

TELEPHONE
SILVERDALE 352

BOTTOMS FARM,
SILVERDALE,
CARNFORTH, LANC.

September 24th 62.

T. M. Flett

University of Liverpool
Liverpool 3.

Dear Sir,

Traditional Dancing
in Westmorland.

With reference to your letter in the
Westmorland Gazette dated Sept 7th.
regarding the above subject, my
sister and I when young attended
dancing lessons, under W. Robinson.
and until very recently, my sister
had in her possession a dance
programme. I have a photograph

in my possession, taken when my
younger sister was ^{for the Ball} Queen for 3 years in
succession wearing traditional
costume, I also have my scotch hat
& plaid scarf. also the dress - Crown
that my sister wore.

If you think this would be of use
to you I should be pleased to
let you see them -

Yours Faithfully
W^{ms} Martha Lambert.

P.S. So sorry being so late, but my
daughter was away on holiday
so I never had time to see
the weekly Gazette. - M.L.

TEL: AMBLESIDE 3108

KING'S SCHOOL,
AMBLESIDE,
WESTMORLAND.

26th September, 1962.

Dear Mr. Flett,

Since returning from holiday I have come across your letter about traditional dancing in Westmorland in the Westmorland Gazette. It rings a few faint bells, and I may be able to put you in the way of some information. I should be particularly glad to do so, as I am a Liverpool graduate!

My own recollection of these activities is not very clear, as it goes back to pre-1914, before I had reached double figures. My home was in the village of Lamplugh, in West Cumberland; and I do remember that we had a visiting dancing master called Cowper, and I can dimly recall standing self-consciously in front of him and being made to slide my feet (one at a time) to various points of the compass. There was certainly a Juvenile Ball at the end of the course, but of that I remember nothing. I think it possible that one or two of my sisters, who are considerably older than I, may be more helpful. "I haven't had a new dress since Cowper's ball" became a sort of family joke.

I am sending the cutting to my middle sister (Miss M. Hales, 5, Ravenslea Road, London, S.W.12.), and will ask her to write to you. Even likelier is the eldest (Mrs. J.R. Hall, 15426 Archwood Street, Van Nuys, California, U.S.A.), who might even have amongst her keepsakes a printed programme of the kind you are seeking. You may think it worthwhile to write to her yourself.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Hales

Dear Mrs Lambert,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of September 24th. When you wrote I was actually in the lake district, but unfortunately your letter was not forwarded from the University, and I did not receive it until I returned home. I would be very interested to see the photograph and programme you mention, and also the costumes; I hope to be making further visits to the ~~hampshire~~ - ~~Bendal~~ district in the next month or two - may I leave it till then and telephone you nearer the time.

Yours sincerely,

T.M.F.

Dear Mr Hales,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of September 26th. I must apologise for my not having answered it sooner, but it was not forwarded from the University until the beginning of term, and then my answering correspondence had to be temporarily deferred.

I have had some information about the Mr Cope you mention from his descendants, of the last of the older type of dancing master, who still live in West Cumberland - indeed a granddaughter there is a very good teacher of dancing today. However, I have not yet met an actual pupil, not connected with his immediate family, nor have I been able to obtain any of his old programmes. I would be very interested to hear from your sister should she care to write to me, for any details about his teaching would be valuable.

Yours sincerely

T.M.F.

25/10/62

5 Ravenslea Rd

Balham S.W.12

Dear Mr Flett / my brother, (Mr Charles Hales, King's School, Ambleside) has asked me to write to you about dancing & dancing teachers of the early part of this century. I attended dancing lessons given by a Mr Cowfet from Wokingham but I am afraid I have no programmes of any end-of-term balls he gave. We were not so grand as ~~that~~ to have programmes! I doubt very much if his dancing was of the kind you are tracing. I remember the names of the dances we did (most of them) & specially I remember that his chief aim was to make us more elegant & less countrified. In fact, I suspect we should have resented being considered 'of the soil'.

There was one dance we did
(before Mr C's party descended
on us!) that was strongly
reminiscent of a country dance,
and they all will I cannot

It was all a bit peculiar -
a typical programme would
be: -

Schottische

Waltz

Two-step

Military 2-step (very dashing!)

Rare dance

Vienna waltz (very elegant!)

Quadrilles (Known to us as
"First Set" in the vernacular)

Lancers.

These last 2 were "square"
dances made up of set figures
and I remember when I later
did the Kentucky Running Set
at Cecil Sharp House how much
some of the figures, especially
Grand Chain & figures of eight,
reminded me of figures in
these two figure dances

the town dancing masters —
at least, I should think so.

Perhaps I don't go quite
far enough back, but far
enough to remember dancing "First
Sets" to a tune called "Lock of
the North" played on a comb
covered with tissue paper —
in a farmer's barn between
piles of hay. A rare bit of fun!

I am sorry I have been
so long in writing but I have
been ill & unable to attend
to correspondence.

Sorry, too, not to be able to be
of more use.

Yours sincerely
H. Hales.

Dear Miss Hales,

Thank you very much for your kind letter in answer to my enquiry in the Westmorland Gazette. I was most interested in your remarks concerning Mr Cowper, for they echo so strongly what I have already found in Scotland - that Town dancing-masters (and indeed also 'country' dancing-masters) had a considerable effect on dancing in rural communities, and that even in relatively remote places most dancing was professionally taught rather than just passed on from one person to another.

I have had some information about Mr Cowper from his descendants, who still live in West Cumberland (one of his granddaughters is a very good teacher of dancing there today). The dance you mention for a gentleman and two ladies facing a similar trio was almost certainly the Six Reel, and Oliver Cowper sometimes included this in his lessons, though he disliked it because it was too contentious.

We have already tried Cecil Shap House, but the library there contains relatively little information on social dancing within living memory, a gap which we hope eventually to fill.

Once again, thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely

V. M. D.