

extremely popular in industrial Tyneside, but of the most sophisticated sort, and I am sure no country dances survive, if they ever existed.

Sets are usually of about seven or eight couples ; everyone strings down the room in the usual way, then the M.C. divides the lines into sets of about five couples, after which more people string on. I doubt if sets are ever of so few as four couples.

At the present time I am assured that the dances are learned at the village "hops" though one writer has described dancing masters in the past, in the extreme north of Northumberland, similar to those of Scotland. He also gives some dance programmes.*

Sword dancing, of the "crossed swords" type, has been described in Cumberland. Clog dancing was very popular until recently, but generally further south, and certainly on Tyneside and in the Durham Dales. See the article by R. H. C. Robins in *English Dance and Song*, Feb./March, 1953, and the note below.

*H. M. Neville, *A Corner in the North*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1909.

CLOG DANCING

By ROBERT ROBINS

In the December, 1956, number of the Magazine, J. F. and T. M. Flett ask a number of questions, some of which are difficult to answer, while others are matters of fact. Clog dancing is peculiar to those parts of England where clogs are common wear, notably the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire and Yorkshire, but it is no more than a specialized form of step dancing which has a much wider distribution throughout the country. Devon, for instance, has its own tradition, and representatives have been seen at one of the Albert Hall festivals. As performed to-day, the clog dance of north-east England is based on the Lancashire hornpipe in which the steps are comparatively simple in structure, danced off the toe and finished with the same "break." These basic steps are elaborated by the individual dancer according to his own invention, and no two dancers will therefore perform precisely the same steps. Competitions are judged by awarding points for carriage, time, beats, execution and originality. For the championship, ten steps are danced, each one starting on the left foot and repeated on the right and finishing with a "break." The performance is completed with the double shuffle. This is the step with which Jackie Toaduff ends his exhibition, but in competition the time must not be increased. Analysing this step, the second half is found to be the same as the Earsdon Rapper stepping, which was introduced into the Sword dance by George Osborn who began his career as clog dancer to the team. The gulf between traditional clog dancing and stage dancing is narrow. Both Johnson Ellwood and Jackie Toaduff's teachers are professionals who teach both, and among their pupils the girls greatly outnumber the boys.