

Tom Percy, Cow House, Over Wyndale, Lancs, aged 64.

We visited Dolphentholme on our way north to Dentdale, and were wondering how to start looking for information about the Wyndale Greensleeves Dance - we had only the names of the people from whom Cecil Sharp collected it. We decided to go up to Abbey Stead for lunch, and on the way met Mr Percy, who looked a likely source of local information. We stopped and talked to him; and it turned out that his wife belonged to the family from whom Sharp got the dance! After a brief lunch, we returned and I spent half an hour or so talking to Mr Percy by the roadside, where he was hedging.

Mr Percy came into the dale in 1913; previously he and his parents lived in Heysham. I asked him particularly about the "Greensleeves Dance" - this was apparently the local name for it. He had never heard it called a Morris Dance. So far as he knows it hasn't been done for about 40 years.

The dance was just done on special occasions, usually at weddings, but sometimes at a social or a birthday party. In his young days there were only two or three people who did it, but from what Mr Percy has heard old people say - people who were 70 or 75 when he was in his Teens - there were quite a number of people who could do it in the old days. "It was a popular sort of jig" [but note that he has never heard it actually referred to by old people as a "jig".] And in the old days, people danced it quite frequently.

It always was a man's dance, by its very nature; a woman in skirts couldn't get her leg over the ring of hands - and even if she could, she wouldn't. [But Mr Percy didn't appear to think there was anything inherently wrong in a woman dancing it, for he said that he had no doubt some of the "rock-and-roll crowd" could dance it - and he didn't seem in the least worried by such a prospect].

Mr Percy's wife's uncle was James Winder [now dead], one of the two dancers named in Cecil Sharp's MSS. He was a fiddler, as was also his brother, Mrs Percy's father.

and their father, Mrs Percy's grandfather. Mrs Percy still has her grandfather's music ms from which Sharp copied the Greensleeves tune. Apparently the old man (the grandfather) had a dance band which occasionally played for local dances.

[It is interesting to note that Mrs Percy's grandfather played the cello in a string band which played for the church services in Wyresdale church before the organ was installed there. The instruments are still preserved in a glass case in the vestry there.]

Three other people who performed the Greensleeves Dance were John Winder, Battie Doddin, Dave Burns, all (now dead)

Mr Percy has never heard of a dancing-Teacher in Wyresdale.

When Mr Percy began to go to dances in Wyresdale (ca 1913), the programme usually started with a Waltz, then followed a Barn Dance, and "a set of dances". Other dances in use were Quadrilles, Waltz Cotillion, Polka, La Varsoviana, Schottische, Military 2-Step, Veleta, Highland Schottische, Cottages, and (on odd occasions) Sir Roger de Coverley.

In Over-Wyresdale the dances were held in Abbeystead school - about 3 in the winter - and also in a "Corporation Hut" there. Mr Percy was often M.C. at these dances.

Wedding celebrations were usually held in the farms. The supper was held in the house, and dancing took place in the hayloft over the cows - they didn't mind". The dancing went on in the hayloft while the supper was going on, few people went in to take supper in relays; Someone would come to the hayloft and call out for so many couples to go in to supper in the house.

I asked Mr Percy if the older people danced at these weddings. He told me that in general they didn't. The older people, of the same generation as the bride's parents, didn't

dance much." The ladies' parents "had their comes in for a bit of cardin' in' the front end of the house" while the younger people danced in the hayloft.

Mr. Percy has no recollection of ever having seen step-dancing in the Dale.

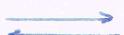
Cottagers. It is about 40 years since this was done in the Dale. It is a 'change-partner' dance, probably something like the following:

(A)      B

A      (B)

- (I) RH and LH star
- (II) Spin in a baby basket as in the Lancers.
- (III) Pick up the other man's partner, and waltz on to meet the next couple.

But I am not sure of this method of progression, for Mr. Percy also said that the men moved → while the ladies moved ←, thus



[He actually drew these two arrows in the dust on the car paintwork!]

Swingin'-6 and Square-8. Mr. Percy had heard his mother talk of these dances - they were performed by her mother (i.e. Mr. Percy's grandmother) and people of that generation. But this refers to the old village of Heysham, and not to the Dale. Another dance actually known to Mr. Percy's mother was Polka Mayowka.

Sharp's visit to Wynesdale. Mr. Percy can still recall Sharp's visit, and the comment passed on it by members of his wife's family.