

### ***The Dancing Years***

MRS. Clara Boyle mentions the dancing classes held by the Robinson family (December *Cumbria*). I have a programme dated 1861 which refers to a Juvenile Ball held at Crosthwaite in April that year. Members of well-known families attended, including some of my clan, the Pricketts, of Johnscapes, Lyth.

These balls were keenly anticipated in villages which had to rely on home-made entertainment. Dancing to the strains of the fiddle or melodian, played by a local man, was a real treat.

At a later date Mr. Cannon organised similar dancing classes, varying the programme of dances and introducing some modern reels.

We have progressed a long way since people footed it on the village green, around a maypole, and the waltz was considered an indecorous movement by couples in too close proximity. The mazurka, of Polish origin, was introduced into England by a Duke of Devonshire on his return from Russia, and no doubt caused a stir at that time.

The tough old people of the villages walked miles to the nearest room where balls were held. It is on record that a man aged 81 years walked from Corney parish, in Cumberland, to Ulverston, where he played on the violin all night, and walked home next day by way of Dalton, a distance of 50 miles. He did not have "a blink o' rest."

***recalled by Belle Halliwell***



Dear Madam,

A friend has recently brought to my notice your very interesting article on The Dancing Years in February's Cumbria. I have for some time been carrying out research on traditional dancing in England, and in the course of this work I have collected a fair amount of information about various dancing-masters who taught in the Lake District. I was particularly interested in your reference to a ball programme of 1861, for a programme of this date could throw considerable light on the influence of professional dancing-masters on traditional dancing. I would very much like to see this programme, and, if possible, to obtain a photographic copy of it, and I wondered if you would be kind enough to allow me to borrow the programme for a short time so that I could make a copy of it. I would, of course, treat it with the greatest of care, and would return it by registered post.

Yours sincerely

T. M. F.

The Editor

Cumbria.

Dalesman Publishing Company Ltd.

Clapham.

Lancaster.

Dear Sir,

I have for some time been carrying out research on traditional dancing in England, and a friend has recently brought to my notice the very interesting article on The Dancing Years by Belle Halliwell in the February 1962 issue of Cumbria. I would very much like to get in touch with Mrs Halliwell, and would be most grateful if you would forward the enclosed letter to her.

Yours sincerely

T. M. F.

63 Wellfield Road.  
Fresno  
Calif.

Dear Mr or Miss Lett

5-9-62.

Thanks for letter of  
appreciation re my article in Feb. Cumbria  
"The Dancing Years".

I am loaning to you the old programme of  
1861 in the hopes that you will be able  
to obtain a photographic copy of it.

Newspaper in which I have alluded to it  
have not been able to use it owing to  
it having deteriorated too much.

You will note the old-time names for various  
dances - La Varsoviana; Jockey dance;  
Holly Berry Contra dance; La Tempete;  
Charles Town Quadrilles; Rye dance Mayurba  
Highland Fling; Polka; Tompipe etc."

Some of these "gigs" are quite unknown  
to me. There were other old-time dances  
"The Hagworm Crawl" which was performed  
by dancers slithering about with their feet  
in imitation of the movements of the



(2)

"Hagworm" - (a member of the reptile family.)  
 "Horse to Newmarket" was another  
 favourite with young lads who pranced  
 and cracked their whips to the strains  
 of suitable music.

The Sailors Hornpipes were popular as you  
 will see by the old programme; and  
 were a strenuous performance.

Amongst your list of Lakeland dancing  
 masters will be the Robbings - Father and Son -  
 who held classes in many villages including  
 "Crosthwaite" - near Kendal. Held at the  
 "Punch Bowl Inn" situated near to the  
 entrance to Crosthwaite Church.

These old Inns were the centre of  
 village life and entertainment where the  
 local fiddlers played as the lads and  
 lassies kicked the "light fantastic toe"; just  
 as their ancestors had "Footed it on the  
 Village-Greens in the villages of "Merry England".  
 As I said in the article in "Cumbria" -

Some of my ancestors are named on  
 the old Crosthwaite Dance Programme. viz.:-

(3)

Mr. & Mrs. Tuckett and Miss Tuckett -  
 all those who took part are well known  
 local names and belonged in many cases  
 to the stock band of farmers who  
 cultivated their paternal acres for  
 many generations, and intermarried  
 with the neighbouring families.

Some of the young folk who are named on  
 the 1861 programme - at long last, after  
 the toils of life were over were laid to  
 rest in the Churchyard adjoining the  
 Inn in which they had spent many  
 happy dancing years.

I do hope you are able to make a  
 copy of the old Programme which I  
 fear has deteriorated with the passing  
 of time. It was like this when it  
 passed into my keeping a few years ago.  
 I am always glad to help anyone  
 interested in Ancient history so far as  
 lays in my power, and will look forward  
 to hearing how you go on when you return  
 the precious programme to me. Yours Sincerely  
 (Mr. Tuckett) (Mrs.) Belle Halliwell



63 Wellfield Rd  
 Freetown  
 Sierra Leone.

13. 11. 62.

Dear Dr. Flett.

Thanks very much for  
 return of old dance programmes, in good  
 order.

I rather thought it would not reproduce,  
 but at any rate it is a record of past  
 activities amongst young folks.

I am glad you have been successful in  
 finding a few old programmes. May I ask  
 whether you intend publishing the results  
 of your findings? - If so, I should very  
 much like to be able to get a copy.

I am only too glad to be able to help  
 anyone - even if only in a small way - with  
 regard to past history.

Yours Sincerely/  
 Belle Halliwell

PTO for answer.

PTO for reply

PTO of reply

14. 11. 62.

Dear Mrs Halliwell,

Yes, we do intend publishing our results but not for some  
little time yet — we hope to write a small book on dancing in the North-west,  
and in particular we shall deal with the Robinsons and their many dances.  
(and of!)  
When it reaches the stage of acceptance by a publisher I will let you know.

Yours sincerely

Tim F.

# JUVENILE BALLS

MR R. C. ROBINSON

Respectfully intimates to the Inhabitants of Crosthwaite and Neighbourhood that his

## JUVENILE BALLS

WILL TAKE PLACE

AT THE PUNCH BOWL, CROSTHWAITHE,

On the Evenings of Wednesday, and Friday the 24th and 26th of April, 1861.

### Part First

March

Contra Dance

Dance [G]

Scotch Dance [3G]

Charles Town Quadrilles

Hornpipe [G]

Highland Flieg [2G]

Polka - Second Class

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Schottische - First Class

Hornpipe [B]

Dance [G]

Highland Flieg [3G]

Dance [G]

Hornpipe [B]

Hoop Dance [2G]

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Jockey Dance [B]

Highland Flieg [3G]

La Varsoviana

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Polka Mazurka

Hornpipe [G]

Five Reels

Dance [2G]

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Highland Dance

Dance [G]

Hornpipe [B]

Spanish .... [?]

Hornpipe [G]

Hoop Dance [2G]

Highland Dance

Dance - by three ladies

Sailor's Dance

### Part Second

Cottagers

Dance [2G]

Hornpipe [B]

Lancers Quadrilles

Dance [3G]

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [2G]

Hornpipe [B]

La Tempete

Hornpipe [G]

Hornpipe [G]

Hornpipe [B]



Polka - First Class

Scotch Lilt [3G]

Hornpipe [G]

La Vassouriana

Hornpipe [B]

Hoop [?] Dance [2G]

Horn[?]pipe [G]

... Reels

Schottische - Second Class

Hornpipe [G]

Crawland Dance

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Schottische - Third Class

Hornpipe [G]

Hornpipe [B]

Hornpipe [G]

Rifle Polka

Hornpipe [2G]

Hornpipe [G]

Sailor's Hornpipe

Holly Berry Contra Dance

Hornpipe [B]

Jockey Dance [2B]

Dance [3G].

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DANCING TO COMMENCE AT SEVEN O'CLOCK  
 TICKETS TO BE HAD AT THE ABOVE INN  
 Dancing after the Children's Ball for Visitors

J. ROBINSON, PRINTER KENDAL.

Dear Mrs Halliwell,

I enclose your programme, which I have now had copied. I am afraid that the copy won't be good enough for reproduction, but it is most valuable as a record, and I am very grateful for your kindness in lending me the programme.

By means of various enquiries in newspapers, and by following up such articles as yours, we have now managed to find 12 of these old programmes, and they span a century, from 1825 to 1922. Together, they form a most fascinating set, for some of the dances listed on the first programme still appear on the last. We have managed to recover a number of the dances, and with luck ~~we~~ may yet find one or two more.

Once again, my sincere thanks for your help.

Yours

J. M. Hett.