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FAILSWORTH BOY DANCERS

Graham gives information about the Failsworth team run by Mick Coleman. Julian Pilling's dance, now done by a boys team, was from a fellow called Salt whose picture is in one of Graham's group photos. The dance given by Graham is as far as can be made out not like Salt's, why, no one knows. Mick was a dance maker & maybe did different things at different times. The dances collected by Graham & Pilling are quite interesting & important as showing the Failsworth component of the Royton dance.

The following is from Graham's book:-

Coleman used to dance to the old tunes (Cross Morris, Three Cans Morris & Nancy Dawson) but he found it necessary to modernise if the interest was to be maintained. He trained a troupe of boys in Lanc. clog dancing which was more difficult & varied than the Morris Dance. For these clog dances he used such tunes as "Men of Harlech", "Auld Lunge Syne" & "British Grenadiers". He would blow a whistle when a change was required and the boys changed from clog dance or Morris to Coleman's figures, as directed by the number called. Sticks held up & waved & jingled while doing polka step.

Graham implies that amongst the "old" figures used were;
Cross Morris = Cross Corners = "Run it" at Godley Hill.
3 Cans Morris = Back-to-Back at Godley Hill.
Nancy Dawson = Cross over & back, twice: as 1st. ½ of Cross Morris

Coleman's figures (which seems to mean those not used at Godley Hill or Middleton) were danced to "Rose Tree" & "British Grenadiers" in general, with the introductory figure to "Long Morris". Despite what Graham says there does not seem anything remarkable about them & they appear to make a satisfactory dance. Julian Pilling says that Mick Coleman used to try & catch his teams out by calling figures they weren't expecting. This means order arbitrary but by analogy with other dances figs. 1, 3 & 8 could be used as the recurring chorus throughout the dance. Graham talks throughout of sticks, though he does mention "handkerchiefs are equally suitable" and one suspects they actually used slings.

FIGURE ONE - "Forward & Back"

This is a forward & back step begun forward. Step up street (not towards partner) 4 paces forward & 4 paces back. Then repeat.

- Polka to end of the tune of "Long Morris". Then figure 8.

FIGURE TWO - "Polka & Cross"

Begin with "Rose Tree". Use stick movements of 2nd half of Fig. 8. Instead of stepping forward & back, face your partner & keep in polka step for 8 bars, then turn to right, facing forward for 4 bars, turn on the left leg - that is half round so as to face the backward direction, to the end (4 bars). Then "British Grenadiers" to which the dancers change places with partner, passing right shoulders & turning right & returning passing left & turning left. Repeat crossing & return.

FIGURE THREE - "Sticks & Turn"

Sticks are circled overhead during this figure. Take a step on the right foot, then one on the left foot, then cross the right

leg 3 times in front of the left foot. The figure is next taken the reverse way, so as to cross the left leg 3 times. Thus,

h/R.-.L.-./r.r.r.hl/L.-.R.-./l.l.l.hr//

in the repeat the dancer twists half round on each supporting foot, making a complete turn before he makes the 3 crosses of the forward leg. The above pattern holds - the difference being the turning instead of the stepping.

FIGURE FOUR - "Down the Middle"

Use "Men of Harlech" followed by "Auld Land Syne". Here & in the following figures the 12 (no reason why should not be only 8) dancers constitute one group. Stand in 2 columns facing partners. Nos. 1 & 2 advance 2 paces to partner & put hands across each others shoulders, then keeping hands there, they polka down the centre to the bottom of the columns & face partner. Each couple follows suit. Then Nos. 1 & 2 step back to the top, each going on the outside of his row. Other couples in the same way return to their places. (presumably in one continuous movement the others moving up to the top while cus. go down middle.) (This makes it as Insides-with-hands-on-shoulders followed by Outside at Royton)

FIGURE FIVE - "Hands Across"

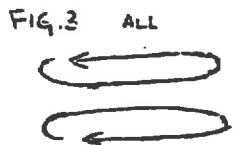
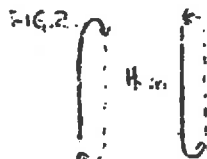
Use "Weel May the Keel Row". This is a circling movement in 3 groups, the middle 4 going in the reverse direction. No. 1 joins right hand with No. 3 - No. 2 with No. 4 crosswise. Dance round (right wheel). Middle 4 join left hands & dance left wheel. Bottom 4 like the top 4. Step in time with music & retire to places by end of tune. (This suggests that one steps in place for 4 bars before returning & after one has got home)

FIGURE SIX - "Round partner"

The right column crosses over (each to right of partner) to the left column, who remain stepping in their places. When across behind partner, pass him & return without turning round. The passing is done by taking 2 paces to the left. Spring on the right foot crossed behind the left, then the next sidewise movement is with the right foot crossing in front of the left. When the right row have got back to places facing partner, the left row crosses over to the right & retires in the same way.

FIGURE SEVEN - "Chain back"

The right row crosses over & makes a chain along the left row going spirally round to the bottom of their opposite row, then threading back round the row until each dancer reaches his place & faces his partner. The left row repeat. (This appears to mean that No. 2 leads his row round the odds till he reaches the bottom, then he leads a threading or hey back up the odds line - if No. 2 passes the end man of the odds left shoulders, & the men following him pass him by the right & left alternately, one will have the appearance of the Flamborough Hey & each man will fall out to his place at the same time.



From what has been given so far one might deduce that the Fallsworth contribution to Royton was the Polka figures - there is something like "Royton No.1 stepping" in figure 3. FILLING'S version lacks figs. 5 - 7 but this may just be forgetfulness or that Coleman only used some of his repertoire of figures in any one dance. The major differences lie in the use by Salt of clog steps - especially in the figure equivalent to fig. 3 & in the complete absence of Graham's figure 8.

FIGURE EIGHT - "Stick Dance"

This should be called for at the end of each of the more complicated figures (also figure No.1) the swinging arms giving a rest to the feet.

During the dancing of the figures, the leader calls out "No.8" ie. extra figure, which is the word of command for using the staves Handkerchiefs are equally suitable.

The arms are swung 8 times to the half bars of the music. Swing the right arm under the left armpit, then the left under the right. Repeat these right & left swings in the 2nd bar. On the 3rd bar bring both hands toward each other. Swing both arms outwards on the next beat. For the 4th. bar bring both hands to the shoulders & forward again. Repeat for 4 bars. The feet have rested so far. Now use feet & hands for 2nd part of tune. Start with the right hand swinging under other arm & the left foot forward. Then left hand swinging & the right foot forward. Keep up the polka step. Three times swing staves like clubs above the head. Once spread the arms outward, once forward & once over shoulders. Repeat this for remaining 4 bars of tune. (Fig. 2 uses these stick movements)