

CLOG WORKSHOPS AT THIS SUMMER'S FESTIVALS

Date	Festival/Tel number	Teacher
JULY		
29-5 Aug	Sidmouth Folk Festival 0392-77285	Sue Bousfield
AUGUST		
5-7	Durham City Folk Festival 0385-65754	Mary Jamieson
5-7	Dartmoor Folk Festival 0837-2816	Sam Sherry
5-12	Broadstairs Folk Week 0843-582340	Not Known
20-27	Whitby Folk Festival	Green Ginger Madeline Hollis
26-28	Kendal Folk Festival 0539-25133	Westmorland Step Dancers
26-29	Towersey Folk Festival 084421-2231	Reading Cloggies
27-29	Cornwall 0208-4783	Not Known
SEPTEMBER		
2-4	Fylde Folk Festival 03917-2317	Sam Sherry
9-11	Leeds Folk Festival 0532-463507	Not Known
9-11	Whitchurch Folk Festival 0256-43854	Bantams
16-18	Bromyard Folk Festival 0203-73457	Reading Cloggies
16-18	Luton Folk Festival 0582-411517	Madeline Hollis
OCTOBER		
1	Reading Festival Of Step Dance	Reading Cloggies

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Next issue 1st October. Copy Date 1st September.

EDITORIAL.

First of all please note the change of address and telephone number above.

In this issue last year I wrote concerning the inability of the Folk Directory to distinguish between clog dancing and women's morris. It seems in this years Folk Directory that by some lucky chance the Newcastle Cloggies have a category all to themselves but that the rest of you are still languishing under a variety of headings. Word has however reached the powers that be and representations have been made! I understand that they are considering (considering) allowing us a category of our own next year. I suggested that they might head it "Step and Clog teams" but who knows what they may choose. I did have a very nice letter from the editor of the directory asking me to publicise its existence to the clog world - you see they really do know we exist.

As befits the competition season this issue carries an article on the subject of competitive dancing and in particular the organisation off the Durham Competition. I have sent a copy to the organisers and will publish any reply received. I understand that the Westmorland competition is definitely off this year although there will still be a workshop or two.

The article on repertoire building is the first of a regular series which will appear in each issue. It concerns material available to the performer in particular areas. In this issue the North East is covered - other areas follow in subsequent issues, and will include eventually social dances with stepping.

I hope that some of you will write to me with your views on my comments regarding the standard of teaching contained in the review of the Cobblers Awl weekend. If you are shocked by my comments you have every right to be. I feel that in general the clog world maintains a high standard of dancing and instruction but there are unfortunate exceptions.

MORPETH CLOG COMPETITIONS 1983

E.Simcox

The children's competition this year was divided into two sections - under 10 and 10-14 years. Unfortunately there was only one competitor in the under 10, and although she did extremely well it was hardly a competition!

1. Shona Harper.

There were 8 entrants for the senior class and the standard was very high. The winner was Rebecca Adamson, who was last year's Novice Champion. She is barred from this competition until she is 15, but can re-enter the children's competition next year.

1. Rebecca Adamson.
2. Tiffany Walker.
3. Katherine Harrigan.

There were 5 entrants for the Novice Competition. The standard was mediocre.

1. B Davies.
2. Cath Shaw.
3. Ann Harper.

The Intermediate Competition was again won by Brenda Walker, despite having seven points docked for almost falling off the pedestal. The only other entrant was Ann Harper.

1. Brenda Walker.
2. Ann Harper.

The same two entrants tied for first place in the Open, the only other entrant, Cath Shaw, having been disqualified for dancing only nine steps. Brenda Walker was unable to finish in the dance-off and Ann Harper was the winner.

1. Ann Harper.
2. Brenda Walker.

The number of entrants for the three adult competitions totalled six - not very encouraging. The judges were Hylton Pomeroy and Irene Cowie.

It was decided this year that the clog competitions should alternate with those for singing. The running order of the competitions and the number of entrants were not made known, consequently some competitors were kept waiting for a considerable time. e.g. most of the children had arrived by 1.30, but were not called until 4.00. When I asked the reason for the change I was told that it was to give the musician a rest between contests. As there were two musicians available this was not necessary. It was unsatisfactory for the spectators also, as the room emptied and filled again after each competition. There were few spectators left to watch the Open Championship. Altogether a disappointing afternoon.

A CONTESTANT'S VIEW

M Cherry

In 1976 I set out to compare my skills, through the medium of the North Eastern Counties Clog Contest, against other clog dancers. As far as I was concerned the result was very favourable because the very best of the country's clog dancers at that time competed in the earlier revival contests.

There was however a surprise, contesting was not fun, it is a very serious business. Immediately both myself and at least one other competitor complained to the organisers because we were penalised for being one step short.

During 1978 I was prompted to inform the organisers of my thoughts which I have now attempted to update for the readers of "Instep". My friends inform me that much has been done to implement some of my suggestions but much of what I said may still be relevant today.

I learnt my first clog step as the result of a chance meeting with a past member of a Newcastle University rapper dance team. I was already in possession of a pair of clogs and from this time onwards (1960) I began to take an interest. It soon became apparent that although there were a few people around who could show me the odd step or two, they appeared to know very little about dancing technique or timing and had little or no idea how to write the steps down. With this in mind I began to analyse what little I knew and subsequently produced a method of tap tabulation which I still use as a teaching aid.

In 1965 I married a lady whose late father came from the small mining community of Annfield Plain and have visited Durham most years since that time. In 1978 I was indeed very grateful to the Victory Club of Annfield who put their facilities at my disposal for practice purposes.

It was not until 1974 that I was prompted to contact Johnson Ellwood, my purpose being to learn something of the clog contests. My visits covered a period of three years prior to his death. These visits enabled me to enter the revival contest in 1976 and again in 1978.

Johnson Ellwood was possessed with a fanatical enthusiasm for dancing which fortunately for myself and many others lasted throughout his life. He once said to me, "I ask nothing of you except that you go home and teach my steps to your friends". We all know what is happening throughout the country and I think he would be pleased. Following my visits with him I made the following notes from the information he gave me.

There were two contests. (1) Floor
(2) Pillar

Music

Always the traditional hornpipe.

Steps.

Varied in number, as many as twenty had been known. There was no mention that the contest was limited to particular types of step. A great deal of importance was put on variety of step. The contest always finished with a double shuffle off the toe.

Judges.

5 in number, adjudicating the following aspects -

Time.
Beats.
Execution.
Carriage.
Originality.

Performance.

The dance was performed on the spot with very little movement. The arms were held loosely by the sides. Each competitor was expected to indicate his speed to the musician by beating the floor with his foot, prior to commencing the dance. If the dancer varied his speed he was penalised. If the musician varied the speed the competitor lost no marks.

The problems of competition

In the main the revival contest is run very much as it was prior to the time it lapsed around 1951. In 1978 I believe there were only five local competitors, the rest were enthusiasts such as myself who had travelled many miles, in my case 300. A number of us felt that the rules were in need of clarification and in fairness to the organisers we had the opportunity to debate the problems at the open forums which followed the contests at that time.

The points which showed up very clearly were -

- 1) The North East were to promote the premier contest.
- 2) The rules were in need of clarification.
- 3) There was a reluctance to clearly define the rules.
- 4) The major points of controversy were - style, execution and adjudication.
- 5) The contest did not appear to give equal opportunity to all the competitors.

Expansion of 1-5

1) In 1978 we all agreed that it was appropriate for the North East to have this honour. Now that the contest has had a few years to develop there must be others better qualified to comment.

2) Clarification of the rules.

I submit that the rules in all contests should be written in such a manner that there can be no misunderstanding between individuals which result in entirely different interpretations.

The following phrases are from "clog News Sheet" April 1978 -

"impossible to verbalise"
"includes both style and footwork"
"there are no strict rules"
"half beat"

These phrases refer to different aspects of the rules and I consider them to be unacceptable. If something is impossible to define or verbalise, how is it taught? If there are no strict rules, how can it be marked or penalised? What is a half beat? In the context in which it is used the term "half beat" refers to sound or loudness of a beat. I consider this to be a misuse of the term.

Johnson Ellwood used to tell a story about an argument he once had with a judge, it concerned quarter beats. I am lucky enough to have this story on tape. The judge, I am sure, was referring to music. There is no doubt that Johnson was talking about the sound or loudness of the beats.

During a performance a dancer will make the taps loud and soft and he will vary the time between the taps. Put them to music; in common time the half beat is a quaver, the quarter beat is a semi-quaver.

The performer gives the expression by adding weight to the taps, that is, he makes them loud or soft. How is it done? Usually it is achieved by the movement and position of the trunk. In no way can the loudness be called a half beat.

3) I still await the rules to be clearly defined.

4) The major points of controversy -

Style - What do contest organisers mean if they refuse to give an adequate explanation.
How is it adjudicated, and how is it penalised?
What are the differences between Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire etc.

How do the teachers of dancing define style?

Execution My understanding was that execution is the ability to put in heel clicks, rolls etc. into steps.
A dictionary definition is as follows -

The act of executing, performance, accomplishment, the mode of performance, a work of art, skill, dexterity.

Adjudication Now that several years have passed and the judges have gained in experience perhaps they would care to express their point of view.

5) Equal opportunity. Any contest irrespective of medium pre-supposes that the contestants compete on equal terms. In order to give each competitor the same chance to win the contest, the rules, conditions, and adjudication must be seen to be fair in all aspects.

Interpretation of the aspects of adjudication.

Time The ability of the competitor to keep in time with the music. The ability to control speed throughout the dance.

Beats The ability to produce differing rhythms by striking the floor with different parts of the clog or by striking the clogs together.

Carriage May simply be described as deportment.

Execution The mode of performing a work of art, skill, dexterity.
Style!
The ability to add kicks, heel beats, rolls etc.

Originality The ability to embellish a simple step so that it is particular to an individual dancer.
For some reason this aspect was not included at or since the revival contest of 1976. Why?
Surely this is an area which allows the art to develop and grow. It is the means by which individual ideas and personality are expressed.

Very simply the areas of adjudication are split into two categories -

- 1) The aspects which you listen to - Time and beats.
- 2) The aspects which you look at - Carriage, execution and originality.

Some suggestions

Audible aspects - If the judges were screened from the competitors complete concentration could be given to what is heard.

Visual aspects - Add dress to the carriage section, to date it is not judged and carries no marks.

Replace execution with "artistic performance". Define style within the artistic performance so that there are no misunderstandings or drop it completely.

Reintroduce originality to cover the content of the dance.

Why not carry out some detailed research into the rules and conditions of similar contests. e.g. Highland dancing, Irish

dancing, Ballroom dancing, Eisteddfodds and Music Festivals. To date only one thing is compulsory, the double shuffle to finish. Why not have a dance of compulsory steps.

The competitors

1900-1950 Who were the competitors and what was their background.

1950-1975 Clog dancers appeared on television and at festivals so it did not die out completely. They were always announced as "champions". Who were they, where are they and why did they dance.

1976-present Who are the clog dancers today? Why are they spread throughout the country and what is their background?

Prior to the Second World War were clog contests confined to the areas where the clog was made and worn as a working shoe? The regions which come readily to mind are the mill areas of Lancashire and the Durham coalfield. These regions were made up of small and very close knit communities. Each community very likely had it's own champion and there was very little need to define every facet of the rules.

Did the decline of the clog contest commence with the advent of the war or did the war accelerate the decline?

Following the war and throughout the twenty five years without contests there have been vast changes in education, living standards, and travel. Clog dancing like many artistic pastimes very naturally was absorbed and became a folk art.

In consequence the people who took it up around 1960 had a vastly different educational and social background. In order to do it, someone like myself had to pick up the threads wherever they were to be found, piece them together and inevitably impose on it their own personality.

This I believe is the reason for the questions in connection with the contest rules. It obviously has some bearing on the fact that there is extreme difficulty in answering queries.

I present this article in order to promote discussion, argument and debate within this journal in the hope that the clog dance and contest will continue to develop and thrive.

EFDSS N.W. Area Conference Campaign for Real Reels

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our traditional dancing'*

Reading Traditional Step Dance Group

Saturday 22nd October 1983

Moss Side Community Centre, Leyland

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11 to 12.45 Morning Session

2.30 to 5 Afternoon Session with tea break

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REPERTOIRE BUILDING

One of the questions I am frequently asked is where the Newcastle Cloggies learn the material which they perform. I thought it might be a good idea to publish a list of just what is available at the present time in the way of steps and dances to learn. Each issue a different area or style will be covered beginning with -

The North East

The Ellwood Family - innumerable steps in dotted hornpipe rhythm plus an unknown number of simple waltz steps. Opinion varies as to whether these latter are clog or tap steps. Many of the Ellwood's pupils have embellished and changed the steps they were taught thus effectively making the steps their own.

Mrs Ivy Sands - Three dotted hornpipe routines of varying difficulty.

Mr John Surtees - Small number of dotted hornpipe steps, waltz steps and three schottische steps of considerable interest.

Sam Bell - Dotted hornpipe and waltz routines.

Aylis Angus - a number of "pieces" combinable into a routine of one's own devising.

Tiny Allison - Dotted hornpipe steps and waltz routine. Also several "tap" routines of some interest.

Mrs Marhoff - steps may not originate in the North East. Single and Double Hornpipe, Heel and Toe Jig Routine, waltz steps, Musical Comedy steps and Lily of Laguna Routine.

Lily Farrell - small number of dotted hornpipe steps.

Kit Haggerty - Dotted hornpipe routine.

A number of other dancers have taught a small number of steps each and research is continuing to bring to light new material at an alarming rate. The above list is not exhaustive and I should be pleased to hear from anyone who may be able to add to it.

Of step dancing in the area little is known other than it used to be done in the country areas. A step or two have been collected for use in the Morpeth Rant and others may be just awaiting collection.

If anyone requires further information on any of the above or advice regarding where to learn any particular steps the editor would be pleased to answer any queries.

COBBLERS AWL WEEKEND OF DANCE

A Review

This, the second clog/rapper instructional weekend organised by Cobblers Awl, was held at Newport on 7th/8th May. Although a rapper workshop was held I will confine my comments to the clog part of the weekend.

I found the whole event very well organised, particularly as regards the accommodation provided for visiting dancers and the excellent breakfasts!

I attended the classes in Welsh clog run by Huw Williams who turned out to be an excellent teacher with the rare ability to run a class which catered for a very wide range of ability. He was also able to impart a certain amount of background regarding the origin of some of the steps which I have found most dancers of this tradition unable to do. It was a pity that the music was for the most part provided by a 120 bass piano accordion, hardly a traditional Welsh instrument, but this is a very minor criticism. I know how difficult it can be to provide musicians of quality for a large number of concurrent classes.

Two other members of the team attended Sam Sherry's Jig class, about which I have nothing to say other than that one cannot have too much of this particular good thing. There really is no substitute for the straight from the horse's mouth approach.

I regret that I have a lot to say about the beginners and intermediate classes run by Mary Ford and another member of the Wessex Woods. I was personally appalled by the standard of teaching in these two classes. The Intermediate class was "Lancashire". When questioned as to the provenance of the steps the instructor was unable to give me any information except that they were "Lancashire hornpipe steps". This did not unfortunately stop her from teaching them in jig time for the entire weekend. The beginners were being taught a reasonable selection of simple steps. This is just not enough at the beginners' stage however, when the steps are really only a vehicle for the basic technique of the dance. I felt that neither instructor had sufficient understanding of what they were teaching or of how to go about running a class. As an example, neither instructor was able to explain the timing of the steps they were teaching. I was inclined to put this down to inexperience in teaching, however the two instructors gave an rather embarrassing "performance" at the ceilidh in the evening revealing that they just simply were not good enough to be able to teach at this stage in their careers. I regret having to say all this in such uncompromising terms but I'm sure Cobbler's Awl could have found someone better to take these classes. One should really only use the best instructors at this level, or indeed at any level.

Be that as it may I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend and will quite happily make the 700 mile round trip again next year.

COMPETITIONS

- Aug 5-7 At Durham city Festival. (0385-65754)
- 7th Children's competitions.
Novices Competition.
Pedestal Competition.
Four Northern Counties Championship
- Aug At Saddleworth Rushcart. (04577-4153)
- Local Lancashire Competition.
- Sept 2-4 At Fylde Folk Festival. (03917-5127)
- Junior Competition.
Novices Competition.
Lancashire and Cheshire Championship.
Open Waltz Competition.

Reading Traditional Step Dance Group

FIFTH ANNUAL

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SATURDAY 1ST. OCTOBER 1983

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Sammy Bell Waltz with Dot Mulliner.
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Ian Dunmur - Advanced
p.m. Reels and country dances with
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Colin Robertson - Flowers of Edinburgh.
Mike Cherry - Beginners Dotted Hornpipe.
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BOOK REVIEW

-Hard Shoe Step Dancing in Scotland and the Flowers of Edinburgh.
Colin Robertson. Scottish National Dance Company. Reading 1982.

The Scottish National Dance Company are well known for their excellent series of leaflets on Scottish solo dancing but this booklet marks a new departure in a direction which I feel should be given every encouragement possible. The booklet (which is obtainable from the SNDC 1 Lakeside, Earley, Reading, Berks) is excellently produced and well bound. It consists of two sections, the first a short precis of current knowledge concerning hard shoe step dancing in Scotland and the second a notation for a particular dance - Flowers of Edinburgh.

The first part is perhaps a little short on scholarship and in some places is a little misleading. The bibliography is occasionally erroneous and the author informs me that he did not in fact consult all the references cited. The good news however is that here at last is a Scottish dancer of the highest calibre with an interest in, and a concern for, the traditional dance forms of Scotland, who is prepared to take the gospel and spread it amongst his less interested bretheren. Scottish dance scholarship has been in the doldrums ever since the untimely death of Tom Flett. I'm sure this booklet will do something to redress the balance. The notation is excellently laid out and is readily understandable - I taught myself the dance in about half an hour from the notations. It is a fairly simple dance and should be of considerable use to teams looking for a useful new dance. There are one or two errors - for example although the time count is give in 2/4 time the example bar in the text is a 4/4 one. None of the errors leads to any ambiguity however and I found the notation a delight to use. My only criticism of this section is the lack of source given for the dance. I have contacted the author about this and I'm sure he won't mind me passing on what he told me. He learnt the dance about twenty years ago and cannot now remember from whom! The implication in the text is that this is the dance of the same name which Ewan Maclachlan taught in the Hebrides in the middle of the last century. There is no concrete evidence for this, or at least I have been unable to find any, however I think that the dance does have the right "feel" about it. All in all a very worthwhile booklet, providing a record of a dance which is well worth preserving whatever its origins. Colin Robertson is to be congratulated on his efforts, I hope he produces more of the same standard. Incidentally I see that he is teaching the dance at the next Reading Day of Dance on 1st October.

Newcastle Cloggies

THIRD

Weekend of Dance

Boldon Colliery Community Centre

November 19-20th 1983

Classes include -

Beginners to Clog - Dotted Hopnpipe.

Mrs Ivy Sands' Single Hornpipe. Beginners to NE/Improvers. 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. Intermediate. (Instructor unconfirmed)

Mrs Viona Marhoff. Stage Steps. Mrs Marhoff, assisted by Julie Jarman, will teach a package of steps in different rhythms in her own inimitable style. Intermediate/Advanced.

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

Full details now available from

Mrs A Metherell, 15 Wolveleigh Terr, Newcastle upon Tyne