

NEWCASTLE WEEKEND OF DANCE

will be held at

CRAWLEY

11/13th NOVEMBER 1988

Workshops include:

Beginners North East Hornpipe

Beginner's Lakeland

Kit Haggerty's Hornpipe Steps (Intermediate North East)

The Steps of Norman Robinson (Improvers Lakeland)

Elsie Willis' Ragtime Routine (Advanced)

Ivy Sands' Sailor's Hornpipe (Intermediate)

Ivy Sands Double Hornpipe (Intermediate North East)

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INTERNATIONAL COLOUR EDITION

30p

No 21

EDITORIAL

Yes, well, it has been rather a long time hasn't it. In fact a year. It was intended to produce three issues of Instep in 1988, but that now looks rather unlikely. From now on however it is hoped to adhere to a new, and hopefully more manageable, publication schedule. The next issue will be in March 1989, and then at six monthly intervals.

So what's new. Now here is a lesson for all you dancers living in the south who wish you had clog dancers living on your doorstep just like us. A North-east trained dancer has surfaced in Sussex. Originally coming from Ashington in Northumberland, he is a former pupil of Eddie May, the dancer who taught Sammy Bell. Sounds absolutely fascinating. Collection and filming is being undertaken by Lynn Colbeck.

This year's Newcastle Weekend is to be held in Crawley. An advert appears later in this issue. No venue has yet been set for 1989 but in 1990 there will be a tenth anniversary Newcastle Weekend in Newcastle. Plans are already afoot for what promises to be a weekend featuring the biggest collection of traditional dancers ever assembled.

This issue, being number 21 is an "International Colour Edition" and features articles and reviews from outside the UK as well as the more parochial news. Since we've hit our 21st birthday I've also included a short resume of the research which has been carried out and which is still in progress, together with some suggestions for the future.

Not only is Instep at its 21st edition. It is hoped to bring the number of booklets in the Newcastle Series up to 21 during the course of the year. It is intended to include in the titles booklets on Devon stepping, Mrs Willis' Ragtime steps, Sam Sherry's Waltz Routines and, after a wait of something like five years since it was first promised, Part 1 of the Ellwood family Steps, including a complete biography. I felt that I had to wait for the result of the Spycatcher trials before publishing the last named as it does reveal a few secrets.

Finally, the Instep Research Team has, over the years, amassed a large archive not only of notes taken by members of the group, but also copies of the notes of others, together with a small amount of original material - posters, programmes and the like. We are now actively seeking out manuscript notes from other collectors to add to what looks like becoming a sort of national archive (that sounds a bit too grand, but you know what I mean). If you have any material of any sort please contact us. Any copying fees will be paid by the Research Team. Of particular interest are any films or video tapes. In reverse, if there is any information YOU need, we probably have, or at worst, know where to find it. All our information is freely available to anyone.

Instep's 21st edition seems a good moment to review the research which is currently in progress. Over the years I have tried to keep you up to date with the latest "finds" and although many of these have now been fully researched and some have found their way into print, much is still in the pipeline.

The Instep Research Team has begun its project on Suffolk step dancing. Progress looks like being very slow however because of the distances involved and because of the expense. We are getting there however. We have so far interviewed Font Watling and made contact with both Geoff Ling and Cyril Barber. All three are excellent step dancers and Font at least has agreed to teach us. This really is however a long term project and we do not expect to have anything like the whole picture for some years.

In Instep 16 I mentioned "Mendip Step Dancing", and was able to publish a brief report and a poem (yes a poem!) in issue 18. Nothing more has happened since, but I am reliably informed by Ann Smith, who started the whole show rolling, that she is going to do some more digging and see what can be turned up. Much excellent work has already been done by Tony Sever, and a video of one of the dancers, Eric Illott, has been made by Dot Mulliner. At present it seems doubtful whether anything danceable will be recovered but one never knows.

Instep 18 contains the first mention of Mrs Elsie Willis, originally from Cumbria but now living in Newcastle. We have collected, over a period of three years, two hornpipe routines and a ragtime routine. The two hornpipe routines have been taught at the last two Newcastle Weekends and the Rag routine will feature on the programme for the next. A full video is in the planning stage.

Issue 17 introduced a Yorkshire step dancer, Mrs Naylor of Halifax. I now have two videos of her steps and hope to make another trip to see her in the next few months. She has also made her first public appearance since the war at the 1987 Newcastle Weekend. Her repertoire consists entirely of schottische steps, which she learnt from her uncle.

What happened to the video project on Marion Cowper of Whitehaven? Well, we got through the planning stage, involving several trips to Whitehaven. Then Marion was taken ill, only a few days before shooting was to commence. We believe that she is now fully recovered but contact has yet to be re-established. We are also in "mid collection" as it were, and have yet to record her second hornpipe routine and the fancy dances.

The Newcastle series have been planning for some time to publish a booklet on Devon stepping, written by Anne-marie Hulme, the acknowledged expert on the subject. One step eluded her however and previous efforts to film the dancer, Leslie Rice, had not been very successful. I volunteered to make the thousand mile round trip from Newcastle to Dartmoor to record him, and I am pleased to say that on this occasion a successful video record of his dancing was produced. The booklet is basically written and all that is required is some polishing.

And what of the future? The supply of dancers shows no sign of drying up. On our own doorstep one of the Instep Research Team is about to embark on the collection of the steps of Lily Farrell.

Five steps were collected by myself some six years ago from Lily who is the daughter of Dickie Farrell, a Northumberland Champion in his prime at the turn of the century. In Cumbria a survey of Norman Robinson's pupils would prove most valuable and would add much to our knowledge of his dancing. Nothing has yet been done in Scotland, although it is known that the Glasgow area was renowned for its clog dancers until after the First World War.

Yorkshire has so far yielded two dancers and there may be more to be found. In Lancashire, although the hornpipe steps of Bert Bowden are well known, his other, much more exciting routines are certainly worth close scrutiny and, unless I am much mistaken, there must be other Lancashire dancers still alive if they could be found. What for example happened to Eddie Flaherty (See Instep 20)? He would now only be 66.

In the deep South West, a rudimentary description of a clog dance from Boscastle has been published (in Troyl III see Instep 16) but close investigation may reveal other information. In any case the informants who contributed information to the Troyl series should be reviewed and sifted.

There is then the knotty problem of the stepping of the travellers. Now there's a worthwhile project for someone. I have some leads if anyone's interested. A certain amount of groundwork has been done by A-M Hulme and P Clifton, particularly concerning the Orchard family but as far as I know they have not worked in this area for several years.

Then there is the whole area of Welsh clog. A review of the first booklet to cover this type of dance appears elsewhere in this issue. It is clear however that an enormous amount of research needs to be done. I suspect that this is one of those areas where the average person believes that everything has already been discovered - I mean we all know about those typical "pitter-patter" steps don't we? Experience has shown however that a little digging can reveal a wealth of new material. Much the same was said of Scottish dancing before Tom Flett began his researches and my experiences in the North-east were very similar.

In short it seems that there is a never ending supply of material. What we need is not more material but more active researchers and collectors. The Instep Research team is not confined to the North-East. We now have a member who lives in Hampshire. If anyone out there wants to come in from the cold, give me a ring.

Reviews

This being the "International Edition", this issue features reviews of one or two rather unusual volumes from the Continent that may have escaped your attention. But first for something closer to home:

Roy Castle on Tap. London. David and Charles. 1986

Quite simply the best book on tap I have seen.

The book covers a complete range of tap material from the simplest steps up to how to wing. The descriptions of winging are the only comprehensible ones I have seen, and although I must confess that I haven't yet mastered the art my failure is not the fault of the excellent text. The text is punctuated with somewhat prosaic photographs and cartoons but where this book scores over the others is in its use of a sensible notation system to record the steps and routines. Anyone used to reading clog notations should have no difficulty in deciphering the step notations.

Another major scoring point is the use of fairly lengthy step routines, ranging from a "Soft Shoe" to a quite complex "Flambee". The routines are well constructed examples of how to link step units together to form entertaining tap performances which most dancers of reasonable ability should be able to manage without too much difficulty. The copy which I bought had the added advantage that some of the proceeds of sale went to the BBC Children in Need Appeal - whether this is true of every copy sold I don't know.

Elsche Korf. Terschelling Danst. Hilversum. Dennis Musiv BV. 1983.

Not quite new this one but new I suspect to most of you out there. Elsche Korf is the doyen of the traditional school of Dutch dancing, indeed she is one of the very few who have ever collected any dances from oral tradition in Holland at all. If this seems surprising it is worth considering that most Dutch groups have little or no interest in their indigenous tradition at all, preferring to learn "International" dances. Many of the dances which are seen performed by Dutch teams are modern inventions or reconstructions. Mrs Korf has however pioneered the collection of dance from the few traditional practitioners who still survive, and this volume is the result of her efforts on the island of Terschelling over some 10 years.

The book contains some 31 dances, all of a social nature, but its interest to an English dancer, apart from its methodology and presentation, is that it contains a number of true reels. I have not come across the typical "figure/set/figure/set" pattern of the reel elsewhere on the continent and so the discovery of these dances is I feel worthy of note. The stepping given is of a simple nature in all cases. One of the dances (Riel p62) however bears a striking resemblance to the Scottish Four Hand Reel.

The book is excellently written, the notations easy to read and the descriptions of the dances and steps accurate. An excellent piece of scholarship which English dance researchers would do well to copy. Do not be put off by the fact that the book is in Dutch. It is in fact surprisingly easy to make out the notations at least, although I confess I have had to have the introduction translated.

H.Noorlander. Klompen. Arnhem 1978.

Yes, you guessed it, I was in Holland last summer.

A little more for the specialist, this book as its name implies is a fairly comprehensive history of Dutch clogs and their makers. The Dutch is incomprehensible without a translation, and although the volume was at one time published in English also, that version is now out of print. The book contains many fascinating photographs showing the making of Dutch clogs and their decoration. Did you know for example that many regions in Holland had their own traditional shape of clog? Has a really good bibliography - only one English entry though. Perhaps an unusual birthday present for the clog nut?

Available from:
Rijksmuseum voor Volkskunde "Het Nederlands Openluchtmuseum",
Arnhem, Holland.

Y.Guillard. Danse de Caracteres en Sarthe. Tome 1. La Tradition
Bone. Le Mans 1987

I have questioned many French dance teams in my time about step dancing. They all say "There isn't any". Yves Guillard didn't believe the accepted truths about the lack of this type of dance in France and set about trying to find some, and there, on his doorstep he discovered a step tradition as complex and varied as anything in England.

The dances are performed in soft shoes and are for the most part what would be termed character dances or fancy dances in the UK. They were however danced by adults and vary from the fairly prosaic to the extremely difficult. M. Guillard has been collecting since 1977 and apart from an excellent magazine article (Dansez Sartois. Y Guillard & C Thuard. Cenomane No 15, 22/12/84, p4-50), this is the first of what I understand will be a series of publications.

The book is spiral bound and has only thin paper covers. Mine has fallen apart already. The pages appear to be produced on a fairly poor quality photocopy machine and the quality is frankly not brilliant. But who cares - the material is absolutely riveting. Notations are given for 40 separate "lecons" and 9 complete dances. The notation system used appears to be designed by M.Guillard especially for these dances and appears a little confused at first. Once one is used to the method however it does seem to work.

In addition we are given reproductions of some of the original dancing master's notebooks in which the informants wrote their steps, together with appropriate music, again often in reproduction.

The French is fairly straightforward (with a dictionary by one's side for the technical terms) and should not cause the average 0 level French speaker too much difficulty.

Buy one from Y Guillard, 4 Rue des Minimes, 72000, Le Mans, France.

A FRENCH CANADIAN WALTZ CLOG

The steps given below were presented at a folk dance camp in the USA in 1986 by Camille Brochu. At these camps, dancers from each country attending are expected to present and teach something of their own tradition. This was one of the Canadian offerings for 1986. A copy of the notation was kindly passed on to me by Maurits van der Guyl of Amsterdam, and I have not so far been able to trace Ms Brochu. If anyone out there knows her perhaps they would put the editor in touch. The notation is in typescript and is given here verbatim.

LA CLOG-VALESE (French Canada)

I learned this dance in 1964 from the famous Quebecois fiddler Jean Carrignan. It is most likely a derivative of the English Waltz-clog, and can be done either as a solo or as a duo.

Suggested Recording: Philo FI-2003 Side B/2 3/4 meter

Stylistic Notes: In Quebecois step dancing, the feet are kept almost parallel and as close to the ground as possible. Movements are clean, sharp and contained within near space. Flexibility in the ankle joint is essential as is the use of countertension from the floor (i.e. in the hops). The torso is maintained upright and the arms hang loosely along the body. Most of the time the weight is kept forward on the ball of the foot.

Meas

Pattern

FIGURE I CHORUS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | Small leap onto L ft.; |
| | 2 | Shuffle with R ft; R toe takes weight momentarily; |
| | 3 | Fall back onto L ft; touch R toe next to L. |
| 2 | | Repeat meas with opp ftwk. |

VERSE

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 3 | 1 | Step on L ft; |
| | 2 | Brush R ft in low level across in front of L; |
| | 3 | Hop on L ft. |
| 4 | | Repeat meas 3 with opp ftwk |
| 5-12 | | Repeat meas 1-4 twice; |
| 13-14 | | Repeat meas 3-4. |

BREAK

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 15 | 1 | Jump slightly fwd on both heels; click toes together |
| | 2 | Step back on R toe; step back on L toe; |
| | 3 | Click both heels together; lower R heel. |
| 16 | 1 | Lower L heel; |
| | 2-3 | Pause |

FIGURE II

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------------|
| 1-2 | | Repeat Chorus as in Fig I. |
|-----|--|----------------------------|

- VERSE
- 3 1 Step on L ft;
2 Shuffle with R ft; hop on L ft;
3 Step on R ft behind L ft; step on L ft in front of R ft.
4 Repeat meas 3 with opp ftwk.
5-12 Repeat meas 1-4 twice.
13-14 Repeat meas 3-4.
15-16 Repeat break as in Fig I.

- FIGURE III
Repeat same pattern as in Fig I and II except for Verse:
- 3 1 Jump on both ft slightly apart with knees bent;
2 Hop, catching L heel with R toe; fall onto ball of L foot;
lower L heel (slight knee bend);
3 Point R toe behind and to L of L foot.
4 Repeat meas 3 with opp ftwk.

- FIGURE IV
Repeat same as in Fig I and II except for Verse:
- 3 1 Step on L foot sdwd L; catch L toe with R heel;
2 Hop on L ft in place; step on R foot across to L of L ft;
3 Catch R heel with L toe; hop on R ft in place.
4 Repeat meas 3 continuing in same direction.
5-6 Repeat Chorus as in Fig I.
7-8 Repeat meas 3-4 with opp ftwk (last ct of preceding Chorus ends with a catch step on L ft instead of a toe touch).
9-10 Chorus step beg on R ft, again ending with a catch step instead of a toe touch.
11-12 Repeat meas 3-4.
13 1 Cross and step on L ft over R ft; catch L heel with R toe;
2 Hop on L ft in place; step sdwd R on R ft;
3 Catch R toe with L heel, hop on R foot
14 1 Cross and step on L ft over R ft; catch L heel with R toe;
2 Hop on L ft in place;
3 Step back on R toe; step back on L toe.
15-16 Break as in Fig I but substitute jump on 1st ct with step fwd on R heel, step fwd on L heel next to R.

- FIGURE V
Repeat pattern same as Fig I and II except for verse:
- 3 1 Step on L ft.
2 Stamp R ft next to L;
3 Hop on L ft; shuffle on R ft.
4 Repeat meas 3 with opp ftwk.

Presented by Camille Brochu

Editor's Note:

I too have collected some waltz clog steps which originate from Jean Carrignan. My information comes from the dancing of Pierre Chartrand, who collected the steps from Carrignan. My notes are derived from Pierre's dancing in July 1986.

Pierre only danced three steps from Carrignan. I give notations for these.

The steps are performed in hard shoes. Pierre always danced each step off the left foot with no repeat off the right. It will be noted that his first two steps are almost identical to two of the notations given by Brochu. The third is however new.

First I give the Platform step, which corresponds to the CHORUS the Brochu notations.

Platform Step.

1	step	shuffle	A: :B,B
and 2			
and 3	step		:A
and 4		tap) lazy	:A
and 5	shuffle	step)	:A
and 6	step		B,B:
			A:
		step	:A

This unit occurs regularly during the course of the dance. Immediately the limitations of the Brochu notations become the apparent. Initially it might be taken that the "1 2 3" of measure 1 represent the three strong beats of a 3/4 bar. If this is the case the notator has clearly not noticed that the first beat of the shuffle occurs before the strong beat at "2". Alternatively if the notations are correct the rhythm is quite different from that danced by Pierre, indeed quite startlingly different. Try it and see.

The platform unit is abbreviated to P in the following notations.

Step 1.

A 1	flat step	flat tap	A/F*: :A/F
2			
3	hop	shuffle	A: :C,C
&			
a			

Step is P A A P A A P A A and finish.
| | | | | | | |
L L R L L R L L R L

This step is number 5 (or FIGURE V) amongst the Brochu notations. The step is readily recognisable from the notation given. Note that Brochu uses "VERSE" for the unique section of each step. Compare the rhythm of beat 3 in this step with beat 2 of the platform unit given in the Brochu notations. This demonstrates the ambiguity mentioned in the notes to the platform unit mentioned above.

Step 2.

A 1	jump=	jump=	F:F
2	click toe(L)heel(R)		RC:
&			RC:A
a		hop	:A
3	tip tap	heel drop	RC:

Step is P A A P A A P A A and finish
| | | | | | | |
L L R L L R L L R L

Step 3.

Step is P A P A P A and finish
 | | | | | |
 L L L L L L L

Finish.

The finish is always A A F
 | | |
 L R L

Note.

J Alter. A Field Study of an Advanced Dance Class in a Private Studio Setting. Dance Studies Vol 10 1986 p49-97.

Judy Alter documents her attendances at modern dance classes held in a US city over a period of 13 weeks at the rate of 3 classes a week. On first reading the style seems to be turgid and full of those awful obvious statements which punctuate the papers of researchers who know that everything must be recorded but have not yet learned that not everything needs to be reported. If one, on second reading, skips the "dull bits", rather like reading Dostoyevsky, the paper becomes really rather stimulating. In fact, although the context is far away from that of a clog or step dance class, some of the concepts and findings have a ring of truth about them from which every clog teacher could learn.

An example. At page 85 is a section entitled "Self description in Relation to Where I Stood to take Class." Ms Alter records her feelings, recorded subjectively, dependent upon her position in the classroom, and very variable they were too. I'm less than sure about the conclusions she draws but the concept is fascinating. Who looks to see where particular pupils are in a dance class? More particularly which teachers amongst you have tried moving pupils in relation to each other in order to increase their success rates in learning material? I think all you clog instructors out there should read this. Ask the next person who teaches you whether they have or not!

Dance Studies (incl back numbers) is available from the Centre for Dance Studies, Les Bois, St Peter, Jersey, Channel Islands.

Jerry Duke. Clog Dance in the Appalachians. Duke Publishing Company. PO Box 210368, San Francisco, CA 94121-0368. 1984

Now I'm fairly used to being bored by Appalachian Clog Books. Most are a more or less dull collection of steps made up by someone or the other. No provenance is ever given and no one ever seems to be able to give anything of the history of the dance. Until Jerry Duke that is.

The book is not new, but I have not seen it on sale in the U.K. and I acquired my copy through a friend on the Continent.

The book begins with a resume of the early history of the dance and there follow chapters on "Related Dance Literature" and the most interesting description of clog steps and movements I have seen under the heading "Description and Analysis of Dance Movement."

This is not simply a book for the devotee of Appalachian Clog however. The author draws together the historical strands which link step styles on both sides of the Atlantic and makes most interesting reading and the concepts introduced are often equally applicable to styles of stepping found on this side of "The Pond".

Huw Williams. Welsh Clog/Step Dancing. n.d. 2.95.
The Author, 7 Austin Rd, Griffithstown, Pont-y-Pwl, Gwent NP4 5ER.

This book is a lesson to us all. The lesson is never to lose sight of what another author or researcher is doing elsewhere. Although excellent in intention, it is clear that the author doesn't know a great deal of dance scholarship outside Wales. As a result he sets about trying to re-invent the wheel, devising his own form of notation which takes one back to the pre Tom Flett days of the mid 1950's. We've gone a long way since then. What is clear however is that Huw Williams knows a bit about Welsh Clog although the style of presentation being similar to that of Geoff Hughes in his "Clog Dancing for Beginners" does its level best to conceal this.

The booklet contains some 18 steps and also a complete suggested routine together with some tunes. The notations are, as you may have guessed from the comments made above, both opaque and inadequate but do form the basis at least for further work. I would be willing to bet that Huw Williams, with the assistance of a good notator could produce a really fascinating series of booklets on Welsh dancing. This offering does not do either Huw, or the subject justice however. Buy one anyway. You may not agree with me!

STEPPING COMPETITION IN DERBY

16th January 1988

A Review by Heather Horner

Despite some doubt until relatively late as to whether S.C.I.D. would happen this year, the go-as-you-please competitions took place on a foggy January afternoon in Derby Assembly Rooms. Not that it was foggy inside the building, but it was cold, and that's what I remember mostly - a lot of the step dancing was forgettable. There were two classes, "solo" and "group", with trophies of an embossed leather belt and a Willie Scott crook for each class respectively. Overall I found that most of the entertainment came from the groups. There was a high proportion of Fosbrook entries, in fact 6 in the solo class and three in the group class. I can't tell you who they were since they were entered by initial only, Fosbrooks A, B etc.

The judges chose three areas to award marks which they described as "Technical Merit", "Entertainment" and "Tradition". This last category came as a surprise to most of us, entrants and audience, and didn't quite seem to fit the overall concept of developing step dancing away from the Northern competition style. However, it appears to have been the result of last minute changes in the judging personnel, with no time to discuss the joint criteria.

Some of the solo entries had a theme tune with a matching costume, but the dancer stayed centre front with an on the spot selection of basic steps. Though the ideas were very good, there were many lost opportunities in developing the theme. I feel the musician is just as important as the dancer; they must work together. With a couple of exceptions, teamwork wasn't evident in the "solo" class. The eventual placings were the anonymous T Fosbrook (1st), J Fosbrook (2nd) and D Fosbrook (3rd), though they made so little impact on me I can't remember their themes, except that "T" might be Teddy since the class winners danced again at the trophy presentation. I don't mean to be overcritical because I did admire some of the ideas. Of course in a competition, nerves can play havoc with performances,

and musicians are just as prone as dancers. I enjoyed K Applegard's style and music; with a bit more theme development and a bit less nerves from the whistling musician, who started too high and ran out of breath, it's a winner.

The "group" entries (up to six dancers) were generally much more entertaining, and some of them even looked as if they enjoyed dancing. The placings were Hoddesden Crownsmen (1st), Ray and Dawn Dawson (2nd) and Fosbrooks B (3rd). Touchwood gave a lively performance of choreographed Applachian style clogging, with no theme but good music. Spinning Jenny had a fairly developed theme of sailors dancing (no, not the Sailor's Hornpipe), with some good music and varied rhythms. Though they used some basic steps, this was just right for the continual movement and action, particularly with 6 dancers. With a slightly different judging slant, Spinning Jenny would have been placed. There was another sailor theme from Fosbrooks B, which felt as though it ran well over the 5 min. time limit, as did Fosbrooks A (Mice) and H Fosbrooks (Horse). Ray and Dawn Dawson had an imaginative "spy" theme, though with only one person dancing at a time it had less aural impact than the other groups (except the exploding bomb at the end!). Hoddesden Crownsmen danced as a true team of three dancers and 1 musician, crisp stepping, change of rhythm, lots of movement yet always under control.

Step dancing is a performing art. As I've said before, there is a place for competitions in raising standards of performance, and it could be a growth area if a festival with a suitable venue feels there is a potential; watch this space.

As an afterthought, I'd like to put a question for you to consider. In performance, do step dancers sometimes lose the balance between aural and visual?

Clogging Health Hazard

Chris Brady

This is just a short note to draw attention to a health and safety problem which people may not be aware of.

Whilst most hard surfaces are affected by clogging on them, "Marley" tiles (i.e. those with stripey surfaces) commonly found in schools, kitchens and community halls were until recently made of asbestos fibre bound by relatively soft vinyl.

The abrasive action of wooden soles or metal taps on these tiles is enough to liberate quantities of asbestos dust, and this is now widely recognised as being a very serious health hazard.

This is especially a problem with older tiles which have become badly worn in say school classrooms.

To minimise this health risk the solution is obviously to dance on stone tiles, wood or lino covered floors, but if there are no alternatives then at least room ventilation should be increased as much as possible.

On no account should the dust be swept up in a dry state afterwards since this would cause a health hazard as well.

Further information may be obtained from your local Health and safety Executive.

Clog Dancing in Australia

Late last year I received the following information from Bob Buckley of Sydney about clogging in Australia:

Sydney Clog Dancers:

Have a repertoire of about 8 routines. There are about twelve people who can perform the simplest two and only about three who can manage our hardest routines. We also have three people who have routines they have not taught to others.

Adelaide:

Have a small group of two or three dancers with a very similar repertoire to the Sydney group.

Perth:

There may be several groups - generally with a smaller repertoire. I have not seen these people for some time.

Melbourne and Canberra:

A couple of dancers with some of the simpler steps learned from Sydney and Adelaide people.

Darwin:

This group have quite a different bunch of material. They've managed to collect a routine (which is quite simple) but it is the first in the country.

Editor's note:

I also have on completely separate authority that another dancer has been discovered in the colonies, this time in Perth. No further information concerning origin as yet. It seems quite possible however that rather than being in any way "indigenous" as it were, this and the dance mentioned by Bob in his article represent material from a British immigrant. Either way I wait for further news. We know that several dancers did emigrate to both Canada and Australia during the 1920's. They may of course have passed their material on in their chosen homeland. I'm not sure which would be more interesting, a new tradition or one which has emigrated. It would be fairly remarkable to be able to collect Lancashire steps in Darwin and Lakeland style stepping in Melbourne. It is one of those quirks of the British nature however that we take our traditions with us, and keep them going with a great deal more verve in a new country than we ever did at home. One only has to look at the multiplicity of Scottish dance groups all over the world to see this strange syndrome in action.

If I hear any more I shall let you know.

Sammy Bell's Unique Dance Pedestal

Chris Brady

On the back of Sammy Bell's booklet, published by Mike Cherry of the Reading Cloggies, is a sketch of a clog dance pedestal.

This is based on the one that Sammy bought from Eddie May in about 1925, and after talking to Sammy about this I thought that people might like to know what it was made of and how.

Although pedestals for clog dancing on were fairly common, many were really just small wooden tables or boxes about three inches deep. Sammy remembers a report of one gentleman dancing on such a low wooden box but with a Welsh slate embedded in the top. However Sammy's pedestal was unique in that it had a glass top for dancing on!!

The body was a square ebony box two feet six inches by two feet six inches by one foot deep. It was covered in black velvet, with gold tassels hanging down. There were two brass carrying handles on either side of the box, under the velvet.

The interior of the box was divided into four square holes, each with a light bulb inside. The top of each light bulb was about one inch below the glass top, and the bulbs were rated at sixty watts.

The box was bolted to the top of four detachable legs which were each two feet long, turned in a spiral and lined with gold trim lines. The four turned cross pieces helped to make the structure rigid, each one fitting into holes in the legs. The four legs were bolted to the stage with strong angle brackets.

Fastened to the rear of the pedestal, with two hooks over the rear cross piece was a step made of ebony.

The top of the box was recessed to a depth of three-quarters of an inch, to allow for a sheet of three-quarter inch thick, wire reinforced glass to rest over the bulbs. This was just under two feet six inches square. Vim was sprinkled onto the glass to make it less slippery, and it was on this that Sammy used to dance, a total of three feet high above the stage.

Sammy's costume at this time was black clogs, cream woolen socks, port-wine velvet knee breeches with buckles on the outside of each leg bottom, narrow waistcoat to match, cream silk shirt with button-down collar and sleeves held up around the arms with armlets, and a port-wine tie.

When Sammy performed on the pedestal on the music hall stage, in Ashington and elsewhere, the lights of the auditorium would be turned right down, so that just the lights from the pedestal shone upwards onto Sammy's clogs and legs, and then he would dance. I can well imagine that the effect would have been most dramatic indeed!!

Reference: "Originality - The Steps of Samuel Bell". Mike Cherry. Reading 1984.