

2/12/81

Today I visited Mary Jameson of

13 Northlands
Chester-le-Street
County Durham

She remembered the Hexham competitions but was not sure how many there were. She said that they were held on the floor of the Queens Hall, Hexham - the judges sat next to the stage + the dancers faced them. She said that John Johnson had sent entry forms to Tiny Allison and encouraged her to enter with her pupils. She said however that Tiny had gone to stay with the judge before the competition. She said her father had won the belt at Hexham on one occasion + that Jaeline Toaduff on another. These competitions were organised by Bill Scott. She said that Jaeline Toaduff did not really dance on the spot but moved about too much. In particular she mentioned that at one of the Hexham competitions he started in the middle of the floor and ended up standing next to the judges near the stage. She also said that all the competitors had to return their trophies before the competitions for display. Jaeline's mother refused to do this + kept the belt in her shopping-bag + when Jaeline had won it passed it over the heads of the audience to be awarded to her son. [? this must have been the junior belt?]. She mentioned that one of the competitions at which Jaeline won the belt was at Chester-le-Street. [???

In 1953 the 4 Northern Counties competitions were organised. Mary implied that these were better than the (Northumberland) + Durham Championship because it covered 4 instead of 2 Counties. They were run by Mr Telfer. There were a number of different competitions for

different age ranges:-
 under 10
 10 - 12
 12 - 15
 15 - 18
 18 →

All competitions were danced for 6 steps + double shuffles except the 18+ which was for the belt and was danced over 10 steps + double shuffles. There were also pedestal competitions in each age range except the under 10's. There were also team dancing competitions in each age group - 3 or more danced all dancing the same steps together. There were also tap competitions danced in teams + walk competitions - originally danced in taps, but towards the end in clogs - 6 steps. - presumably same age groups.

The judges for these competitions were normally old dances she mentioned George Fenton, a pupil of Jimmy Ellwood, George Hoscomb from South Shields + Bill Lindsay. There were always 5 judges the extra one being for originality.

Mary had won the belt in 1953, 1954 + 1955. She still has the belt - reddish leather with brass plates riveted on. The 1953 competition was held in Gateshead
 1954 in Durham
 1955 Bordon Colliery.

After this the belt was won by a number of different people - Mary mentioned Jean Johnson, and Noreen Drummond.

The musician was normally a pianist. She said that a few people outside her + her father's groups entered the competitions. She said that George Fenton had entered several - he always wore a Tam O'Shanter hat. Johnson had also sent entry forms

to Tiny and Jackie Toaduff but they had always declined to come.

She told me that originally they had got their clogs from a clog-maker who had a factory at Wickenham - he eventually retired and they got their clogs from a clog-maker near the Marlborough bus station in Newcastle. He made industrial clogs and initially would not believe that it would be worth his while to make dancing clogs but when he found how many he sold he continued to do so.

Mary said that at the Hexham competitions the judges used to claim that her best dancers had not danced the correct number of steps and disqualified. To counter this she wrote down which steps each child was doing and checked these off as each child danced so that there would be a check on each judge.

Mary and her father taught hundreds of children all over Tyneside and Johnson had classes every night of the week at a different place. They also organised concerts - all for charity at which the children performed. These concerts would consist of demonstrations of each type of dancing normally ending with a clog dance. This would include a fiddle or two - music always provided by a piano. The costumes were made either by parents or a local dressmaker. They would farm out each booking to the class which was nearest to the venue.