

## Jigs – resources for DDMM

Jigs are morris dances for one, two or several dancers. Most morris traditions include jigs as well as 'set' dances, and jigs generally follow the same style as the rest of the dances in their traditions. For example a Bampton jig is recognisably from Bampton because it consists mostly of the same steps and hand movements as the Bampton set dances.

There's an excellent summary of what jigs consist of, their place in a morris side's repertoire, how to approach them etc, written in 2013 by Stuart Bater, Harthill Morris / Handsworth Traditional Sword. [View it on the Ring website](#)

Cov-19 isolation gives an extra impetus to learning a jig – with clear instructions, suitable music available on Youtube, hopefully accompanying a clear and accurate demonstration of the dance, one can keep fit and enhance one's enjoyment of morris without having to venture out.

This 'resources' document contains a mixture of commentary, instructions and links to suitable online material.

### How hard are jigs to learn?

Just like set dances, jigs vary in difficulty (technical or / and athletic). Many are pretty straightforward, some are really tough. Dancing solo in front of others is a challenge in itself – there's no hiding place, and nobody wants to make an idiot of himself. However, learning a jig, whether or not you do it 'in public' is an excellent way to take your knowledge of a tradition to another level.

Some men can't wait to try a jig in public, others never do – that's your choice.

Jigs generally draw on most of the 'moves' found in the tradition concerned, so you do need to be familiar with those: there aren't really any jigs which don't incorporate something showy - no point in bothering an audience with something which doesn't go beyond simple stepping. However, there's nothing like a jig to get you to review a tradition and to hone the moves concerned.

### Learning jigs in isolation

You need instructions, music and ideally feedback on how you are getting on. Most of us don't have a musician tucked away at home, so learning at home involves recorded music. There are morris tunes online, CDs etc, but these are often not a lot of use, either because the tune is being played to listen to rather than to dance to, or it's being played too fast, or both. You'll probably find the best source of music is actually a video of someone dancing the jig concerned. That's no guarantee of perfection but if the dancer is competent then the music usually is as well.

Watching a competent dancer on video can of course be very helpful in seeing how the dance is done, especially if you've also got some written instructions to refer to. However, just searching Youtube does not ensure that you'll be presented with a competent performance, and even if the dancer and music are good, they may have a significantly different way of tackling the tradition than you've learned with DDMM.

So, what follows attempts not just to tell you how to do the dances but also suggests specific videos to use. Over time we hope to produce a series of videos by Devil's Dyke men and musicians, dancing and playing jigs accurately and in DDMM style.

Getting feedback on how you're progressing is of course less easy than if you are learning in company, but there's always Zoom or equivalent to communicate with one of the side's teachers or musicians.

## Which jig should I start with?

Some jigs are harder than others, and it is generally easier to learn a jig in a tradition which you already know from your 'set' dance repertoire. Having said that, it's entirely up to you. The final section of these notes makes a few suggestions.

## Where can I find notes on how to do jigs?

There's quite a bit of published material varying from the widely available 'Handbook of Morris Dances' by Lionel Bacon ('the Black Book') through Morris Ring publications such as the guides produced by Bert Cleaver, to privately produced material such as the handouts at Morris Ring Jigs Instructionals. There's also a fair amount online, for example on <http://www.koki.org.uk/>. Some of the instructions can be pretty cryptic and as mentioned earlier, may refer to a different approach to a tradition compared to the DDMM way.

So, we're in process of producing our own instructions for jigs, which will appear on pages linked to <http://www.redsite.org/DDMM-info/Introduction.html>. If you haven't seen these pages, they are where we have attempted to write down all the 'set' dances we do, arranged by tradition. We'll add the jigs to those pages as well. This is all a work in progress!

## Jigs you might learn

### Fieldtown

The most usually danced Fieldtown jig is **The Nutting Girl**. It's got a well-known tune, incorporates all the standard Fieldtown moves without anything particularly awkward. **Ladies of Pleasure** is similar, shorter, less often danced but another fine tune. Then there is **None so Pretty** which has a distinctly different 'chorus' touching face, chest and then clapping – the same sort of movements as in dances like Adderbury Shepherd's hey. Fieldtown also have a version of **Princess Royal** which is a more complex jig including kisses, clap, heel-and-toe as well as the normal caper components.

### Bledington

The three most commonly danced Bledington jigs are **Lumps of Plum Pudding**, **Ladies of Pleasure**, **Princess Royal**. Of these Lumps is possibly the simplest, and Princess Royal, which has a 'chorus' involving cross hops, the hardest.

### Sherborne

Definitely an A level tradition, technical, physical but most rewarding. DDMM have in the past done **Go and Enlist for a Sailor** and some men still harbour ambitions for **My Lord of Sherborne's Jig** before we become decrepit.

### Bampton

Although they can be done by one person, Bampton jigs are normally done by two dancers, each taking turns. All the Bampton jigs involve a move called 'straddle' or 'manhole' capers (a variant on upright capers). Bampton jigs are popular but not without their own challenges of getting the timing right. **Princess Royal** is possibly the most danced (Matt and Ollie Simons do a classy version).

**Flowers of Edinburgh** is a particularly exhausting Bampton jig (and set dance too)

### Other traditions

Most traditions include jigs: Ilmington (Nigel dances one called **Nelson's Praise**), Bucknell, Oddington, Longborough (DDMM used to dance Longborough **Princess Royal**, quite some while ago), Headington etc.