

Mr Robert Doran, Moathill, Maryport, Cumberland, aged 77.

Mr Doran was at one time very well known in his district as a clog-dancer. He has recently had a leg amputated, so that his dancing days are well over, but he gave me a good deal of information on clog-dancing in his youth.

Mr Doran began to learn clog-dancing at a fairly early age from his father, who could do a little. He does not know where his father learnt it. Then at the age of 9 he began to take lessons in clog-dancing from a Mr White in Whitehaven.

Mr White was at this time a man of about 40. He had no regular dancing-classes, but just took people privately for lessons in clog-dancing in his spare time. Mr Doran had lessons from Mr White for about 3 years, winter and summer, going twice a week after school, each lesson lasting about an hour.

When Mr Doran was about 12, Mr White moved to Fleetwood, and after a few months (while White was settling in his new home) Mr Doran went to stay with him for a month, having lessons each day.

After this, Mr Doran "picked up" with White. Then, at the age of 15 or so, he took further lessons with Michael Hannaway in Coatdyke, near Motherwell. He went to stay with Hannaway for a month, and had lessons every weekday. Their usual system was to work at a step for about ten or twenty minutes at a time, and then Mr Doran would go away and practise. By the evening, he could do the steps as well as Hannaway.

Hannaway, aged about 50 at this time, was a music-hall artist, and a "big man at the game", either winner or runner-up in the Championship (see below).

This completed Mr Doran's tuition, and for the next three years or so he gave exhibitions at concerts all over Cumberland (charging 10/- or a guinea a time) and on various music-halls. He has danced in music-halls in Glasgow,

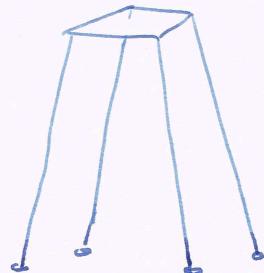
Whitehaven, Workington, and Preston. His best engagement was a week at the Empire (?) at Hull, for which he got £10 or £12.

In the meantime, he was learning the trade of hairdresser, and after he had completed his training and set up in business, he only danced locally. From the age of 20 or so, he took private pupils in clog-dancing (just as White had done with him), charging 2/6 a lesson. He also taught his brother to dance.

Both White's and Hannaway's steps were fundamentally the same, but Hannaway's steps were more complicated. Mr Daven himself made up his own routines, and departed from the steps taught by White and Hannaway.

There were various types of dancing.

Pedestal Dancing. This was the most advanced form of clog-dancing. The dancer performed his entire dance on a pedestal, consisting of a brass plate 12" square, mounted on legs, which were screwed to the floor. The height of the pedestal depended on the ability of the dancer. His own pedestal was as high or higher than most - 3' 6" off the floor. His brother's pedestal was somewhat smaller.



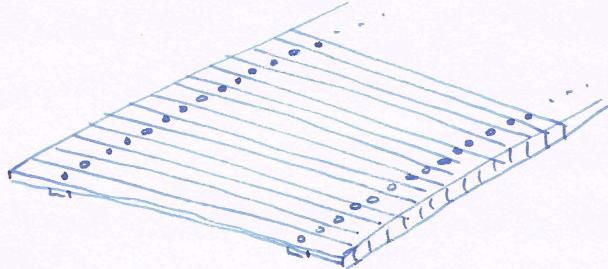
In one of his steps on the pedestal, Mr Daven sprang into the air and clicked his heels together 3 times before landing again on the pedestal.

Clog Dancing. Ordinary clog dancing on the ground.

Waltz-time dancing. Use patent leather shoes for these. Also known as soft-shoe dancing. "You could hear the beats mind, running along the floor and twisting round."

Tap dancing. Also done in patent leather shoes, but to schottische tunes.

Mat dancing. Done on a mat consisting of laths fastened together. [His own mat, now in my possession, is made of laths each about $3' \times 1\frac{1}{2}'' \times \frac{1}{2}''$, riveted to two leather straps at points about 6" from each end, and when spread out is about $3' \times 9'$.]



At first, Mr Daven said that soft shoes were used for mat dancing. Then he added that "I've danced in my clogs on it, mind, in different places".

I tried to get him to say whether there was a characteristic style of clog-dancing for Lancashire. When I first mentioned this, his comment was "Booh". But then he came out with "Lancashire fellows were mostly toe dancers". His own, and Hannaway's, dancing made considerable use of the heel, and was more complicated than the general run of Lancashire dancing.

I asked him if he wore jingles on his clogs. His contempt was devastating: "Nooo. You never saw a good dancer with those on". By jingles, he meant brass bells on the instep. I'm not certain about the hollowed-out heel.

His clogs were plain, and the leather was not tooled. "There was no point in making them fancy if you were going to knock hell out of 'em".

The tunes he used for clog-dancing were Nolah, Russian Rag, and Four little blackberries.

He had no distinctive names for his clog steps.

His costume, still in existence, consisted of white shirt, breeches and waistcoat of yellow or red silk, and stockings. This was the standard type of costume then.

World Championship competitions were held in London, but only every 7 or 8 years or so; they were held in one of the big London music halls.

Mr Daven never entered for the World Championship, but he did establish himself as champion of Cumberland. He did this by means of a challenge

"I, Robert Daven, will dance anybody in Cumberland"

inserted among the adverts in the local newspapers, the Maryport News and the West Cumberland Times. He first did this when he was aged 14 or 15, and repeated his challenge half a dozen times, up to the time when he was 16 or 18. However, he never had a challenger, and thus made him undisputed champion of Cumberland.

He has never taken part in a competition, because the mere fact that he was competing would have scared off other competitors (!)

I tried to get him to give me the names of some of his contemporaries who were good clog dancers, but apparently they didn't exist. I mentioned Robinson Mitchel of Netherton, only to be told that he "was a one-footed dancer. ~~Robert~~ ~~Daven~~ I could do as much now with one foot as Robinson Mitchel could do with two". And of Mr Cowper [presumably Parry (see later), since he was younger than Mr Daven]. "No good. You wouldn't go to the bottom of the road to see him".

N.B. My notes above tend to present Bobby Daven in a most unfavourable light. He was indeed a most likeable fellow, and his scorn for his contemporaries was so devastating that it was in no way objectionable. My impression, from what two or three people in Netherton & Maryport have said, is that he was a really first-class dancer, with few competitors in the district.