

Mrs Willis

The First Hornpipe

C Metherell

A Crane

Newcastle Series

MRS WILLIS. THE FIRST HORNPIPE

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The story of Elsie Willis is a story of co-operation. In the summer of 1982 the Instep Research Team had compiled a list of the name and addresses of Tom Flett's informants in the Lake District with a view to visiting any who were still alive.

Sue Mycock, whose researches into Cumbrian tradition had already led her to discover various local morris dances had agreed to introduce us to Marion Cowper (already the subject of a Newcastle Series booklet - The Cowper Family. Biography and Waltz) and a local contact she had turned up, Robbie Harrison of Flimby.

Three carloads of collectors set off, two groups of the Instep Research Team attacking from the North and Madelaine Hollis, co-opted for the occasion, leading a pincer movement from the South. Most of Tom's informants were predictably dead but we did get to meet Robbie.

Unfortunately, Robbie was unable to dance for us, having just had an operation on his leg, but he was able to tell us that he had learnt from his uncle who had lived in Shiremoor, Newcastle. Better still his cousin had learnt at the same time and was still living in Shiremoor.

Back to Newcastle. Eventually, several other projects having been completed in the interim, contact was made and Robbie's cousin Mrs Elsie Willis agreed to teach us her steps.

History

Both Robbie and Elsie had learnt from Elsie's father John George Harrison, known as Jack. He was born and brought up in Flimby, Cumberland and had learnt to dance whilst living there. He was born in 1881, but came to the North East to find work in the pits in about 1900. He taught a number of local people as well as his own family.

Robbie came to stay with his uncle for some months in the 1920's and he and Elsie had lessons together. He taught them at least four routines:

1. First Hornpipe - probably to the tune of Woodland Flowers. A six step routine including a double shuffle finish.
2. Doubled Hornpipe - to Woodland Flowers. A rather more complex routine.
3. Ragtime Routine - probably six steps performed to British Grenadiers.
4. Waltz Steps

Jack had danced in a competition in Durham and had performed at various local events such as the Shiremoor Gala. He was able to play the banjo, fiddle and piano. He also possessed a dancing mat, this being made of wooden laths tied together with strings and about 4ft by 6ft. He was also adept at making his own dancing clogs by taking the uppers off ordinary shoes and substituting wooden soles. He died in 1954 when Elsie was 36.

Elsie has danced at similar functions to her father and is able to remember that on one occasion she wore full length trousers and a waistcoat made of blue velvet.

Robbie Harrison died in 1984.

The First Hornpipe.

This consists of five steps and a double shuffle. Each step is danced first off the left foot and is then repeated off the right. There is some doubt about Step 5 as Elsie showed us this step in two different ways, the version given here is the simpler of the two.

Step 1

a	|	tap)	flop	|		|	A:
1	|	<u>step</u> )		|	)	|	A:
a	|			|	)	|	:C,C
2	|			|	)	|
a	|			|	)	|	<u>step</u>
3	|	)	shuffle	|	)	|	:RB
an	|	)		|	)	|	C,C:
4	|		<u>step</u>	|	)	|	A:

Step is six times through off alternate feet and Finish A.

Notes.

1. Note the rhythm which makes the step much more interesting than appears at first sight.

Step 2

a	|	tap)	flop	|		|	A:
1	|	<u>step</u> )		|	)	|	A:
a	|			|	)	|	:C,C
2	|			|	)	|
a	|			|	)	|	<u>step</u>
3	|	)	step=	|	)	|	:A
4	|	)	<u>hop</u>	|	)	|	A:
&	|	)		|	)	|	A:
a	|	)		|	)	|	:C,C

Step is six times through off alternate feet and Finish A.

Step 3

a		tap) flop			A:
1		<u>step</u>)			A:
a				<u>heel swivel</u>	:C',C'
2		<u>step</u>			A:
a				tap) flop	:A
3				<u>step</u>	:A
a		<u>heel swivel</u>			C',C':
4				<u>step</u>	A:
a		tap) flop			A:
5		<u>step</u>		<u>heel swivel</u>	:E',E'
a					XA*:
6		<u>step</u>		<u>heel swivel</u>	:E',E'
a				<u>heel swivel</u>	XA*:
7		<u>step</u>		<u>heel swivel</u>	:E',E'
a				<u>heel swivel</u>	XA*:
8		<u>step</u>			

Step is three times through off alternate feet and Finish B.

Notes.

1. The swivels are very wide, the turned out position being, on some occasions, not far short of a right angle relative to the supporting foot.

Step 4

a		tap) flop			A:
1		<u>step</u>)			A:
a			)	shuffle	:E,C
2)		
a			)	<u>step</u>	:XÉ
3		<u>step</u>			À:
a			)	shuffle	:XC',E
4)		
a			)	<u>step</u>	:F
5		<u>step</u>			A:
a			)	shuffle	:E,E
6)		
a			)	<u>step</u>	:XÉ
7		<u>step</u>			À:
8		<u>hop</u>			A:
&			)	shuffle	:E,E
a)		

Step is AB AB B B and Finish A

| | | |
 L R L R

Step 5

1	<u>step</u>		click toe(L) heel(R)	F*: (A:)
&			<u>step</u>	:RB
a				:RXC/E
2	<u>step</u>		click toe(R) heel(L)	A:
&			<u>step</u>	:RXB
a				:RC/E

Step is 12 times through off same foot and Finish A

Notes.

1. As stated in the introduction, this is the simpler of the two versions shown to us by Elsie.
2. On the last repeat of the step the movements change in order to enable the dancer to get into the finish on the correct foot:

7	<u>step</u>		click toe(L) heel(R)	A:
&			<u>step</u>	:RB
a	<u>hop</u>			A:
8				:RXC/E

Step 6

1	<u>step</u>	)	shuffle	A:
&		)		:C,C
a		)		A:
2	<u>hop</u>	)	shuffle	:C,C
&)		
a)		

Step is twelve times through off alternate feet and Finish A

Notes.

1. The last time through the above step, i.e. when danced off the right foot a special Finish is employed to replace Finish A:

1	<u>jump=</u>		<u>jump=</u>	F:F
2		↓	click toe(L) heel(R)	:RB
&	<u>hop</u>			A:
a	<u>drop heel</u>			A:
3			<u>step</u>	:RXE
4	<u>step</u>			A:C/D
5		•		
a	↑	↓	click heel(L) heel(R)	C/D↑:B/C†
6			<u>spring</u>	:A
7	touch	↓		A:
8				

Finish A

a		tap) flop			A:
1		<u>step</u>	)	shuffle	A:
a			)		:C,C
2			)	<u>step</u>	:A
a		<u>step</u>	)	shuffle	A:
3			)		:C,C
a		hop	)	<u>step</u>	A:
4			)		:RXE*
a		tap) flop	)	shuffle	B:
5		<u>step</u> )	)		B:
a			)	<u>step</u>	:C,C
6			)		:A
a		<u>step</u>	)	<u>step</u>	A:
7)		
a)		
8)		

Finish B

a		tap) flop			A:
1		<u>step</u>)		<u>heel swivel</u>	A:
a				tap) flop	:C, C
2		<u>step</u>		<u>step</u>)	A:
a					:A
3		<u>heel swivel</u>		<u>step</u>	C, C:
a					:A
4		tap) flop		<u>heel swivel</u>	A:
a		<u>step</u>)		spring	:C, C
5					A: D
a		<u>step</u>			D: A
6		↑			RC: ↑
7		↓			
a					
8					