

Mr and Mrs John Whittle, 5 Christian St, Workington, Cumberland, ages 76 and 72 respectively.

I went to Mr & Mrs Whittle in search of information about the Cowper family, but it transpired that they had been taught to dance, not by the Cowpers, but by another dancing-master who was new to me, a "Dizzy" Bryden.

Mr Whittle went to Mr Bryden's classes when he was 18 or 19 or so. Dizzy Bryden was a full-time dancing-Teacher, and at this time was a man of about 50 or 60. His wife was a dressmaker and kept a shop in Oxford St, Workington, and the dancing classes were held in a room above the shop. His wife also helped him in the running of his classes.

Bryden held his regular classes between 5 and 7.30 p.m.; these were attended by both schoolchildren and teenagers. Then from 7.30 to 10 p.m. he held a dance for adults (mostly teenagers). These dances were usually attended by about 30 or 40 people, who paid 6d for the evening. There was little formal instruction during this dance, but Mr Bryden would make use of ex-pupils by asking them to take up beginners.

He played the fiddle for both his classes and the evening dances. At the dances he would both play and dance, and call out the instructions, all at the same time — "goan in among them, playing away, telling them what to do — ladies in the centre, ladies' chain . . ."

The dances which Dizzy Bryden taught included Lancers, Quadrilles, Caledonians, d'Alberts (the Waltz Cotillion was the 3rd or 4th figure of this), Polka, Heel and Toe Polka, Waltz, Schottische, Polka Mazowka, Highland Schottische, La Va, Ban Dance, Military Two-step, Caucasian Circle, Six Reel, Eight-Reel. As he concluded this list, Mr Whittle added "By gum, I've come out of there wringing wet wi' them dances". Mr Bryden taught no step-dancing.

of enquired about the 8-Reel, but they had no real memory of it except that it was in square formation.

I then enquired about the 6-Reel, and they gave me the following information.

6-Reel. Twelve people, six on each side. There was changing of partners, swing with some, waltz with another, finish in a ring. But all terribly happy.

At this stage I asked if it might possibly have been done by 6 men with two ladies each. Mr Whittle showed signs of excitement, and evidently this brought the dance back to him. His recollection of the dance now was as follows:

Stand in two long lines, three facing three



Advance and retire (probably twice) [but do not exchange partners with the opposite man] Then each man swings his R.H partner, then his L.H partner, and then the threes each dance a baby basket. Repeat as often as desired; there is no progression.

At the beginning of the Square Dances, many people put in a sequence of stamps on alternate feet. * In Common time this is :

| | | |
|-------|----------------|------------|
| Count | 1. 1. 2 3 4 | 2 1. 2. 3. |
| | LF RF LF RF LF | RF LF RF |

with feet in 1st position, but almost parallel. Mr and Mrs Whittle said that the stamps fitted :

If you're an angel where's your wings?

This was usually done at the beginning of the first and last figures. [I presume that this is a degeneration of something like the Westmorland Shuffle off.]

Mr Whittle told me that he once saw a "3-Reel" done, at an 'Old Folks Do' at Seaton, near Workington, at New Year's Time, about 1905. The 3-Reel was done by a man and 2 ladies as an informal exhibition; the man would have been about 50 at that time, the ladies between 40 and 45.

The man first step-danced with one of the ladies while the other stood still, then he danced with the second lady while the first stood still. Then all three step-danced — but apparently there was no figure 8.

The dancers wore ordinary shoes for this, and the steps were "Cumberland and Westmorland step-dancing". This was the only occasion on which he has ever seen a 3-Reel.

Mr and Mrs Whittle said that most of the villages round Workington have a "New Year's do" for the old folks, particularly in the country places. At Seaton in Mr Whittle's young days, for instance, the parish arranged the "Old Folks Do"; they provided a tea, followed by a concert and dance. The concert lasted about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and the dancing started at about 8%. Old people went free, and young people paid 1/6.

I inquired further about the "Cumberland and Westmorland step-dancing". He said that various people "taught the clog-walloping". I then asked whether the Cumberland & Westmorland step-dancing was the same as this clog-walloping, but on reflection he thought not. In the clog-dancing "they had Lancashire steps and so on". [It is possible that the point here is that step-dancing was done in ordinary shoes, but I can't be sure of this — Mr Whittle was not clear on this].

Mr Whittle named several people who "went in for clog-dancing and taught it to those who wanted to learn it", Bill Lowden at Harrington (3 m. S of Workington), & Harry Earp, Harry Shepherd, & a man called Williamson, all in Workington. They danced on a board, 3' square, raised off the floor. These were competitions

in the music-hall, and these various people took part. They also gave exhibitions at concerts.

They knew of Oliver Cowper, who had had his dance-studio in Christian St. He taught "old-time dancing" for adults, and to the children he taught "draping the maypole" and "carnival dancing". This carnival dancing is still done in the streets at carnival time; Teams of children dressed in fancy costumes, representing fairies, sailors, etc. They take part in the carnival procession, and then at the field where the carnival is to be held, they plait the maypole [We saw some of this at Allithwaite, near Cartmel, while on holiday there in 1958.]

After old Oliver Cowper retired, he was followed by Harry Cowper, his son. The latter eventually emigrated. Another son, Roland Cowper, is a decorator in Whitehaven. Oliver Cowper held his dancing classes in an upstairs room in his house in Christian Street.

Another proper dancing-master is Will Wright of Seaton, aged about 70.