

JOHNSON ELLWOOD — Champion Clog-dancer

The death of Johnson Ellwood of Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham, has removed from us one of the few remaining true 'traditionals'—those whose expertise in dance or song depended solely on contact with skilled performers of earlier generations. Johnson was not only a performer but a zealous and indefatigable teacher with that rare quality, in these present days, of burning enthusiasm. His pupils ranged from the small sons and daughters of pitmen—his little "firecrackers"—to adults of all ages. Scores of Durham Clog dancers owe their prowess to Johnson's ability to transfer the multifarious rhythms of the genuine clog dance.

Born at the very end of last century—a Victorian—he was the son of the famous Jim Ellwood—the Champion clog dancer of the miners. Johnson's first public performance was at the age of six and he won a silver watch in competition only two years later. After service in the Royal Navy in World War I, and three naval battles he returned to the pits and continued to perform with his father, carrying on many of the steps of Dan Leno who was his father's friend. Both Johnson and his father remained amateurs despite many attractive offers.

In the Second World War Johnson was a Fire Chief with hundreds of men under his direction. Later, on the staff of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, he seized the chance to teach a generation of rapper dancers, the further skill of clog.

In 1976 Johnson was the moving spirit in reviving competitive clog dancing, his first great gathering being seen by 400 people. He was looking forward to even more important events in 1977.

To the five skills of the clog-dance champion—timing, beats, carriage, originality and execution—Johnson added that fire-in-the-belly which is the mark of genius. We who have benefited from Johnson's life send our sympathy to his family, but rejoice in what he did.

W.F.C.

JOHN DUNKERLEY

On Monday April 25 John Dunkerley died at the tragically early age of 33 years. His friends had known for some time that he was suffering from Hodgkin's Disease and that it was unlikely that he would ever make a recovery. We hoped against hope though for a miracle for even the thought of being deprived of that bright presence was painful. Alas it was not to be.

John was born in Doncaster but moved to the Midlands at a very early age. While still a teenager he joined the Ian Campbell Folk Group and remained with them for 16 years. Musically very versatile, he excelled on a number of instruments, banjo and piano accordion especially. While he enhanced traditional music he was still not above giving some toe-tapping rendition of Scott Joplin Rags and the like, on the piano.

His going has left a gap which will never be filled and the world of folk music is very much the poorer.

MARY HARDY

CHARLIE BATE

Charlie Bate died on March 15th, 1977, after a distressing illness borne with a fortitude and cheerfulness which was no surprise to those that knew him. He was fifty-nine. His had never been an easy life. An earlier illness had left its mark on his health, while the changing economy of Padstow and its coast and countryside made steady jobs difficult to come by. As a musician, however, he was in constant demand, which was little wonder because his accordion playing and singing produced instant rapport with his audience, even with those to whom such music was unfamiliar. To lovers of folk music he was a perfect example of the natural performer, equally at ease in the Royal Festival Hall and the Golden Lion in Padstow; and it is on May Day that we shall miss him most, leading the musicians of the old 'oss party and greeting friends from near and far with all the eloquence of his piercing blue eyes.

Charlie was a great countryman and he knew all the natural history of the Padstow countryside, but he was modest about this as he was with his musical talents. He was the kindest of men and I never heard him speak a hard word of anyone. March 19th was cold and windy, but in St. Issey, where he was buried, the congregation filled the Parish Church and stood ten deep at the back to pay their last respects to one of nature's gentlemen. Cornwall could have had no better ambassador. Our sympathy goes to his wife and son, and we all share in their loss.

"Where is St. George. Where is he O?
He is out in his long-boat all on the salt sea O.
Up flies the kite and down falls the lark O. . . ."

ROBERT ROBINS

Bookshelf

CORNISH SONG BOOK, PARTS 1 & 2. Ralph Dunston (Lodenek Press. Part 1: Card Cover £1.50. Board Cover £2.75. Part 2: Card Cover £1.20. Board Cover £2.25).

Rejoice, rejoice, all you lovers of Cornwall and Cornish song and music, because Donald Rawe of Lodenek Press has reprinted "The Cornish Song Book" by Ralph Dunston.

He has cut the original book into two parts, putting the Cornish language songs, the folk songs and tunes into part 1 and in part 2 he has put the Carols and Sacred Songs and Music. It is grand that this worthwhile Cornish collection has at long last been reprinted, and at such reasonable prices too. In these books you will find *Trelawney* in Cornish and English, the *Padstow May Song*, the *Hal an Tow* from Helston, *Morvah Fair*, *Falmouth Polka*, *One and All* and many more marvellous treasures. This is a smashing pair of books and I recommend them most highly.

TONY FOXWORTHY