

Mrs Birbeck, 28 Oaks Road, Great Glen, nr Leicester, aged 59

Mrs Birbeck is the daughter of Richard Allan of Langwathby [cf. English Notes, p.12 & 62]. She has some memories of his activities as a dancing-Teacher, but not very clear ones - understandably, since she left home at 15.

Richard Allan lived at Langwathby all his life, and by trade was a railway worker. He died not long before 1945, at the age of 83.

From at least 1910 (or probably much earlier) up to at least 1915 (when Mrs Birbeck left home) Richard Allan held a combined class and dance every Saturday night throughout the winter (from October to the end of March) in the Assembly Rooms, Langwathby. Mrs Birbeck attended these from the age of 10 until she left home. The Assembly Rooms at Langwathby was the name of the local hall, a single-storey structure. The classes were advertised on a board in the yard of the Assembly Rooms.

Each evening was divided into two parts, a class for children from about 7 or 7.30 to 8.30, followed by a dance for adults from about 8.30 or 9. Mr Allan charged 3<sup>d</sup> a night for the children, and 6<sup>d</sup> or more for the adults. There were usually about 20 children, and something like 40 adults; they would have sometimes 4 sets of lancers on the floor, with people sitting out as well. Perhaps twice during the winter he would have a big dance - these were always well attended. So far as she knew, he had no classes elsewhere, though he was sometimes asked to play at dances outside Langwathby.

At Langwathby, he taught the children proper steps in his classes. He demonstrated the steps first, then played & made the children try them.

The dances which he taught were

Quadrilles	Lancers	Circassian ①
Spanish Waltz	Long Eight	Square Eight
Four Reel	Eight Reel	Speed the Plough

Haste to the Wedding (probably) Waltz

Polka

Schottische

Knee & Toe Polka

Barn Dance

Valeta

Highland Fling ("used to fly round in that")

She can't remember a Six Reel, & they did not do Triumph, Petronella, or Cottagers.

Both the Square-Eight & the Eight-Reel were in square sets. Mrs Burbeck thinks these were distinct dances, but she is not sure. The Four Reel was  $\begin{matrix} \circ & \square \\ \square & \circ \end{matrix}$ , but doesn't know whether they chained across  $\begin{matrix} & x & \\ x & \nearrow & x \\ & x & \end{matrix}$ . There were proper steps in the Reels.

Circassian  $\odot$  was couple meeting couple round the room, but she is hazy about the figures.

The Long Eight was danced with the hop-one-and-two [my term]. Mrs Burbeck thinks they had hands on waists for these, fishwife style (palms downwards, thumbs to rear).

So far as Mrs Burbeck knows, Richard Allan did not teach step-dancing. At any rate, the names of the Westmorland steps were unfamiliar to her. Indeed, she has never seen any step-dancing either in Langwathby, or later in Appleby.

She is not sure whether he taught the etiquette of the ballroom, but in any case the proper etiquette was observed. For a  $\odot$  dance, they promenaded with their partners until the time struck up; in other dances they went straight to their places.

The children had "flat shoes", the adults ordinary shoes, not patent leather.

He did not teach the adults,

Mrs Burbeck does not know who taught her father to dance; she has never heard of Bobby Miller.

Her sister, Mrs W.F. Gibbs, 30 Harmondsworth Rd, West Drayton, Middx, is aged c. 64, & may know more of her father's teaching, since she stayed at home longer.

Another possible source is Mrs A Clark, council houses, Langwathby.