

5 September 1955
Bunay, S. Ronaldsay, Ronsay.

(65)
Wednesday, Sept 21st

Mr Eric Sutherland, Lowerhouse, Burray, aged 79.

When Mr Sutherland was a youngster, there was an old man, Chalmers, who taught dancing in St Margaret's Hope, Burray, Holm, Kistvaer & Stromness. He was both fiddler & teacher. Mr S. attended one of his set of classes. There was no other teacher on Burray so far as Mr S. knew, but the islanders possessed one or more of the little "ballroom guides", & they taught themselves dancing from these.

The dances taught by Mr Chalmers were Spanish Galop, Highland Schottische, & some (the modern one), Lancers, Quadrilles, Petronella, Flower of Edinburgh, Cumberland Reel, Triumph, Rory O'More, Haymaker, Glasgow Highlanders, Circassian O, Jackie Tar Schottische, Scotch Reel. He did not teach the Queen Victoria C.D. He also taught the Highland Fling, Sword Dance, & Jackie Tar. [+ Mr S. learnt these]. The sword dance was of modern anti-clockwise type.

In addition to these, there was also the Sixsome Reel, & Bobbito Bowster. In his young days, the Sixsome Reel was going out of use, & he cannot remember it. The Bride's Reel in Burray was the Townome (Scotch) Reel.

The first step of Mr Chalmers Highland Fling was :-

Bar 1. As usual first step

" 2. Three jumps [as in the four jumps of the Sword Dance]

3,4,5,6 ~ & repeat bars 1,2.

7. As bar 1.

8. Turn as usual.

Some doubt as to bars 3-8. 1+2 quite definite.

Mr Sutherland recalled interesting details of the Herring industry. He himself skippered a trawler with a crew of six at the age of 20. At that time they fished largely from the Shetland ports, Scalloway, Walls (?), Whalfoot (or Yell?), Ronaldsvoe (?) ~~of the gills~~, ~~of~~ & Berwick. In all of these places, there were girls employed to gut the herring. They lived in wooden huts, tanned on the outside, & known as "tarry temples". They came from all down the east coast, & even parts of the Highlands.

Most of the boats carried at least one member of the crew who could play the fiddle or the concertina, and when the boats were becalmed or held up by rough weather, it was the recognised custom for the crew to go into one of these "tarry temples", & start a dance, even if they had never seen the girls before. If they fished from a particular port for a few weeks, they "would get acquaint in a certain hut". They kept the Sabbath strictly, & on a Saturday evening, these impromptu dances ended at 12^oc. On other nights they often went on until early morning. This mostly ended with the 1914-18 war.

Many Burry folk went deep-sea fishing, & so got more practice in dancing than most ~~in~~ Orkney people. Combined with Mr Chalmers' tuition, this gave them a reputation in Orkney as fine dancers. They also built themselves a hall 60 years ago, the first in Orkney, & held dances there throughout the winter.

(67)
Rousay Sept 22nd - 24th

Mr — Craigie, Breck, Souni, aged 88. Also Mrs Craigie aged 85.

Two most confusing visits, with a good deal of vague information. Mr Craigie is, or was, a fiddler, & played for many of the dances on the island.

They have a most confusing terminology shared by other people on the island, in that they call the 4-some the "4-couple reel", the sixsome the "6-couple reel", & the 8-some the "8-couple reel".

On my first visit, Mr Craigie remembered having danced & played for an 8-couple reel, whereas Mrs Craigie^t could only remember a 6-couple reel. The latter was the usual sixsome, 3 men facing 3 ladies, returning ~~always to their~~ after running the reel to their own places & partners. Begun by running the reel. Mrs Craigie remembers very vividly her mother dancing it.

On my second visit, Mrs Craigie claimed to remember an 8-couple reel very similar to the 6-some, with the men on one side, & the ladies on the other. ~~He Craigie also claimed, however,~~ But Mr Craigie now said that the 8-couple reel was simply two 4-some reels performed side by side. Shortly after, he changed his mind, & agreed with Mrs Craigie that the men were on one side, the ladies on the other.

Both agreed that in the sixsome the men did not place their hands on their partners' waists or shoulders.

^t Both belonged to Souni & had lived there all their lives.

The Bride's Reel was always the 4-some so far as they knew.

In the old days the men often took their jackets off - they had white starched shirts on. They used "mantes", though not often, queaking between bridge & tail, but did not have any particular name for it.

Mr Tom Gibson, Brodland, Sourn, aged 75

Mr Gibson has vague memories of the old 8-some Reel. It was last done 40-50 years ago, & for some years before that was very rarely done.

The dancers definitely stood in 2 lines, but equally definitely they did not stand the men on one side & the ladies on the other. He thought that it might have been as in N. Ronaldsay.[†] It consisted of alternately running the reel & dancing, & was in reel tempo only. The reel was a confusy one from corner to opposite corner (?), but he was not certain of the figure. He knows for certain that they "mixed & crossed".

He had no recollections of the 6-some reel.

The Bride's Reel was always the 4-some reel.

He had not heard of "mantas" [though I didn't describe it fully], nor Bobbito Bowties [this I did describe].

There had never been a dancing teacher on the island so far as he knew. The dances in common use in his young days were

[†] But would he have been thinking of two 4-some reels side by side the couples beginning beside their partners?

Dandies, Lancers, Petronella, Flowers of Edinburgh, Royal O'Hare,
 Triumph, Haymakers, Queen Victoria, Glasgow Highlanders (introduced
 to the island by some Burry men), Polka, Highland Schottische,
 Tacky Tar Schottische, Cucania O, Cumberland Reel [the Rousay
 war dance!], Com rigs [a couple dance, something like the 7 Step
 Polka], Venus Polka [introduced ca 30 years ago]

He had never seen the 3-some reel.

Miss Jessie Logie, Hutton, aged 94.

Vague memories of an 8-wome, but no real information other
 than that it was done in two lines.

Mrs Mairiand, Froloft, aged ca 80

Same as preceding.

Mrs Clouston, P.O Wasbister, aged 83.

In her young days the 4-some or Scotch Reel was called the
 4-couple reel, and the starting position was as shown below. Late



They began with the two men back to back, facing their partners.



The Sixsome or 6-couple reel was also done. Three men on one side, three ladies facing them, alternately set & run the reel. Always return to own places, & no change of partners. Strathspey & reel tempo. Last done ca 50 years ago.

She remembers old people talking of an 8-some Reel. Never seen it. They kissed after some of the dances, accompanied by squeaks on the fiddle, but had never heard it called by any special name such as "mouter". She had neither seen nor heard of Bobbity Bowties.

The Brides Reel was always a 4-some.

In her young days Petronella, Flower of Edinburgh, Rory O'More, Strip the Willow, Highland Schottische, Polka, Waltz, were done. The Quadrille & Lancers came in after she had started to go to dances. & the modern 8-some came in later still.

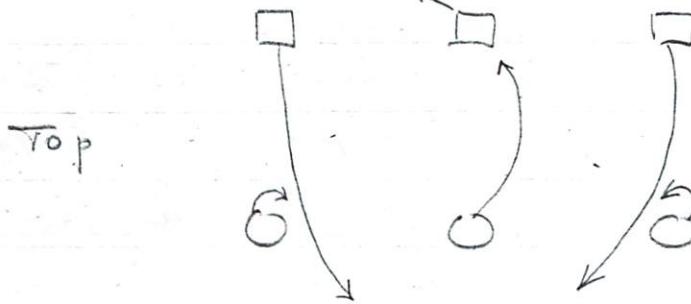
Sept. 25th (71)

Mr John Budge, Gammons, South Ronaldsay, aged 79.

Mrs Budge, aged 80.

Mr Budge is still a very fine fiddler. He played for dances in S. Ronaldsay for many years.

The Sixsome Reel was common in their young days, & Mrs Budge says that it is still done at weddings by some of the older folk - just for fun. The dancers stand in two-lines as usual, & the men follow their partners in "running the reel". They begin as follows. [This quite definite, from Mrs Budge.] All return to



their original places. Both Strathspey & Reel. Begun by "dancing", then running. As the Bride's Reel, it is performed by the B & G (at top), BM & M, & HF, these last being the groom's sister & her husband [if he has a married sister]. The HF stood up behind the bride pair at the actual wedding ceremony, but did not go to be kissed on the following Sunday.

In the Bride's Reel, they danced first, then ran the reel. The music then changed from a Strathspey to a Reel, & they danced & ran the reel again. The fiddlers then stopped for a very short

*This was Mr Budge
talking, so that top man moves*

pause, the Right-hand man moved round the back of the other two men to the opposite end, & the other two moved one place to the right. They repeated the sequence in this position, then changed again, & repeated once more.

The 'Bride' Reel was always the Sixsome Reel-

Mr Budge played his "Strathspeys at a good brisk pace. They had never seen "Hands even", or the 8-some Reel done in two lines - it was always the modern version in a

(1)

McDougall taught there 63 years ago, & included Glasgow Highlanders. But Mr Budge said that this was already done when he began to dance. The first part was played in strathspey tempo (Mr Budge played it for me).

They knew Bobbity Bowster by that name, but it was better known to S. Ronaldsay as "The Lang Reel". It was performed to the tune "The White Cockade".

They possessed a copy of the New Edition of Allan's Ballroom Guide, bought at least 60, & less than 70 years ago. It had the same contents as the edition seen in the E.F.D.S.S library.