

Example 2 From S. Sherry, reel time routine.

4/4

1	and	shuffle	A : C, C
2	and	step	: B
3	and	step	A :
4	and	hop	A :
5	and	shuffle	: C, C

6 X off alternate feet + suitable break.

Variation from F. Foster, Co. Durham.

4/4

1	e	shuffle	A : C, C
2	+	touch	: B
3	e	drop heel	: B
4	+	shuffle	RXC :
5	e		RXC :
6	+		: C, C

6 X off alternate feet + suitable break.

Finally an example of a Westmorland "shuffle off".

4/4

1	and	step	A :
2	and	tap	: A
3	and	step	: A
4	and	hop	A :
5	and	shuffle	: C, C
6	and	step	A :
7	and	step	: RXC
8	and	step	A :

BILL GIBBONS, Canal Step Dancer

Madeleine Hollis

82 year old Bill Gibbons is always delighted for an opportunity to put on his clogs and do a dance, and he is in constant demand to perform at fetes, concerts, schools etc. He is thrilled at the revival of interest in clog dancing and is always happy to show his steps to anyone who would like to learn them.

Bill lives in the village of Burscough, near Ormskirk, Lancashire. Burscough is on the Leeds - Liverpool canal, and is not far from Ring O'Bells, Latham, where Bill was born. Bill went to work with his father on the barges when he was twelve, and they used to dance on the barge deck to keep warm.

Bill's father taught his children to dance when they were very small. They danced mainly to hornpipes played by their father on the melodeon. On the barges they danced to the beat of the engine. The steam engine rhythm was in triplets (bangers-and-mash bangers-and-mash): 1 & e2 3& e4) and therefore hornpipe rhythms could be danced to it. When the barge was in shallow water, the beat would slow down, and they would dance more slowly.

Originally, when the barge decks were wooden, they wore clog irons, but when steel decks came in, they changed to rubbers to avoid the dangers of slipping.

Bill now dances in wooden soled clogs with an aluminium heel plate to improve the sound of the heel beats. He dances usually to two Jimmy Shand records "Three Drops of Brandy" (hornpipes) and "The Bluebell Polka". He used also to dance to the faster "Steamboat" played by the Countryside Players.

At one time, Burscough was a canal village, and a lot of the boat people could dance. Bill's family were in demand at weddings and other festivities to dance their four (or six, or more) handed jig to Irish jigs such as "The Irish Washerwoman". They danced in their clogs, with irons on the sanded stone-flagged floors.

Bill is the only step dancer left now. He has made up most of his steps, building them up over the base of the simple stepping his father taught him.

His dancing is impromptu stepping rather than steps of fixed length. He does do set steps, though some have several variations, and the steps vary in length, in general from one to four bars. Some are in threes, danced against a four rhythm, which is extremely effective (and tricky to learn).

He does not do the steps in a set order, but always fits the rhythms beautifully to the music, creating a marvellous pattern of sound. He uses his heels a lot, but moves very economically, so it is very difficult to see where the sounds are coming from. He often dances a step or short sequence first off one foot, then off the other, and is very insistent when teaching than I must do this.

The EPDSS have filmed Bill dancing on a barge, and the film will shortly be available for hire from Cecil Sharp House.

I have been going regularly to Bill for lessons for over a year, and he tells me I have learned all the steps, and he hopes I will pass them on to others.

I intend to notate the steps, using the proposed standardized "Newcastle Notation", once this becomes operational! Of course, such notation should only be used in conjunction with the film or as an aide memoire after learning the steps.

Newcastle Cloggies

Join us at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic - any Thursday at 7.30 p.m.

Book us - to perform for you - or take a workshop.

The team performs clog dances from Northumberland, Durham, Westmorland and Lancashire, step dances from Fife and the Hebrides and a wide variety of reels from the Highlands and Islands.

Contact: Jill Wollens, 36 Firfield Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.
Tel. 0632-862397

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Workshops: Lakeland; Beginners & Advanced
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Lecture: Sam Sherry Films
Demonstration: Clog-making

Tickets & Information from: Ann-Marie Hulme, 19 Winterbrook, Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 0491-39609

FOR SALE

CRAWSHAWS CLOGS Size 5 (Shoe size 6). Black, patterned, hardly worn, one toe cap missing. £13. Mrs. Alice Metherell, 3 Fetcham Court, Newcastle upon Tyne 3.

WANTED

INFORMATION - Newspaper cuttings or photos of the "World" Clog Championships in London in the early twentieth century. Date, place and names are looked for. Please contact: Chris Metherell, 3 Fetcham Court, Newcastle upon Tyne 3.

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