

THE BEDLINGTON MINERS' DANCE

Thrales Rapper 2019



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(Cover Photo Taken from the gallery on bedlington.co.uk)

Bedlington

INTRO

Bedlington is a former pit village in Northumberland, about 10 miles to the North of Newcastle upon Tyne. Bedlington is famous for its traditional rapper sword team and for the Bedlington Terrier, the breed of dog named after the village.



Picture 1: A postcard from Bedlington. (1960s) Taken from the gallery on bedlington.co.uk

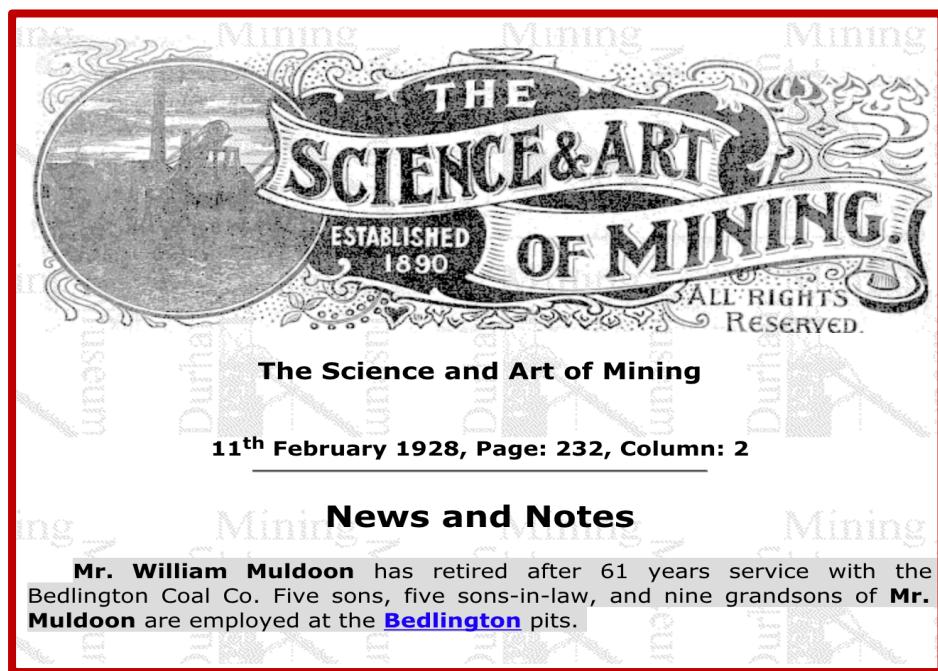
Rapper dancing took place in Bedlington from before 1881, as teams from the area competed in the ‘monster sword dancing competition’ in Blyth. It is suggested that the Bedlington team last performed at Christmas in 1926, but there are reports that they were still performing up to the mid 1930s. (1) (2)

The sword dance from Bedlington was collected from Peter and Luke Muldoon in 1961 by Brian Hayden and Andrew Burgess. Hayden’s notation which was published in ‘*English Dance and Song 1979*’ is the main source for the Thrales version of the dance. (2) However Thrales have also taken into account other notations in an attempt to compile a more complete dance but without losing authenticity. Bill Cassie had published a cut down version using Haydens and Burgess notes in ‘Rapper Knots From Amble and Bedlington’ in 1966.

(3) Also in 2012 Phil Heaton published Andrew Burgess account of the dance from the collection in 1961. (1) Thrales have also carried out their own independent research into the Muldoon family to create a more complete bigger picture.

Muldoons

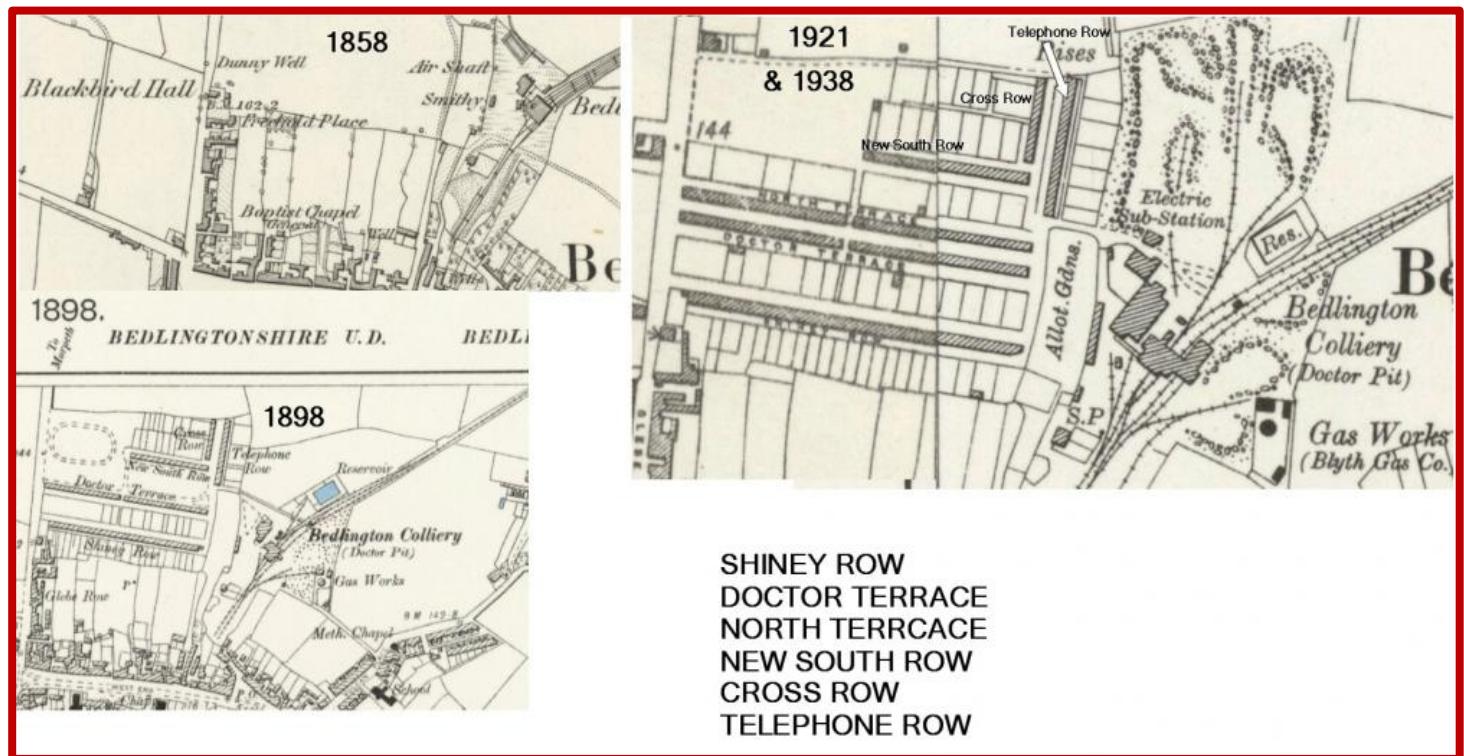
Much as the Flanagan family performed their dance in Amble the Bedlington dance was performed by the Muldoon family (and close friends and cousins). Father, William Muldoon was of Irish decent but was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland. He had 61 years of service with the Bedlington Coal Company and passed away age 69, the year he retired, 1928. As Hayden notes that the dance was last performed in 1926, it is reasonable to assume that he was the driving force behind the team. Bill Cassie also notes that ‘they had been taught by their Father’.



Picture 2: Evidence that William Muldoon worked at the Bedlington Coal Co., with children and grand-children all working for the company. <http://www.dmm.org.uk/news19/9280211.htm>

William Muldoon had 6 sons, one of whom died in infancy. Three of the remaining sons are mentioned as being involved with the dance; Peter, Luke, and James (Jimmy). Presumably Thomas and William also had some involvement.

Census details have the whole family living at New South Row (1901) and then 21 Shiney Row (1911). Both roads (now demolished) were directly adjacent to Bedlington's Doctor Pit.



Picture 3: New South Row, an upper set of terrace houses, and Shiney Row, the bottom row of terrace houses in the right hand photo, both streets where the Muldoons lived. Shiney Row can also be seen in the 1898 map, bottom left.



Picture 4: Shiney Row, where the Muldoons lived in 1911. Photo taken early 1960's. From bedlington.co.uk

KIT

The notation published by Hayden states that the team wore white shirts, with a bow tie, hoggers dyed green, with long red ribbons hanging from the knee over off-white woolen stockings, and clogs with irons. (2) It was important to the Muldoons that all team members wore matching kit, so the audience could not determine the patterns of each figure. (3)

The Bedlington team referred to both of the characters in the dance as Betty. Describing one 'male Betty' and one 'female Betty' (both were men of course men). The male 'Betty' wore a top hat and posh black coat, while the 'female Betty' wore a skirt, a green shall (matching the green hoggers worn by dancers) and a hat with a veil. (2)

For the Thrales version of the Bedlington White shirts have been teamed with red bow ties, no colour was stated in the notation by Hayden, but red fits into the colour scheme worn by Thrales. The hoggers and white socks have been replaced with the standard trousers and red socks that are worn by Thrales, fortunately the trousers already incorporate red ribbon down the sides! Clogs have been replaced with standard rapper shoes.

MUSIC

The Bedlington team danced to a variety of accordion, fiddle, pipes or piano. (2)

The tunes played for the Thrales Bedlington Dance are “Cock of the North” and “Black-thorn Stick”. Both mentioned in the notation by Hayden.

“Atholl Highlanders” has also been included into the set as it works well with Cock of the North, a tune pairing dating back to at least the 1950s.

Cassie’s notation only states a single tune, “The Washerwoman”, but does state that the team danced to Jigs. (3)

DANCE

The Bedlington dance has a number of unique figures and an unusual way of making the lock which is not used in any other traditional dance.

The dance was normally performed as a processional, up and down the main street of Bedlington, performing a few figures outside each of the pubs. The dance was also sometimes performed as a set performance (inside a pub or workingman’s club) with a set starting formation.

When processional, the dance allowed the Number One dancer to call figures in any order, allowing the dance to be shortened or lengthened and take up more or less room as needed. Between each of the figures the lock was held up by number one in their left hand as a chorus with the dancers stepping beneath it. Every knot was then performed from the circle position (open ring) or front position (face up) after the lock had been pulled down.

The notation written by Brian Hayden in 1979 states that the Bedlington originally had 23 figures, but when collected the dancers could only remember 7 so only these were recorded. (2) Phil Heatons book, ‘Rapper – A Miners’ Sword Dance of the North East of England’ reports that Burgess was told there were as many as 28 figures.

THE LOCK

The swords were painted, or marked with ribbons, allowing the dancers to distinguish each sword when pulling apart the lock. (2) (3)

The lock is made in a different method to most, with the dancers turning clockwise on the spot and sliding their right hand to the left over their left hand, with their left hand going under their right, arms cross as the lock is made rather than get further apart. The right hand goes under the left of the neighbour (on your left) and the left over the right of the neighbour (on the right).

The breaking of this lock is also done in a unique way with the arms crossed the opposite way (right over left) and the left hand lacing over their neighbours sword and then under their own (palms up).

STEPPING

The notation written by Hayden has a very descriptive section on the stepping performed by the Bedlington team, while both the Cassie and Burgess notation simply states that a “lazy shuffle” was used. (1) (2) (3)

Thrales use a more standard stepping style to keep the dance exciting and smart and more in keeping with Thrales style.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The start of the Bedlington dance as a set performance began with swords loose, forming a ring. The dancers faced clockwise with swords vertical in the middle. All right hands were put together at face level and all left hands were placed on the left shoulder of the dancer in front. Swords then went onto the left shoulder and knot was made, in the same manner as other figures. (2)

To create an entrance (rather than just bumbling on) Thrales perform the opening of the dance as follows. Walk on to form a clockwise facing circle with swords at sides. Then after a musical intro, on beat 1 Number 1 puts his sword (and right hand) into the centre at above head height (to make more of a show of the swords), On beat 2 Number 2’s sword joins the bundle, followed by Number 3 on the 3rd beat, 4 and 5 follow suit to create the notated starting formation. On beat 8 all dancers left hands are put on the left shoulder of

the dancer in front of them then all step for a phrase in this position. The dance then proceeds as notated, with the dancers walking clockwise, swords coming down to shoulder level and the first ‘knot’ being tied.

In Cecil Sharps notation of the North Walbottle Sword Dance he states that the dance was ‘introduced there as recently as 1906 by a dancer of the name Raine, who taught the Walbottle men’. (Confusingly the team Sharp collected here and calls the North Walbottle were actually Westerhope! See Les Williamson - *The Westerhope Sword Dance 1973*). He goes on to explain that Raine taught them the dance which was ‘danced at his native village, Bedlington’. Sharp then proclaims that ‘The dance now to be described is therefore, strictly speaking, the Bedlington dance.’

Potentially some of the missing figures from the nearly 30 figures reported to be danced by the team from Bedlington are be found in the North Walbottle repertoire. Indeed a number of the figures do match across the two dances (eg twos and threes/Curly, figure of eight). It is reasonable to assume that some of the other 28 figures that Luke and Peter talked of would have similarities to the sharp notated figures of North Walbottle. Bearing this in mind, and in the spirit of the Bedlington dancers insistence of dancers inventing ‘new knots’ - Thrales have incorporated and adapted elements of the North Walbottle dance. Specifically an adaption of the Number Three Ring figure (with a backwards lock) and the idea of the two Bettys joining in the dance for the last few figures.

Other teams performing at a similar time and within close proximity of North Walbottle include Westerhope and Thockley. Westerhope is known to include a sixth dancer, and a photo of Throckley (1910) shows a 7 sword lock, Picture 5. We believe that as North Walbottle, one of the earlier teams in that area where the dance is known, included the characters in the dance and it is highly likely teams forming later, such as Westerhope, would have included additional dancers or characters as it was expected.

As a result of the above reasoning Thrales have adapted the Bedlington ‘Twos and Threes’ figure to include the ‘male Betty’. Thrales have also adapted the Figure of 8 to include both of the ‘Bettys’ in a similar way to the North Walbottle notation. Thus creating a 6 sword and then a 7 sword lock.



Picture 5: 3 local teams showing 6 and 7 sword locks. Westerhope TL, Whorlton BL, and Throckley BR. Whorlton has 5 dancers, with a 7 sword lock, suggesting the characters must have been included in the dance.

The North Walbottle notation of Figure 8 with 6 dancers, however we believe the numbers for crossing have been mis-remembers / notated incorrectly. The notation states that the crossing order is 1, 5, 2, 3, Tommy, 4, which does not make sense. A more realistic notation would be 1, 5, 2, 4, Tommy, 3 crossing in that order – which would also align with the curly notated in North Walbottle with the Tommy positions behind number 2.

BEDLINGTON – THRALES VARIATION

Bedlington is performed as follows:

- Walk on and starting formation (1) (2) (3)
- Lock (2) (3)
- No.1 Nut - Lock (2) (3)
- No.2 Nut - Lock (2) (3)

- The Somersault - Lock (1) (2)
- No.3 Nut - Lock (1) (2) (3)
- Number 3 ring (Back Lock) (4)
- Bedstead - Lock (1) (2) (3)
- Round and Round / Twos and Threes / Curly (with 1 Betty)- Lock (1) (2) (4)
- Crossing Over / Figure Eight (with 2 Bettys) (1) (2) (4)
- Lock and Processional walk off (2)

REFERENCES

1. **Heaton, Phil.** *Rapper The Miners' Sowrd Dance of North-East England*. London : EFDSS, 2012.
2. *The Bedlington Sword Dance*. **Hayden, Brian.** 1, s.l. : English Sword Dance and Song Society, 1979, Vol. 41, pp. 5-7.
3. *Rapper Knots from Amble and Bedlington*. **Cassie, Bill.** 2, 1966, Folk Music Journal, Vol. 1, pp. 92-101.
4. **Sharp, Cecil J.** North Walbottle Sword Dance. *The Sword Dances of Northern England Part 3*. s.l. : Novello and Company Ltd, 1913.

Appendix 1:

The Bedlington Sword Dance

Hayden, Brian (1979) *English Dance and Song* 41/1 p5-7

Introductory comments

Collected in May and June 1961 at the Red Lion and the Blue Bell Bedlington, Northumberland, from Peter and Luke Muldouan, by Brian Hayden assisted by Bill Burgess and Students of the Agricultural Department of King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The dance was last performed Christmas 1926. It was usually performed at Christmas but during the Depression it was danced at other times as well. The dance was taught to the team by a man who came over from the White Elephant (an area to the north of Bedlington). There had been another team in the village prior to the Great War but they performed a different dance. All the dancers were from the Muldouan family with occasional help from their close friends. Their mother occasionally danced an Irish jig. The team had come across other teams from Amble, Ashington, Bedlington Station, and Newbiggin. They also knew of a team from Earsdon. If they met another team whilst out dancing an informal dancing competition was held; the winner was decided by the acclamation of the crowd and the prize, was the total "bag" that both teams had collected; but usually ended with a quarrel and fighting.

The 5 dancers wore white shirts, with a bow tie, knee length pit hoggers dyed green, ribbons (mainly red and fairly long) hanging down from the knee; off white woollen stockings, and clogs with irons on them. (They normally wore clogs, outdoors and down the pit at that time)

There were two Bettys; the Man Betty wore a top hat and a black coat (very posh), the Female Betty wore a skirt, a green shawl, and a hat with a veil over a ginger moustache. Once when their usual Betty was not available they had a Betty from Ashington. They could not understand why he kept disappearing to the "Netties". So one of them went and secretly watched him, to find that he was creaming off most of the take into a long bag hanging down inside his skirt. So they took the money off him, and made him walk home without a penny.

The rappers were made from old pit saw blades and manufactured (unofficially) in the pit workshops. They were about 24in long and had swivel handles at one end. The other end was wrapped over with canvas and bound with string. Luke said that if we removed the fixed wooden handles of our rappers (Standard EFDSS pattern 26in. long) and wrapped the ends as described they would be about right. The rappers were marked by each dancer at both the ends he held so that he could see which handles to grab after the nut had been raised and lowered.

At various times they danced to the accordion, fiddle, pipes, and piano, but felt that the pipes and fiddle were too quiet, and preferred the accordion. (Note: The instrument referred to was with two rows of mother-of-pearl buttons on the melody side 8 buttons on the other side usually now called a melodeon to distinguish it from' the *piano-accordion*.)

If they went inside a pub the accordion player usually sat down at the piano and played for them. The tunes played included: 'Jack's the Lad', 'The Washerwife', 'Blackthorn Stick', 'Rollicking Irishman', 'Cock of the North' and 'Irish Whiskey'. There was a song with the dance sung by the Bettys but this was only occasionally used, i.e. only when the dance was started from a stationary position usually indoors. Nobody could remember the words of the tune but Peter said it had something about them being Pitmen from Bedlington. I played them the tune of the Old Earsdon Song:-They didn't recognise it. I played them the tune to the High Spen Song and they instantly recognised the tune and said that theirs was similar to that. They assured me that I could buy the words to the 'Sword Dancers Song' from the Music Stall in Newcastle Market. (I tried this but found that I couldn't)

The village of Bedlington has a very wide main street. Looking down; the road in the middle is flanked on the left hand side by a green slope up to a wide pavement and frequent pubs, or clubs in between the houses, the right hand side is similar but with less green and fewer pubs. At the top end of the street on a road running at right angles to the main street is the Red Lion, a large pub but with only a small pavement in front of it. The dance was normally done in a processional form down and up the main street of Bedlington; doing a few Nuts on the pavement outside each pub, and then dancing on to the next. They usually ended up at the top end of the village at the Red Lion where they danced *inside* the pub. They also danced at Ashington, Blyth and Morpeth, and in aid of the "Sally Army Soup Kitchen.

The Steps

The dance was always done to jigs in 6/8 time, of the type with 6 notes in most bars.

1st Step.

Stand with the feet a natural distance apart and the toes pointing directly forward. Starting with the weight of the body on the right foot, tap the ball of the left foot onto the ground then step onto the ball of the left foot transferring the weight the body onto it -pause-tap the ball of the right foot on the ground then step on to the ball of the right foot, transferring the weight of the body on to it-pause-. Repeat another 7 times to the end of the phrase.

2nd Step.

The basis of this step is the same as the first step but filling up the pauses by stamping the heel of the foot that has the weight on it down on to the ground.

Usually 2 bars of the first step are done then 5½ bars of the second step, stamping down the right foot on the ½ bar.

tl=tap left. tr=tap right.
L=Stamp onto left foot R=stamp onto right foot.
Lh=bring down left heel. Rh=bring down right heel.

The Front Position

The dancers stand in a small circle all facing the same direction (usually towards the crowd of onlookers). No. 1 and No. 5 stand at the front, with their nearest shoulders about 6in. apart. No. 2 and No.4 stand fairly close (about 12in space) behind them, a similar distance apart from each other. No. 3 stands by himself equidistant behind Nos. 2 and 4. No.1's rapper rests curved over his right shoulder. No 2's rapper rests curved over his right shoulder. No.3 holds his hands together at chest level, rapper rests curved over No. 4's left shoulder. No. 4's rapper rests curved over No.5's left shoulder. No. 5 holds his rapper at waist level between himself and No.1.

The Circle Position

The dancers stand in a small circle facing the centre, with their shoulders about 12in apart. The dancers hold, their rappers with their elbows fully bent, and the handles vertical in front of their shoulders so that they bend in a full semicircle between them.

The Nut

At the end of each figure the dancers come into or should be already standing in the "Nut Position". This is a close centre facing circle each dancer with his left wrist above his right wrist the rapper in his right hand (swivel handle) above the rapper in his left hand (wrapped end). Each dancer moves his elbows together, pulls the rapper in his right hand down a little bit, and slips the swivel handle of his rapper under the, wrapped handle of the man on his left, at the same moment moves his left hand up a little and slips the wrapped handle over the swivel handle of the man on his right's rapper. The dancers push the rappers in as far as they will go to tighten the Nut. No. 1: moves his left hand and firmly holds the nut at the point where No. 5's and No. 2's rappers cross, and lets go of the rapper in his right hand. The other dancers let go of the rappers in both hands. No. 1 raises the Nut in a vertical plane high above his left shoulder. The dancers facing towards the centre of the circle step for one phrase of music. No. 1 lowers the Nut to a horizontal plane at about chin level, bringing his right arm over his left arm as he does so. Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 place their right arms above their left arms, move their left hands to the right above a swivel handle and grab their original wrapped handles with their left hand (palm upwards). At the same time all 5 move their right hand across to the left under a wrapped handle to grab the swivel handle of their own rapper with their right hands. As soon as the dancers begin to grab their rappers No. 1 releases his hold on the Nut, turns his left hand over and grabs his original wrapped handle with it. All the dancers bring their hands together and past, then step back into the circle position. Usually they then go straight into the next figure but may if No. 1 calls it, "Step" in this, position for a further phrase.

Note 1: To practice this part of the dance without first performing a figure; the dancers should start in the circle position then all turn clockwise on the spot - this brings them into the "Nut Position".

Note 2: The dancers at Bedlington each marked their swivel handles and wrapped ends of their neighbours' rappers with nicks burn marks, coloured wool and knots etc. to make sure that they grabbed the correct handles after the Nut was lowered.

The Dance

The dance is said to have originally had 23 figures which it took The Muldouans a whole year to learn; however we were only able to learn 7 of these. Luke originally danced No.5 then changed to No.1, Peter originally danced No.4 then changed to No. 5.

Normally the dance' was done in a processional form. The dancers started in an alley or side street with the swivel handles of their rappers in their right hands. They each took the wrapped handle of their neighbour's rapper in their left hand and formed up into the "Front Position". The musician started playing and after one or two phrases of jig music they ran out into the main street and down to the first "stop". There they performed 3 or 4 figures of the dance; then formed up into the Front Position" again and ran on to the second "stop" to dance a few more figures. Then to the next "stop" and so on round the village, or town. There is no particular order to the figures but usually "No. 1 Nut" was performed first at each stop. If the dancers wanted to create a special impression at a specific location where a large crowd or an important person was expected; they did not run on in the "front position" as usual; but finished the dance at the previous "stop" with the first half of "The Somersault", to the part where No.3 has just jumped over No.5's rapper and the dancers have all formed a line facing forward. They then ran on to the special location in this position. On arrival No.3 performed the somersault and the figure continued. After they had completed the performance at the final stop the dancers either formed

up into the "Front Position and ran off down a side street or alley and finished dancing or they finished the dance in the same way as they ended the set performance.

When they danced a set performance (this was usually inside a pub or a workingmen's club); the dancers started in a small circle facing clockwise with No. 2 behind No. 1 etc. The dancers held only the swivel handle of their own rapper in their right hand. They put all their right hands close together in the centre of the circle, and held the rappers vertically in a small bundle (the wrapped ends uppermost), with their right hands face level. They each placed their left hand on the left shoulder of the person in front of them. One of the Bettys then sang the 'Sword Dancers Song' at the end of which the musician started playing and the dancers "Stepped" for a phrase. They then walked round clockwise for one circuit, lowered the rappers and each grabbed the wrapped end of the rapper of the 'person in front of them with their left hand. After completing another circuit the dancers came into the 'circle position' then all tuned one complete circle on the spot and performed "The Nut". Usually a dozen or so figures were performed, never all 23 at once! At the last figure when the Nut was held up for the last time they stepped for two phrases; the second more vigorously than the first; then threw the nut down on to the ground in the centre of the circle and the music stopped. This completed the performance.

The Figures

No.1 Nut

Starting from the Circle Position Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 take a step towards the centre of the circle and "step" almost shoulder to shoulder. Meanwhile No. 1 takes 1/6 of a turn right and moves anticlockwise round the outside of the circle (Luke ran round R. L. R. Peter went round doing the stepping as he went tl. L. tr. R. tl. L. tr. R. See 1st Step) holding his and No. 5's rapper high above the other dancers. After one complete circuit No. 2 slips out with 1/6 of a turn to the right, and No. 1 slips into his place. No. 2 then runs anticlockwise round the outside of the circle a back into No. 3's place. Nos. 3, 4 and 5 each run round the circle in turn. As No. 5 completes his circuit Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 take a step back. The dancers are now standing in the "Nut Position" and perform the "Nut" as instructed.

Twos and Threes

Starting from the front position, No. 1 and No. 5 raise No. 5's rapper and go underneath it. No. 1 turns to his left and followed by No. 2 they run round in small anticlockwise circles. No. 1's rapper is held down curved over his right shoulder throughout. Meanwhile No. 5 turns to his right and followed by No. 4 they run round in small clockwise circles. No. 4's rapper is held down curved over No. 5's left shoulder throughout. No. 3 steps forward under No. 5's rapper and may go whichever way he likes. (i.e. He may follow either No. 2 or No. 4.) When Nos. 1 and 5 are on the outside of their circuits No. 5's rapper is raised high and flat over the dancers sweeping down to low and curved as they go through the inside of their circuits (note No. 1 always goes through the centre a little ahead of No. 5).

Similarly the appropriate one of the rappers No. 3 is holding is raised high over the dancers when he is on the outside of the circuit, the other rapper resting curved over the shoulder of the person he is following. After several circuits (3-5) No. 1 calls "Nut" and as soon as they momentarily come into the "Front Position" the dancers all turn clockwise on the spot to bring themselves into the "Nut Position" and proceed to tie the Nut

The Somersault

From the front position Nos. 1 and 5 lower No. 5's rapper to ground level and No.3 moves forward and jumps over it. At the same time No. 2 moves diagonally forward to stand on No. 1's left, and No. 4 moves diagonally forward to stand on No. 5's right. The dancers are now in a line facing forward as shown.

Step for a phrase. Towards the end of the phrase of music No. 3 (still lightly holding the ends of his and No. 2's rapper) places his left hand on No. 1's right shoulder and his right hand on No 5's left shoulder. At the end of the phrase No.3 somersaults backwards, helped as much as possible by Nos. 1 and 5 with No.5's rapper in the small of his back. On landing No. 3 moves back into his place turning clockwise as he does so. Meanwhile Nos. 2 and 4 move back into their places turning clockwise as they do so, and Nos. 1 and 5 turn clockwise on the spot. The dancers are now in the "Nut Position" and they perform the Nut.

No. 2 Nut

Starting from the Circle Position Nos. 3, 4 and 5 take a step the centre of the circle and "step" almost shoulder to shoulder Meanwhile No.1 takes $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn right and moves anticlockwise round the outside of the circle. As soon as he is past No.2, No.2 also takes $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn right and follows No.1. When No.1 gets back to his place No.2 continues past him to-his own place. Then No.5 turns $\frac{3}{4}$ of a turn clockwise round No. 4 who turns clockwise on the spot. No. 5 followed by No. 4 then run clockwise round the other dancers, who "step" shoulder to shoulder in the centre of the circle. When No.5 comes back into his place he turns clockwise on the spot and into the main group No. 4 passes behind him and turns clockwise on the spot into No.3's place, No.3 having made $\frac{1}{6}$ of a turn to the right moves anticlockwise round the outside of the circle of dancers "stepping" in the centre, back to his place. The dancers are now standing in the "Nut Position" and perform the "Nut" as instructed.

The Bedstead

Starting from the front position, Nos. 1 and 5 lower No. 5's rapper to ground level No. 3 moves forward and jumps over it. No. 2 and No. 4 then change places (No. 4 crosses in front of No. 2 under the rappers No. 2 is holding). Nos. 4 and 2 close up, close behind Nos. 1 and 5, the rappers are then held in the position shown behind No. 3's back.

1's handles are next to 3's left hip, 5's handles are next to 3's right hip, 4's handles are next to 3's left shoulder, and 2's handles are next to 3's right shoulder. "Step" for a phrase in this position. Towards the end of the phrase No. 4 takes a hold of the wrapped end of No. 2's rapper in his left hand, and No.2 takes hold of No.3's swivel handle in his right hand. No. 3 is then slowly lowered back horizontally onto the "Bedstead". The two rappers behind 3's shoulders are lowered slightly as this is done. No. 3 releases his grip on his rappers and holds 2 and 4's nearest arms. The dancers may either flip No. 3 over immediately or if there is plenty of room they can run round in a circle with No. 3 lying flat on his back on the "Bedstead". To flip him over: No.1 and No.5 bring the rappers that they are holding up smartly and he somersaults over backwards and (with any luck) lands on his feet. No. 3 now retrieves his rappers from Nos. 2 and 4, and all the rappers are held high above the centre of the circle. No. 3 brings his hands together and goes to the centre of the circle with a $\frac{1}{2}$ turn clockwise as he does so. No. 2 rolls round clockwise back to his place, and No.4 goes in between them, turning clockwise as he arrives back in his place. As soon as 2 and 4 have passed, No.3 does another $\frac{1}{2}$ turn clockwise back into his place. Nos. 1 and 5 turn clockwise on the spot and the dancers should now be in the "Nut Position", and perform the "Nut" as before.

Figure of Eight

Starting from the "Front Position", No. 1 crosses in front of No. 5 and goes round to his right to start a figure of eight path. No. 5 crosses behind No.1 and in front of No. 2 and goes round to his left on a figure of eight path opposite No. 1. No. 2 follows No. 1 after No.5 has gone across in front of him. No.4 follows No. 5 after No.2 has gone across in front of him. No. 3 comes through the centre of the set behind No.4 and goes round whichever way he likes (see note below).

After completing the first small circuit No. 1 comes through the centre of the set and turns to his left and goes round the other part of the figure of eight. He is followed through the centre of the set by No.5 who turns right, No.2 who turns left No.4 who turns right, and No.3 who goes whichever way he likes (see note below). Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 are now going round the same paths that they took in "Twos and Threes". The whole of the above sequence is then repeated another once or twice and when No.1 calls "Nut" the dancers who have come into a squashed "Front Position" all turn clockwise on the spot into the "Nut Position" and perform the "Nut" as described.

Note: Both Peter and Luke said that No.3 could go whichever way he liked as in "Twos and Threes" but we got hopelessly tied up when we tried this. The figure does work if No. 3 always follows No.2. Nevertheless dancers are welcome to find another way in the spirit of the tradition.

The Third Nut

Starting from the "Circle Position" Nos. 3 and 5 step towards each other into the centre-of the circle and hold their hands close together with the handles of the rappers they are holding vertical, and "Step" in this position. No. 1 followed by No. 2 take a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn left and walk round Nos. 5 and 3 in a clockwise circle $\frac{1}{2}$ of the way round them. No. 1's rapper is held in high curve between himself and No. 2. Meanwhile No. 4 takes $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn anticlockwise and runs round all of the dancers in an anticlockwise circle back to his place, in doing so he passes Nos. 1 and 2 twice, clashing his rappers against-theirs "to make the sparks fly". Nos. 1 and 2 then take $\frac{1}{2}$ a turn clockwise, and No.2 followed by No.1 walk back, on their tracks to their places. Whilst No.4 takes $\frac{1}{2}$ a turn clockwise and runs round all the dancers back to his place clashing the rappers as he goes. When he gets back he steps into the centre of the circle and faces No.2 who also steps into the centre of the circle. They "Step" and hold their hands as Nos. 5 and 3 did before. No. 1 continues in the direction he is walking taking No. 5 behind him, and No.3 turns out clockwise and runs round, all the dancers in a clockwise circle back to his place. After they have passed with clashing twice Nos. 1 and 5 take $\frac{1}{2}$ a turn inwards and walk back on their tracks to their places, and No. 3 turns out anticlockwise and runs round all the dancers back to his place clashing the rappers as he does so.

As they come to their home positions all the dancers turn clockwise on the spot into the "Nut Position", and perform the "Nut" as before.

Appendix 2:

THE BEDLINGTON SWORD DANCE

There are two published notations of the Bedlington sword dance. The first was by Bill Cassie in 1966¹, and a more detailed notation by Brian Hayden in 1979². Both notations were collected in 1961 from dancers who had last performed in 1926. Pending permission to reproduce Brian Hayden's notation, only Bill Cassie's is reproduced here.

The search for the Bedlington knots was started in February 1961 by Brian Hayden meeting Peter Muldoon. The suggestion came from the famous clog dancer Johnson Ellwood who had heard about the sword team when teaching clog dancing in Bedlington. The collection of knots was slow and required about ten visits to Bedlington, which is 11 miles north of Newcastle and about 7 miles from Earsdon. Once again, the tradition there had been upheld by one family – the Muldoons, although there was some evidence that there had been at least one other team in Bedlington. It was 30 years since the dance had been performed, and Peter Muldoon and his brother Luke had difficulty in remembering the knots. There was also a third brother Jimmy who was concerned with the family tradition. They had been taught to dance by their father at home and used handkerchiefs if swords were not available.

Like the Amble dancers they used the Fiddler position or a Straight Line formation as the processional, from which they broke straight out into the first knot at the next pitch. In the processional, either one man held up the Star, or they all held the linked swords – it was optional. They were very insistent that knots could and should be invented by the team. They performed the knots called by No. 1 and in any order so that each dance looked different. Pete stressed the importance of all the dancers wearing the same clothes so that the audience could not elucidate the patterns of the knots.

The step used was a "lazy shuffle" and the step for processing was the usual half-running sword dance step. A melodeon was much preferred for the music as it could be heard better than a fiddle. Jigs were used, and "The Washerwoman" was mentioned again. The calling on song was as for Winlaton. The swords were painted or marked with ribbon to help the dancer to seize the right ones when pulling them out of the Star.

THE KNOTS

The Bedlington men had few names for the knots, but said that they had, at one time, known nearly 30. This is in accordance with the tradition of most rapper teams who always seem to have a large repertoire. Several of the knots shown were exactly as in other traditions – the Needle of Winlaton, and the Figure Eight of North Walbottle were two to which names seem to have been attached. They were called "Round-and-Round" and "Crossing-Over". One or two unusual features, however, make this collection of knots interesting. The addition of these to a performance will give variety to a rapper dance.

THE OPENING

This was similar to that of Amble, apparently without a clash – something which should not be omitted. The swords are held up vertically in the centre of the set for a phrase and then dropped on to the left shoulders and the Star is made. The Star was usually shown, and always by No. 1, and then lowered to the men standing in the Ring.

FIRST KNOT

This knot, and all others collected, started from the Star position, but with all the swords opened into a ring. This necessitates the grasping of the rappers when lowered by No. 1, and the pulling of them out into an open ring. To do this, the hands must be crossed in the opposite sense to that used in tying the Star. Each sword is held bent between two dancers and held higher than the head.

No. 5 turns out right and runs anti-clockwise round to his place, followed by 4, 3, 2 and 1 (numbered clockwise when in position). This is a type of Single Guard.

SECOND KNOT

This is similar to the First Knot but two dancers run round together.

THIRD KNOT

This is a very odd knot but probably effective if the swords "spark" as they are supposed to do. The dancers step in the open ring with the swords bent above the level of their heads and break out, individually or in pairs, and run round in any direction until the swords are tangled. They then return in the reverse order to their places! There is no attempt to tie a Star. Peter Muldoon was cross-examined on this knot, but it seems quite definitely to be a separate knot and as they used to do it. It is probably a bowdlerised version of a complex knot such as Bulldog.

FOURTH KNOT

This one is reminiscent of some of the continental sword dances, for No. 3 lies back on a bed of swords and is then thrown into the air, turning a back somersault and landing on his feet. The Newcastle team found this surprisingly easy to do!

The numbers given above are merely for the sake of reference. The men had few names and numbers for the knots which they were able to remember, but the idea of starting from an open ring in the Star order (but without the swords being interlocked), and the interest of the last two knots, above, makes this a useful addition to a rapper repertoire.

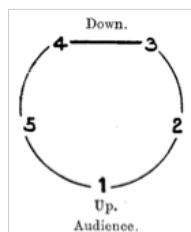
References

1. Bill Cassie, *Rapper Knots from Amble and Bedlington*. Folk Music Journal 1966, vol. 1, issue 2, pp. 92-101.
2. Brian Hayden, *The Bedlington Sword Dance*. English Dance and Song, 1979 vol. 41, issue 1, pp. 5-7.

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Appendix 3:

NUMBER-THREE-RING



Nos. 3 and 4 hold up the sword between them (No. 3's), face each other, and make an arch. Nos. 5, 1 and 2, in order, then pass under the arch, turn to their right, and return to their places. All now face outward, Nos. 5, 1 and 2 making a quarter-turn counter-clockwise, No. 3 a quarter-turn clockwise, and No. 4 rather more than a whole-turn counter-clockwise. All, standing close together, back-to-back, now lock the swords together above their heads, by separating their hands and bending points under hilts.

The Rose is then performed in the following way. The leader holds up the Nut in this right hand, arm erect, and all, standing back-to-back, "step" to the end of the strain.

The leader now lowers the Nut to its original horizontal position, all grasp their swords as before, and the Nut is untied in the following way: Nos. 2, 1 and 5 turn clockwise, move round outside No. 3, turn to their left and pass *up* under No. 3's sword and return to places, turning to their left. Directly No. 5 has passed through the arch, No. 4 makes a rather more than whole-turn, clockwise, No. 3 makes a half-turn, counter-clockwise, and all face centre.

CURLY

No. 1, raising both hands, turns out to his left and, followed by Nos. 2 and 3, moves round in a small circle counter-clockwise; while simultaneously, No. 5, raising both hands, turns out to his right and, followed by No. 4, moves round in a small circle clockwise.

This movement is, of course, the same as Figure 2 of the Beadnell dance⁵ (see Part II, p. 41), and similar to Three-and-Two of the Swalwell dance² (see Part I, p. 77), except that No. 3, instead of changing from one circle to the other in alternate circuits, remains throughout in No. 1's circle.

The leader should call "Nut" when he and No. 5 have just completed a circuit and are facing the audience, and, if possible, when near the end of one or other of the strains of the music.

CURLY (for 6)

As before (see above), Tommy and No. 2 following No. 1, Nos. 4 and 3 following No. 5

CURLY (for 7)

As before, No. 2, Tommy and No. 3 following No. 1; No. 4 and Bessy following No. 5.

FIGURE OF EIGHT

This is danced in very much the same way as Right-and-Left in the Swalwell dance² (see Part I, p. 79), the dancers, however, following one another in a different order.

The movement begins in the same way as Curly; Nos. 2 and 3 following No 1 in the right hand circle, No. 4 following No. 5 in the left hand circle. The two sets of dancers change their respective circles at the end of each circuit, crossing from one circle to the other in the following order: Nos. 1, 5, 2, 4, and 3.

The leader must, of course, call "Nut" when he has just completed a circuit in his own circle, i.e. the right-hand one.

FIGURE-OF-EIGHT (for 6)

As before, the dancers in the first circuit following one another as in the preceding Figure, and then crossing in this order: 1, 5, 2, 3, Tommy, 4.