

C Sharp House

2 Regents Park Road, London.

PAT TRACEY

assisted by

Madeleine Hollis

LANCASHIRE HORNPIPE

All stage welcome. Clogs not necessary hard shoes will do.

October 19th 1983 November 23rd 1983

December 14th 1983

7.30 - 9.30 p.m.

#1 per session.

If well supported, further workshops will be
arranged in the New Year.

WORKSHOPS

OCTOBER

19th	Cecil Sharp House. 7.30p.m.	Pat Tracey
22nd	Campaign for Real Reels. Leyland. A Barber 38 Howick Cross La, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs.	Reading Cloggies

NOVEMBER

19-20th	Newcastle Weekend tel 0632-761066	Newcastle Cloggies
23rd	Cecil Sharp House. 7.30p.m.	Pat Tracey

DECEMBER

3rd	Haddenham Folk Day. tel 85995	Gill Macnab.
14th	Cecil Sharp House. 7.30p.m.	Pat Tracey.

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30p

No 10

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15 Wolfeleigh Terrace
Newcastle upon Tyne
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EDITORIAL

Well I do seem to have caused a bit of a flutter with my review of the Cobbler's Awl weekend in the last issue. Now I know what Barry Norman must feel like after an average episode of Film '83. I was surprised that neither of the correspondents seem to have asked themselves the basic question of why I should have been so critical of the workshops in question. Is it just that I am plain bloody minded, or maybe I get some form of vicarious pleasure from being critical. It cannot be that I have any axe to grind where the Wessex Woods are concerned because, as they so correctly point out, I don't know them from Adam. It's very easy to impute some foul motive to a critical reviewer without specifying what the motive is.

One point not raised by either writer, but suggested to me by a third source, was the question of what gives me the right to be critical anyway. The answer is quite simply that I'm the person left to write the reviews. I would indeed welcome reviews written by anybody else, an in fact I even asked one of this issue's correspondents to write a review of the forthcoming Newcastle Weekend. She however declined, perhaps these days the risk of having your head bitten off is just too great.

On a more cheery note, I am pleased to be able to record the birth of yet another weekend of clog dance, this time in Lancashire, and featuring a number of classes taught by the original dancers. I also see that Cecil Sharp House have got back in on the act. Can this be anything to do with the fact that Madeleine Hollis has now moved to London?

A rather sad incident has occurred concerning the Lancashire and Cheshire Championship belt. Following her appearances at Sidmouth this year, Sue Bousefield left for the Continent, taking their car, luggage and the belt. Unfortunately while in Italy their car was broken into and their luggage, including the belt, was stolen.

One final matter which has cropped up in conversation with dancers recently concerns what happens to the subscriptions which you all pay for Instep and the money made from sales of the Newcastle Series. Money from sales of both is used both to finance the publication of further booklets and also to pay for research in clog and step dancing. In fact all the traditional dancers present at the Newcastle Weekend are there as a result of research done with finance provided by the proceeds of sale of Instep and the Newcastle Series.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your compliments (re: A Review Cobblers Awl Weekend of Dance, Issue 9).

As for your comments on Wessex Woods, I must start by questioning your apparent need to express your opinions in such a destructive and arrogant way. It will do little towards achieving your aims for high teaching standards and just cause a lot of ill feeling. We have a great respect for Wessex Woods, both as people and dancers, and we are sorry to see them victims of your doctrinaire attitudes.

Concerning your actual criticisms, I am somewhat doubtful of your ability to give an accurate assessment of Wessex Woods classes, since by your own admission, you spent the majority of your time in the Welsh clog class. I cannot give my comments on the standard of teaching as I was not present, but I would like to question the premises on which you base your assessment. Not giving a potted history of the steps and being innovative by fitting hornpipe steps to jig rhythm, do not constitute bad teaching in my opinion. Wessex Woods were asked to teach steps from their repertoire, no more, no less. In assessing their ability to do so it would have been far more relevant to judge the methods rather than the material. I fully accept that basic technique and accurate information are important and we would like to think that both were taught well, though in your opinion they were not. However, also highly important, in our opinion, is for a clog dancer to acquire a love of clog dancing - to enjoy it. If Wessex Woods pupils went away with whetted appetites that is not an achievement to be dismissed lightly.

It has never been our aim to try and produce the same sort of academically disciplined event as those run by Reading and Newcastle Cloggies. We merely try to provide an opportunity for clog dancers to get together, have a good time, and learn steps from other clog dancers who they may not be able to meet elsewhere. You may be highly critical of our relaxed approach towards clog dancing but we will, as we hope others will, continue to do it for sheer pleasure while maintaining a healthy interest in the academic side.

Practice and even preach pedantry if you wish but do not use it to breed malice. This is something I am sure the clog world does not want and can ill afford.

Vanessa Sawicka

(Cobblers Awl)

The Editor Instep,

We read with curiosity and not a little disbelief your comments regarding the clog workshop at Cobblers Awl weekend. Whilst we welcome constructive criticism we consider this to be more a personal attack than a critical review. To our knowledge you spent little more than five minutes in each class during the whole weekend (it was much later in the day before Mary knew the identity of the silent stranger) - hardly sufficient time to reach such derogatory conclusions we would have thought. However to answer certain criticisms.....

Regarding your question concerning the origin of the steps, Pauline (one question you did not ask - her name) does not claim to be an historian of clog dance and we apologised at the time for not being able to give you the right answers. We had planned for a team of two to take our "doubles" workshop - one for practical and one for technical - but there was a health problem. Nevertheless we do not believe that lack of history will seriously affect the execution of the steps.

We do not set ourselves up to be experts, or carbon copies of other, better, dancers, which is why we attend "advanced" workshops. We only hope to pass on, as we are constantly asked to do steps and style as performed by the Wessex Woods. During the past ten years or so we have been frequently asked to "teach" or methods, and always by people who have seen us perform.

In what we believe to be a constantly evolving tradition of clog dancing we experiment with our music as well as our steps, and the playing by violin and flute of a beautiful piece of music named "Lannigan's Ball" was the inspiration for our "doubles" routine i.e. hornpipe steps in jig time. Our reasons and timing being explained, with the help of our musicians, to anyone wishing to know.

Had Cobblers Awl required a completely different style of workshop we feel that they would have contacted one of "the best instructors at this level". However such was their miserable choice that we wonder how it was that so many of those attending the workshops seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves and went out of their way to personally show their appreciation. But perhaps enjoyment factor counts for nothing in your opinion, in which case we make no apology for conducting our workshops in an atmosphere of conviviality with an end product of steps learnt and perhaps a challenge taken home. We think it is a great pity that you do not appear to have captured the mood of the weekend.

We undertook the weekend for the pleasure of taking part and in an eagerness to pass on to others the benefits(?) of our clog education in the same way that we are always eager to learn from others. We daresay our teaching may leave something to be desired but until there is a workshop on how to run a workshop, or a published standard to which we should conform, we shall just have to learn by our own mistakes. We would in the meantime appreciate constructive comments to improve and encourage us rather than those which, to a less determined group, could make us want to hang up our clogs in despair.

We regret that you found our contribution to the weekend so distasteful but we have many past workshops and performances to our credit, and judging by other people's satisfaction, we shall continue in our own modest way whenever and wherever we are asked.

We hope you will give fair coverage of our point of view in the next issue of Instep.

Wessex Woods

THIRD

Newcastle Weekend

Boldon Colliery Community Centre

November 19 20th 1983

Classes include -

Beginners to clog/Improvers - Dotted Hornpipe.

Mrs Ivy Sands Single Hornpipe - Beginners to NE. Taught by Alice Metherell. Mrs Sands will be on hand to give her expert advice.

Miss Marion Cowper -Waltz Routine. Newly discovered steps in waltz time, taught by Miss Cowper whose family have been dancing masters for four generations.

Mrs Viona Marhoff - Stage Steps Mrs Marhoff, assisted by Julie Jarman, will teach a package of steps in several in her own inimitable style.

Dance Class. Clog dancing is a performance art. Ed Wilson and Chris Metherell will show you how to turn that boring routine into a successful performance.

Full details from Janet Goodfellow, 111 Simonside, Heaton,
Newcastle Upon Tyne tel 0632-761066

COMPETITION ROUNDUP

Northern Counties Championships
Durham 6/7th August 1983.

This competition has improved greatly over the years, and this time the event was held with much less formality than on previous occasions, resulting I felt in a much better competition all round. This, in the case of the Open Championship was mainly due to its removal from the echoing reaches of the Town Hall to the much more relaxed atmosphere of the University Chaplaincy. At this venue the combination of proximity to the dancers and the informality of the organisational details I felt reached almost the ideal. It is a pity however that I have to record that, at a time when the number of traditional dancers known on Tyneside is increasing by leaps and bounds, that the judges represented what seemed to be an ever contracting spectrum. In the case of the adult competitions these being three members of the same family and the organiser of the Lancashire and Cheshire Championships. Do not mistake me, the standard of judging was irreproachable but it would be nice to see some new old faces.

Novice Competition.

1. Bob Lamb (Stockton)
2. Liza Watling (Hull)
3. Roy Simcox (Leeds)

Pedestal.

- 1.= Jane Metcalf (Hull)
- Lynette Eldon (Hull)
3. Sue Butler (Hull)

Open Championship.

1. Jane Metcalf. (Hull)
2. Lynette Eldon. (Hull)
3. Brenda Walker. (Durham)

Junior Under 12.

1. Kathryn Harrigan. (Durham)
2. Solomon Walker. (Durham)
3. Shona Harper. (Gosforth)

Junior Over 12.

1. Hayley Walker (Hull)
2. Helen Brown (Hull)
3. Alison Simcox (Leeds)

Lancashire and Cheshire Championships.
Fylde 3rd September 1983.

As Alan Bell, the competition organiser put it, a successful raid by dancers from the North East!

There were 10 entrants for the junior championship. Although it was pleasant to see the former Open Champion, Sue Bousfield, invited to judge, I did wonder at the propriety of her acceptance for this competition when a high percentage of the dancers were her pupils. I was also surprised that the juniors were judged on originality. I'm not sure how one expects children of 8 or 9 to show originality, and since in the event a good number of the children danced identical steps I am at a loss to know how this discipline was judged.

There were 5 entrants for the Novice Championship, but only three for the Open and two for the Waltz.

There was a brief "forum" after the competitions were over. It's always pleasant to see a competition organiser asking the dancers and judges and even the audience what they feel can be done to improve the competitions. The main talking point here was the extremely low entry for the two adult competitions. Various "incentives" were discussed but no conclusion reached. One interesting suggestion came from Sam Sherry when the discussion turned to the junior competition, he suggested that each dancer should perform three or so compulsory steps of a simple nature as part of their routine.

Junior Championship.

- 1= Tiffany Walker.
- Solomon Walker.
3. L Smith.

Novice Championship.

1. Jackie Hamilton.
2. Tiffany Walker.
3. Solomon Walker.

Open Championship.

1. Chas Fraser.
2. Jackie Hamilton.
3. Linda Downham.

Open Waltz.

1. Jane Metcalf.
2. Jackie Hamilton.

Judges. Sue Bousfield, Mary Jamieson, Jane Lloyd, Pat Tracey
Don Watson.



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Bert Bowden, Bill Gibbons, Sam Sherry, Pat Tracey*

*Ceilidh: Madeleine Hollis & New Britannia
Leyland Morris Men; Bert Bowden & his Amazing Puppets
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~ Bar ~

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*Melanie Barber
38, Howick Cross Lane, Penwortham, Preston, PR1 0NS*



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BERT BOWDEN

Liverpool Step Dancer and Entertainer

Madelaine Hollis

Bert Bowden was born in 1910 in Lodge Lane, Toxteth, Liverpool, where his family had lived since his great grandfather came to Liverpool from Northern Ireland. He now lives in Netherley on the outskirts of Liverpool.

Bert's father, Nathaniel, was born in 1859. Bert knows little about his early days, but does know that Nathaniel's father was a clog dancer, so we can assume that he taught Nathaniel to dance. Bert's mother did not dance.

Nathaniel, a rope maker by trade, did clog and soft shoe dancing. He went blind as a result of injuries sustained in the First World War, and was therefore unable to see much of the development of "modern" tap dancing, which was all the rage when Bert was a youngster.

Bert says that there was never as much clog dancing and music in Liverpool as in the Manchester and Wigan areas, but even so there were plenty of opportunities for amateur performers like Nathaniel and his friends. A lot of pubs did not allow dancing, particularly at night, but there were many variety shows and concerts, often for charity, in church halls, civic halls, institutes etc., and people danced, sang and played music at home. Nathaniel always liked a crowd at his house, and when he was in the mood for dancing would teach Bert and his friends a step or two.

Nathaniel and his friends learnt their steps from each other and by watching other dancers, often going to the same theatre several nights in a row to make sure of the steps. As well as performing solo, Nathaniel sometimes formed a trio, "Bowden, Roper, Stack" with a couple of friends to perform at shows.

Music for step dancing was provided by concertina, melodeon, violin or piano. Nathaniel was usually accompanied on the concertina by a friend. Bert recalls that he danced a fast tempo to tunes like the "Irish Washerwoman", a medium tempo to tunes like "Woodland Flowers", and also in Waltz tempo.

Clog dance competitions had died out when Bert was growing up, but his father remembered taking part in them. There were two judges, one to watch the dancer and one under the stage to judge beats.

Dancing clogs had only wooden soles, no irons or leather. The thinner the soles, the faster the dancing could go, and "they used to dance really fast". The dancers would walk around the streets in their dancing clogs to wear the soles down, and get them thinner and lighter. Dancing clogs were always black and decorated elaborately with eyelets. They either had a silver buckle or a large ornate tongue covering the laces.

Nathaniel taught Bert six "old Lancashire steps", which were danced to hornpipes, one of them learned by watching Dan Leno! The form and rhythm of the steps seem to indicate to me that they have evolved from the same root as the "off the toe" hornpipe steps found right across Northern England.

Bert is very particular as to how the steps should be danced. The style and rhythmic "expression" must be exactly right, and the heel drops, which Nathaniel called "chops" must sound properly. "Dad used to say 'chop it down'".

Bert started performing a clog routine at children's parties and concerts when he was about fifteen. He says he was very shy at first, and was told off for not smiling enough. Observing that clogs were no longer worn by dancers in the theatres, but that tap dancing was all the rage, he soon took up tap, picking up steps like his father before him by going to the theatre several times a week and watching the performers. He reckons the best act he ever saw was "The Five Sherry Brothers"! He has never had any lessons in tap, but when he went to a local ballet school to learn ballet in order to help him burlesque, he found he knew more tap than the teachers. They immediately entered him for an "All England Competition" to represent the school, which he won. This was the first of many competitions in which he invariably did well.

Bert became a joiner by trade, remaining a dedicated amateur dancer, comedian and puppeteer in his spare time. He performs his clog and tap routines on a dancing mat of wooden laths which can be rolled up for transportation. He also performs a sand dance, wearing a pair of soft shoes which belonged to his father.

He has been a puppeteer since the age of fifteen, and has appeared to great acclaim on the T.V. programmes "Blue Peter" and "The Generation Game". He makes all his materials: puppets, props and theatre and still takes endless time perfecting his techniques.

Bert has been depressed in the past at the lack of local interest in learning the old clog steps. He is delighted to pass on his dancing skills, and is thrilled that he has managed to get Melanie Barber and myself dancing the old steps in a way that (on occasion anyway!) meets with his approval.

There will be an opportunity to meet Bert, see him dance and perform with his puppets, and attend a workshop on the old steps at which he will be assisted by Melanie, on 25-26th February 1984 at the Wallopers Weekend of Lancashire Clog in Leyland, Lancashire. For the other delights offered over the weekend and further details, see the advert elsewhere in this issue.