

Note by T.M.F.

The success of my five-day visit to Westmorland and Cumberland was so remarkable, that I feel I ought to add an explanatory note.

Clara Boyle was an obvious starting point; she was the Lake District Headteacher before the War, and I already knew that she had done some collecting through the Richard Allan correspondence which Sam Jackson had sent me. Since we had already corresponded, I simply phoned her up, and arranged to see her. On her own initiative, she brought Miss Short into the discussion, since Miss Short ~~was~~ is a native of Ambleside, whilst Clara Boyle isn't.

I reached Bobby Doran through Julian Pilling. Julian had visited Keighley Museum, and there he saw a pair of clogs belonging to a Cumberland clog-dancer, Robinson Mitchel of Netherton, near Maryport. I visited Netherton, only to find that Robinson Mitchel had been dead these twelve years or more, but my enquiries there soon gave me the name of Bobby Doran.

The chain which led me to the Cowper family was a very long and involved one. On my Odyssey in 1958, I had to change at Castlerigg Junction on my way to Douglas. An elderly porter there, John Carmichael, told me that the right people to see in that part of the world were the Misses Blackley, whose father had taught dancing in Lanark. I therefore made a detour that afternoon to pass through Lanark, only to find that the Misses Blackley were away (the visit wasn't wasted, because I found old Willie Lawson through talking to an elderly man leaning against a wall outside Lanark Station). However, I did succeed in finding the Misses Blackley on a later visit during the Odyssey, and among much other most valuable information, they recommended me to Miss Wallace in Kilmarnock, whose father had been a dancing teacher.

In the spring of 1959, I visited Miss Wallace, and she again gave me much valuable information. She also loaned me a notebook of her father's in which he had

written out some "fancy dances" for children. And here, as the composer of several of these dances, I found the name O.I. Cowper, and, just once, the place where he resided - Workington. Since I was primarily looking for signs of dancing Teacher on this trip, I therefore went in search of the Cowper family in Workington.

After talking to two or three people in Workington, I eventually reached the street in which Mr Cowper had had his dance studio. An enquiry to the first person I saw - & asked if there was any elderly resident in the street who might have known the Cowper family - took me to Mr & Mrs Whittle, only to find that they had been taught by Dizzy Bryden. However, they told me of Roland Cowper's existence in Whitehaven, and that he ran a decorator's business there, and a look in the phone book gave me his address.

Mrs Stoney is pianist for an EFDSS group in Westmorland, and I had no job in running her to earth, since Ethyl Anderson gave me her address. Similarly, Cicie Wilson and Mrs Johnston of Hawkshead were two of Dan Howison's sources, whilst Norman Robinson was known to Dan by name, although he had never met him.

Mrs Keith is, of course, Norman Robinson's mother, and I found her, naturally, through her. And Mr Batey was the father of the landlord at a pub near Grasmere where I stopped for coffee.

Mr and Mrs Fisher, at Edenhall, were a fluke. I remembered the old correspondence with Clara Boyle about Richard Allan, and decided to visit Edenhall to see if I could find out anything about him. I reached Edenhall just at lunchtime, and there was not a soul in sight. Eventually I spotted a lady peering at me from the back of her front room, so boldly walked up the path & knocked. She sent her husband to the door, but after a few seconds she herself came and talked to me - and it turned out that Mrs Fisher's aunt had been Richard Allan's second wife! They not only gave me the address of Allan's daughters, but also gave me the address of an old musician in Penrith, Mr Wannop; and there I went to learn about Bobby Miller.