

Mr & Mrs Fred Wood, Higher Wood House Farm, Slaidburn, aged 77 & 70+.

When Mr Smith of Bank Ends was telling us about Catlau clipping, he mentioned that although the Mr Robinson who farmed Catlau in his younger days was now dead, Mr Robinson's two sons still farmed Catlau & they were aged c. 40. When we were coming over from the Tatham Fells, F.R. suggested that we should call in at Catlau, for even if the present generation of Robinsons did not remember the clippings, they would probably remember the name of someone who had been present at them. After some hesitation on my part, we drove in, and were very kindly received by one of the Robinsons - Jack, I think - who referred us to Mr Wood. We therefore drove on & found Mr Wood, just outside Slaidburn.

Our conversation with Mr Wood was very difficult to note, for we jumped about so much.[†] Mr Wood seems to have something of a reputation locally, both as a tradition bearer and as a bit of wag, and he was clearly determined to live up to it.

Mr Wood has lived at Higher Wood House Farm since 1898, at the age of 15. Mrs Wood was brought up at Newton.

Mr Wood's father was brought up in Cocklett House in Dale Head - it is now derelict - and played the fiddle for dances (and also played the harmonium in Dale Church). In his day the dances were of a Scotch descent - Reels and that sort of thing, "Swinging-Six and Humpies". But "Swinging-Six on a red-hot summer's night becomes rather hard work."

In Mr Wood's own young days, there were no halls in either Slaidburn or Newton - they danced in the public houses. There was also a dance once a year in the Court Room at Slaidburn. There was also a pub - The Traveller's Rest - at Dale Head, and this had a room beside it where dances were held.

One of the local events was the Dunsop Ball, held every January. It took place at the Root Farm at Dunsop Bridge. This farm belonged to the Townleys, and had

[†] I have not preserved the original order, since this was not crucial.

racing stables. The dance was held in a room which had been a store room over some loose-boxes — it had a good floor. Everybody in the district attended if they could, and there were usually 7 or 8 square (4-couple) sets on the floor. It took place on a Friday night, & went on all night. Many of the dancers stayed locally for the day, & the dancing continued on the Saturday night, though it had, of course, to finish at 12^o.

Mr Wood has attended many dances associated with a chipping: "You got a little bit of enlightenment when the sheep-shearing came on. You had your dinner, you had a dance in the loft, to a concertina". After the day's shearing was over, the men took their overalls off & washed, & put on their light shoes — there wouldn't be time for them to go home to change [& it would have broken the day]. Women had to be invited — the farmer invited some for the dance, and they would go along & help with the cooking during the day. The chipping finished with the "pill-gill", i.e. dancing.

The dances in use in the district in Mr & Mrs Wood's young days were

Quadrilles

Lancers

Caledonians

(they usually finished the dance with Caledonians — not so many could do it).

Swinging-Six

Waltz

Polka

Schottische

Crakop

Polka Mazowka

La Vassouraine

Heel & Toe Polka (a little)

Some did The Highland Fling. They have seen Sir Roger, but never done it themselves, & have done the Square-Eight. Mrs Wood has seen Brass Nuts done in Horton-in-Ribblesdale, where her mother came from.

Mrs Wood has heard of a dance using handkerchiefs — she was told of it by her mother, presumably referring to Horton-in-Ribblesdale. But neither Mr nor Mrs Wood have heard of the name Kendal Ghyll.

Mrs Wood has heard of the Three-Reel, & has seen her father do it at her home

in' Newton - her father was a step-dancer

They have never heard of Turn-off. (6 or 8).

We asked if they had ever seen three men do Greensleeves. Mrs Wood immediately said "that was another one". When we questioned her, however, she said that it was a couple (i.e. Circle) dance. She had heard of it from her mother, & had only done it once herself, & has now no recollection of the details of it.

At Slaidburn Whit Monday sports^(up to 1914), they had dancing on the field from about 8% onwards - Slaidburn Brass Band played. I couldn't find whether they had Morris Dancing or not, but it isn't beyond the bounds of possibility.

One nice remark. We told him we were interested in dancing - this on our entry - he immediately said "Dancing? I have danced in a farm on a blue-flagged floor".

Another odd piece of information; when Dale Head Reservoir was made, they did away with 22 farms. Thus in his young days, the top of Bowland was by no means as deserted as it is now.