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Newcastle Notation - A rational System for the Notation
of Clog and Step Dances

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WORKSHOPS JANUARY TO MARCH 1984

JAN

25th Cecil Sharp House, London 7.30p.m. Pat Tracey

FEB

25th Preston Weekend of Dance. Pat Tracey
Contact M Barber tel 0772-742690 Sam Sherry
Bert Bowden
Bill Gibbons

29th Cecil Sharp House, London 7.30p.m. Pat Tracey

MARCH

21st Cecil Sharp House, London 7.30p.m. Pat Tracey

30p

No 11

INSTEP No 11 Jan 1984

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Editorial

Not a bad year for clog and step dancing as a whole. Several important new dancers have come to light whose steps will enhance the repertoire available. One thinks immediately of Marion Cowper who is perhaps the 'find' of the year. The 'Campaign for Real Reels' commenced this year with the intention of 'putting the stepping back into traditional dancing' (see review in this issue), and in view of the continued interest in this type of dance and its usefulness to performers we shall widen the scope of this magazine to cover this field.

A few old teams have gone, but several new teams have come on the scene to take their place. We have held over the list of teams normally published in this issue until April, due to the lack of space.

And what of 1984? A new clog weekend is planned in Lancashire to be held in February, continuing the trend of making traditional dancers available to a wider audience. Following the success of the first film of Pat Tracey, a second is in the pipeline and may be completed this year. If 'Pat Tracey Rides Again' is anything like Part 1 it will have been well worth the wait. A film of the Orchard family of step dancers is planned, together with videos of Marion Cowper and Mrs Viona Marhoff.

Who knows who will suddenly spring up full of new steps and information? My feeling is that in view of all the work currently going on in Lancashire, it is there that any really exciting discoveries will be made in 1984.

I have to announce that Ann-Marie Hulme has resigned from the Academic Services committee of EFDSS. She has done sterling work in promoting an interest in clog and step dancing, particularly as regards filming. In their wisdom the EFDSS have invited your truly to replace her - do they know what they are letting themselves in for?

One final point. I have no reviews of either the recent Ivy Sands Video nor the 1983 Newcastle Weekend. All other reviews I am able to write if no one else will - even if the result is not always greeted with universal joy - but these two I can't write. Would someone please oblige?

NORMAN ROBINSON - 17 STEP ROUTINE

Much interest was caused at the last Newcastle Weekend by a lengthy Lakeland routine performed by Ian Dunmur.

The steps he performed were collected from Norman Robinson, one of Tom Flett's major informants. Norman used to perform a 17 step routine as a clog solo, and I feel it appropriate to present details of this routine for anyone interested in performing it. Page references are given throughout to Traditional Step Dancing in Lakeland (J F & T M Flett. EFDSS London 1979) together with notes on the steps where it is felt that this is appropriate.

Norman Robinson. Clog Routine

Collected by T M Flett 5, 7 & 8 January 1960.
(TRAD 1 p46 - 61a)

Shuffle Off = Version 1 (p 27)

On steps marked (*) Robinson used a modified form of shuffle off not published in the Flett's book. This was identical to Version 1 above, but with a shuffle with the L foot on beats 4 & a of bar 8. i.e. the next step seems to begin with a preparatory shuffle.

"The order of the following steps is probable inaccurate." (Flett written up notes Trad 1 p 49)

N.B. Norman Robinson's names for steps are given in brackets.

Step 1 = Single Shuffle. Version 1 (p 29)

* Step 2 (Double Shuffle) = Treble Shuffle. Version 1 (p 31)

Note use of slow double beat rather than a fast "flatter" to change feet.

* Step 3 (Treble Shuffle) = Double Treble Shuffle. Version 1 (p 32)

Note. This differs markedly as regards foot positions from the step as usually taught and performed. Note to step 2 applies also.

* Step 4 = Double Treble Shuffle. Version 2 (p 32)

Notes to step 3 apply.

* Step 5 = A Long Sidestep. Version 1 (p 34)

Note. This step is repeated in mirror image with the other foot. The only step in the routine to do this. Travel sideways, away from shuffling foot during step.

Step 6 (Hagworm Crawl) = Hagworm Crawl (p 51)

Step 7 (Single Crunch) = Single Crunch. Version b (p 41)

Note. Norman Robinson's method of crunching is given on p 38 (Version III). Note particularly the foot positions on bars 3/4.

Step 8 (Double Crunch) = Double Crunch. Version d (p 41)

Step 9 (Knock Toe & Heel) = Knock Toe + Heel (p 58)

Note method of rolling given on p 57 (Version III)
No shuffle off.

Step 10 = Wriggly Twist (p 50)

Note. On bar 8, beats 4 and , of previous shuffle-off:
"hop twice on L, begin to carry RF round in a ronde towards a closed crossed position."
Shuffle off at end.

* Step 11 = Kicking Step.

The notation given at p 48/9 is somewhat confused. Flett collected this step in the first pattern given on p 49 with heel beats: ie the version which includes single crunch.

* Step 12 = Kicking Step. Last version on p 49.

Note. Version collected included heel beats.
Bar 6, beats 4 and are:

"Spring onto the balls of both feet in 1st position and immediately bring heels to floor (keeping toes on floor)"

Step 13 = Flatter, Cross over, Knock Heels & Crunch. (p46)

Note. Step 13 had two alternative shuffle offs. Flett's written up notes do not mention the heel click at bar 2 beat 2, and it is the R foot which is raised and performs the crunch at beats 3 & a 4 .

Step 14 = Crow Walk (p 53)

Step 15 = Slip step (p 54)

No shuffle off. According to Flett's written up notes Step 14 was always followed by Step 15. In which case the Note on the back treble on p 53 seems to be in error.

* Step 16 = ? Closest published step is Back Treble + Kick (p 50)

Step 16 is 1 and 2 and 3 of this step repeated with alternate feet for 6 bars ending on bar 6 beat 4 with "spring onto the balls of, both feet in 1st position" and shuffle off.

Step 17 = Swivelling Crunch sequence b. (p 44)

Clog Terms from a 19th Century
Local Dialect Glossary

The following are all taken from:

J W Brockett. A Glossary of North Country Words. 1825.

Clogs

a sort of shoes, the upper part of strong hide leather and the soles of wood, plated with iron often termed cawkers.

Cross the Buckle - Cross owre the buckle

a Peculiar and difficult step in dancing - Newc[astle]
To do it well is considered a great accomplishment.

"Bob hez thee at lowpin and flinging,
At the bool, football, clubby and swinging,
Can ye jump up and shuffle,
And cross owre the buckle,
When ye dance? like the clever Bob Cranky"

Song. Bob Cranky's Size Sunday

Hagworm

the common snake.

Knack and Rattle

a quick and noisy mode of dancing with the heels.

"He jumps and his heels knack and rattle,
At turns of the music so sweet,
He makes such a thundering brattle,
The floor seems afraid of his feet."

The Collier's Pay Week

Sandgate Rattle

a peculiar step in vulgar dancing consisting of a violent and very quick beating of the toes on the floor.

Shuffle and Cut

a superior step in vulgar dancing.

(The glossary also mentions the 'Rapier Dance' and the 'Sword Dance', although these have not been quoted above.)

It is most likely that other local dialect glossaries contain similar information and the editor would be pleased to publish any information sent.

Campaign for Real Reels

Workshop with Reading Step and Traditional Dance Group

Sheffield 17/12/83

For those of you not familiar with the 'Campaign for Real Reels', a brief resume might be in order. As I understand it RSTDG were asked to participate in a series of workshops held in regional centres and organised by EFDSS covering a number of types of dancing. RSTDG were to give tuition with the aim of 'putting the stepping back into traditional dance'. Perhaps predictably the workshops fizzled out in a wave of apathy and in fact only one series was held, at Leicester early in 1983, which from all accounts was a great success. Individual groups were spurred on by this example and RSTDG have taken a number of workshops, around the country, independantly of the EFDSS umbrella, culminating in their final fling for 1983 at Sheffield.

This was the first of these events which I had attended and despite the fact that I was familiar with most of the dances taught I felt that I had acquired several new perspectives and ideas to take home to Newcastle.

The accent was on the form of the dance, rather than the steps involved, which the dancers were expected to pick up quickly. I felt that the workshop was aimed not so much at putting the stepping back into dances, but at putting dances with stepping back into the repertoire. Both equally laudable aims. My inclination would however have been to concentrate rather more on the stepping, which is after all the 'focus' of a reel and rather less on the muliplicity of different reel forms from different areas. It is comparatively easy to pick up figures from a notation, but rather more difficult to interpret steps from the written page. If at the end of the day RSTDG intended people to go out to ceilidhs and be able to step rather than stand still in a country dance, more emphasis on the stepping might once again have been appropriate.

The workshop was taken by Ms A-M Hulme, obviously an expert in her field. She experienced certain organisational difficulties and was never confident with the PA, but for me this did not detract from a fascinating day.

It is also a pity that a greater effort was not made to provide those attending with written notations for their dances. Although most, if not all, are published most are now out of print and in the case of the English dances the published versions often leave a lot to be desired regarding accuracy. I have heard however that the EFDSS is sponsoring a booklet containing some or all of these latter reels although publication is as yet some way off.

CECIL SHARP HOUSE
2 Regents Pk Rd

Clog Workshops

WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASSES FOR 1984

WITH

PAT TRACEY

assisted by Madelaine Hollis

7.30 p.m. Admission £1

25 January 1984
29th February 1984
21st March 1984

11th April 1984
9th May 1984
6th June 1984

All stages welcome. Clogs not necessary.

Cobblers & w! Weekend

12th-13th May 1984

SATURDAY 12th May - Noon to 6pm + Ceilidh (7.30 - Midnight)

SUNDAY 13th May - 9.30am to 1pm at Brynglas House, Newport, Gwent.

SESSIONS: Welsh Clog - Huw Williams

Advanced Clog - Sam Sherry

Beginners and Intermediate Clog - Greenginger -
(Durham)

Rapper Sword - Dave Hislop

Musicians Swap Shop (FREE)

+ CRÉCHE, Stalls, Films, Clog Making

Accomodation FREE. Camping (tents, campers, caravans) at Brynglas House (Limited space though)

Costs. Sessions + Ceilidh £5. Ssersion only £4. Ceilidh only £1-50

s.a.e. for full details and tickets from Dave Stone, 170, Oaksford, Coed Eva, Cwmbran, Gwent. NP44 6UQ before 31st March.



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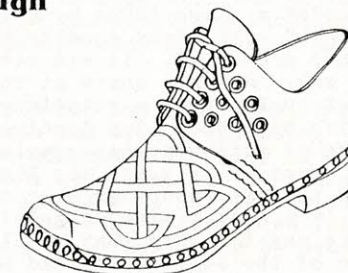
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AN APOLOGY AND A PLEA FROM THE EDITOR

Firstly may I offer my apologies for the inordinate lateness of this issue, due in part to Christmas but mostly to the fact that I have been away on holiday for much of January. One of the other reasons however will be apparent to anyone reading this issue carefully. With the exception of the adverts, every word of this issue is written by me. This is not intentional, I have no particular desire for this magazine to turn into a vehicle for my views and ideas, it is merely that I have received no articles, reviews nor even so much as a letter for publication. Surely someone must be out there! I realise that putting pen to paper is not everyone's idea of an enjoyable way to spend a winter's evening but any article or viewpoint, however brief, would be most welcome. If anybody desperately wants to write something I have a long list of suggestions just waiting for a likely author to spring out of the woodwork. How about you?

Held once again at Lodden Hall, Twyford, near Reading, this event was quite the best series of workshops which I have yet attended. I find it difficult to say quite why this was so but the whole event seemed to exude such a good atmosphere that it was impossible not to be caught up in it.

I attended a class taken by Colin Robertson billed as "Flowers of Edinburgh". It might equally have been subtitled "or how to run a workshop properly". It was advertised as for advanced dancers and so it was. My only qualm at the outset was spending a whole day on what is in truth a relatively simple example of traditional Scottish hard shoe step dancing. I need not have worried. Flowers of Edinburgh was concluded early in the afternoon and Colin moved on to teach the Earl of Errol which he completed before the afternoon was over despite its inherent difficulty. Colin is a past master at getting the most out of a group of dancers and I'm sure that we all lost several pounds during the course of the day! Colin had published a booklet explaining the dance (reviewed in a recent issue of this magazine) and it is a tribute to the excellence of this description to say that I had learnt the dance from this booklet prior to attending the workshop and found my interpretation of the notation in accord with Colin's dancing in all but a few minor respects.

Alice attended the Sammy Bell waltz workshop, this being taken by Dot Mulliner with assistance from Sammy himself who divided his time between this and a workshop on his hornpipe steps. The workshop was well geared to the dancers present both in standard of teaching and degree of difficulty. Everyone attending seemed to enjoy the workshop and it is of course made all the more worthwhile for the chance of seeing Sammy teach.

It has always struck me that one of the great benefits which the Reading Day could provide would be to run workshops on the form of stepping peculiar to the South, rather than concentrating solely on the stepping traditions of the North. One thinks immediately of Bob Cann and Leslie Rice from Devon or Dick Hewitt from Norfolk. It occurs to me that the provision of such a workshop would be a most appropriate 'first' for the Reading Day.

This is shaping up to be a totally uncritical review, but I regret not quite. In previous years the evening dance has been excellently run by Roy Dommett to the music of the Rakes. This year featured the same band but Roy had been replaced by a young man who in my opinion completely misjudged his audience. His remarks when introducing the guest performers, who as usual represented some of the cream of clog and step dancing I felt were at the very least inane and at worst bordered on the insulting. I gather from comments made by the organisers at the end of the evening that I was not alone in my opinion and with a bit of luck next year will see a return to a more experienced pilot. I for one will make sure I am there to see it.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Since Its inception in 1981, it was always intended that Newcastle Notation would not be an entirely static notation system. It was clear when we sat down to design the system that it would need modifications from time to time, both to cope with new situations, not considered at that time and also to correct any incipient faults which would only become apparent when the system came to be used.

The notation has now been in use for two and a half years and the time seems ripe for an update. When the system was being designed, a number of dancers were consulted and many of the recommendations which they made were subsequently incorporated into the final version. We would now like to invite a wider cross section of dancers to participate in making suggestions for improvements and developments which they feel would be beneficial to the system as a whole.

The panel of authors would like to hear from anyone who has any suggestions to make, and will treat all suggestions seriously.

Please bear in mind the following points:

- 1) No major changes will be made, if this were done the system would become quickly unworkable.
- 2) The authors are particularly interested in making the system clearer and more accurate.
- 3) Any suggestions regarding the explanation of the system, as distinct from criticisms of the system itself would be most welcome.
- 4) We would be most interested in any ambiguities which have become apparent, and also any movements which are particularly difficult or cumbersome to notate. (for example we shall be considering the method for notating "click" in some depth.)
- 5) Please work only from the full system and not from any of the resumes which have appeared from time to time.
- 6) Any suggestion, however small will be useful. You don't have to be an expert to make valid comments, the system is aimed at the beginner as much as at the experienced dancer.

The authors will be considering the update during the months of February and March. In April a working draft will be produced, and a copy will be provided free to anyone writing in with comments and suggestions. There will then be another chance to comment before the updated system is finally published during the summer.

Newcastle Notations is designed to be used - used by all clog dancers - it is as much your system as the authors' and we hope that as many dancers as possible will use this chance to improve it.