

Mr and Mrs Thwaite, Gayle, near Hawes, Wensleydale, Yorks, aged 80 & 83

Mr Thwaite was born and brought up in Gayle; Mrs Thwaite was born in Snaipeholme and brought up in Hawes.

Both Mr and Mrs Thwaite went to dancing-classes in their young days, though Mrs Thwaite only went "a little bit", because her mother wouldn't let her go. These dancing classes were held in Hawes by Robert Stavelly, a Hawes man who taught dancing in his spare time. Stavelly held classes every winter, for adults only (i.e. young fellows and young women), and the charge was 1/- a night. He taught the local dances, but did not teach step-dancing. Further, he did not teach the etiquette of the ballroom [though Mr & Mrs Thwaite were a bit uncertain here]. Stavelly was not a musician, and Octavius Metcalf played the fiddle and concertina for his classes. Stavelly also held "long nights", which his pupils could attend if they paid the appropriate charge.

Both Mr & Mrs Thwaite went to Stavelly's classes for about one quarter. When Mrs Thwaite was attending these classes, she was about 20, and then "dance-master" would have been about 30.

Stavelly was the only teacher they had ever heard of in Wensleydale.

Mrs Thwaite attended dances only at Hawes, at the Crown Hotel, at Hardraw, in the schoolroom, and at Dent, on the occasion of Dent Fair. Mr Thwaite has danced at Hardraw, Bainbridge, Astengga, Hawes, and at Dent Fair.

The dances in use in Hawes and the neighbourhood in their young days were

Quadrilles

Lancers

Circassian ①

Square-8

Sylph

Turn-off-6

3-Reel

6-Reel

Waltz

Polka

Schottische

Polka Mazowka

Bar Dance

Mr Thwaite had danced Waltz Cotillion, though Mr Thwaite hadn't. Neither of them had heard of or danced the following.

Caledonians	La Varsoviana	4-Reel
Cottagers	Buttered Peas	Kendal Ghyll
Holly Berry	Brass Nuts	Buy a broom
Bonnets so blue	Irish Washerwoman	Off she goes.

Lancers and Quadrilles were virtually a new dance in the dale in their young days, "like a new kick-off". "It was such as they we went [to the classes] to learn".

Sylph. Probably as in the published version. Mr Thwaite thought it was progressive.

Square-8. Stand four couples in a square. Top couple come down and back and go across to bottom. Then bottom couple do the same, then sides do the same. [This is impossible, but it sounds like the Langstrothdale version given me by Peter Berestford and George Turnbull, pp 117, 125.] Then "take hands and swing round" [i.e. circle 8 to the left, completely round]. Then take ballroom hold with partners and swing with pivot step.

Turn-off-6. Men one side, ladies the other, 3 couples in a set (though could also have 2 sets of 3 couples). Cast off, the men following 1st man to the left, the ladies following 1st lady to the right, meet at the bottom and lead up to places, then [top couple?] take hands and swing round. [Almost certainly something omitted here.]

6-Reel. "12 people, 6 on each side.... More like step-dancing.... The women step-danced as good as men". They did not step-dance themselves - Mrs Thwaite couldn't, and Mr Thwaite didn't. "There was maybe 3 men and 3 women, they called that a 3-Reel... They step-danced to one another and swing round"

Step-dancing. There were many different steps; not all people stepped alike.. At fair time [in the pubs?] you would get a ring of men - one would walk into the middle and step-dance, then come out and another would take his place. But ~~at~~ this was on its way out in Mr & Mrs Thwaite's young days, and they didn't themselves step-dance, so that it is all a bit vague

Step-dancing could be done in boots or clogs. [Some of the young men in their youth had fancy clogs, decorated with brass eyelets and brass nails - they thought that these were called Lancashire clogs - though I prompted here. But there was no connection between the wearing of these clogs and step-dancing, i.e. the wearer of fancy clogs was not necessarily a step-dancer, a vice-versa]

Most dancing in Hawes took place in the "outside rooms" of the Crown Hotel, the White Horse, and the Black Bull, though there were relatively few dances during the year. The Conservative Ball was one of the big events - it was always held in one of the pub's outside rooms.

At Fair Time, in Hawes at Whitsuntide and September, and at Dent Fair, there would always be dancing in the outside rooms of the pubs. It maybe started in the afternoon, and went on until late at night. On these occasions the dancing was free. [But note: it was only Mrs Thwaite who told me this, and Mr Thwaite wasn't there at that particular moment. I discovered later (see p.) that at Dent the ladies were admitted free, but men had to pay.] The music for these occasions was usually a concertina

- an op. of tobacco was sufficient payment for the musician for the night at an ordinary dance. At Dent Fair, Mr Thwaite said it was "coats off for that".

Mr Thwaite and other young lads of his own age went pace-egging at Christmas-time. They visited the pubs, and most of the cottages in Gayle, wearing old clothes and old caps, their faces blacked. They each sang their own verses, though he can't remember these verses now. The money they collected went to a supper and a "dancin' neet". This was held in a long room in Gayle which was normally used as a wash-room, but was occasionally "let off" for dances. They had to make a small charge for this evening to cover their expenses.

Another occasion when there was dancing was on November 5th, following the bonfire [they pronounced it "beainfire"], following the tubbing ceremony. In their young days, the hill farmers treated their sheep with a salve formed of a mixture of tar and certain fats - this was to keep off the fly, for in those days there was no such thing as sheep-dipping. [It must have been a laborious business; they would separate out a parting in the sheep's wool, then run a finger-full of salve down the parting, then separate out the next parting, and so on].

The tar arrived in barrels, and the salve was usually mixed in tubs formed from barrels sawn in half - these tubs were usually about 18" across and about 18" deep - and at the end of the autumn, just before November 5th, most farms had several tubs left with some spare tar in them. The young men of the neighbourhood used to beg or steal these tar tubs from the farmers, and at about 7.30 p.m. on November 5th they gathered by the bonfire, at the bridge-end in Gayle. Each Tub of Tar was lit, and the young lads raced through the village, each with his blazing tar tub on his head. After one or two circuits of the village, they returned to the bonfire - already

burning well - and, one by one, they tipped their tubs on to the fire. The blaze then - with the fire augmented by 60 or 70 tubs full of blazing tar - can well be imagined.

After this "tubbing" ceremony, the young folks danced on the roadway beside the bonfire, till 4 1/2 or so the next morning, to the music of a concertina. They couldn't do Lancers or Quadrilles in such circumstances [why not?], and the dances done were just Sylph, the Squee-8, Turn-off-6, and circle dances."

Mr Thwaite said that you might easily ruin a pair of shoes from the dancing round the bonfire that evening - and Mrs Thwaite said that she often put on clogs to dance there, because the dancing was so hard on shoes. This dancing at the bonfire was their only dancing out of doors. Exactly the same custom took place in Haves itself; there the bonfire was held outside the Black Bull.

When they danced at the fairs in Haves & Dent, everybody would be wearing their "Sunday best" shoes. Quite definitely boots & clogs were not worn for dancing on such occasions.