

SECTION 2: RAPPER SWORD

THE RAPPER SWORD

The traditional terms are; a dance is subdivided into "Knots" (figures). Each Knot ends with a lock, called a "Star" (nut) under which the men "Jig" (step, rose). Sharp said (Sword Dances Part 1 p.71): "So far as my own investigation have gone, the dance itself seems to have varied very little. The number of figures that were performed in different villages varied very much, but in every case I have noticed that the figures themselves had apparently been drawn from a common stock." Most leaders had a larger repertoire of knots than team normally used. It is known that knots have been sold. It was common to invent new knots - it is known that one team did this in a train to London. Even "revival" clubs have invented their own knots. It seems usual to arrange the knots into "dances" each with from 4 to 8 knots. "Running" and "Jigging" knots can be used for contrast. Every team incorporated some movement characteristic of the team in each knot. Thus -

AMBLE - Knot/optional single guard /star
BEADWELL - Knot/star, half turn clockwise & step with backs to centre
EARSDON - Single guard/knot/star
HIGH SPEN - Knot/curly/star
MURTON - Knot/star
NEVEBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA & WESTERHOPE -
NORTH WALBOTTLE - Single guard/knot/star
SHALWELL - One turn off/ knot/ star held up displayed.
WINLATON - Spin/knot/star.

There is a lot of information & ideas in the report of the Chipperfield meeting derived from Bill Cassie. There are many further points in Cassie's article on High Spen in Folk Music Journal 1965. (available as reprint)
The traditional teams can be divided into two types, those that aim for quiet, fluent movement at speed and the others whose figures could be compared with the "discharge of a rocket; a bang followed by a breathless period on the part of the audience, and then a second crash, bringing a great sense of relief, when the star was tied".

AMBLE

List of Knots:-

Single Run (or Jog Trot); Double Run - processional figures
Two & Three; Waves; Single Jump; All Round Jump; Three Jump;
Fast; Fast & Loose; Single Guard; Double Guard; Double Run & Somersault.

BEADWELL

Shaf says "used to jump over the swords & other figures which have died out".

MURTON

Source:- Schofield MSS & EDS News No.17, April 1928 by Orde.
It has been recollected more recently & may be published somewhen. (Cawte, ED&S March 1957)

8 Knots were collected.

1. SINGLE SCRINGER - like Needle at Winlaton or 2's & 3's at Earsdon with two circles going round and round but No.3 always in same ring as 1 & 2.
STAR -- tie as at Earsdon but No.5 stays still. Jig under the star. No.1 turns out to right to untie.
2. DOUBLE SCRINGER - like Single Scringe except that after one circuit Nos.2 & 4 cross over and join opposite circles.
3. TRIPLE SCRINGER - obviously a more complex figure in same family.
4. FRONT GIRDLE - a variant of Single Guard. No.1 on arriving at top carries on & makes a complete circuit of the set c.l. The rest on reaching their places, face centre & step. At end of his circuit No.1 makes a whole turn c.l. & takes his place & No.5 turns half left & moves clockwise round the set as No.1 did. Repeat by 4,3,2.
5. BACK GIRDLE - like Front Girdle but dancers face outwards. On loosening star all keep hands up, make a half turn clock & face outwards. No.1 steps forward, turns $\frac{1}{2}$ clock & moves clockwise round the set. On arriving opposite his place he turns $\frac{3}{4}$ clock & falls into it. At the same time No.2 starts off round set & does as No.1. 3,4,5 repeat in turn. Dancers in centre step. At end all turn half anticlockwise.
6. HORSES - 1&5 in front, 2&4 behind, 3 at back.
7. JUMPING KNOT - rather like No.1 ring in Newbiggin. 1&5 lower 5's sword & 4 jumps over, all step to end of half phrase (4 bars); 3&2 jump together, step to end of half phrase; 5 jumps, step; No.1 jumps sword between him & no.2. Each dancer after jumping takes up his position facing outwards. After No.1 has jumped all turn half anticlock. (3&2 jump sword between 1&5; 5 jumps sword between 5&1)
8. CHAIRMAN'S KNOT - on losing swords after a star, dancers open out into a line 4 5 1 2 3. and step. They then retie, open out & hold it up.

A Scringe between everything, but no two Scringes together. Star not displayed to end. Never a ring as at Winlaton. In stepping used heel as well as ball of foot. In Scringe did a sort of "sand-dance-step" scrapping foot forward on the beat.

WINLATON

- Step:-White Stars used a "heel-and-toe" step = /L rh rt rh/
weight on one foot for whole bar. The taps with heel & toe make a gentle rocking movement of the foot.
-Blue Stars & subsequent, used single shuffle.
- NEEDLE:-as Swalwell - 1&5 turn out not up through middle. Neither Sharp or Butterworth noted how figure started.
- FIDDLER - as knot of same name at Earsdon & High Spen.
- TUMBLER - Sharp called this FIDDLER - can include somersault like Stand in Guard at North Walbottle.
- ROLL - can also be danced as a Single Guard.
- DOUBLE JUMP - Straight line then 1&5 jump over, all step, jump back.
- BACK-TO-BACK - from open ring turn c.l. to face out & tie star overhead. 1&5 break away to form star in normal way.