patterned. Ensure no flesh is visible when dancing! |
| boots | Black. Laces may be coloured. Sorbithane high impact insoles are a good idea. |
| bells | 24 each ankle. |

All ‘coloured’ items in the hues of Dartmoor.

Check all items of kit with Ragbag.

Kit to be worn to April practices.



Waistcoat embroidery logo.

If you require help or advice or materials please ask Fiona.