

Mr Tom J Holgate, Downham, Lancs (nr Nelson), aged 87

Interviewed in company with Julian Pilling. Mr Holgate came to Downham in 1881, and has lived there ever since.

Mr Holgate attended dancing classes in Clitheroe, at the Swan and Royal Hotel in Castle St, when he was aged about 16 (and so ca 1889). These classes were run by a Mr Gudgeon, with members of his family to assist him. The classes were for adults only. From 7 to 8 p.m., there was a period which was definitely spent on tuition, with Mr Gudgeon demonstrating his steps whilst accompanying himself on the violin: "playing his violin, he waltzed across the floor - with the proper step, - and we had to follow him". After 8 p.m., they had a dance, with little or no tuition. The classes were once weekly, and the charge was 2s. 6d for a session of 5 or 6 weeks.

At this time Mr Gudgeon was aged about 50 or 60. In the classes he was assisted by one son, Ignatius, and a daughter, who took up various members of the class for the dances. He also had a band, which was very much a family affair. He and one son, James, played the violin, another son played the big bass fiddle, and yet another son played the piano (with yet a fifth son as a reserve pianist). One outsider also played - a flautist. For the classes from 7 to 8 p.m., old Mr Gudgeon played alone, but for the general dancing he had his band in.

The dances which Mr Holgate learnt from Mr Gudgeon were: Quadrilles, Lancers, Waltz Cotillion, Cossack Circle (couple meeting couple round the room), Si Roger de Covery, Polka Mazowka, La Varsoviana, Waltz, Polka, Schottische, Barn Dance.

At this stage I asked Mr Holgate whether he learnt the Heel & Toe Polka. He misunderstood me, and said that they learnt the Polka. I repeated

question, and he then went into a seeming misterance, namely that he learnt a Scottish Reel from Mr Gudgeon. In this, they stood couple facing couple, each man with his partner beside him. It had proper steps, and apparently one of these was the "heel & toe", thus explaining the misterance. I then asked him if he learnt the steps from this Reel from Mr Gudgeon. He then went on to say that he learnt some from Mr Gudgeon. Others he learnt here at the school in Downham.

Further enquiring now elicited the fact that there were also dancing classes in Downham, a fact which he had denied when we first began to question him. These classes were held by a Mr Blackburn, a man of between 20 & 30, who came out from Clitheroe. At this time Mr Holgate was aged about 15 (i.e. ca 1888), and this was the last time such classes were held in Downham. Mr Blackburn took the schoolroom once a week, from 7 to 9 p.m., and came about 4(?) times. Some of the older schoolchildren attended these classes, but they were primarily for those who had left school. Mr Blackburn provided the music for his classes by playing the piano. The dances which he taught were the same as those taught by Mr Gudgeon.

Incidentally, the Gudgeons were shoemakers and cloggers.