

U-SPY KENNET MORRIS



THE COMPLETE SPOTTER'S GUIDE TO KENNET MORRIS - WRITTEN BY A FOOL

Join in the fun and learn whilst collecting points using this A - Z guide to the noble art of the Cotswold Morris and Kennet Morris. The person with most points at the end of each season will be ... the winner.

Accordion



Jon Holmes is our accordion player, and he uses a piano accordion, so called as it has a piano style keyboard for his right hand. His left hand sometimes plays buttons to produce bass notes and chords. Although called a piano accordion, it is in fact more like an organ as it is a wind instrument using bellows to sound the “reeds”.

But the main difference between a button accordion and a piano accordion is that it burns a little faster.

U-Spy Points: 1. Score 50 if it’s burning, or the keyboard is on the left as it’s upside down.

Jon Holmes



Badge



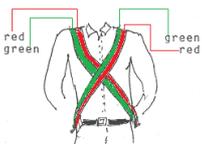
The Kennet Badge has evolved over the years from a letter “K” written in felt tip on a green card to today’s cross-stitched design. The Oak & Stag are from the crest of the Royal County of Berkshire’s coat of arms and the blue represents the River Kennet. The white stuff in the water is probably from the time that the Whitley Wood sewage farm discharged into the river.



U-Spy Points: 1, or 10 if you spot an old felt badge with a stag that looks like a rabbit. And the really good news – you can buy a leather badge for £2, and if you’re a Morris person you’ll get a discount – and 20 points (they’ll still be “Men” until the stocks are cleared!)



Baldric



This is the name given to the cross belts worn over our shirts. The red and green outermost colour on the shoulder must be worn as port and starboard, very important when we’re all at sea. Our badge is worn on the cross on the front when a dancer has reached the high standard demanded by the Squire.

U-Spy Points: 1, or 10 points for spotting a baldric with no badge. 50 points if you can’t see the badge because the dancer is wearing the baldrics inside-out, or has fallen on their face.



Bells



Morris dancing and bells are synonymous. Each member of Kennet makes their bell-pads to their own design using a variety of bell sizes. Some tune each bell pad differently so they know which foot they are stepping on, if they can remember which is which. They do not wake up the earth, just the wife when you arrive home tired and emotional after a hard night’s Morris dancing.

U-Spy Points: 1 for a pair of bell pads, 10 for a person dancing without any, and if you’re lucky enough to find a lost bell, that’s not been stood on, 50 points ... and the bell.



Capers



Capers, or frolicsome leaps as the dictionary defines them, come in several varieties – half-capers or “forries”, fore-capers, kick-capers and upright, full or whole. They help define Cotswold Morris Dancing and are the ultimate demonstration of a dancer’s prowess. For the mathematically minded you will discover the inverse correlation of the formula $h = w + a + p$

Where h = height in inches off the ground, w = weight in stones, a = age and p = pints consumed.

U-Spy Points: 1 for each caper over 12 inches off the ground, 5 for 24 inches and 50 if all dancers manage to caper at the same time.



Concertina



The concertina is the original squeeze box. Bill Martin sometime played the Anglo version where each button produces a different note on the push and the draw of the bellows. Bill was a professional map maker so he’s used to complex folding things. It used to be known as Anglo-German but “German” was dropped by the English makers during the First World War. Not to be confused with the English concertina, which sucks and blows the same note for each button. Bill recently became a country member and is now known as the Clitheroe Kid.

U-Spy Points: 100 if you can get him back to us, but 20 points if you can work out how it can be played.



Dobbin



Dobbin is the Kennet beast or animal. He is what is known as a Hooden Horse or mast horse and some people actually believe he might not be a real horse but that there is a person under the hood holding a mast. Really! Dobbin is articulate – not that he ever speaks (and if he did it's unlikely it would make sense), but bits of him move.

U-Spy Points: 1 for not being scared of the beast, 5 if you see his ears move and 50 points if you feed him money without getting your fingers bitten off.



Fool



Peter de Courcy

Peter de Courcy has been the Kennet Fool for over 40 years -the things some people do to get out of dancing. Traditionally the Fool is the best and most respected dancer in the team. There's an exception to every rule. He will let the dancers know if they're not entertaining enough and correct mistakes with a deft blow of his veggie-bladder. He has been known to talk a bit, shout a lot – and even dance. He also wrote this booklet. He has a lot to answer for.

U-Spy Points: 1 if you managed to avoid being bladdered, 20 if you thought he was very funny, 50 points if you bought him a beer and 100 points if you bought a badge from him.



Foreman



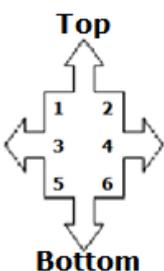
Edwin Trout

Our foreman is Edwin Trout. If anything goes wrong in a dance it is his fault as it is his job to teach us how to do things properly throughout our winter practice season. By the time we dance out in May he gives up and becomes an ordinary dancer (not that ordinary – he's actually quite good). Edwin is quite easy to spot as he's usually the man holding his head in his hands, or is sobbing, wondering why he bothers. Edwin has recently taken over the role, and is one of our most experienced, and able, dancers.

U-Spy Points: 1 if he's not happy, 10 if he's smiling and 50 if he applauds the dancers



Formation



In Morris each dancer is numbered according to his position in the set. Facing the "Top" of the set (where the musicians are) those on the left are numbered 1, 3 & 5 – the "odds". Those on their right are the evens 2, 4 and 6 (if there are eight dancers, you can work it out). Number 1 will usually lead the dance. Each column will always line up with number 1 & 2 (see Lines) and with their opposite number.

It is vital we also know which way to face, so each direction is given a name. Face Up means we all face the musicians who should still be at the head of the "set", if they haven't gone to the bar whilst we work this all out. Up is not towards the heavens, though the Foreman may be facing there in despair. Face Down is the opposite direction, or possibly the Foreman staring at the floor wondering why we bother practicing. Face Front means turn to face the dancer across the set from you. Face Out means to turn your back on the set and face the audience, if there is one. Face In is looking towards the middle of the set.

You may hear these instructions called out by the leader of the dance, but the dancers probably won't, or if they do it probably won't make any difference. Simple ...

U-Spy Points: 1 for each time you hear a call, 10 if the dancers hear. 50 points if at the end of the dance, as they should, all follow number 3 off the stand.



Galley



The Galley or Gallery is a special dance movement where the dancer turns through 360° whilst standing on one leg, the other leg raised to waist level with the knee bent at 90° the foot pointing towards the ground. This foot will describe two circles at the same time as the dancer hops on the standing foot. That's the theory. In some dances the turn will be of only 270° or 180°. The Galley may start on either foot so that both knees will eventually wear out and need to be replaced.

U-Spy Points: 5 for identifying a Galley, 20 if the thigh is parallel to the ground and 100 if all dancers manage both two hops and two circles of the free foot without falling over. ○

Handkerchief



Handkerchiefs are very much part of the Cotswold Morris tradition and come in pairs, one for each hand. Some may tie the handkerchief to a finger for sake of security as, traditionally, a dancer dropping one would have to buy the team a beer each. Handkerchiefs should be white and 500mm x 500 mm. Only a fool would dance with coloured handkerchiefs.

U-Spy Points: 1 for a dropped hanky, 5 for two hankies knotted together (for a dance called "Maid of the Mill") and 100 if a dancer actually buys a round of drinks having dropped one. (A hanky that is.) ○

Inside or Outside Foot?



It is vitally important that each performer starts a dance on the correct foot. The inside foot is the one nearest to the opposite number, and the outside foot the other one. Some dances, especially, where a galley or similar is involved, require all dancers to start on one or the other. Other dances require everyone to start on the same foot, so one side of the set will be on their inside foot and the other their outside. Many dancers dance on the ever popular wrong foot. The rest probably don't know their left from their right anyway.

U-Spy Points: 1 point per dancer if you can spot a wrong foot. 20 points if you don't. ○

Hey



The Whole Hey is a figure of eight pattern performed by three dancers, usually in columns each side of the dance set, each eventually returning to their starting place. This is often part of the dance chorus and the dancers will stop half-way, and perform the second part of the chorus before continuing. Coincidentally, this is called a Half Hey. The skill of the dancers avoids any chance of collision when attempting this figure.

U-Spy Points: 1 for a Whole Hey, ½ for a Half Hey, 2 points if someone goes the wrong way (too common to award more) and 10 points for a collision. ○

Jig



A jig is usually performed by a solo dancer, the most famous of which was William Kemp. In February and March 1600, he undertook what he would later call his "Nine Days Wonder", in which he morris danced from London to Norwich (a distance of over a hundred miles) in a journey which took him nine days spread over several weeks. Some of our men also seem to take that long to perform one dance. The jig is an opportunity for one of us to show off their prowess, and an opportunity for the other dancers to go to the bar. Kennet dance one, two and three person jigs. The "Ducklington" jig for three has been danced with as many as 15 of Kennet. Not bad for a solo dance!

U-Spy Points: 5 for each dancer and 10 if you spot their prowess. ○



Kennetshire



We would proudly display the Kennetshire flag if we hadn't lost them! More will eventually be purchased so points may be hard to come by for a while. The shire includes all of Berkshire, much of South Oxfordshire and North East Hampshire. Parts of Devon, Kent and West Yorkshire are regularly claimed for Kennetshire. The flag is based on the Union flag, but in Kennet colours. Any similarity to a southern European separatist movement's emblem is coincidental, but we will allow them to use it.

U-Spy Points: 10 for each flag spotted. 500 points if you recover our lost ones



Lines



Straight lines of the columns and rows dancers are an essential part of the structure of any Morris dance. All the dancers should line up with the person at the head of the set. If you hear the shout "Lines" you know the dancers' feet (and minds) are probably wandering. Kennet will usually ignore this as they are always right and do not need to look up and down or across the set, relying on their in-built compass – in much the same way as a pigeon's brain.

U-Spy Points: 1 for each call of "Lines" - 20 points if you notice any difference.



Trafalgar Square Nov 2003

Matron



Matron was a new character introduced to Kennet in July 2010 by the late Clive Allen, who is sadly missed, not just by Kennet, but by many in the Morris world. Before Clive she had a "virtual" presence and was said to be responsible for allowing some of the performers out for the evening, so long as they were back in time for their cocoa. She also took the blame for not making sure dancers took their memory pills when a dance figure was particularly badly forgotten.

She was available to administer her nostrums, tonics, tinctures and emetics to our ailing and failing members in reality. We're not sure how we're going to stay standing without her, but out of respect for Clive, the position has been retired.

U-Spy Points: 0.



The Late
Clive Allan

Melodeon



Matt Smee

Properly called a "diatonic button accordion" the melodeon is a favourite instrument of Morris musicians. The melody-side keyboard contains one or more rows of buttons, with each row producing the notes of a single diatonic scale. The buttons on the bass-side keyboard are most commonly arranged in pairs, with one button of a pair sounding the fundamental of a chord and the other the corresponding major triad (or, sometimes, a minor triad), and sometimes are actually used; so simple even young people can play it. The main difference between a piano accordion and a button accordion is that it burns a little slower.

U-Spy Points: 10 points for only one melodeon playing, 5 points for 2, 0 for any more than 2 playing. Score 20 points if you spot the melodeon player smiling.



Neckerchief



Red and white spotted neckerchiefs were adopted as part of Kennet's kit many years ago, in common with several other "revival" Morris teams. Although not really traditional they do give a rustic look to the side, even if we do not know one end of a plough share from the other and only know a harvester as a pub chain.

U-Spy Points: 5 if you spot a dancer without a neckerchief.

Score 50 points if you recognise the man in the photo; 100 if you buy him a beer



Off the Ground



6 or 8 Morris dancers jumping clear off the ground in unison is an exhilarating feature of many of Kennet's performances, or in a corner dance where two challengers vie to see who can get off the ground the highest with the most exuberance. That's the theory anyway.

U-Spy Points: 1 for each dancer off the ground simultaneously. 50 points for each if they're over 70 years old (you could score 200 – but I doubt it!) ○

Processional



Goring Heath Alms Houses (appropriately named Alnut's Hospital) May 2008. The Kennet Evolution?

On certain occasions we dance in procession, one of our favourites being our traditional Wheatley Processional on Spring Bank Holiday at The Alms House, Goring Heath (see above - you might guess that we don't dance it very often). You may also see us process on to the dance spot, and even process off. But it is more likely to be the equally traditional Kennet "Shamble Off".

U-Spy Points: 1 for a Processional On, 10 for a Processional Off, 20 for a Processional Dance, 0 for a Shamble Off (far too easy) ○

Queue



Spot the queue at the bar when the Kennet arrive at the pub, have a half time break, finish dancing, start singing and finish singing. It's an occupational hazard we just have to get used too. And don't ask about the Gents' Loo. (See also Processions above.)

U-Spy Points: 1 point for each person in the queue. 10 points if you hear "No, after you." ○

Rounds



Rounds or Whole Rounds are often used to finish a dance, although some traditions also include one in the chorus. When ending a dance we will dance in a clockwise circle, usually turning on the spot half way round and carrying on clockwise. In chorus versions it is more usual for the dancers after turning "out" half-way through to return anti-clockwise, back to their place. Of course, these will never be confused.

U-Spy Points: 1 for each Whole Round, ½ for a Half Round. Score 10 points for anyone going the wrong way round and 50 points for hearing "No, let me buy you this round." ○

Squire



Jason Yanacopoulos

We elect a new Squire or club captain every couple of years. The main job is to wear the Squire's badge of office, a magnificent silver medallion made by the late Mick Baccus, one of our earliest members, and presented to the club back in 1976. The Squire leads the public performances and decides on the dances we perform at each "stand", as we call a dance spot. This is because the Kennet stand around generally ignoring his every pleading to form up to dance. Other than that, he doesn't do much, other than forgetting to bring the sticks bag.

U-Spy Points: 1 for recognising The Squire. 10 points if he remembers to tell the musicians what dance he's about to perform and 20 points if the dance side does what he says first time. ○



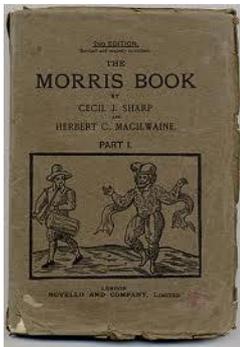
Sticks



In Cotswold dances, if you haven't a handkerchief in your hand, you'll have a stick (or two as the picture shows). This does assume we've remembered to bring them (see above). Sticks may be made of willow or from the wood of a nut tree and will usually be about 26 inches long. Short sticks are shorter. They are used to draw attention to the dance and will not wake up the ground ready to sow the corn nor will they scare off the devil, despite what every Morris aficionado will promise. At the end of the dance, Number 2, the person at the head of the right hand side of the set, will collect in all the sticks that haven't been broken, dropped, thrown away or stolen by the devil.

U-Spy Points: 1 point for each stick collected by N° 2, 5 points for a dropped stick and 10 points for a broken stick that hasn't injured anybody or broken a window. ○

Traditions



Cecil J Sharp collected traditional dances from the Cotswold region of England in the early twentieth century. Each village where he was able find dances had similar but different styles and these became known as "Traditions". He published The Morris Book from 1906 onward in 5 parts giving detailed notations and tunes for 86 dances (with about the same number again unpublished). Kennet perform a wide range of traditions from the villages of Adderbury, Bampton, Bledington, Bucknell, Ducklington, Field Town, Hinton in the Hedges, Ilmington, Lichfield (sort of Cotswold), Oddington, Sherborne, Upton-upon-Severn (definitely not Cotswold), Wheatley and Winster (Derbyshire!). There are several others we've danced in the past but are now known only by a few older Kennet men, and there are several we've created ourselves in the style of a tradition we now call Kennetshire (any similarity to Bucknell is completely coincidental).

U-Spy Points: 1 point for each tradition you can identify (it should be announced). ○



Another tradition is to put money in the collection to bring you "The Luck of the Morris", and to help pay for our practice hall and running expenses. What's left is distributed amongst worthy charities. Get 10 points for each £1 you put in the collection - we now have a card-reader so no excuses. None goes on our beer – so you'll have to buy us one to be really lucky! ○

Umbrellas



A damp day in Wrotham; Hartley Ale June 2011

Umbrellas are a rare feature of our dancing as it is well known that a Morris performance is a virtual guarantee of fine weather. They are mainly used as sun shades or to help our loved ones find us in a crowd (see below).

U-Spy Points: 1 for each umbrella, 2 for a wet umbrella and 5 points for each used in a dance. ○

Venues

THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



SUMMER PROGRAMME 2012

The best way to collect U-Spy points is to attend as many of our dance venues as you can, as published in our Summer Dance Programme each spring and handed out freely at dance spots. The programme is also downloadable from our Website www.kennetmorrismen.co.uk.

U-Spy Points: 5 points for each venue you see us at in the season, 10 points if it's at a Festival and 20 points if it's not a Pub. ○

WAGS



The Kennet Ladies' Evening at The Lands End, Woodley, January 2011

As we're now a mixed side we have a problem! The "Wives and Girlfriends" regularly accompanied their men to our many venues, including weekends away, and are much a part of Kennet as the dancers. Many have been friends for many, many years. The WAGs, as they were known, were well rewarded for their loyalty (and perseverance) at our Ladies' Night and on our annual End of Season Tour, which always includes an exotic shopping location (coincidentally, near to a good pub). But what to call the group now? Suggestions to the Fool please, on the back of a £10 note, if you think you can improve on POLOs (Partners Or Loved Ones).

U-Spy Points: 1 for each WAG you can spot, 5 points if her man remembers to buy her a drink on pub evenings and 10 points if her man actually talks to her during the evening. 20 points for a POLO

Xmas



The Kennet Christmas Carols Evening is legendary, another evening well attended by many guests (see above, see left, season's greetings etc). It is always held the Monday evening before Xmas day. We also dance on New Year's Day lunchtime at The Calleva Arms, Silchester to complete our festive celebrations.

U-Spy Points: 1 for each carol you sing, 10 for each Kennet member without a hangover you spot on New Year's Day.



The WAGS carolling 2011

Zzzz



The Squire of The Morris Ring attempts to awaken the Kennet contingent after The Hartley Day of Dance

Morris dancing is a strenuous activity, oft carried out in the baking heat of the English summer, with only beer to quench our thirst. No wonder that we sometimes have to rest to revive ourselves ready for the next vigorous performance ... or more beer.

U-Spy Points: 5 for each sleeping person spotted. 10 points if they still appear to be dancing, 50 points if they've missed the tour bus.



I hope you have enjoyed our light-hearted look at this finest of English traditions and have learnt a little more about Cotswold Morris and Kennet Morris. Any similarity to I-SPY books is completely coincidental. Besides I think you ought to do the spying, not I. If you want to learn even more, visit our Website www.kennetmorris.com where there is a mass of information about our dances, our full programme, and maps of the venues.

You will also find other books in this (growing) series. U-Spy Kennet Morris Dances is a guide to our 2024 season's dance repertoire, Your Welcome to Kennet Morris, an introduction for anyone considering joining us, and a companion volume, The Kennet Morris – A Foolish History. Have fun.

Yours foolishly

Peter de Courcy

May 2024