

21 Burlington Road  
ALTRINCHAM  
Cheshire

16th March 1974

Dear Dr Karpeles

Some years ago you were so kind as to give details from your notes on Lancashire morris dances to Bernard Bentley & Dan Dowison when they were working at their article. I wonder if you would be very kind & give me some assistance with the Abram dance?

You will be interested to know that the Manchester Morris Men are making a second visit to Langollen this summer - last time we took second prize & we are hoping to improve on that this time! We are going to do Mossley & Abram as our two dances, as they are both from the Northwest tradition & markedly contrasted. We are doing Mossley as the Royton or some variant has been done so often.

Abram we shall be doing with an all-mens team, & we are going to have the King & Queen in the centre, provided that this does not conflict with the strict maximum of dancers allowable. I would be very glad for any additional notes you may chance to have on their dress & the bush they carried - additional to your own published material - & also how they came on & went off & carried themselves & so forth - the sort of detail that gives life to the performance.

We are also having an argument on which beat of music the handkerchiefs are thrown up. I am maintaining, from DNK's instruction, that it was strictly on the first beat of the new phrase, whereas our Foreman thinks & teaches it as the last beat of the preceding phrase. We would be glad of your august authority on this - if, as I hope, I am right I shall crush him to atoms!

You will of course know the account of the Abram dance by John Leyland in his Memorials of Abram. Did you know he had written a Diary which is available on microfilm? This is interesting because the detailed information varies a little with the statements in Memorials. His diary reports he saw the dancers on July 9th 1880 - 'the dance they performed was quiet & graceful' - & he says further that it is 11 years since it was last done. He adds that the piece of land belonged 'to the young men of the Township' almost as if it were a 'Bachelerie' custom, but there is no other evidence on this that I know of. I thought you might be interested in these points.

With kindest regards

Yours sincerely

(Derek Froome)

Frome X  
if  
Abram

Dear Dr. Frome,

19 March 1974

I am glad that you will be doing the Abram dance at Llangollen and I wish you all success.

I've looked up my notes (over 40 years old!) and I cannot find much information that is not given in the Journal. Except that I have discovered some unaccountable mistakes in the latter concerning the notation. These are:

- E 5 - 8 'clockwise' after one-and-a-quarter turn' should be 'counter-clockwise.'
- F The dots should be replaced by 'move round on the outside of the set clockwise, whilst even numbers move round inside'

I can't think how these mistakes occurred, but I have just noticed that they are corrected in the next number.

I am bothered by your remarks about the handkerchief movements. From Mr. Porter's description I took it that the handkerchiefs were thrown up on the middle beat of the last phrase (as described in the Journal) and this was confirmed by Mr. Adam Ingram (age 80) who had danced in 1901 (the last time the dance was performed). I saw him in November /32, a year after my visit to Mr. Porter.

I had some discussion with Douglas about the handkerchief movements, and although he had not seen the dance or had any information from the dancers, he felt that it would be more natural if the handkerchiefs were thrown up on the first beat of the new phrase. I remember I was somewhat shaken at the time and I hoped to get the matter settled by a subsequent visit to Mr. Porter, but alas, I was unable to see him owing to his serious illness and subsequent death.

I ought to mention that there is a curious discrepancy in the notation for E music. In my notes I have written: 'Dancers throw both hands up overhead on first beat of first bar (lowering them on the second beat)'. But in the Journal I have altered this to read 'the second beat of the last bar'. I cannot re-

remember now why I did so, but probably to bring it into conformity with the other movements. However this may have been an exception due to the fact that E contains no other ~~xxx~~ hand-movements.

I am afraid this is all very unsatisfactory, but on the whole I should be inclined to give way to your Foreman as I am pretty sure that my notation is correct. At any rate, I'm afraid you won't be able to indulge in the pleasure of crushing him to atoms!

Yes, know of the passage in John Leyland's Memorials. I refer to it in the Journal and have copied out the reference in my notebooks. I don't believe I knew of his Diary.

I have no other particulars about costume, but you could amplify from Leyland, e.g. dark trousers.

I have some very lovely letters from Richard Porter, but nothing in them that would throw further light on the dance.

This is all rather unsatisfactory. If you have any further queries to which you think I could give the answer, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Shall I see you at the Folklore meeting tomorrow I wonder.

Yours