



left to right: Peter, Sam, Harry, Jim, Dan, Daisy, Betty, Laline

## 'ACTUAL STEP DANCING' SAM SHERRY an autobiography

Transcribed and edited by Ann-Marie Hulme and Peter Clifton

I was born, in 1912, at a little village in Nottinghamshire called Costock. My mother's parents kept the village pub there, the Red Lion. They'd gone there from Bolton where they had a pub before 1900. They were dramatic sketch artists on the music halls starting round about the 1850's. Then, like a lot of pros in those days, they saved enough money to go into the public house business. The music hall and the public house were part and parcel of each other, all music halls started in the pubs originally. My grandparents' idea was that as soon as they had enough money they would buy a pub and run their own music hall, which is what they did. They bought a pub called the 'Old Man and Scythe' which today is a listed building. I think it had a singing room, this was part of all pubs in those days. It was situated in the heart of Bolton's theatreland so they kept in touch with the profession, and my mother was brought up in a music hall atmosphere.

My father was a professional music hall artiste. When playing in Nottingham the artistes very often went out to my grandparents' pub and that's where he met my mother. My father was born in the 1860's of Irish parents, in Glasgow. As far as I know his parents came from Fermanagh and Sligo in Ireland and had no connection whatever with show business. My father went to work as a boy in the shipyards in Glasgow. He used to go down to the music hall on a Saturday night and he would try and copy what he saw. He taught himself to dance by watching. He used to say that after he'd finished work at night he walked four miles to a quiet or disused railway arch, put his board down and practised the steps. Eventually he started to enter 'Go As You Please' competitions in the music halls. 'Go As You Please' competitions were part of the pub set up. Anyone could enter. There was no entry fee and no rules governing content. If they did well they might get a booking in that pub by way of a prize and this is the way they graduated to the halls. Generally the proprietor was the chairman and I suppose he made the decision on who won.

So my father became a professional dancer and comedian. He gave up dancing fairly early on in his theatrical career and became a comic singer. He was light as a fairy on his feet when he was over sixty and was a treat to watch. Regrettably I never saw him perform on stage as he was in his 30's when he married and I was the youngest of nine. The only time I ever saw him dance apart from the steps he showed me, were what he called Schottische Steps. I still do these three in my Jig Routine, although I have also incorporated some tap steps. I remember a painting by my mother of my father as Idle Jack in pantomime, in which he wore a ginger wig which stood on end

and a Dan Leno type of costume. Traditionally the comic singer was a caricaturist. If he dressed as a fine gentleman, he would wear a caricature of the evening dress of the time, if he was playing a silly fellow, then he would wear something outrageously silly. My father did a lot of comic songs of his own, as a comic singer in those days had to have his own songs. So he had songs like 'I Want To Be A Sausage', 'How Can A Man Be Happy With His Wife When She's Always Eating Biscuits In The Bed' and 'Cassidy's Barbers Shop', songs which I still sing in the folk clubs and which go down very well. They were written by song writers who came round to the theatre to persuade the artiste to buy their songs. If the artiste bought one, it became his copyright. Later father had successes with published songs such as 'Harrigan' and 'Those Moral Sentimental Songs'.



Max Tyler Coll.

A good many of his songs have disappeared but the ones I know, I learned from my elder brothers who, once they were of performing age, travelled with him, and became familiar with the songs. But some of them—one called 'Johnny MacKilroy Bought A Penny Savaloy' for example—have disappeared. This again was a sausage song. 'Sausage' is reckoned to be the funniest word in the English language. There were certain basics in music hall songs, as in most types of humour—mothers-in-law, wives and sausages.

Unfortunately my father got mixed up in the music hall strike of 1907. He had, as a leading artiste, four or five years work booked with Sir Oswald Stoll, who owned a number of halls all over the country, but along with a number of artistes, father had his contracts cancelled on a technical point, due to bad feeling resulting from the strike. So he found himself out of work and blacklisted. There was still plenty of work to be had but it was not the better halls. He had to find work where he could in the smaller halls, miners halls in Wales and other places. Almost every village had its assembly room and they would run variety shows in the smallest halls. Any place which was big enough to hold an audience could be rented and a music hall show run. My eldest brothers travelled with my father all over Wales, working the miners' halls through small agents in Cardiff and Swansea. This was the first time they met other dancers, and rehearsing on stage in the morning they learned other steps.

When my eldest sister was 13 or 14 she put on an act called 'Laline' and travelled with my father. She had a lovely voice and played the violin well. So, if he was working she might work on the same bill, or she might work while he travelled around looking after her. My elder brothers went into the Army during the First World War and I remember my father going away, coming and going, coming and going. Gradually he became disillusioned as he found it increasingly difficult to obtain work and by the end of the war, he had more or less given up working altogether. When my brothers came back from the Army they put on a three handed act called 'Dan Brothers and Sherry'. They had great success and travelled all over the world, touring in Australia, South Africa and Europe where music hall was still the main entertainment for the masses.

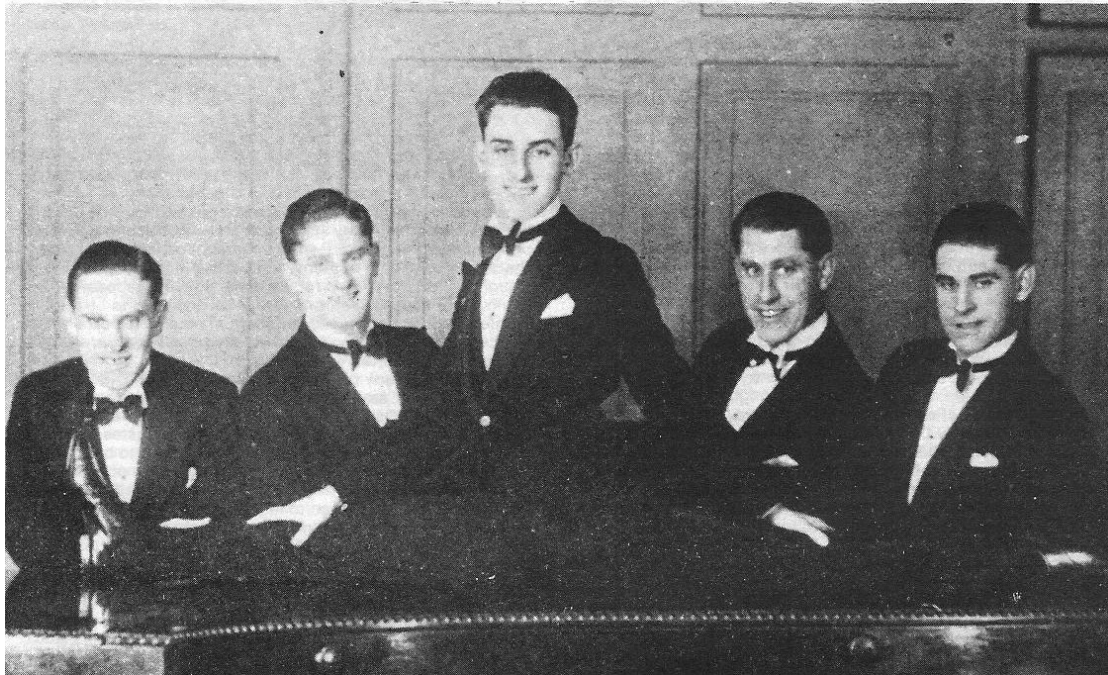
I think we left Costock when I was about six months old and went to live in Nottingham. I'm the youngest of nine. I had four brothers and four sisters. The eldest brother, who was fifteen years older than me, was called Dan or Daniel Conroy Sherry. My father's name was James Bernard Sherry but he went under the professional name of Dan Conroy. Then came Harry Bradley Sherry (Adge). He was named after my mother's father, and then James Bernard Sherry (Jim) named after my father. My eldest sister is Alice Louise who has always been known to us as Lal or Lally, then my sister Daisy Mary, followed by another sister Louisa Blanche, always known to us as Ouida, then came Bessy Violet, she later became known as Betty. Next came Peter Bijou, named after a friend of my father's, the male half of a double act on the halls called 'Bella and Bijou'. Then came me Samuel John.

We were taught to dance by my father almost as soon as we could walk. From the age of five I had to practise for at least an hour each day after school before I was allowed to go out and play, to learn dancing—step dancing as it was called in those days—and acrobatics on the tiled kitchen floor. My father taught me what he called the first three Lancashire steps. They were the basis of all the steps that I went on to learn from my brothers and I still start what I call my main routine, the Exhibition Routine, with those three steps. He would show us the steps in the same way that I show people now, by what we call 'breaking them down'. He would show you the first bit of it,

you'd learn that and then you'd go on. Perhaps half a bar to start with and then another half bar. Very early on we learned to dance in eight bar phrases. I can't remember learning how to dance eight bars, but it became so natural after a period of time to learn the six bars of a 'step' and the two bars of a 'finish'. We learned the steps without music but occasionally my father would vamp on the piano for us to dance. We were part of a musical family and the general atmosphere was one of music and dancing. My mother was quite a good pianist and taught me the rudiments of music. I grew up hearing music being played and songs being sung. One of my earliest memories is hearing my sisters playing and singing from Gilbert and Sullivan. Music became part of our lives. At this stage we danced in ordinary light walking shoes. It was some years later before we wore tap shoes. My father was keen to pass on his dancing skills to his children. At this time the music hall profession was a very good way of life. If you had a good act you were never short of a living. We were taught to dance and do acrobatics as the basis of a 'Speciality Act'. Although my father had given up working when I was of a learning age he was still insistent on my practising. He had a typical Victorian attitude that if he taught us to do something by which we could earn money, then that money was rightfully his; he invested his time in his children for his future. All nine children were taught to dance, some became more proficient than others, some were more interested than others. None of the girls liked dancing. I didn't particularly enjoy dancing, I don't think my interest became keener until I was about ten or eleven when we were shown off to visitors. My father used to say, 'If you dance for your uncle Sam perhaps he will give you a thousand pounds' (it was always a thousand pounds). We would dance and perhaps get sixpence. As children we were taken to see other good professional acts at the Hippodrome or Empire in Nottingham as encouragement. One act I particularly remember was 'Renie and Godfrey', a brother and sister act who danced and did acrobatics playing violins. It was this type of act which was in mind for us.

I left school at 14 and after about three or four months at home during which time I did very little practise, it was decided that I should join my elder brothers, who were travelling with a show called 'Contrasts', to train and practise.

left to right: Harry, Peter, Sam, Dan, Jim



Then I started to really seriously get down to learning dance routines and learning waltz steps under the tuition of my brother Jim, the best dancer in the family in those days. He had learnt from such people as Scott and Whaley, Horace Wheatley and Victor Andre. For the last few years of my school days my father, who was then in his 60's, began to lose interest and was less strict. My father was not an acrobat but having toured with famous acrobatic families, such as the Craggs and Olracs, and watched them training, he was able to teach us simple ground tumbling tricks. Jim was keen on acrobatics, though he hadn't started young enough to become an expert, and encouraged Peter and me to learn acrobatics so we could incorporate it into our dancing to become acrobatic dancers. When we started travelling with my brothers we saw other acrobats and learned more acrobatics. We did all the ground tumbling tricks such as 'round off flip flaps', 'handsprings' and 'upstarts', though we never got to the stage where we did 'twisters' and the very advanced stuff. It was usual for all performers on tour to practise each morning on stage. Then you would get together to talk, acrobats would show you tricks and dancers compared steps.

Some of the steps I do today I learned from a man called A. J. Powers who was a Scots comic who had given up dancing for comic singing. If you were simply a dancer you went on as a first turn and your money was fixed at £10-£15 a week, but if you introduced comedy into your act, you could then get a better spot on the bill and earn more money. In the afternoons we practised our piano and fiddle. My elder brothers were doing what's called the 'Piano Act'—any act using a piano was called the 'Piano Act'. We made sure our digs had a piano. Occasionally Peter and I went down to the theatre at night just to feel the atmosphere but usually we were sent home after the first house so that we'd be fit enough to start practising the next morning. Every Monday morning there was a band call when you rehearsed your act with the orchestra. Any special effects, such as a 'Drum Crash', when you fell down on your bottom, were explained to the conductor, who could make an awful mess of your act if he didn't get these right. We have had many battles with conductors in our time, but generally speaking relations were very good.

dance, we did it as a tap dance to a tune such as 'Sunny Side of the Street'. This is in 4 but the steps fit more or less the same as in a 3/4 tune. After a three or four minute soft shoe routine, which didn't leave us too breathless, we did a faster type of hornpipe dance such as I do now in my final routine which I call the 'Exhibition'. We incorporated acrobatic tricks into this. In an eight bar phrase you might do four bars of the step, a two bar trick and a two bar finish. eg.

Tom ti tiddly tom tiddly tom ti tiddly tom  
1 & 2& 3 4& 5 & 6& 7 (even rhythm)

tiddly tom ti tiddly tom tiddly tom ti tiddly tom  
8& 1 & 2& 3 4& 5 & 6& 7

then you put in the trick

parum parum parum pom  
&1 &3 &5 7

The drummer would emphasise these four beats which would finish that six bar phrase which is followed by a finish in two bars.

tiddle om pom tiddle iddle iddle iddle om  
8& 1 2 3& 4& 5& 6& 7

most of the ground acrobatics can be fitted in in this way.

We played in 'This Is It' as far afield as the Palace Southampton and the Tivoli Aberdeen. It was quite a successful show. Unfortunately I was taken ill and never returned to 'This Is It', Peter carried on for a while doing a single turn but then he left the show. This was about 1928.

My brothers had decided to buy 'Contrasts' from the owners Tom Moss and Harry Bentley and run it as a family show. It was called 'New Contrasts' (later changed to 'A Sherry Cocktail') and my brother Dan took up the role of principal comedian with Jim as straight man and Harry playing the character parts. Peter and I joined them as a speciality dancing act, and three of the sisters did a musical dancing and singing act. Ouida was a ballet dancer and bender. A 'bender' is a type of female acrobat, one who performs the more graceful movements such as forward and backward bends, resembling the contortionist's style. She played the violin well and was one of the few of us

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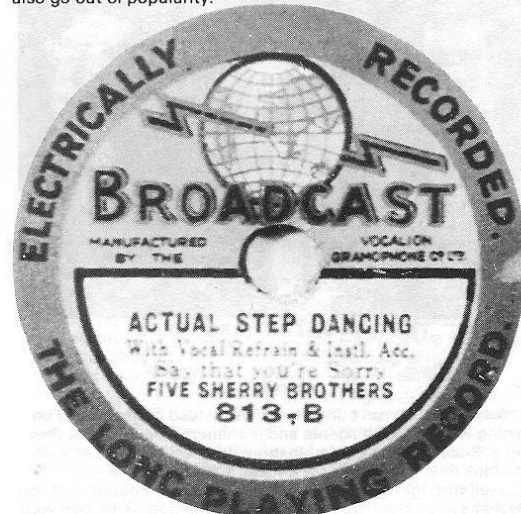
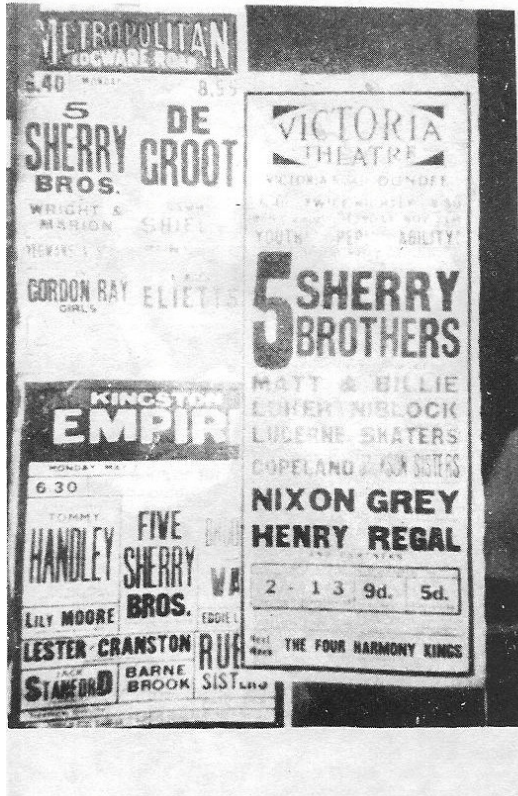
Ellis Ashton Coll.

Eventually in 1927 Peter and I formed a speciality dancing act and were booked to join Nor Kiddy in a revue called 'This Is It'. Those were the days of touring revues. A revue was a vehicle for the comedy talent of the principal comedian who, with a straight man for a feed, appeared in comedy sketches and introduced chorus girls and the various speciality acts. We put on an eight minute speciality act, starting with a fairly easy dance in jig time which was then called soft shoe or schottische time. Soft shoe dancing came from the days of G. H. Elliott and Eugene Stratton, who danced what was called a 'light dance'. They skipped about the stage to tunes like 'Lily of Laguna' and 'Little Dolly Daydream' in shoes with a special buff leather sole which was greenish in colour and very rough in texture. It was not until the 1920's that 'give me that old soft shoe' came to mean the tap dance with straw hat and cane. My father and my brother Harry danced the original soft shoe or schottische

who had passed some examinations. My eldest sister Laline who was the best vocalist in the family also played the violin. My sister Betty was a fine cellist. They put on a musical act called the 'Sherina Sisters' specialising in close harmony singing and Ouida's bending. Later Ouida married and left the show and was replaced by Daisy. Wherever we went business was phenomenal. We really thought it was going places and we were going to be rich. Unfortunately the talkies came in about that time spelling doom to a certain extent for the variety theatre and music hall. The silent cinema had made its presence felt but it had lived alongside the music hall. It hadn't been a real competitor, as people went to the pictures and to the music hall. But with Al Jolson in 'The Singing Fool' the whole situation changed and within a short time, where you had been playing to good business, you found you were playing to mediocre business.

We were doing fairly well and then the family was 'discovered' by the late George Black who ran the Palladium and the big theatre circuit in those days, Palladium, Holborn Empire, the Finsbury Park. He thought that we were something quite unique and decided he would like to put the family into a show, so 'A Sherry Cocktail' was disbanded, and we formed a show called 'Pageant on Parade' which was a vehicle to exploit the varied talents of the Sherry family. It was in this show that we reintroduced dancing in clogs to the variety theatres. It was modelled on an act which Black had seen by the Americans King King and King. He said "They're the greatest thing on Earth" and my brother Jim told him that we could dance as well as them. We had some special shoes made by an old chap called Le Fre from Kennington in London, who specialised in making dancing shoes. He made big dancing boots like Little Tich used to wear. Le Fre made us dancing shoes with patent leather uppers, wooden soles and a leather instep. Jim, Peter and I did a speciality dance dressed as bell boys in page boy uniforms and little military hats. It was a great success. It was the first time we had danced the traditional clog steps with heel clicks on the halls. This style had disappeared to a certain extent from tap dancing. We danced to a Randolph Sutton song 'I Told Them All About You'. It was a fairly fast 2/4 tune. We used to 'wing' as well. To wing in clogs is very difficult but we were mad enough to try and do it. Unfortunately, like so many things in show business, 'Pageant on Parade' was not a success and was taken off. We were owed six weeks work and Black wanted to play 'Dan Brothers and Sherry' in their original act, the 'Sherina Sisters' in their act and Peter and myself in our speciality dancing act, but my two elder brothers insisted that we should play as 'The Five Sherry Brothers' and 'The Sherina Sisters'.

So my two elder brothers, who had my father's temper, got at odds with George Black, who was the most powerful man in Theatre Land in those days. However the 'Five Sherry Brothers' act was formed and my brothers insisted that one of the weeks out of that six was at the Holborn Empire which, next to the Palladium, was the most important variety theatre in England. Black grudgingly allowed us to do this, but like so many people in high places he didn't forgive us. It was really too soon to go to the Holborn Empire—we should have toured first, but even so we were a great success and from then on we were a star act, top of the bill. Black didn't renew our contract after that six weeks but there were still plenty of other theatres we could play—there was still Moss Empires which hadn't at that time, joined with Variety Theatres Consolidated which was Black's circuit. That was about 1930. The 'Five Sherry Brothers' act opened with Dan on the piano, Peter and Harry on violin and me on guitar. I started to play guitar when I was about 15 years old, I first learned Hawaiian guitar and then went on to Spanish guitar or plectrum guitar. We started with the four of us on stage in a musical number, to which Jim came in whistling, something like 'Love's Old Sweet Song'. We varied the tune as you get tired of one tune after a while and it would also go out of popularity.



A record was made in 1932-33 of part of the Five Sherry Brothers show-stopping act

For the second number Dan and Jim would do a comedy act. Then Harry, Peter and I did our acrobatic fiddle dance. Harry specialised in pirouettes whilst playing the violin, Peter and I did the acrobatics. Whilst we were getting our breath back Jim did his bird impressions to a tune like 'In A Monastery Garden' as a background. He started with a thrush, then a blackbird, a canary and finished with a nightingale. The Finale was an acrobatic dancing act. We started with a three handed step dance. We carried a large slatted maple dancing mat made by Le Fre, which measured 20ft. by 6ft. This dance was similar to the Lancashire steps which I do today and ran for about two and a half minutes. We stopped for applause and then went into the acrobatic routine which used the same style of music, in which we fitted acrobatics. At the end of the acrobatic routine we stopped, took the applause again, and then went into a fast 'winging' routine. This only lasted about two choruses because it was such hard work. It's the hardest thing you can do in dancing and we made a big show of this. We did it in competition-style dancing, the first 'wing' step together, then we danced in turn each doing a progressively more difficult step. For the last eight bars, Harry and Dan left their instruments to join us on the dancing mat, to dance the big 'double wing' in unison. It lifted the act right up, and was a tremendous success. Wherever we went we were what they called a 'show stopping act'. We wore evening dress and tap shoes.

During this time we met and were influenced by the very good American dancing acts such as King King and King and Brookins and Van. We were never short of work, we were always a top of the bill act but we never actually got to the very top of the profession because of the affair with Black. We had got on the wrong side of Val Parnell as much as Black, as Val Parnell was the booking manager for Black's theatres and became a very powerful man. Val Parnell's brother Wallace had produced 'Pageant on Parade' which had not been a success and there was bad feeling all round. We did play their theatres occasionally because we did a lot of work with Sophie Tucker at that time who insisted we played with her.



**THE FIVE SHERRY BROTHERS**

Peter                      Dan  
                                    Jim  
                                    Harry                      Sam

We decided to run our own shows instead of depending on getting work through agents and managers. We ran what they call a 'Road Show' or 'Combination'. It wasn't a revue as such, you took over the theatre for a week and booked the acts yourself through agents. You ran a variety combination and you would have perhaps 50% of the take at the door. You took your chance on whether you made or lost money. If business was good you made more than your variety salary. In other words you stood or fell by the business you did. All the time theatres were tending to close because of the take over by the talkies and many music hall artistes left the profession. We were having an uphill fight and because of the problems over the 'Pageant on Parade' fiasco we found ourselves restricted more or less to the 'number two halls' which were the small halls in places like Huddersfield, Halifax and Manchester, but we made a reasonable living. Then the war came along. I was the youngest and I was called up first, after me Peter was called up, Harry died during the war and that was the end of the Five Sherry Brothers. Dan and Jim continued to run a road show during the war.

After the war in 1946 Peter and I got together and did a double act called 'Peter and Sam Sherry'. We did more or less the same thing, song and acrobatic dance. We started with a song number followed by a light dance routine, more or less the same old style, your first routine hadn't to be too strenuous because you needed breath for the rest of your act. We started off with something like 'Buttons and Bows' or 'She Wears Red Feathers and a Hula Hula Skirt'. I'd started writing a lot of semi comedy songs during the war and for the second number we used to do a light comedy song, one that I'd written or one which was popular. I'd play guitar and we'd vocalise in harmony and that was the second part of the act. We then did the acrobatic fiddle dance which was then the punch part of the act. We finished as before with a fast acrobatic and winging dance. But instead of finishing with fast winging, as we were the acrobats of the family, we did acrobatic jumps on our hands

across the stage. We had a fair amount of success but never the success of the 'Five Sherry Brothers'.

We had good Summer seasons which took us to pleasant seaside places like Llandudno for twenty weeks. We worked with Will Catlin who owned Arcadian Theatres in Llandudno and Scarborough and put on shows in Great Yarmouth. Summer shows were in the old revue style with a principal comic who worked throughout the show. As well as doing our speciality act we also filled in for character parts. I always got landed with the policeman's part. 'Ello Ello what's this 'ere then'. Peter used to get the nancy boy parts which annoyed him! You had to have four different acts because people who came for a fortnight's holiday wanted to see four different shows. Number one show was on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the first week, number two on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, number three on the first half of the second week and number four on the second half. This was a good continuation of the training we'd had in the variety halls.

The Five Sherry Brothers' had also done panto and I had played Cat for a number of years, an acrobatic cat in a catskin. Peter and I also did Cow and Horse, we had our own horse skin as we preferred not to depend on the proprietors who often supplied the most tatty old thing. So we earned a reasonable living, not a fortune, but the variety world in general was shrinking all the time and things were getting more and more difficult. You needed to have a good long summer season and a good panto, filled in with variety dates in between. If you managed to work 40 to 45 weeks a year you thought you were doing quite well. This we carried on doing for a long time.

We did much better with panto, we got in with the Tom Arnold organisation who were the best panto people in the country, with theatres like the Palace Manchester, the Empire Liverpool, Theatre Royal Newcastle, Theatre Royal Birmingham, and the Howard and Wyndham theatres which were long run pantos. We did well playing Robbers or Captain and Mate. We also did our speciality.



Sam and Peter Sherry

We worked with up and coming people like Max Bygraves. Our money was going up each year as we were rebooked with this organisation until one year we were booked as Brokers Men to go to the Theatre Royal at Birmingham, with Max Bygraves and George Bolton as the Dame. Our agent rang us up one day and asked us to play the Ugly Sisters instead. That meant us going into drag which was something we'd never done before. We were quite keen on the idea, but thinking back it was a bad thing for us because in Cinderella the Ugly Sisters are two of the main comedy parts, but into *this* pantomime they'd written a Queen which George Bolton as Dame played. So there was very little left for the Ugly Sisters. Had the pantomime been a great success it wouldn't have mattered, but it was not. Tom Arnold's producer in chief Robert Nesbit came up from London and found fault with everything he could including us and that was the end of our Tom Arnold enterprise, we were not booked the following season. We played other pantos but they were only six weeks instead of the twelve or fourteen weeks and we took a cut in salary. Then the Summer seasons started to dry up. We did a lot of work with Albert Modley in Summer season and with Hilda Baker but it was getting more of a struggle. Eventually when the Summer seasons dried up and we were down to about five weeks pantomime it wasn't even a living. In 1956 my brother Peter, who had married a soprano singer called Joan Jolly, decided to buy a business on the Isle of Wight and retire from show business. I didn't quite know what to do then. I had rented a wharf in Galgate, Lancaster from British Waterways where my wife Marjorie and I went when I was 'resting'. So we went there for the Summer with the intention of working out a single act, I had always wanted to do a single.

We came to Galgate for the Summer, but things did not turn out as I had planned, because I got interested in boats and decided to buy, renovate and hire out two boats. I have always been handy, music hall artistes tended to make their own props, and eventually I went into partnership with a shipwright and we built up a thriving boat hire and repair business. That was the end of my showbiz career for a long time. I gave up dancing completely, threw away my dancing shoes and burnt the dancing mat. I kept nothing to remind me. Once or twice I went to the Winter Gardens Morecambe with my old friend Albert Modley, but I found it so unsettling, I decided I had better cut away from it altogether.

About 1965 a folk club was formed in Lancaster. I was interested, as I sang and played the guitar, so I joined and became a regular singer. I sang comic songs, both my father's and my own compositions. I'd sung folk songs in the dressing room, songs like 'Foggy Foggy Dew' which I learned from Burl Ives in the film 'Smokey'. Burl Ives is still my favourite folk singer. When I first started playing the guitar at about 16 years old, I was a fan of Jimmy Rogers, who used to sing Blues and Railway songs like 'Hobo Bill's Last Ride'. In those days I used to read a lot of cowboy magazines, in which were often poems, I set these to music and played them on the guitar and I still sing some of these today. I still didn't consider dancing—as far as I was concerned my dancing days were over. Then one day the EFDSS Area Rep., Gladys Muschamp and I were talking about a ceilidh which she was organising and she said "I wish we could get a clog dancer for this ceilidh" to which I replied "I can do a clog dance". I hadn't had a pair of clogs on for many years, I looked around in Lancaster and couldn't even find a pair. I heard there was a clogger in Garstang and by this time it was getting near the day. He said he could have them ready for lunchtime of the day of the dance. I collected the clogs, went back to the office in the boat yard and had a try. I found that the feet automatically did the steps and I could almost remember the routines. The evening came and the Countryside Players agreed to play for me. I went on and danced the fast hornpipe routine. I had a medley of steps which I danced as they came into my mind. It was very successful and Nan Fleming-Williams and Pat Shaw were obviously impressed because shortly afterwards I received an invitation to perform at the National Gathering. The reception I got was fantastic, the applause was thunderous and I had to do an encore. Before I knew what was happening I was being asked to perform at folk festivals. I danced at the Albert Hall the following February and was invited to Sidmouth and Loughborough festivals and so it went on.

I now run two weekly classes in Lancaster and Preston where, besides teaching my routines, I try to teach general dance techniques. Techniques which are found in all styles of clog dancing. To me clog dancing is clog dancing. It's only in the last few years that I've learnt about regional differences. I knew that there was Lancashire clog dancing, which was the basis of my performance, but I didn't realise that there were other styles. I now try to emphasize regional differences in my classes. In my professional career I never went away from the Lancashire style, by which I mean the fairly fast even-rhythmed two in the bar style. In my days on the music halls all dancers danced in  $\frac{2}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$  time. I find that a lot of the steps that I do and have done for years which I thought were Lancashire style, are in the style I have come to know as North Eastern, because they use a lot of heel beats which isn't what is generally thought of as the Lancashire style. I recall clog dancers from the North East, although I can't bring any to name, but I do not recall meeting anybody during my show business career who said "I dance in the North Eastern style", but I did meet many people who said "I dance in the Lancashire style". I think the Lancashire style became the accepted style for tap dancing in general. For example the 'Time Step', which was an American invention, is a six bar step with a two bar 'finish' and is so patently in what I would term the Lancashire style. The last two steps in my jig routine are what I would call tap dance steps. I'm not doing anything in them which was not part of clog dancing, but I learned the steps in the tap dancing style with exaggerated arm movements. I now keep these influences to a minimum. The most important parts of the body in clog dancing are the legs and the feet. They should do all the work. It's important to let the arms and the hands do the natural thing, rather than introduce movements like the tap dancing movements, but then I don't think you want to hold them stiff and rigid as they tend to do in the North East. I teach beginners to dance with the hands on the hips. This gives them body carriage and elevation without the use of their arms. Later they can hold their arms naturally. Very often dancers will clench a fist or curl a finger and this is something to be avoided. The only satisfactory way of learning my steps is by personal tuition. Notes which the pupil may make afterwards serve only as a reminder of the step. It is essential to practise regularly. I was brought up by my father to practise daily and when I became a professional music hall artiste, rehearsed each morning. I still have this professional approach and try to spend some time each day in dancing. I tend now to think of steps as numbers of a routine. I teach my pupils to remember the steps as, say, Number four of the Basic Lancashire Routine or Number three of the Waltz Routine. But I remember my father teaching certain steps to me by name. The first Three Lancashire Steps are so named because the second and third Lancs. are a progression of the first. Another way of naming steps employed mnemonics. For example Number Five of the Exhibition routine was called 'Yaddi Diddi Yaddi' by my family. It gives the rhythm of the beginning of the step. A step may be recalled by naming it after a particular movement in the step, for example Number six of the Lancashire Routine might be called 'Front Cross', as the step starts with the right foot crossing in front of the left. Although this does not describe the whole of the step it is an effective way of naming it. I dance a step called the 'Pick Up Step' which contains several pickups. A pickup is a beat coming back with a toe off either a flat foot or a heel. Some people consider pickups belong to tap dancing but I was taught clog steps which included pickups by my father. Other steps I know by the name of the person who taught it to me for example the 'Andy Powers Step'.

I retired from the boatyard in 1976 but what with the classes, performing at folk clubs, and festivals and running workshops, I'm still kept busy.

I am delighted with the renewal of interest in clog dancing through the folk revival, encouraged by the EFDSS; and in particular that I have played a part in it. Many people of all ages are showing their desire to learn—some showing a dedication to practise which is heartening.

With competitions in the North East and Lancashire going from strength to strength, the standard is improving and the future of clog dancing seems assured.

