

Instep 20

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**Editorial.**

First of all, a correction. It seems that the EFDSS are not supporting a video recording project of Suffolk step dancers, although it is hoped that one will take place under the auspices of the Instep Research Team instead. The project is still in the planning stage at present but I shall keep you informed as usual.

The long awaited second film of Pat Tracey has finally arrived and was premiered in Wallingford before an invited audience on the fifth of April. The film is available for hire via Barry Callaghan or the Reading group and video copies are also to be had. I also hear on the grapevine that it is planned to make available on video all those little clips of 8mm film that get shown at clog weekends around the countryside. The video will be compilation of as many pieces of film as are available. If anyone out there has access to any interesting items give me a ring.

Most of this issue is taken up with an examination of the well known, if brief, film clip of Norman Robinson dancing outside the Albert Hall in 1969. The hot news this month is that a second film of Norman dancing has turned up, thanks to the Furness Clog Group. This is an 8mm, silent, colour film dating from 1968 and shows rather more of Norman dancing than the 1969 clip. A full analysis will, I hope, appear in a later issue. For those of you who want to see the film, it will have its first airing at the next Newcastle Weekend in November, which is incidentally to be held in Sheffield.

Many thanks to those of you who supported my candidature for the National Executive of the EFDSS. I didn't quite make it, by about a dozen votes.

My apologies if this magazine appears to be concentrating on the Lakeland style at present. I happen to be rather interested in this area at the moment - I hope you are too!

Finally my apologies for the lateness of this edition, due in part to the lack of suitable printer for several weeks, but mostly to my inability to get it out on time. The next issue should be out in January.

NORMAN ROBINSON - FILM NO 1.

Chris Metherell

In early 1986 I was invited to take a workshop on Lakeland stepping by the Furness Clog Dance Group. As they had met at least one dancer taught by the late Norman Robinson I suggested that they might like to see the brief film clip of Norman dancing which was discovered some four years ago. Although I had seen the clip many times I had never sat down and watched it "frame by frame" as it were, so the week before the workshop took place I sat down in front of my video with a notepad. The results were surprising, to me at least. Here is what I found.

**Background.**

The film is part of a newsreel clip concerning the E.F.D.S.S Albert Hall Festival of 1969. A review of the 1969 Festival appears in English Dance and Song Vol 21 No 2 (1969) p75. Norman is not mentioned. The dates were 15th and 16th August 1969. The clip is in black and white and in addition to the Norman Robinson material contains brief snippets of the Bacup Nutters and The Bursa Sword Dancers from Turkey. The film is available as a video copy from Barry Callaghan, 107 Rustlings Rd, Sheffield.

The Robinson section is 23 seconds long and is filmed on the terrace outside the Albert Hall. Norman is accompanied by a musician who as yet remains unidentified. The speed at which he dances seems to be approximately 50 bars to the minute. Unfortunately the sound does not, for most of the clip, synchronise with the stepping and it is instructive to listen to the sound without viewing the picture and vice-versa. The music used is the White Cockade.

**The Film Shot by Shot.**

1. Caption "A Movietone Film Clip". Unidentified music over.

Cut to:

2. Caption "Folk Festival".

Cut to:

3. Shot of Albert Hall and Albert Memorial. Camera pans down to musician (identity unknown) playing a 120 bass piano accordion. Norman is dancing to the right of the musician. He is dressed in a white shirt, dark knee breeches with a sash around the waist and white socks. His feet can just be made out. His clogs are two coloured and are tied with ribbons. These clogs are now in the possession of Bruce Wilson of the Furness Morris Men. Inspection reveals them to be of red and blue leather. Voice over; "Performing for us outside the Albert Hall, clog dancer Norman Robinson. He was on the bill there during the recent folk festival." Norman is dancing Single Shuffles. It is just possible to make out two bars of the step.

A	1	<u>step</u>		A:
	2	<u>hop</u>		A:C†
B	3		↑	:XE*
	4		<u>spring</u>	C†:A
	5	↑	<u>hop</u>	XE*:
	6	<u>spring</u>		A:C†
	7	<u>hop</u>	↑	:XE*
	8		<u>spring</u>	C†:A
			<u>hop</u>	

Step is normally performed as A followed by B parts to fill out six bars.

Cut to:

4. Close up of Norman's face.

Cut to:

5. Half length shot of Norman performing the Kicking Step beginning at bar 2. Voice over; "Norman started dancing when he was six, carrying on a Robinson family tradition and preserving a style of dancing which has been familiar to generations of...". We get the whole step, with the exception of bar one, together with a shuffle off.

A	1	<u>step</u>		A:
	and		)	:C,C
	2		)	
	and	<u>hop</u>		A:
	3			G/H†:RB
	4		<u>step</u>	:XF†
	&		click heel(L) heel(L)	:XF*
	a		<u>hop</u>	:A
			<u>heel drop</u>	F*:
B	5	<u>step</u>		:XE*
	6		<u>spring</u>	A:
	7	<u>spring</u>		A:
	&	<u>heel drop</u>		:B/C
	a		<u>step=</u>	:B/C
	8		<u>heel drop=</u>	

Step is AB AB B B  
 | | | |  
 L R L R

In second half of the step, instead of using B/C for beats "a 8", Norman uses position A. The difference in positions between the first four bars and the last two bars in this respect is quite striking.

Norman ends this step with the following shuffle-off:

	1	<u>step</u>		A:
and	2		)	:A
	2		)	:A
and	3	<u>tap</u>		A:
and	3	<u>step</u>	)	A:
and	4		)	:C,C
	4		)	
and	5	<u>hop</u>		A:
	6	<u>hop</u>		:RD
	7		<u>step=</u>	A:
	8			A:

He then goes into Treble Shuffle, commencing with a preparatory shuffle with the left foot. We see only one and a half bars of this step.

	1	<u>step</u>		A:
and	2		)	:E,E
	2		)	
and	3	<u>step=</u>	)	:XEbt
	3		)	Abt:
	4		)	:C,B
and	4		)	

The step is normally performed as six times through off alternate feet and shuffle off, although of course the snippet seen on the film is too short to see the whole step.

Cut to:

6. Close up of feet. Norman dances bars 4 to 6 of Double Treble Shuffle. Voice over "...people around Westmorland".

A	1	<u>step</u>		A:
	and		)	:E,E
	2		)	
	and	<u>step</u>	)	:A
	3	<u>step</u>	)	A:
	and		)	:F,F
	4		)	
	and	<u>step</u>	)	:RXC
B	5	<u>step</u>	)	A:
	and		)	:E,E
	6		)	
	and	<u>step</u>	)	:A
	7	<u>hop</u>	)	A:
	8	<u>hop</u>	)	A:
	&		)	:E,E
	a		)	

Step is AB AB B B  
 | | | |  
 L R L R



Cut to:

7. Full length shot of last bar of shuffle off, as given in shot 5 above. Norman begins the next step with a preparatory shuffle with the left but the film cuts off after only a half bar of the step which I have not been able to identify.

#### Commentary.

References in this section are abbreviated as follows:

TSDL - Traditional Step Dancing in Lakeland. J.F. & T.M. Flett. London. 1979.

TRAD1 - T.M. Flett English Manuscripts. Written up notes. Copy in VWL.

#### 1) Single Shuffles.

This is basically as given in TSDL at p 29, Version 1. TSDL suggests however that D is used rather than the C which Norman uses on the film. See also TRAD1 p49. Only two bars of the step can however be seen on the film and it is thus impossible to say whether the beginning of the step accords with the description given in TSDL.

#### 2) The Kicking Step.

We cannot see bar one of this step. It is thus not possible to say whether Robinson used the "preparatory shuffle" to get into the step. A full discussion of this point appears in the note to treble shuffle below.

The film is useful to clarify and confirm one of the few errors which occur in TSDL. At p48/49 there is a description of the various versions of the Kicking Step, but the overall picture seems to have been a little confused. Examination of the notes in Trad 1 reveal several that several errors have crept into the versions given in TSDL. Most of these do not concern us here. On p49 it is suggested that the step should be performed without the heel beats in bars one and three. Trad 1 states (at p56) that the heel drops should be included and this is clearly borne out by the film clip.

The film also confirms that Robinson used Version 3 of the crunch - see TSDL p38 - although with a slight change of foot position. This lends a little more "openness" to the style.

#### 3) The Shuffle Off.

This is new and is not contained in either TSDL or Trad 1. It is a fairly simple variation of Version 1 of the shuffle off given in TSD1 at p27. Its use seems to be consistent in that shot 7 shows the last bar of the same shuffle off.

#### 4) Treble Shuffle.

This is given in TSD1 p31 as Version 1.

The film confirms that for this step at least Robinson used the preparatory shuffle to get into the step. Details of this movement do not occur in TSDL but are given in Trad 1 at p48. This consists, as can be seen from the notation given, of a shuffle, performed on the upbeat before the step. That is on beats 4 and. Trad 1 reveals that Robinson used this movement before the following steps:

Treble Shuffle (Version 1 TSDL p31)  
Double Treble Shuffle (Versions 1 and 2 TSDL p32)  
Long Sidestep (Version 1 TSDL p34)  
Kicking Step Two versions TSDL p48/9

Further details can be found in my article on Robinson's repertoire in Instep 11 and Ian Dunmur's excellent article in Instep 13.

There is a note in TSDL at p28, which seems to refer to Theodore Cannon's style of shuffle off, suggesting that he too used a preparatory shuffle.

The use of the slow duple time shuffle at beats 4 and seems to confirm the suggestion given in TSDL p26 that Norman did not dance the triple time hop/shuffle or flatter. This is supposed to have been so because his teacher, "Young Jos" Robinson had been wounded in the foot during WW1 and could not perform the movement.

#### 5) Double Treble Shuffle

There is nothing like a bit of contradictory evidence. In this step Robinson uses the flatter rather than the shuffle as outlined above. It is known that Robinson, by the time the film was shot, had been "assisting" Tom Flett in the process of finding and interviewing old dancers in North Lancashire and it is suggested that he had picked up the flatter in the course of these researches. Certainly the movement is commonly associated with his steps today.

The step as performed on the film is rather different from any of the versions given in TSDL at p32. It is essentially Version 2, substituting flatters for the slow shuffles, and with considerable modification of the foot positions as given in that book. The version danced on the film corresponds quite well to that frequently performed by modern clog dancers and may best be described as an amalgam of various other versions, once again perhaps derived by Robinson from his researches involving other dancers in the area.

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**THE STEPS OF EDDIE FLAHERTY.**

For those of you who do not have access to back numbers of English dance and Song, I thought that it might be worth reprinting the essentials of an article which appeared in ED&S Vol 30 (1968) p42-46.

The article is written by Eddie Flaherty of Astley, Lancs and contains much interesting background information. In basic terms Eddie was taught by Jack Grimes in the early 1930's, Grimes was at that time in his 60's and Eddie, who was born 12/8/22 must have been about 9 or 10. It is hoped in due course to revisit Eddie, if he is still alive in order to check the material contained in the article. This consists of four steps and two breaks or shuffle-offs. I have rendered these into Newcastle Notation, but the foot positions must be regarded as provisional at present. No details of the music used are as yet known. Each step was danced twice through once off the left foot and once off the right.

1) The Three Lancashire Prize Steps.

N.B. This is the name of the step given, not of three separate steps.

1		<u>step</u>				A:
a				)		:B,B
2				)		
a						:A
3		touch				B/C:
4		<u>step</u>				A:

Step is performed six times through off alternate feet followed by the break given below.

Break for Step 1.

1		<u>step</u>				A:
a				)		:B,B
2				)		
a						:A
3		<u>step</u>				A:
a				)		:B,B
4				)		
a						:A
5		touch				B/C:
6		<u>step</u>				A:
7						:A