it is possible to disentangle and impose some order on the widespread and often contradictory evidence and hopefully to produce a relatively accurate chronological framework into which it may be slotted.

I have already examined the inter-relationships between the main dancing families in Bampton [3] but a brief recap will be necessary for the sake of overall comprehension. Similarly, the same paper offered suggestions concerning the motivations of dancers, albeit in a very general way, and here it should be possible to refine that theory of economic determinism working in tandem with, but not directly opposed to, that rather oblique and difficult to define sense of dancing for the sake of "tradition" or continuity with the past. It is my intention to avoid as far as possible any duplication of that previously presented material and to present here evidence which may be used in conjunction with the paper in order to gain a more complete overall picture of the morris as performed at Bampton for at least a century prior to 1914.

Bampton itself lies in the Thames basin fifteen miles to the west of Oxford and five miles south of the market town of Witney. Once Bampton was an important market town famous for the production of leather goods and tanning, but by the beginning of our story it is a rather decayed community relying on agriculture for its economic base. Strictly speaking, the morris was based on the conjoined community of Weald and this remained the case until the first war. As "Jingy" Wells observed

> My first meeting with Mr. Sharp was when I was living in the Weald, where I was born and bred and of course all Morris men were born and bred in the Weald where Morris dancing originated. 4

Such a belief is important but historically unlikely and I propose first to examine the oral tradition of dancing in the town and discover what sort of chronological structure may be established from it. Wells was interviewed

by the Daily News in 1910 after he had claimed that Bampton morris was more authentic than the revival at Ilmington by Sam Bennett. He wrote

> Having read a good deal lately in the "Daily News", I feel it our duty, as we challenge to be the oldest set of morris-dancers in or out of Oxfordshire, to state that the original Morris has been kept up unbrokenly and can be traced back over three hundred years. We are old-fashioned country people, born and bred here, so have never been very far outside to see or meet with these so-called revivals of morris-dancing, but should anyone care to contradict this statement or send us a challenge we should like to meet with any other set of dancers in or out of Oxfordshire that can boast a longer or better proof of style. 5

Wells was, perhaps, in his attempt to establish impeccable credentials for the Bampton side exaggerating its probable longevity. Shortly after this piece had been reprinted in the Witney Gazette a correspondent who quite clearly was acquainted with one or more of the dancers noted that

> The present generation of morris dancers in Bampton... can go back some two hundred years by means of documents and traditions handed down to father and son, showing that this district was well known for its morris dancing. 6

This is a little more creditable yet even two hundred years seems an exceptional length of time for an accurate oral or folk memory. In 1929 the Witney Gazette reported

> The morris dancers of Bampton...are extremely and justly proud of the fact that this custom has been carried on in Bampton for a period approaching three hundred years, a record that few places can beat. 7

What these accounts are saying is that there was morris dancing being performed in Bampton since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century and perhaps earlier. This is not at all improbable yet there appear

to be no surviving written records to confirm that this was indeed the case. Jan Vansina, in his marvellous book Oral Tradition, cites examples from central Africa where the oral evidence held by the community historians was checked against other more tangible historical evidence and was discovered to be chronologically accurate over several centuries [8]. Similarly, the pre-literate tradition at Bampton may be just as accurate although there is no way of confirming it.

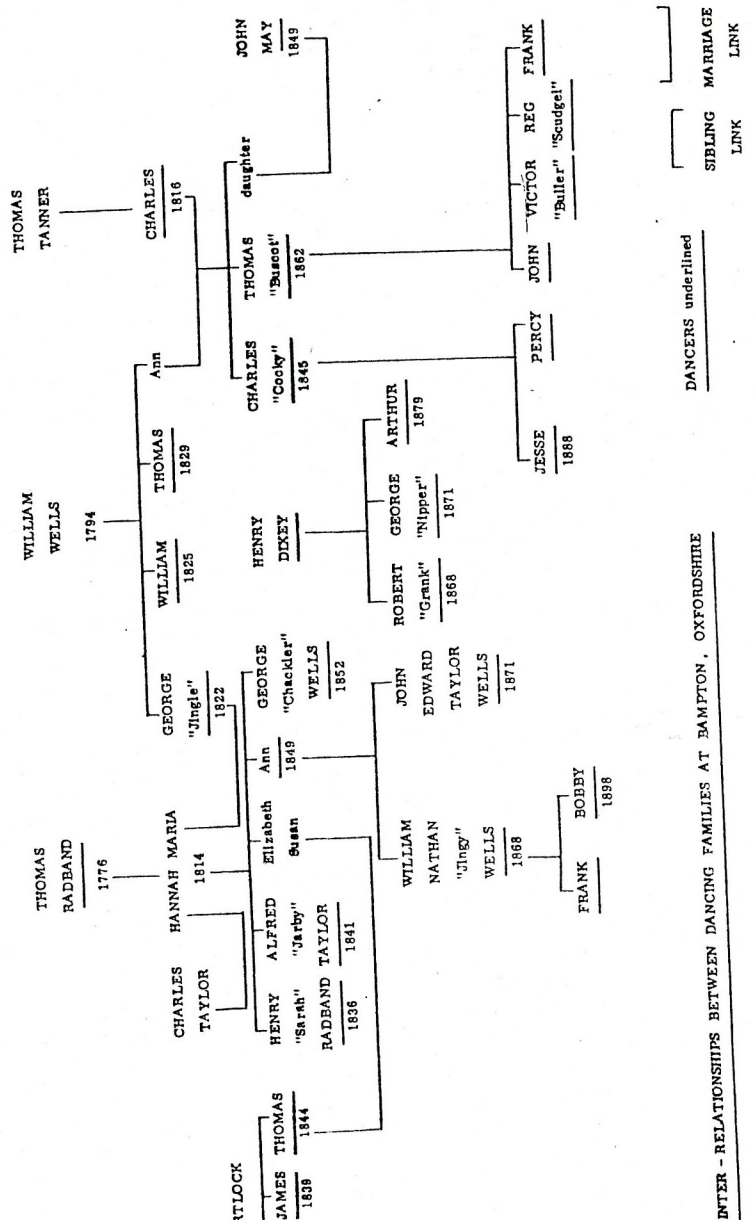
A less extravag nt and more easily checkable manifestation of the oral tradition may be found in the recalling of family history. In 1931 the Oxford Mail noted that

> Members of the Wells and Tanner families have led Morris dancing in Bampton for three or four generations...9

and here we have an entirely plausible claim which returns us to the early years of the nineteenth century. "Jingy" Wells recorded much of the historical information he had gathered in the form of poetry and in one example, written around 1930, he tells of his family's association with the morris in this way,

> The Morris Dance as you must know
> Was done by my people many years ago
> My grandfather all his brothers too
> All my uncles My brother my own sons two...[10]

A family tree showing the inter-relationships between the dancing families at Bampton is reproduced on the facing page and it is possible to interpret this stanza by referring to it. The author of the poem is William Nathan "Jingy" Wells, born 1868. "My grandfather" is George "Jingle" Wells and "all his brothers too" are William and Thomas Wells shown adjacent. George "Jingle" Wells married Hannah Maria Radband in 1852 and thus



became the step-father of her previous children Henry Radband and Alfred "Jarby" Taylor, as well as fathering a son of his own, George "Chackler" Wells. These three men are "all my uncles." Both of "Jingy" Wells' sons were occasional dancers and although neither actually danced in the set as one of the six for long (although Bobby would step in when his father was short of dancers right up until 1939), both carried the cake and collected, with Bobby performing this function for over thirty years.

The earliest known dancer from the Tanner family is Charles Tanner, born in 1816, who was also the uncle of "Jingy" Wells, having married the sister of George "Jingle" Wells. When interviewed by Carter in 1894 he claimed to have been "head morris dancer in his earlier years." [11] Two of his sons, Charles "Cocky" and Thomas "Buscot" Tanner, were active in the dance set as ragman and lead dancer respectively until the first war. Sons of both these men joined the side when of an appropriate age : Charles' sons Jesse and Percy, and Thomas' sons John, Frank, Victor and Reg, with these latter two being active until the second war.

Here we have the three or four generations from both families which validates the oral tradition. With birth dates of 1816 for Charles Tanner and 1822 for George "Jingle" Wells, we may suggest a date of around 1840 onwards as one when these two men would have been active as dancers. On the analogous evidence of dancers from other communities in Oxfordshire I am assuming an age of about twenty as one when a man was likely to have joined the set as an active dancer, although there would have been many variations, especially towards the end of the nineteenth century when the morris generally was in decline.

Largely owing to the foresight of "Jingy' Wells we possess the names of practically all the men who were dancers at Bampton from about 1840 onwards [12]. Appendix I lists these names and shows that between the years 1836 and 1896 there were thirty-one dancers joining the set, an average of one new dancer every two years. The implications concerning the personnel

of other morris sides is obvious and suggests that they would have been more fluid than, for example, Carter's lists imply [13]. The tendency during the nineteenth century was for a morris side to delimit its membership to the barest number of participants in order to maximise the tangible benefits. This would have meant that six or at most seven active kit-clad dancers were present at any given performance. It is apparent that some men were more committed to the morris than others who perhaps danced for one or two years only. Included amongst this latter group must be "jingy's" brother John Edward Taylor Wells, who danced in 1887 and then left Bampton to live in London. Another observation is that a dancer's active participation may not have been consecutive. With short-term and short-range migration a common feature of nineteenth century agricultural society it may have been the case that men sometimes lived elsewhere for awhile and then returned to dance again. New dancers would have been periodically required when former dancers were, for whatever reason, unavailable. Similarly, men would have retired from dancing for other reasons : age, marriage or perhaps early death [14]. At Bampton, although not at other communities, sufficient dancers were available each Whit Monday to allow an annual performance without interruption for more than sixty years prior to 1914; even where this meant having a woman dress as a man, as supposedly happened with "Jingy's" mother Ann around 1873 [15].

To substantiate this claim to longevity we may now assess the evidence of the extant written eye-witness accounts, the earliest of which occurs in 1848. The Reverend J.A. Giles, vicar of Bampton at that time, wrote rather disparagingly of the custom

> Another season of festivity is Whitsuntide, when the Morris dancers exhibit their saltatory powers for the amusement of the people, and to gather a few shillings for their own private emolument. As these functionaries do nothing but dance, and thoroughly fatigue themselves before nightfall, they must be considered to have earned the hot suppers and mulled ale, which probably terminate the festival, but they have no farther claim to delay the progress of this history. 16

Giles had obviously seen them perform, found no merit in their dancing and dismissed them as of no interest to himself or his readers, and a rare opportunity to record something valuable was missed. Even in 1848 it is apparent that the dancers were performing every year at Whitsuntide, and in the list of dancers in Appendix I there are half a dozen men aged twenty or more during this decade. Giles notes that the dancers collected money for themselves rather than as a contribution to the general festivities of the town and this displays an economic motivation for dancing, although to what extent the dancers themselves were conscious of the fact we cannot say.

The next written reference occurs in 1858 when Jackson's Oxford Journal reported of the Whitsuntide happenings in Bampton

> We must not omit to notice... the Morris dancers. These worthies put in their appearance on this occasion, much to the amusement of young and old. Their brilliant, though grotesque adornment had a very picturesque effect; and the funny accompaniment of a merry and active clown, or 'squire' as he is sometimes called, added not a little to the broad grins of the juveniles. The dancing was very creditably performed, but we cannot approve of the substitution of a squeaking fiddle for the appropriate, and to our mind, orthodox 'tabor and pipe', which in our boyish days were so admirably played by the well and widely-known 'poor old Master Beechey, of Lew'. 17

This account is particularly important for it is the first we possess which describes at least a portion of the performance. The correspondent makes some interesting value judgements : "very creditably performed" implies a high standard of dancing and his description of the fool is approving. Further, his observations concerning the music are pointed and deserve analysis.

Since its recorded beginnings the morris was danced to the accompaniment of the pipe and tabor (whittle and dub, fife and drum) and the three holed pipe is a difficult one to play and master successfully. In conjunction with a drum suspended from the same hand that fingers the pipe and beaten with

the other hand it offers the dancers a strong rhythm and enables them to maintain good time with their feet. When the fiddle, sometimes home-made, as was the first one played by "Jingy' Wells [18], became more common in country districts it gradually superceded the pipe and tabor, not only as an accompaniment to the morris but also in a social dance context. Sometimes the fiddler would be accompanied by a companion who beat a tambourine and sometimes not, and if the latter was the case the all-important rhythm was absent. In common with other morris sides Bampton had long been a pipe and tabor tradition. Thomas Radband, at centre-top on the family tree, was born in 1776 and was piper and leader of the Bampton morris side, possibly from as early as 1800 [19]. The implication in the 1858 reference cited above is that "poor old Master Beechey, of Lew" was also a piper for an earlier Bampton set, and although we can have idea of the age of this correspondent at the time of writing, his "boyish" memories may take us back to the first decades of the nineteenth century.

"Jingy" Wells asked his uncles Henry Radband and James Portlock who they remembered as musicians and the earliest was Pot Shurey of Buckland Marsh, around 1840 [20]. He was replaced by another piper, "Old" Rouse of Alvescot, about 1848; whilst a few years later Richard Ford became the regular musician. According to Wells' grandfather

> Dick Ford was the best fiddler we ever had. He was born and bred here. He knew every movement in every dance. My grampy said he would make them do it right... 21

In all probability Ford was the first fiddler to play for the Bampton morris side and from this favourable assessment by a man who had danced to his playing, appears to have been well aware of the requirements of the dancers. Almost certainly he played in that very rhythmic and highly accented southern English country style which is ideally suited to the performance of dance, yet can be very painful to the more cultured ear. The standard of musicianship would, no doubt, have varied considerably. Ford was replaced

about 1856 by John Potter, a piper from Stanton Harcourt who had a fine reputation as a player, but he wasobviously in great demand as a musician, having played at various times for the morris sides at Stanton Harcourt, Ducklington, Leafield, Standlake, Eynsham and others [22], and he would have presumably gone to the side which could make him the best financial offer. Wells notes that after Potter another fiddler, Robert Batts, played for the Bampton set and he dates this as circa 1858, which tallies well with the newspaper account already quoted. Batts is probably the man born in Lew in 1796, the father of the dancer John Batts and the uncle of another, also Robert Batts. It is presumably Robert Batts the fiddler whom the newspaper correspondent is railling about in 1858. His feelings about this break with "time-honoured" musical tradition were so strong that he spoke out against it in several subsequent reports. In 1860 his account of the Whit Monday activities a tBampton included the observation

> The visitors were somewhat more numerous than is usual upon these occasions, the more juvenile portion of whom seemed to find much gratification in witnessing the saltatory evolutions of the grotesquely-bedizened morris dancers, accompanied by a non-descript jack-pudding, who ever and anon essayed some funny freak, which called forth the laughter of the motley lookers-on. The old 'tabor and pipe' and the 'Rebeck' seem to be at a discount with the morris dancers, and an old cracked violin is the substitute employed instead. 23

And again, in 1863,

> The morris dancers made their appearance, but there was not much of novelty in their proceedings or their dress; they still obstinately persist in employing a squeaking 'fiddle', instead of the more legitimate tabor and pipe, notwithstanding what has been said respecting it, and which considerably marred the effect of the whole... 24

With the changeover from pipe and tabor to fiddle must have come a transformation of dance style. Wells observed that

> ... they used to play much slower on the whistle and dub, but it was very beautiful and you could grasp every movement... The music is most of it too quick and the old graceful movements are slurred to keep pace with it. You see very little of the old backstepping now which was as pretty a thing as you could wish... 25

A number of traditional dancers at other communities complained that when the fiddle replaced the pipe and tabor they could not get used to the difference in style and so gave up dancing altogther. The technique of good piping was being lost to the younger generation of players and the fiddle (some would say easier to play) was rapidly replacing the older time-honoured or "traditional" instruments. The newspaper correspondent was obviously oblivious to the changes occurring in grass-roots musical tastes and abilities. There was increasingly a problem of finding a musician of any persuasion who knew the requirements and tunes needed for the morris. According to Wells

> My grandfather never had no trouble to get the dancers but the trouble was, 60...70 years ago, to get the piper, or the fiddler...the musician. Sometimes they had a very great difficulty. I've had one from Buckland, one from Fieldtown, and I've had to go out here to Hereford, and Broadway, that way, to get a piper...There's plenty can play but it's the old tune the old time that's needed, otherwise they would be lost... 26

The necessity of having to range far afield for the musician did, however, have certain advantages once the player was secured.

> My grampy used to say that he liked to get men from Fieldtown, Finstock and Filkins to come in because they always brought a new tune or two with them. That's how we got new tunes. They explained the tunes and put them through it. Then the local men would pick them up and play them. There were several tunes picked up that way... 27

This is a concise account of the folk process in action and indicates the

method whereby the repertory of a morris side was in flux and mutable. Because this was the case we cannot say which tunes (and hence dances) were in the Bampton repertory at any given date, although a generalisation can be made. Charles Tanner, who would have first danced about 1836, spoke in 1894 of these tunes being very old ones : Green Garters, Constant Billy, The Willow Tree, Maid of the Mill, Bob and Joan, Handsome John and Highland Mary [28]. In 1918 his son, Charles "Cocky" Tanner, called the following tunes, which had also come from his father, the "old morris songs" : Johnny so Long at the Fair, Maid of the Mill, Bobbing Around, The Nutting Girl, Sweet Ireland Mary, The Willow Tree and The Old Woman Wrapped in a Blanket [29]. At this point we should note that, in common with other sides, the Bampton men used to sing as they danced [30]. These titles offer some indication of the repertory as it might have been at Bampton around the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Between 1858 and 1865 the morris dancing at Bampton is mentioned annually in one or other of the local newspapers, but during the following two decades they become largely silent on the topic and their reports concentrate instead on the more moral and religious aspects of the Whit Monday proceedings, in the form of the walk to church by the three local benefit societies and the sermons there preached. This is a trend which occurred in most of the newspapers published in the counties where the morris continued to be performed and reflects a transformation of attitudes towards such pursuits amongst middle and upper levels of the social hierachy. Those reports which do filter through about the morris at Bampton during this period are rather terse and are historically disappointing, giving little in the way of details and merely establishing that a performance occurred. Their tone does, however, suggest a continuous existence for the side, with no implied lapses in performance, as happened for example at Abingdon during these decades [31]. The Witney Express account of 1872 is atypical, and notes that

> The morris dancers put in an appearance, as is their wont on Whit Monday, and they cut some fine capers when

> performing their grotesque dances; and "Joey" was as facetious as ever as clown, and caused much merriment with the juveniles, and also to some of the children of a mature growth. 32

Although space does not allow for deep probes into the personal histories of individual dancers, we should perhaps identify the "Joey" mentioned in this account as Joseph Akers, the village sweep who moved to Bampton around 1870 and who died in a snowdrift during the winter of 1881 [33]. In the decadal censuses he is named Joseph Radband, which suggests a family connection with the leaders of the Bampton morris.

Remarking on the performances of the dancers in subsequent years, the Witney Express uses the terms "accostomed fashion" (in 1876), "as usual" (in 1880 and 1882) and "as of yore" (in 1881) [34], which again implies an unbroken tradition of performance. The report for 1877 throws some interesting light on the music which was then being used

> ...the morris dancers busily tripped the "light fantastic toe" to the sound of fiddle and tambourine... 35

reflecting perhaps the need of the dancers to have an accented rhythm. According to "Jingy" Wells, "old fiddler Butler from Leafield" started playing for the Bampton morris about 1876, while his son took over as musician some years later [36]. This father and son team used to have a travelling dance booth which they would take to fairs and club days and would charge the dancers (social, not morris) a certain price for each dance [37]. The father, William "Deedlum" Butler (so nicknamed because he diddled the tune whilst playing) would play the fiddle and his son Dick would collect the money and then accompany his father on tambourine. It seems likely that it was this combination of musicians who are being referred to in the 1877 account. William Butler was born in Burford about 1813 and later lived at Asthall, near Leafield, where his son Dick was born in 1854, and so was one of those musicians who had to be imported in the absence of a local player who knew the tunes needed for the dancing. Dick

Butler however, later came to live in Bampton and this availability of a resident musician was only one of the factors which contributed to a general renaissance of the Bampton morris around the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.

Briefly and simplistically stated my thesis is that the period around the middle years of the eighteen-eighties is characterised by a set of thought patterns and perceptions both from within the Bampton team itself and from those people who observed the performances and were therefore potential patrons, which were very different to any that had gone before. Let us first examine the tight-knit group of men who had for many decades (and possibly for several centuries) kept the morris in performance and suggest what physical and mental transformations may have occurred during this phase.

I have mentioned before how difficult it is to quantify the degree of "tradition" which may have existed in the mind of a dancer and to be able to state that this, rather than any sense of financial or cultural gain, was the dominant reason for an individual's involvement in the morris. Evidence relating to the period prior to eighteen-fifty or so, before which the morris was more widespread, suggests that as far as intangible benefits were concerned, to be a dancer in a morris side was a positive thing. Annual competitions between teams at venues like the Lamb Ale at Kirtlington or the septennial ones at the Woodstock Whitsun Ale probably engendered feelings such as pride in competing and especially in winning, or in being a highly acclaimed individual performer. It appears to have been the case that during this phase there was general approval and acceptance of the local morris side from most sectors of the community, and indeed, there is the suggestion that in many respects the morris dancers were the representatives of their home community at such functions as the Whitsun ales. Speaking of these ales, a correspondent to Walford's Antiquarian in May 1886 noted that the visiting morris teams were "often with all the good folks of their village in company" [38]; while G.A.Rowell, writing in Folk Lore during the same year recalled

> So long as Morris dancing was kept up with spirit, i.e. to about 1830 or 1840, there was a sort of rivalry in parishes as to which should have the best turnout, so that the six selected were generally the pick of the parish for activity and appearance...39

He goes on to note that the sashes worn by the dancers were "generally those of the nobleman or leading family of the parish", and here is a further indication of the status held by the dancers. There were obviously plenty of tangible benefits - money, alcohol, food - but here I am attempting to establish the intangible concepts associated with being a morris dancer. Specifically relative to our present theme is the oral tradition passed on to Russell Wortley by William Kimber of the Headington Quarry side.

> Bill Kimber remembers his father telling him that he was taken, as a boy, to the last Lamb Ale (at Kirtlington). In Bill's grandfather's day "they always used to meet - the different sides - and dance. It was chiefly agricultural labourers, you know - always used to get together and compete and have this Ale. They used to dance for what they called 'the ribbons and the cake'. And I've heard Dad say the old 'uns (of Headington Quarry) used to always take the first prize with the ribbons - that was the first prize - and Bampton took the cake..." 40

Even if we allow for some prejudiced thinking here it is likely that the Bampton side around the middle of the nineteenth century was technically a good one. It is probably this period to which Sharp refers when he says

> As the old dancers gradually drop out of the side, young men are trained to take their places. These youths in the old days were required to practise several nights a week during the period between Easter Sunday and Whit Sunday under the instructions of the older dancers. For this privilege they had to pay four pence a week. If late they were fined fourpence, and if drunk a shilling, all these sums being dropped into the money box...41

The system of payments and fines would have weeded out those men who were not totally commited to the side and the stringent training would have produced

dancers of a standard necessary for competitive dancing. "Jingy" Wells' uncle Henry Radband, who would have first danced in the set around eighteen fifty-six,

> ...learned to dance in the old rigourous days, when the neophyte had to hang to a beam to stretch his knees... 42

These accounts of financial payments for instruction do not entirely accord with the nepotistic family structure of the side, at least after eighteen forty or so, but may refer to an earlier period when men from outside the immediate family were admitted. Rowell noted that at Kirtlington during the early part of the nineteenth century

> ...it was generally understood that the farmer's sons did not decline joining the dancers, but rather prided themselves on being selected as one of them... 43

and this may have been the normal practice at Bampton also. Whilst the gentry were approving and continued to patronise the dancers freely there was obviously a degree of status associated with being one of the morris participants. There is a large amount of evidence which suggests that the morris generally was increasingly viewed as an undesirable element of the Whitsuntide festivities and that it lost much of its former status. Alun Howkins has documented what he has termed the "taming of Whitsun" in Oxfordshire and has shown how the growth of the work and temperance ethics gradually eroded (or tried to erode) the rather uninhibited ceremonies which occurred at Whitsun during the lull in the agricultural work cycle [44].

As we have seen, in Bampton in 1848 the local vicar was antipathetic towards the morris, and this may have been indicative of a more widespread trend. The dancers at Bampton, however, appear to have survived the attack on such recreations and continued to perform regularly long after other sides in the area had ceased. This continuing existence was no doubt facilitated by the fact that

the town of Bampton remained a focal point for many visitors on Whit Monday, as did several other local club days to which the Bampton dancers travelled to perform. On the Tuesday in Whit week they went to nearby Aston, whilst on the Thursday they danced at Clanfield [45]. Wells spoke of annual visits to a dozen villages in the two weeks after Whit Monday during his active period [46]. Their position as one of the few sides still in performance during the eighteen-seventies must have offerred a greater geographical area to exploit on those increasingly restricted occasions when morris dancing was welcomed.

During this phase of the morris the leader and organiser was "Jingy" Wells' grandfather George "Jingle" Wells, who had inherited the position from his wife's father, Thomas Radband. When Wells, born 1822, became too old to dance in the set he took over as sword-bearer and collector. I have suggested that he would have become a regular dancer during the eighteen-forties, and would thus have been associated with the morris when it was still a status pursuit within the community. In all probability he had been involved in many of the competitions against other teams which would have had great potential for the gaining of accolades, both for the side as a whole and for individual dancers. Wells died in January, 1885, and hence 1884 is the final possible year that the morris could have been under his control. In more senses than one it is a case of the old order passing, and it is possible to imagine that following Wells' death the morris side would have foundered to some extent. As we have already seen, Joseph Akers Radband, whom "Jingy" described as "a good dancer. He was a fool and a trickster. He knew every move and when he got buried in the snow we were without a dancer", died in 1881. George Wells' stepson Alfred "Jarby" Taylor, described by "Jingy" as " a very little man, but wonderfully agile and witty...'eels and toes, 'e was a good dancer", replaced Radband as fool but this did not last for long, for before the jubilee he was succeeded by Harry "Buffer" Clark, who had himself given up by 1887 [47]. Upon his death, another of Wells' stepsons inherited the mantle ofsword-bearer and leader of the morris, and this would presumably have been around 1885. We have here a very turbulent period during the first half of the eighteen-eighties, and by the time of the jubilee the dance set is composed largely of men who were born during the period when the

morris generally was in decline. Henry Radband, now leader by virtue of family succession and of being the oldest man still active, would not have danced in the side until around 1856. His half brothers Alfred Taylor and George "Chackler" Wells, and his cousin Charles "Cocky" Tanner, would not have been active before 1861, 1872 and 1865 respectively, and hence all were products of the post-status period. During the third quarter of the century there must have been a radical degree of rethinking in motivations for each dancer. Men involved with other sides locally said that performing got to be too much like begging and people refused to give money to the dancers; while as early as 1852, an old dancer told a correspondent for the Oxford Chronicle that the performance, and by implication the patronage, "twarn't like it 'us't to't" [48]. Given this prevailing attitude, the dancers who did continue must have been motivated either by a sense of dancing for the sake of tradition and continuity with the past, which in the face of such obvious hostility seems unlikely, or because the small amount of money which could be collected if one were sufficiently thick-skinned to overcome the notion of begging made the effort involved in learning and practising the dances and in getting the kit organised worthwhile.

Whatever the reason, there were some men who obviously thought that it was worth dancing, sometimes for extended periods, but it is easy to imagine the long tradition of dancing in Bampton coming to a halt during this decade, as it did in many other communities elsewhere, and it is necessary to offer some explanation why it not only continued but apparently thrived during the three decades leading up to the first World War. The reasons are undoubtedly complex, but to my mind there are three main influences - two general and one locally-specific, and it is these three that I propose now to examine in some depth.

The first is a general trend towards antiquarian interest in the recreational pursuits - beliefs, songs, lore - of the rural working class. This process is too convoluted to document here but may be followed in Richard Dorson's comprehensive history of the British folklorists [49]. It is sufficient to note that

during the decade preceeding Victoria's Golden Jubilee the journal of the recently formed Folk Lore Society made its first appearance, as did a slew of books on folk beliefs of various regions and counties. The association of morris dancing with Shakespeare was exploited in 1886 by D'Arcy Ferris with his revival of the dance side at Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, and, although as Roy Judge has shown [50], the potential for a commercially viable morris display team was not as great as expected, the effects of the widely publicised tours by the Bidford side during the first six months of that year upon attitudes towards the morris in general were far-ranging and positive. In its wake there were articles in various antiquarian journals, some already quoted, and these sometimes drew attention to the survival in country districts of various dance sets. With the impending completion of fifty years of a single monarch's reign, some writers were moved to compare aspects of life at the beginning of that reign with the situation as it then was. The general awareness of the historical precedents of the morris perculated as far down to the local newspaper reports. In the account of the Whit Monday proceedings in 1889 as found in the Witney Gazette for the first time the Bampton Morris Dancers are described as "ancient", and this term is used almost ubiquitously in subsequent years. In 1889,

> A peculiar feature added a mediaeval aspect to the proceedings of the day; this was the performance of the ancient Morris dancers, a custom which is at the present time almost unique to this town. The dance was introduced into this country far back in the fourteenth century, in about the reign of Edward III and even at this date the dance was not new, for according to excellent authorities it had been for an unknown period existent in France and Flanders, but it is certain that in the reigns of Henrys VII and VIII it held a chief place in the popular sports of the period, and it is remarkable that the costume has been handed down with so little alteration of character and accessories that the dresses and garniture of the actors on Monday last corresponded very closely with the descriptions given by the Chroniclers, for the bells worn on the legs of the dancers are in exact resemblance to the depictions of those mentioned in Douce's Illustrations of Shakespeare... 51

It is easy to see that with such detailed historical information available to the Bampton dancers and the subsequent continual reminder of the longevity (or supposed longevity) of the side by the use of the epithet "ancient" in the newspaper accounts, why in 1910 "Jingy" Wells and others thought that the morris had been extant in the town since the seventeenth century.

The second major reason for the renewal of interest in the morris I have already touched upon, that is the celebrations in 1887 of fifty years of Victoria's reign. With its recently rediscovered respectability the morris generally was given a shot in the arm (albeit largely temporarily) , reappearing at Bucknell after a lapse of some years, and enjoying a resurgence in popularity in other communities such as Brackley, Bledington, Longborough, Headington Quarry and Ilmington [52].

The final reason, and certainly the most important for the morris side at Bampton, was the fact that at Whitsun, 1887, William Nathan "Jingy" Wells, then aged nineteen, followed the majority of his male relatives into the team. Despite the criticisms levelled at Wells there can be no doubt that his enthusiasm for the Bampton morris ran almost at fever pitch for most of his life. He was very much a product of his times and was conditioned by his unusual, by Bampton standards, upbringing. His mother sent him to a private school, which meant that by his mid teens he was literate beyond the average of his social peers. His mother and brother had moved away to London and "Jingy" also lived there for awhile, giving him somewhat of an urban outlook and perspective, again beyond the norm. It was while in the city that he bought his first proper fiddle, for although he was already able to play, he had previously used one made from a rifle stock and an old corned beef tin [53]. In keeping with the state of flux in which the Bampton side then found itself he was pressed into joining the side. As he told the story,

> ...I went up to London from there for a bit. Had two jobs in London. Then I came back... the beginning a May, Jubilee

> year-'87... Well, I come back at the beginning of May... And they'd got nobody to go'n fool for 'em- that year. They begged me to go round that year an' fool for 'em. That was the year I started...54

The list of dancers in the appendix show that during the eighteen-eighties quite a few new dancers would have come into the side. In addition to "Jingy", in the Jubilee year his brother John was also admitted to the set.

> He was 16; he was 16 in February and he danced the following Whitsunday; then the next Whitsunday he was gone. I started the same year; I was 19 when I started, that was '87, the Queen's Jubilee Year. And my mother was in London then. She sent a piece of print down with the Queen's Jubilee heads on the print. And my poor old granny, and my cousin was a dressmaker, and she cut this print out and made my first clown's dress... 55

Wells gained an enviable reputation as a superb fool, and both this and his unbridled enthusiasm would have contributed to the renaissance of the Bampton morris. I have already mentioned the commitment which resulted in extended periods of performance by certain dancers, and following the jubilee we start to get a few chronological images of a complete Bampton morris set during certain years and this enables an identification of some of the men who danced regularly and at length.

The earliest extant photograph of the Bampton dancers that I know of was probably taken around the time of the Jubilee, judging by a comparison of ages of dancers on both this and the set of photographs taken in 1897, which I will shortly mention [56]. Certain of the faces, including the fool, are blurred and are indistinguishable, but of those which may be identified for certain there is Thomas "Buscot" Tanner, son of the Charles Tanner who would have been a dancer from around eighteen thirty-six; Philip Dewe: Robert "Grank" Dixey; and Joey Rouse as dancers, with Henry Radband carrying the sword and Dick

Butler on fiddle. Of these dancers Joseph Rouse appears as "?1887" on the appended list because I have yet to trace him in the census or parish registers. It would be tempting to identify him as Charles Rouse, "Jingy's" cousin whom we know to have danced, under a nickname if Joseph Rouse did not appear on Carter's list for 1894. Both Thomas Tanner and Robert Dixey gained reputations as fine dancers [57], and one can easily envisage that with such men and a good fool the side might improve in quality. In 1889 a newspaper correspondent observed

> To an old inhabitant it was a matter of pleasant reflection that the dancing this year was more picturesque and in character with the traditions of the occupation than for many years past. 58

Three years later, in 1892, the same paper reported

> The ancient Morris Dancers, as usual, were a great attraction, and several new dancers were introduced; they are to be highly commended for the respectable manner in which they carried out their performance this year... 59

The approving tone of these reports suggest that a new spirit had been infused into the side, the standard of dancing had improved markedly, and that possibly the dancers had regained a degree of local status as a result of their almost unique position as guardians of an ancient tradition. Of the new dancers mentioned in this latter account we may possibly suggest that George "Nipper" Dixey was one and perhaps John Tanner named in Carter's 1894 list was another. Although this latter dancer cannot be identified with any degree of certainty there is a man baptised in 1873 who would certainly be of the correct age.

The next extant team listing is that made by Thomas Carter on behalf of Percy Manning in 1894 [60]. It names as dancers, George Wells, Joseph Rouse, John Tanner, George Dixey, James Dewe and Thomas Tanner. Of these, George "Chackler" Wells would probably have danced in the set first around eighteen

seventy-two, and, if "Jingy" is correct in his statement that Wells danced for forty years [61], would have danced until the time the Bampton morris was discovered by the world at large around nineteen-ten. And here again we have Thomas Tanner, lead dancer until the first War and generally involved with the side until the late nineteen-twenties, when three of his sons were dancing.

Three years after Carter had collected in Bampton, Percy Manning visited the town on Whit Monday, 1897, and commissioned a set of photographs, of which five are still extant [62]. These show not only the team line-up but also the dancers in action, in one they are turning into a hey and in two others they are dancing the kneeling chorus of Flowers of Edinburgh. The dancers that year were Robert and George Dixey, sons of Henry Dixey who had danced before them, Thomas Tanner, Philip Dewe, Joey Rouse and George Wells. "Jingy" was still the fool and Butler still musician.

At some date shortly after this Dick Butler stopped playing for the morris and "Jingy" took over as musician, a role he filled every year except nineteen twenty-six until nineteen forty-eight. The actual date at which this occurred is uncertain, and although the dates 1897 and 1899 have been quoted [63], I believe it to be later. Quite clearly 1897, as we have just seen, is wrong. The Witney Gazette reported of this Whit Monday

> The ancient "Morris Dancers" were admired by a great number, and the "fool" caused roars of laughter... 64

In 1900 the same newspaper noted

> The ancient morris dancers, as usual, created a great deal of amusement, Mr. Wells causing roars of laughter, his excellent dancing was much admired... 65

which certainly suggests that Wells was still fooling. The story of the changeover of musicians is generally told in this way : Dick Butler was having a disagreement with the dancers, either over the money he should get as fiddler or over the fact

that the dancers sometimes got so drunk they fell about and got into fights with one another. One Whit Monday morning they were coming up from Weald and Butler caught his fiddle neck in a drainpipe and broke it. He was so relieved that he went home, whereupon "Jingy" ran home to fetch his fiddle and played for the rest of the day. Another version, as told by Wells himself, goes like this,

> I was the fool in 1908. There was a grand Fete at Weald Manor in July 1908, with a big lot of fireworks which burned down the ricks and the farm of Mr. John Monk. The Morris tried to dance to the playing of the brass band. We could not do it. So the boys suggested that I should try the fiddle. I knew all the tunes so well that, although I knew no music, all went well. So I gave up being the "fool" and became the "fiddler"... 66

Portions of both stories are probably true and it may be that there was another fiddler involved between Butler and Wells. There is a photograph in the town which shows as dancers Thomas Tanner, Joey Rouse, Philip Dewe, and the three brothers George, Robert and Arthur Dixey, on which the fiddler is neither Butler nor Wells. It is possible that Tommy Lewis, a gypsy who normally camped at Hagbourne, Berkshire, and who had played for the Bampton morris between about 1862 and 1870, was used as a stop-gap. Certainly Wells spoke of Lewis as if he had personally danced to his playing.

> Once we had Tommy Lewis from Hagbourne to come over. We had a practise on the Saturday night afore Whitsun. He slept rough and Tommy looked rough on Whit Monday morning. 67

The changeover of musicians is perhaps heralded by this account from 1906.

> ... the Morris Dancers in the early part of the day attracted many spectators, but for some reason before the day was over they disbanded partnership, which caused some disappointment... 68

In conjunction with the report the following year this suggests another watershed. In 1907

> The morris dancers provided the chief attraction. They came out in a most respectable manner, with their new costumes; they had several new dances this year one being the sword dance, which was very interesting... 69

That they had several new dances implies that they also had a new musician, and Wells is known to have introduced new tunes (and hence new dances) when he started playing. He did not, however, know all of the tunes which had been used previously, and by his own admission between the years 1890 and 1910 six very old jigs and six-handed dances went out of the repertory. The sword dance mentioned in the account is almost certainly the Bacca Pipes jig. It had certainly been previously performed by the morris dancers at Bampton, since the ragman on the 1897 photographs is shown to be carrying two churchwarden pipes, and in 1904 Prior spoke of the dance, even to the point of describing it as "something like a sword dance." Possibly there had been a short lapse of performance of the jig and it had been revived in this year. If my thesis that 1907 was the first Whit Monday "Jingy" played for the morris is correct, one can imagine that he reintroduced it. He claimed to be proficient at the Bacca Pipes, even to the point of beating his uncle Alfred Taylor at it, despite this latter's reputation [70]; and also claimed to have taught it to Thomas Tanner and Robert Dixey [71]. It was obviously one of his specialities.

There is a photograph extant in Bampton which shows the dancers smartly clad in what may be the new costumes mentioned in the account, and this may date from this year. The dancers are the same as those on the photograph which shows another musician (Tanner, Dewe, Rouse and the three Dixeys) and this indicates a remarkably consistent personnel line-up, with only one change from 1897. This is in complete contrast to the sixty years between 1836 and 1896, when the average turnover of dancers was one every two years. This obvious renaissance is perhaps significant : Sharp's first volume of The Morris Book had appeared

MORRIS DANCING IN THE SOUTH MIDLANDS. Volume II.

Published by : Keith Chandler

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Hill Grove Farm

Minster Lovell

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from which address copies may be obtained.

MORRIS DANCING AT BAMPTON UNTIL 1914

Due to a considerable number of sources it is a fact that we possess more pre-1914 historical material on the morris as performed at Bampton, Oxfordshire, than from any other South Midland community. Information was recorded by Thomas Carter on behalf of Percy Manning in 1894, by Manning himself in 1897, by Cecil Sharp on a number of occasions between 1909 and 1914, and by Mary Neal, Clive Carey and Juliet Williams between 1912 and 1914 [1]. This material in itself would provide us with a consistent chronological profile of the Bampton dance side over roughly three decades prior to the first World War, but in addition we are fortunate indeed that one of the chief participants in the morris from the date of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 until his death in 1953 was so enamoured of the Bampton morris (and in particular the active role taken by his own relatives throughout much of the nineteenth century) that he extensively recorded, both in his own hand and in interviews with interested outsiders, as much historical information he could uncover. This man, William Nathan "Jingy" Wells, born in 1868 and known throughout his life by the nickname inherited from his grandfather, wrote in 1914

> If my predecessors a hundred years ago had kept all the bits of importance and old relics in the way of wittles and dubs, old violins, old clown and other dresses, old sets of bells... and a score of other things in the way of old and original dances, tunes and songs, we should today have a goodly collection. But, alas, nearly all is gone and the dear old boys with it. It would have been nice to look over. Thus the very reason I am doing this, it may help to amuse or teach others after I am dead and gone. [2]

The tangible relics have disappeared but the valuable historical material remains, at least in part, and by collating and analysing these sources