

Whip the Cat Rapper Murton DERT Traditional Competition



Whip the Cat performing Murton at DERT Leeds 2014 showing the figure 'Landlord's Knot.'



The Murton Team in 1904. Photo courtesy of Rapper.org.uk

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E.C.Cawte and C.J.F.Soper, 1967. The Rapper Dance as taught by the Lowerson family at Murton. Ibstock, Leicestershire: The Guizer Press, 1 st ed.	

Background

The Murton Sword Dance comes from the mining village of Murton in Co. Durham. The Murton team was founded in about 1902 by Harry Lowerson and fiddler Tom Smith. It differs from other traditional dances of the area and time in that it is performed “*inside out*”. The dance was notated by E. C. Cawte and C. J. F. Soper and published in 1967. Whip the Cat began researching and learning the Murton Sword Dance in 2002 but it was shelved until 2012 when we began to re-learn it. The Whip the Cat version is based on the notation by E. C. Cawte and C. J. F. Soper.

The Music

For DERT, our music will be played on a fiddle and will be jigs in 6/8 as per Cawte’s notation: “*The music was played on a fiddle, or English Concertina, or both. The tunes were all 6/8 jigs from Kerr’s Collection of Merry Melodies.*” The tunes we have chosen to use are The Northumberland Lady (aka Breeches Loose), The Fiddler’s Jig and Tweedly Park and not, necessarily, from Kerr’s Collection of Merry Melodies.

The Kit

We have chosen to incorporate elements of the kit the Murton team would have worn into our own current kit, whilst still being recognisable as Whip the Cat. We have opted to change our usual black shirts to white ones and will be wearing black ‘Slim Jim’ style ties as described by Cawte. We have chosen not to wear black breeches or dark blue stockings and instead wear our own black skirts and tights. The Murton team would have worn red sashes but Cawte also describes a half-inch gold stripe down the outside seam of the Murton team’s breeches and, as our existing sash is gold, we have chosen to wear this, instead of a red sash, as a nod to the gold on their breeches.

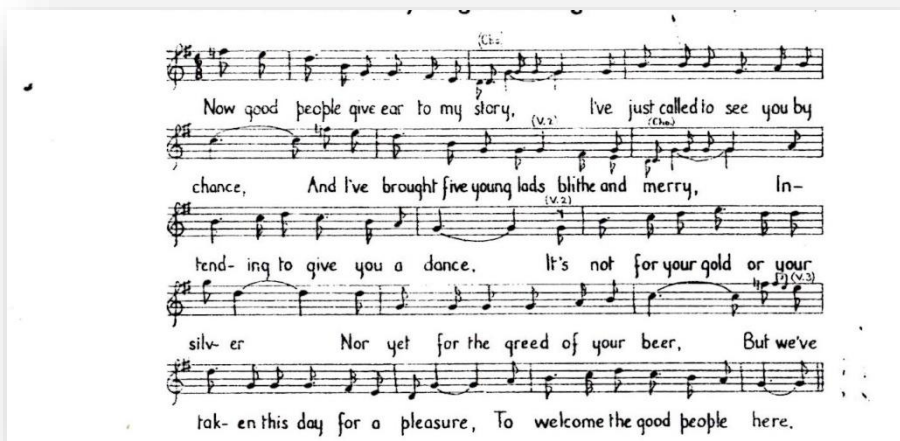
The Step

Cawte’s notation states “*Lowerson I showed Miss Orde a double shuffle, Lowerson II approved a single shuffle, with a break on to the right foot at the end of each phrase. The walking step was the same as usual, well on the toes.*” We have chosen to incorporate both Lowerson I’s double shuffle and Lowerson II’s single shuffle. The standard single shuffle is used predominantly throughout the dance with the double shuffle used on two occasions in the displaying of the locks.

Cawte does make mention of a “*Sand dance step*” which was sometimes used but he goes on to say that “*it is hard on the shoes and the Lowersons finally advised against it.*” We have therefore chosen not to include it.

The Song

According to Cawte's notation, this is sung as the dancers "stand in a circle facing centre. Rappers held erect, with right hands meeting in the centre at chin level. Numbered 1 to 5 clockwise. The Betty sings the song." For Whip the Cat's version of Murton the song will be sung by our Tommy, as we do not have a Betty character. We have decided to cut the song down to just the first verse in order to save time during the performance.



The Dance

The figures in Cawte's notation are not listed in a specific order and it states that "Any number of knots may be performed in any order, but the Murton men usually "put a Scringe between everything, but no two Scringes together." The last knot was usually the Treble Scringe, done twice if it had not been done once already." We have made sure that the final figure in our version is Treble Scringe, however, it only appears once in our dance as the second time through was usually for the Tommy to enter the set and for the star to be tied around his neck. We have chosen not to have the Tommy in the set so there is no need to repeat Treble Scringe.

In Cawte's notation, a Chorus figure is described: "Each dancer should find his left hand rapper on top of his right, the reverse of usual. The star is tightened in the usual way, and held as high as possible, arched up, while the dancers jig for a phrase." and he states that "This simple connecting movement follows each knot". We have chosen to include this, but not in between every figure, as Cawte suggests, as it would make the dance much longer. We display the star as a Rose Bowl because Cawte describes it as being "arched up".

Another thing that Cawte notes is that every figure starts from an open ring, we have chosen not to start every figure in this way as we feel that it would make the dance less fluid.

Cawte notes that Lowerson's teaching emphasised some useful style points. For example that the dancers should always keep as close together as possible. "Whenever you see a gap, close it up" Lowerson said. We follow this stipulation wherever possible, in particular in the Girdle figures.

List of Figures

We have chosen to put the figures in the following order:

Walk On
Single Scringe
Front Girdle
Double Scringe
Back Girdle
Lock and Rose bowl
Lowerson's Scringe
Lock and Rose Bowl
Mixed Girdle
Single Scringe
Landlord's Knot
Lock Display
Lock and Rose Bowl
Jumping Knot
Lock and Rose Bowl
Double Scringe
Tumbler
Treble Scringe
Lock Display



Whip the Cat performing Murton at DERT 2014, Leeds. Showing the 'Coach & Horses shape' with 1 and 5 facing the other dancers in Jumping Knot.

The Figures in Detail

Walk On and Start

There is nothing mentioned in Cawte's notation about how the Murton team 'walked on' for a performance. We have chosen to walk on, numbered 1 to 5 with swords down by our sides. We then walk round anticlockwise for a phrase and turn, abruptly on the spot on beat 8. Swords go up into the middle of the set at chin level ready for the song (see above). When the song is finished, the music starts up and the dancers walk round in a circle for 8 beats, bring their swords down onto their right shoulders and walk round for a further 8 beats. The first figure follows straight away.

Single Scringe

1 casts clockwise followed by 2 and 3 whilst 5 casts counter clockwise followed by 4. The two circles rotate 4 times round, passing shoulder to shoulder in the set. 3 crosses from one side to the other.

Front Girdle

From the last rotation of Single Scringe, the dancers turn to stand in a ring facing clockwise with swords on their inside shoulders. 1 steps out of the set and 2, 3, 4 and 5 shift slightly to make a 'cross' shape. 1 then walks clockwise around the outside of the set using 8 beats; on returning to their place, they turn clockwise on the spot, stepping for 8 beats as they do this. 2 repeats this movement, starting from when 1 returns to their place, before 1 starts stepping. This is then repeated by 3, 4 and 5 one at a time whilst the stationary dancers step in 8's.

Double Scringe

1 and 5 do the same as in Single Scringe. 2 and 4 cross over (2 in front of 4) after one full rotation, they stay crossed for another rotation, then cross back. 3 does not cross and stays on the same side as 1.

Back Girdle

Dancers move as if to tie a lock but instead stop so that dancers are in a ring facing clockwise with swords on their outside shoulders. 1 steps out of the set and 2, 3, 4 and 5 shift slightly to make a 'cross' shape. 1 then walks clockwise around the outside of the set for 4 beats, turns for 4 beats and continues walking for 4 beats, using 12 beats in total, until they have returned to their place. 2, 3, 4 and 5 then take it in turns to do the same, one at a time whilst the stationary dancers step in 12's.

Lock and Rose Bowl

The lock is tied left hand over right and displayed as a Rose Bowl.

Lowerson's Scringe

1 and 5 do the same as in Single Scringe. 2 and 4 cross after one rotation and then cross back. 3 does a figure of 8, going left to begin with, then right. At this point 1, 2, 4 and 5 stop, facing forward and step for 8 beats whilst 3 passes through the middle of the set and casts right at the front of the set and returns to their place. 3 then steps for 8 beats while 1 (with 2) and 5 (with 4) move in little circles and all tie a lock.

Lock and Rose Bowl

As before.

Mixed Girdle

This starts in the same way as Front Girdle. The dancers turn to stand in a ring facing clockwise with swords on inside shoulders. 1 steps out of the set and 2, 3, 4 and 5 shift slightly to make a 'cross' shape. 1, 3 and 5 do the same thing as they do in Front Girdle but on 2 and 4's turn they turn right shoulder back and walk counter clockwise around the set instead, moving on the outside of the person returning to their place before them. The order is the same as in Front Girdle and the stationary dancers step in 8's.

Single Scringe

As before.

Landlord's Knot

After the 4th rotation of Single Scringe, the dancers turn as if to tie a lock but stop in a line in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. In his notation, Cawte says "*Jig for one phrase and close in to tie the star as quickly as possible.*" But he doesn't specify how the swords are brought down whilst stepping in the line so we have opted to bring them down gradually over 4 beats. Because of this we have also chosen to only step for 4 beats there rather than a full phrase as Cawte indicates.

Lock Display

In Cawte's notation he says "*1 holds it up and the others spread out on either side facing the opposite way to before, and all jig to end of the phrase.*" We have decided not to change the order in which the dancers are placed from the previous figure, Landlord's Knot and not to "*face the opposite way to before*" for the duration of the display. 1 takes the lock in the left hand and holds it up and 1, 2, 4 and 5 step back into a straight line, in line with 3, facing the back in the same order as they were in the previous figure (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). All dancers step for 4 beats and all turn together by the left shoulder to face the front. It is at this point that we have incorporated Lowerson I's double shuffle once through (or after 4 single steps if needed). The dancers then turn together by the left shoulder to face the back again, step for 4 beats and re-take hold of the lock.

Lock and Rose Bowl

As before.

Jumping Knot

Dancers break out of the lock and form an open ring and step for 4 beats facing into the circle, we then step for 2 beats and walk in to stand in a Coach & Horses style shape with 1 facing 2, 5 facing 4 and 3 standing behind 2 and 4. We repeat the stepping pattern (4 beats then 2 beats) then 2 & 4 jump together over 1's sword. We repeat the stepping pattern again (4 beats, 2 beats) then number 3 jumps over 1's sword. We are now in an outwards facing circle with our swords curved downwards where we again repeat the stepping pattern (4 beats, 2 beats) before 1 and 5 jump over their own swords. The lock is tied with a slightly slower turn than usual so as to keep the dance moving, otherwise the lock would be tied a few beats too soon. We have embellished the stepping in this figure (e.g. the stepping for 4 beats followed by 2 beats) to make the movements in between the jumps a little neater.

Lock and Rose Bowl

As before.

Double Scringe

As before but with 1 less rotation.

Tumbler

As with Jumping Knot, the dancers form an open ring and step for 4 beats facing into the circle, we then step for 2 beats and walk in to stand in a Coach & Horses style shape with 1 facing 2, 5 facing 4 and 3 standing behind 2 and 4. We repeat the stepping pattern (4 beats then 2 beats) and 2, 4 and 3 all jump over 1's sword. This differs from Cawte's notation where only 2 and 4 jump and 3 turns $\frac{1}{2}$ clockwise. We have 2, 4 and 3 jumping together as it is neater and enables us to get into position for the tumble more efficiently. Once they have jumped, 2 and 4 cast onto the ends and 3 is in position to tumble. We have also chosen for 3 not to let go of their swords for the tumble as we feel we are well practiced enough to do this.



The Murton Lock – held by Harry Lowerson

Treble Scringe

1 and 5 do the same as in Double Scringe to begin with and 2 and 4 cross immediately at the front of the set. 3 does a figure of 8, going left to begin with, then right. This means that 3 follows on 5's side of the set, as opposed to 1's but this way means 3 "avoids an awkward about turn." We complete one rotation with 2 and 4 crossed then 1, 2, 4 and 5 stop facing forward and step for 8 beats (2 and 4 are still crossed) whilst 3 walks clockwise around the outside of the set until they are back to place. Everyone starts rotating again, 3 does another figure of 8, going right, then left. 1 and 5 cross at the back after once through, 1 and 5 and 2 and 4 then cross back to place and stop, facing forward and step for 8 beats whilst 3 walks counter clockwise around the outside of the set and back to place. The lock is tied.

Lock Display

As in the earlier display, the lock is tied and held up by 1. The dancers stand in a line in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. All step for 4 beats or until the end of the phrase and all turn together by the left shoulder to face the front. Step for 4 beats or until the end of the phrase followed by double stepping and finishing with a left leg kick. Cawte makes no mention of how the Murton team finished the dance so we have opted to finish it like this.

**E. C. CAWTE and
C. J. F. SOPER**

The
RAPPER DANCE
as taught by the
Lowerson family at
MURTON



The Guizer Press
Ilstock, Leicestershire.



p6741

FOREWORD

In 1955 Mr Lowerson said the rapper dance was the sort of thing you only pass on to your sons. We are therefore especially grateful to him and other members of his family who were so helpful and hospitable to us. We also thank the Newcastle Morris Men whose perseverance enabled us to complete the process of collection, and David Adcock for the cover design.

ABBREVIATIONS

cl. clockwise
c.cl. counter clockwise

*First edition Copyright © 1967 E.C. Cawte
Published by the Guizer Press, 51, Station Rd., Ibstock,
Leicestershire
Diagrams, text, tune and notation Copyright © E.C. Cawte
Printed in Congleton, Cheshire*

Murton is a mining village in Co. Durham, (Ordnance Survey grid reference NZ3947) three miles from the coast at Seaham Harbour, and about equidistant from South Shields and West Hartlepool. A rapper team used to perform each Christmas, and spend the whole of Christmas Day dancing its way up and down the rows of colliery houses and round the village. There were five dancers, Tommy and Betty, and one or two musicians. The team might be made up to about ten with extras in dancing costume who collected money. Colliery managers and business men were generous, and before 1914 each man's share at the end of the day was often twenty - five shillings or more.

The team was started about 1902 by Harry Lowerson senior, and the fiddler Tom Smith (then in his middle twenties) says there was no team in Murton before that date. The source of the dance is not known, but Lowerson senior said the Murton performance was different from all others (which it is, but only in being turned inside-out) and that the calling on song was made up by the Betty of the team at Hetton le Hole. In fact the Murton song is much the same as the Earsdon one, which was printed in 1887, so the claim seems unlikely. Possibly Lowerson was a member of the team at Hetton, three miles from Murton, learned the song there, and reversed the numbering for the sake of change when he taught the dance at Murton.

SOURCES

This dance was collected from Harry Lowerson's son of the same name, who joined the team in 1905 when he was 13, and formed his own team in 1919. This continued until about 1934. Notes were made in December 1955 by Dr. N. Pea -

cock and E. C. Cawte, and the dance taught to the Newcastle Morris Men. Their performance was corrected and some new knots added in February 1956 by Lowerson II and his son Harry Lowerson III (also a performer) and both danced with the team. After regular performances, the team was watched at Murton by both Lowersons and by two other former dancers, and a few alterations were made to style and details. In August 1956 W.F. Cassie and E.C. Cawte collected further information from Lowerson II and Tom Smith the fiddler. Two photographs of the team in 1904 give some details of dress. These were later given by R.L. Proudlock of Easington Lane to Newcastle Central Reference Library.*

Miss V. I. Orde saw the dance with others in 1927 and wrote an account in *E.F.D.S. News*, April 1928. Dr.R.K. Schofield made a partial notation on the same occasion and later sent us a copy; it does not disagree with our own findings. A report of the present investigation appeared in *English Dance and Song*, March 1957.

Details of the rapper dance in other villages are in

Cecil J. Sharp: *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, Novello, London, 3 vols., (1911 - 1913);

Marjory Sinclair and Elsie Whiteman: *The Newbiggin Rapper Sword-Dance*, English Folk Dance and Song Society, London, n.d.;

Bill Cassie: 'Rapper Knots from High Spen' in *Folk Music Journal*, E.F.D. and S.S., 1965, pp. 6-24;

Bill Cassie: 'Rapper Knots from Amble and Bedlington' in *Folk Music Journal*, 1966, pp. 92-101.

DRESS

The dancers wore white shirts, black ties ('Slim Jim' style in 1904), dark blue pitmen's stockings, and shoes or boots, and black velvet breeches. These had a half inch gold

* Local History Collection: MURTON. Amusements and Sports. Dancing, 8531 and 8532.

stripe down each outside seam, and were fastened at the bottom with three white buttons so as to leave the leg loose. Two bells half an inch in diameter, the type used by morris men, were fastened below the buttons on each leg. The breeches were fastened with a red sash about two inches wide, tied so as to hang over the left hip halfway to the knee. Later they used black and white "boys' snake belts" instead of sashes.

Betty wore a loose skirt and jacket in an all-over pattern, and a soft brimmed hat, mob-cap style. Tommy wore breeches in an all-over pattern with a bell at each knee, cap like a policeman's helmet to match the breeches, dark blue stockings, boots, and a patchwork jacket. Both carried rappers. The musician wore his ordinary clothes.

RAPPERS

These were of the usual pattern, made by the local blacksmith from bed laths or old saws. The length varied because they were replaced one by one as they broke, but it was about the same as the commercially produced set they used in later years. Miss Orde said the set she saw was longer than usual, and this would make *Jumping Knot* easier. In the 1904 photograph one handle of one of the rappers had a knob on, but nothing is known about this.

MUSIC

The music was played on a fiddle, or English Concertina, or both. The tunes were all 6/8 jigs from Kerr's *Collection of Merry Melodies*, the favourite was *The Connaught Man's Rambles*. The speed was the same as usual for the rapper dance, dotted crotchet equals 160 for a well practised team.

STEP

Lowerson I showed Miss Orde a double shuffle, Lowerson II approved a single shuffle, with a break on to the right foot at the end of each phrase. The walking step was the same as usual, well on the toes. Sometimes a 'Sand dance step' was used, sliding the feet along the ground, but it is

hard on shoes and the Lowersons finally advised against it.

When the team is to jig we sometimes recommend a half phrase or phrase. This is for a well practised team, but (as always) the completion of a movement must be adapted to the needs of the dancers, and it is better to complete a movement neatly than quickly. The team should at least try to complete a movement at the end of a phrase of music, or the end of a half phrase.

THE DANCE

Any number of knots may be performed in any order, but the Murton men usually "put a Scringe between every thing, but no two Scringes together." The last knot was usually *Treble Scringe*, done twice if it had not been done once already. At some stage when the star was being tied, usually the second time through *Treble Scringe*, Tommy entered the set by going between 1 and 5 just before they met, and stood in the middle so that the star was tied loosely round his neck. During a phrase of jiggling the star was raised, then tightened, so as to lift his hat off his head, and Tommy left the set unobtrusively. After a moment the hat was flicked off by a sharp movement of the star, and Tommy picked it up again.

When the team danced in the village they performed a few knots, the last of which was *Horses*. In this position they walked some yards up the street and continued the dance by tying the star. The star was only displayed at the end of each street, so that the performance was continuous.

It will be clear from some of the descriptions that the knots were not regarded as unchangeable, and some modification is permissible, but this is unwise unless the team is fully familiar with the way in which the dance usually varies. Anything in this description not in accord with the performance at Murton is clearly stated to be so. Alterations were all made with Mr. Lowerson's agreement, and sometimes at his suggestion.

If a team wishes to perform some of these knots with ones from other villages, little change is required, in most

cases it is only necessary to read cl. for c.cl., and vice-versa, and similarly left for right.

Introduction

Stand in a circle facing centre. Rappers held erect, with right hands meeting in the centre at chin level. Number 1 to 5 clockwise. The Betty sings the song.

Now good people give ear to my story, I've just called to see you by
 chance, And I've brought five young lads blithe and merry, In-
 tend- ing to give you a dance. It's not for your gold or your
 silv- er Nor yet for the greed of your beer, But we've
 rak- en this day for a pleasure, To welcome the good people here.

Chorus

To me fal de de lal de de lal de de day
 Me fal de de fal de de day,
 O me fal de de lal de de lal de de day
 Me fal de de lal de de lay.

All sing the Chorus, while the dancers walk round cl. and clash their rappers twice in each bar. The second half of the music is not required.

2 Now there's me and my noble five dancers,
 My noble five dancers by birth,
 And they bear just as good a character
 As any five dancers on earth.
 Murton* is our habitation,

* The singer should substitute the name of the place from which the team comes.

The place where they're all born and bred,
And there's not finer lads in the nation,
And none are so gallantly led.

Chorus

3 Now my lads they are all fit for action,
With spirit and courage so bold.
They are born of a noble extraction,
Their fathers were dancers of old.
If they be as good as their fathers
Their names shall be wrote on record,
It is the whole company's desire
To see how they handle their swords.

Sometimes the Tommy and Betty used to join in the Chorus. They walked round the outside of the set, opposite each other, clashing with the other dancers. The Tommy used to sing

Now me darling and I'll go along with you,
Stick to your wine and good life,
I would rather ten times be a coachman,
As tied to a drunken old wife.

No chorus after the last verse of the song, but the music starts, face cl., jig for a phrase of music, walk round one phrase, put rappers on right shoulders, take hold of the one in front with left hand, and walk round one more phrase. The first knot follows at once, usually *Single Scringe*.

Chorus

This simple connecting movement follows each knot and is described here to save repetition. *Chorus* is not a traditional term. Unless the movements of the knot have already done so, the star is tied from the open ring by 1 casting cl. and 5 sliding (always facing centre) so that 1's rapper passes over 2, 3, and 4, who step forward and turn 1/2 cl. Each dancer should find his left hand rapper on top of his right, the reverse of usual. The star is tightened in the usual way, and held as high as possible, arched up, while the dancers jig for a phrase.

By reversing these movements they return to the open ring position, though the direction in which they face is decided by their anticipation of the next knot. Each knot starts from the open ring and No.1 should call out its name in good time so that the movement is unbroken.

Single Scringe

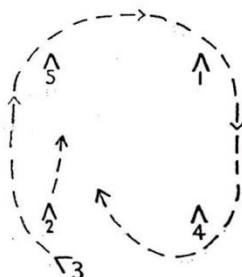
1 casts cl. followed by 2 and 3, 5 casts c.cl. followed by 4. The two circles rotate passing shoulder to shoulder, and 3 may cross from one to the other in a figure eight. Before 1 and 5 cast 1 calls 'Star', and 2, 3 and 4 turn $1/2$ cl. while they pass under 1's rapper, 5 slides as in the *Chorus* instead of casting, and 1 casts and turns $1/4$ cl. to tie the star.

Double Scringe

This is like *Single Scringe* but 3 does not cross. After a few turns 2 and 4 cross, and after a few turns cross back, 2 in front of 4 on each occasion.

Treble Scringe

This starts like *Double Scringe*. After 2 and 4 have crossed once, at a signal from 1 when 3 is at the back, all but 3 face forward and jig, while 3 walks round the others cl., passing behind 2, in front of 5 then 1, and behind 4.



He should time this to take one phrase of music, and the circles revolve again 3 following 2. 1 and 5 cross and back, or this may be omitted. Once again the set stops, and 3

walks round the set c.cl. 2 and 4 cross back as in *Double Scringe*.

When this knot is used at the end of the dance 1 and 5 do not cross, and while 3 is doing his c.cl. circuit 2 and 4 change places, so that the star can be tied at once.

3 may cross in a figure eight in this knot, but this description makes sure he avoids an awkward about turn. The knot will last too long unless the number of rotations is kept small.

Front Girdle

Face cl. in open ring and jig with rappers over inside shoulders. No. 1 walks cl. round the outside of the set, then turns cl. once on the spot and falls back into place. This is repeated by 2 to 5 in turn as the rest jig.

Back Girdle

Tie star but turn cl. $1/4$ less than usual (except 5 who turns c.cl. $1/4$ more) so that all are in a ring facing cl. with rappers on outside shoulders. While the rest jig, 1 walks cl. round the set, turns once cl. and returns to place as in *Front Girdle*. The rest do the same, and the star is tied by turning $1/4$ cl.

Mixed Girdle

Starts like *Front Girdle*, but just before 1 reaches his place 2 turns $1/2$ cl. and walks c.cl. round the set, turns once c.cl. on the spot, and falls into place. Just before 2 completes his circuit 3 passes outside 2 as he repeats 1's movement. 4 repeats 2's movement and 5 repeats 3's.

Jumping Knot

Jig in open ring facing centre, and 2 and 4 move toward 1's rapper. At the end of half a phrase of music 2 and 4 jump over 1's rapper, and after successive half phrases 3, then 1, then 5, jump. Each dancer after his jump faces out, with the rappers arched up on either side of him, and the star is tied by all turning $1/2$ cl. 1's rapper should be waist high except

when lowered for the jumps, the other rappers should be held shoulder high.

Alternatively the dancers may jump singly, or the order of 2, 3, and 4 may be varied, the Murton team used several combinations. It is awkward for 1 and 5 to jump, and Mr. Lowerson suggested that instead 5 should turn once cl. on the spot and 2, 3, and 4 turn 1/2 cl. to tie the star.

A practical alternative used by Newcastle Morris Men retains more of the effect of the original knot. After 2, 3 and 4 have jumped 5 turns 1/2 cl. and 1 turns 1/2 c.cl. All are facing out, and the knot is completed as in the old version.

Tumbler

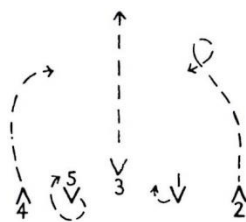
Mr Lowerson was not satisfied that this knot was authentic, partly because 3 used to let go of the rappers. This is not essential, but it is advisable unless well practised. He also thought the knot had been copied from another team.

1 and 5 face the rest, and all jig while 2 and 4 approach 1's rapper, and jump over it as in *Jumping Knot*. Always facing in the same direction 2 and 4 take four walking steps to move forwards, outwards, then backwards, while 3 moves forwards, so that the dancers are in line. The rappers must be kept high.



While the rest jig 3 turns 1/2 cl., the rappers are lowered to shoulder height, and at the end of the phrase 3 rests his elbows on the shoulders of 1 and 5 and does a back somersault. He will be safer if he drops the rappers, somersaults with his hands on his neighbours' shoulders, and takes up the rappers as before. The star is tied immediately by 1 and 5 turning cl., 3 stepping back, and 2 and 4 moving toward 3, turning cl.

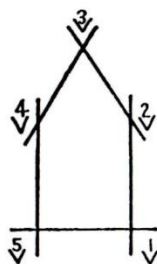
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If 3 jumps 1's rapper instead of somersaulting, the knot is still possible, but this was never mentioned by Mr Lowerson, and the knot will much resemble *Jumping Knot*.

Horses

This may start with a couple of turns of *Single Scringe*. Then make as if to tie the star but 1 and 5 turn **away** from the centre so that all face one way with rappers held crossed waist high.



The team moves down the street as described on p.6, then 1 turns $3/8$ cl. and 5 turns $3/8$ c.cl. to tie the star.

This was modified by Newcastle Morris Men, with Mr Lowerson's approval, so as to return to the original position, if required. From the open ring 1 turns $3/8$ cl. and 5 turns $3/8$ c.cl. so that the dancers are in a reversed 'Horses' position. Jig, walk forward four or eight paces, jig again, then start the knot as above, jigging for a phrase before walking to the original position.

Landlord's Knot

After a couple of turns of *Single Scringe* make as if to tie the star, but 1 and 5 move away from the centre of the set and 3 moves less than usual, so that the dancers are in a straight line:

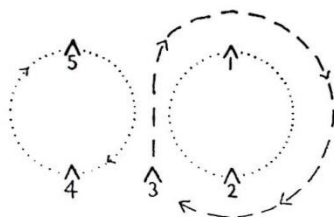
5 4 3 2 1
V V V V V

Jig for one phrase and close in to tie the star as quickly as possible. 1 holds it up and the others spread out on either side facing the opposite way to before, and all jig to the end of the phrase. Another dancer may hold the star if it is necessary to adjust the way the dancers face.

Lowerson's Scringe

After the dance had been noted Mr Lowerson sent us a further knot, his own idea, which is an example of how knots can develop. It is a modification of *Treble Scringe*.

2 and 4 cross and return, and instead of walking round the set 3 goes between 2 and 4, then between 1 and 5, casts right, and completes a circuit back to his place (interrupted line), when the circles rotate as before.



Then 3 stands and jigs while 1 with 2, and 5 with 4, rotate once (dotted line), cl. and c.cl. respectively (the latter not cl. as shown on the diagram), then 3 follows 2 and the star is tied as usual. This knot puts some strain on the rappers; they must be held firmly and high.

GENERAL ADVICE

Mr. Lowerson's teaching on style made some useful points which he emphasised. The dancers should always keep as close together as possible. "Whenever you see a gap, close it up," he said. Similarly when casting, as in the Scringes, the dancers should turn on the spot. When the star is tied it should be held as high as possible, the rappers arched up even higher. Tommy and Betty should fool in the usual way but be careful they do not block the spectators' view.

COMMENT

The dance at Murton resembles other rapper performances in general structure, it has much the same calling-on song, and the knots are of the usual pattern. The dance is turned inside out, but this makes little difference to the general impression and was plainly a local modification by some unknown individual. It shares with Amble and Swalwell a high proportion of 'running knots', in contrast with many 'jigging knots' at High Spen and North Wallbottle with complex interweaving of the rappers followed by jigging in position. These two groups of villages are at opposite ends of the rapper scale in terms of the types of knot, other teams lie between. Murton also resembles Beadnell in this respect but especially in having several modifications of one knot. Setting aside the introduction chorus and finish, the Beadnell team only performed four variants of *Scringe*, and the knot usually called *Single Guard*, much the same as *Front Girdle*. Of Murton's nine knots six are likewise *Girdles* or *Scringes*, and the final face-out position in *Jumping Knot* is also used in the Beadnell chorus. These two villages are at the extremes of the rapper area, and show specialisation at the edge of their range, just as might be expected in animal or plant distribution.

The running knots have similar patterns to the figures of the Yorkshire sword dance, unlike the jigging knots, and presumably represent the older form of the dance. Several modified Yorkshire figures are found at Murton, such as the

Clash (in the Murton song), *Double Under* (*Scringes*), *Double Over* (*Jumping Knot*) and *Double Swords Up* (possibly *Front Girdle*, not so certain). The 'beheading' of the Tommy has been reported from other rapper teams, but the method is described nowhere else, while it is common in the Yorkshire sword dance teams. It therefore seems likely that the Murton performance resembles the form of the rapper dance soon after it divided from the parent sword dance 'stem', and before it developed its more elaborate features.

ADDENDUM

The account of *Mixed Girdle* is inaccurate. 2 and 4 must start by passing outside 1 and 3 respectively; 3 and 5 start by passing inside the previous dancer. In *Treble Scringe* note that 3 transfers to the c.c.l. circuit after his first walk round the set, because 2 has already crossed. In an experienced team 3 will do a figure eight, and 1 must pick the right moment to call "stand".