

5/2/83

Alree, myself, Julie J + Sue Mycock began our odyssey round the lakes. Most contacts turned out to be dead - see full list at end.

Eventually we called to see

Robert Harrison

1 Elm Ave

Flinby
Cumbria.

He was unfortunately not able to dance properly having had a recent leg operation. He was born in 1919. His father could do a bit of clog dancing but sent Robbie to learn from his uncle, Jack Harrison who had left Cumberland when young and gone to live in Shiremoor near Newcastle. Robbie went over when he was 9 in 1928 and stayed for about a year.

His uncle played the banjo for practices but when he performed Robbie usually danced to the piano. He had to practice for an hour every day when he came home from school.

He danced three routines :- Hornpipe, Butrol Grenadous (or a ragtime) & waltz. Each routine had 5 or 6 steps but some of these could be done twice to make up 8 or 10 steps for a performance.

His uncle had a roll-up mat used for dancing and Robbie also mentioned dancing on pedestals.

He had entered no competitions.

His uncle's daughter learnt at the same time and they used to dance as a duo, in particular he remembered that in the waltz they used to come in from opposite sides of the stage.

He danced in concerts until he was 17. He normally wore a silk shirt and breeches. He has a photograph of his father dressed in a velvet costume with a black face. He wore gold clogs. ~~His~~ His grandfather did not dance.

His Cousin is :-

Mrs Elsie Wilks.
to Park Grove
Shiremoor.

He remembered only 2 local dancers - Will Wright who organised classes in the villages round Whitehaven + a man named Barton who came also from Whitehaven.

The first dance he had learnt had been the hemp pipe. He thought the tune he used was Flowers of Edinburgh.

The steps were always performed off both feet and normally in the same order.

He was unable to teach us any of the steps properly but we discovered that he used the following units :-

Kicks + Lolls
~~Swans~~ Heel ~~and~~ swivels.
Wobblers.

No Slaps.

All walk steps began step, shuffle, step, step, step shuffle, step, step.

No shuffle-off - although it might be that he didn't understand what we were talking about.

His break - the last two bars of the hemp pipe sequence was like 'Sammy Bell's or 'Iry Sands'

He stood on the spot for the hemp pipes but moved about for the lagtime + walk.