

August 1961

Mrs George Airey, Park-view, Cartmel, N. Lancs, aged 73.

Lived at Ayside near High Newton up to the age of 18, then moved to High Newton, and lived there until 4 years ago.

Mrs Airey first attended dancing classes about the age of 7 or 8; these were held by a cousin of hers, Mr Ellwood, who was then in his 20's. She then went to Old Toss Robinson for one session, then to Stainton Robinson for a session, and finally, but about the age of 11 or so she went back to Old Toss Robinson for a further session just to help out, to keep the class going. All these classes were held in the schoolroom at High Newton, one evening per week; she is not sure how long the session lasted. She learnt exactly the same things from Old Toss and Stainton Robinson.

The dances which she learnt were as follows.

3-Reel (a boy in the centre and a girl at each end. Danced the reel of three, then he turned to one girl and the two of them stepped to each other, the second girl joining in on the shuffle-off. Then a reel of three, then the boy steps with the other girl, and so on. Description exactly as by Lucy Short (p.1). This was not a social dance, but was often demonstrated at socials).

6-Reel (This was a social dance, in '3 meet 3' formation).

Quadrilles

Lancers

Waltz Cotillion

Cottagers (certainly done in the district; not sure if it was taught at the classes).

Square 8 (?)

La Vassouraine

Military Two-step

Barn Dance

Washington Post (not from Old Toss - he had only the older dances)

Grand March

Highland Fling

Butterfly Dance (?)

Skirt Dance

Skipping-rope Dance

Tambourine Dance

Niggy Dance

Jockey Dance

Clog Dance

Plaidie Dance (Danced by the girls and the King. The girls wore plaids, and all
danced round with the King in the centre. Each girl came up to the King and
whispered in his ear, but he shook his head to each until at last the Queen
came up. To her, he nodded his head in time to the music, whereupon all the
other girls went back to their places and bent down with bent heads, as if
weeping).

Cravand Dance.

All the teachers started off their classes with the step-dancing, and each child got individual
attention exactly as described by Mrs Grace Robinson above. The steps Mrs Airey knew
were the Crouch, Double Shuffle, etc. Her treble shuffle is like Norman Robinson's.
The juvenile balls held by the Robinsons were again as described by Mrs Grace
Robinson. The parents sat on one side of the room. The children entered with the
Cravand March, each boy having his partner's shawl over his arm. The boys took their partners'
to their seats, handed over the shawl and bowed, whilst the girls curtseyed.
The named dances were done by groups. In addition, each pupil had so many steps

of the step-dancing to do by themselves. The teacher told them which steps they had to do - some did 3 or 4 steps, some maybe 12 steps. The audience threw pennies on to the floor, and sometimes shillings.

In the Square Dances, they had to bow and curtsey before each figure.

As a child Mrs Airey accompanied her brother and father on the piano while they played the fiddle for dancing (her brother was 9 years older than her). She began to do this before the age of 12.

One of the dances she saw done on these occasions was Greensleeves [This information was volunteered, and came completely out of the blue] Her father did Greensleeves at parties (her father died aged 80 in 1926 or 1927). This was a dance for 3 men, and had 3 figures in it. In the first figure, the men linked arms in a ring of 3, facing inwards; in the second they repeated this back to back with linked arms [Quite definite over all this - she can still remember seeing it done], then in the 3rd figure they clapped, batted on the back, and kicked each other, each man on turn [and again equally definite]. Perhaps they did this in both directions, once round one way, then the reverse.

This memory of Greensleeves is definitely before 1916, for her father gave up playing for dances and parties in 1916. Only 3 got up to do the dance at a time, as a sort of exhibition, always men, but not always the same 3 men. This was while they were at Ayside, and her memory of it is mainly at Xmas parties held on the farm for the farm staff and their wives, when the dance was done more or less as a joke. She never heard it called Buffoon, and there was no verse with it.

When Mrs Airey was playing for dances with her father and brother, there weren't many dances in the district, only 3 or 4 in the winter, mostly in the parish hall at Field Broughton. The dances went on from 8 p.m. till 3 a.m., and were not always

on a Friday, since she sometimes went to school next day. Greensleeves may possibly have been done at Field Broughton hall, but it was mainly at her home that she saw it done.

Mrs Airey's mother attended dancing classes for six weeks, and didn't go to school during that time. At the time, she was doing a sampler at school, and she had often told Mrs Airey that she had to wrap it up and leave it for 6 weeks when the dancing-master came round. The sampler faced me as I sat in the room, and I was just going to find out the date, when I read in the stitching of the sampler

"Ann Kidd, Work Wrought in the 11 year of her age A.D. 1858"

Mrs Airey doesn't know what her mother learnt, but it almost certainly included step-dancing.

Mrs Airey's brother attended classes held by a man called "Fainton"? At one time Mrs Airey had a printed programme of her brother's final ball.

[About a week after I saw her, Mrs Airey died very suddenly - see the letter which follows. She had searched for the ball programme mentioned above, but was unable to find it. N.B. I promised Mrs Airey that if we ever used any of this material in a newspaper article, then I would not mention her name]

11 Stourcliffe Road

Wallasey

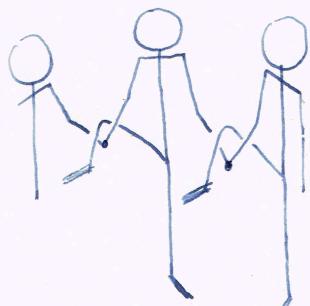
Cheshire

September 4th.

Dear Mrs Airey,

Just before we came away from Cartmel last Friday, I went to see Mrs Riddings and Mr Jackson in High Newton, as you suggested. They were both very helpful, and added to my picture of dancing in the area in the old days, but they left me with two queries which they could not themselves answer with any certainty, and I wonder if you could clear these up for me.

The first concerns the dance "Greensleeves". As you know from your daughter's contact with the Folk-Dance Society, another version of this dance is known from elsewhere in Lancashire. In this other version, there is a figure in which the 3 men join hands in a ring, and each man in turn lifts his right leg over his right hand and rests his leg on his own right arm and his neighbour's left arm, so that each man stands on one leg. They then hop round in a circle like this, then release their hold and put their legs down, then take hands again and do the same with the left legs. I asked Mrs Riddings and Mr Jackson whether there was such a figure in the version of Greensleeves performed at High Newton, but neither of



them could say whether there was or not. Can you remember such a figure when your father and brother performed the dance?

My second query concerns the 3-Reel. In this, as you told me, the boy was in the middle, and the two girls were at the ends.

The three dancers first went through the figure 8, then the boy turned to one of the girls and stepped to her and she did the same step. My query concerns what comes next. Did the boy then turn to the second girl and step to her, and then all go through the figure 8, or did they go through the figure 8 immediately and then the boy come back to the other girl. In other words, was the sequence of the dance

Figure 8

Boy steps to 1st girl

Figure 8

Boy steps to 2nd girl

Figure 8, etc.,

or was it

Figure 8

Boy steps to 1st girl, then to 2nd girl,

Figure 8

Boy steps to 1st girl, then to 2nd girl,

Figure 8 etc?

I am sorry to put you to all this bother, but I would be most grateful if you could help me here. To save you writing, I have left a big margin in this letter, and perhaps you could just put a tick or similar indication in the margin and return the letter to me.

— 3 —

There is one other query which arose from my conversation with Mrs Riddings. She thought that the dancing-master who taught your brother might have been a Tommy Teesdale, from Haverfordthwaite. Could this have been the man? You may, of course, have found your old programme, which would render this query unnecessary.

With very grateful thanks for all your help.

Yours sincerely

T. M. Flett.

Park View

Cartmel

Grange-over-Sands.

Sunday.

Dear Dr. Flett.

I am very sorry to have to inform you that my dear mother passed away suddenly yesterday morning.

She did say she didn't remember that step in Greensleeves, and also didn't think that the teacher's name was. Teesdale.

I am pleased she was able to help you a little and I hope you will succeed with renewing some of the old dances.