

18/2/82.

This afternoon myself and Alice Smith visited
Mrs Urona Markoff. of
63 Castleleagh St.
Sillsworth
tel.

When we arrived she was out collecting her pension
and we were entertained by her sister-in-law at
No 62. She told us that Vi had been ill with
bronchitis over Christmas

When Vi returned she told us her story.

As a child (I would guess she is now ~75
- she said she had been at school in Sillsworth in
1918) she had been born and brought up in
Sillsworth. She had been ill with whooping
cough and it was suggested by Mr Dodd, the
headmaster of her school that she should learn
to dance as he knew her grandfather danced
and had seen that she had some ability as he
had seen her perform country dances at school.
(She particularly remembered 'Ruffy Tuffy').

She had learnt from her grandfather, Mr. Wynn.,
and her father had learnt at about the same
time.

Of her grandfather she really remembered little.
She said he called himself 'pitman's champion'

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although she did not know anything about his winning this. She did not know whether he had ever taught anyone else although he used to have a photograph of her grandfather standing next to a man wearing the belt. She thinks her mother burnt this. It seems that the clogging was all on her father's side and that her mother didn't think much of it. Her grandfather died aged 83 in the same week as she was married and was dancing up to his death. She never danced with her grandfather although he wrote a short play which contained a number of 'imitations' of well known dances - she mentioned G.H. Brot, Little Titch, Dan here + perhaps others. She still has this play although it was never performed.

Her father learnt at about the same time (she was about 8-10 (i.e. c 1918)) and learnt much more than she did "because he was older". He died in 1966 aged 78. He never taught anybody.

She paid her grandfather 1/- a lesson and he taught her while sitting down. She said his style was very light + precise and that she copied his dancing exactly.

~~She~~ Her father was born in the USA but came back to Silksworth at an early age. There seems to have been some connection with the USA and her grandfather has spent some

time in Toledo, Ohio and he thinks it likely that he would have taught dancing while he was there.

Vi knows a number of different sets of steps and has always kept her steps in the sets as taught her by her grandfather. There seem to be two sets of 4 steps which are fairly simple the 2nd 4 being "double" versions of the first four. She then does 'her' steps which seem to have been her favourites. She also has a 'Dutch dance' in waltz time and a 'Lily of Laguna' set. These last she said could be done either in sand or in tap shoes.

She used to perform her steps at charity concerts in and around Silkworth. She particularly mentioned the Temperance Hall and the Hippodrome. She never did this professionally although she thought she would have liked to. She put her steps into a little act, dressing for the part. For her early performances she wore a white dress (which she said looked rather odd with black clogs). When doing the Dutch Dance she would dress as a wind-up Dutch Doll with long blonde plaits. Her standard dress was as a ragged boy however.

Each set of steps seems to have had a particular tune to it - or at least a favourite tune. For the first set of 4 steps this was the sailor's hemp pipe (College Haze) and for

'her' set 'Woodland Flowers'. She thought that for the Dutch Dance 'Tulips from Amsterdam' might be right but was not very sure.

She does not have names for the steps but merely calls them 'the lot step' etc. She has names for the movements but she has been collected from (by both Sue Hrolop - who she liked, + Geoff Hughes who she did not like, mainly because he would not stick to doing the steps her way.) several times and may have learnt these names from previous collectors. She called a shuffle a shuffle although she also mentioned 'forward and back'. A break she called a 'shuffle off' and sometimes a shuffle also. The only other word she used was a 'dot' for a tap made in RB/C prior to a step in RB.

She is very precise in the way she teaches - insists on hands by the sides, body erect + looking straight forward. Also fairly precise about her foot positions. - she is however obviously used to teaching.

She began by showing us how her grandfather had taught shuffles. She called this ? 'kicking the stone' ?

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | A: |
| 4 | | : B/C |
| 2 | | : A |
| 4 | touch | B/C: |

From this the pupil progressed to single shuffles instead of the touches. She had a sequence of these alternating touches and shuffles. To remember this she sang 'Over the water to Chamber' to give the rhythm of the beats. She did this very quickly and I was not able to note it accurately, nor the words she sang.

All her steps are to be performed on the spot, - He made me practise on a breadboard, and said her grandfather had danced on a pit-prop. - although he didn't say how. All dancing was done on a lashed pedestal - He didn't say how big - but he learnt on a slab of slate. At present he dances on a board about 2' x 3' or perhaps a little smaller, which he says is large enough to get 2 dancers on - in fact we did!

For each step - at least for the first set he had a 'count' by which the step could be remembered - this differed from our counting method but was the one taught her by her grandfather.

Step 1. was '12345, 12345.' etc.

Step 2. '12345, 6, 7, 12345' Commas represent slight

Step 3. ?? pause.

Step 4. No count for this - He said it was an 'awful step' to get right + indeed it is a different rhythm to the others.

Step 1 1/4. Recommended time 'Sisters Hornpipe'

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|----------|---------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | } | shuttle. | A : |
| and | | | | : c, c. |
| 2 | | } | step | : A |
| and | | | | B : |
| 3 | touch | | | A : C↑ |
| 4 | <u>spring</u> | | ↑ | |

The shuttles were straight and she was insistent that this was ~~was~~ what her grandfather had taught. The B position on '3' was of some importance to her.

6x through off alternate feet and shuttle off.

Shuttle off

| | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---|--------------|--------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | } | shuttle. | A : |
| and | | | | : c, c |
| 2 | | } | <u>step</u> | : A |
| and | | | | A : |
| 3 | <u>step</u> | } | shuttle | : c, c |
| and | | | | : A |
| 4 | | | | A : |
| and | | | <u>step</u> | : A |
| 5 | step touch | | | B : |
| 6 | <u>step</u> | | | A : |
| 7 | | | <u>touch</u> | : B/c |

Step 2 1/4.

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-------------|--------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | } | shuffle | A : |
| and | | | | : C, C |
| 2 | | } | <u>step</u> | : A |
| and | | | | B : |
| 3 | touch | | * | A : |
| 4 | spring <u>step</u> | | touch | : B |
| 5 | | | <u>step</u> | : A |
| 6 | | } | | C, C : |
| and | shuffle | | | |
| 7 | | | | : B |
| and | <u>step</u> | | | |
| 8. | | | touch | |

3 x through of alternate feet and shuffle-off.

The shuffle off comes on the wrong foot on this step - I kept doing this but she did not comment. It does however work if the final 'touch' becomes a 'step'.

She stated that each step must be repeated off the other foot (she did not use this phrase).

Step 3

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|---------|--------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | } | shuttle | A : |
| and | | | | : c, c |
| 2 | | } | shuttle | : A |
| and | | | | B : |
| 3 | touch | | | A : |
| 4 | <u>spring</u> | | | : c, c |
| 4 | | | | |
| a | | | | |

6x through off alternate feet and shuttle off

Step 4

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------|---|-------------|------------------|
| 1 | <u>step</u> | } | shuttle | A : |
| and | | | | : c, c |
| 2 | | } | shuttle | : A |
| and | | | | c, c : |
| 3 | shuttle | | | A : |
| and | | | | : RB |
| 4 | <u>step</u> | | toe tap | : A/B |
| and | | | <u>step</u> | A/RB |
| 1 | | | | |

6x through off alternate feet and shuttle off.

Note that the step on '1' is not $A|B^*$, so that the step on '2 and' is in 'A' so that the step does not move backwards.

She stated that her next set of steps are the same as this step set except that the shuffles are 'doubled'.