**Traditional Village Dance, Askrigg 2 March 2012**

**Anecdotes to introduce the Second Half**

Harry Cockerill came originally from Langstrothdale and taught himself to play piano accordion whilst living at the isolated farm of High Greenfield. He used to say: *“I played by ear; I don’t know a note o’ music.”* Before the war, he played for dances all over the dales, travelling to the dances on his motor bike with his accordion tied on the back with cow-bands. Dances at Oughtershaw were held in a small hall where space was restricted even further by a full-size billiard table. Boards were placed on top of the billiard table to provide a cramped makeshift stage for Harry and his fellow musicians. Dances went on late into the night. Harry recalled: *“The dancers nivver knocked off before two, and many a time it got to three. I used to fodder cows at t’outbarns on my way home. Sometimes, when I got home, I didn’t know if t’moon was going to bed or t’sun was getting up!”* He got round wartime restrictions on petrol usage by taking a sheep or tup with him in his car to legitimise the journey as ‘agricultural activity’. Dance bookings would arrive asking him to collect a tup at such-and-such a village hall on a particular Saturday evening! In 1963, he moved to Askrigg, where he lived for the rest of his life, continuing to play for dances until the early 1980s.

Dances could be lively affairs. One villager asked a friend: *“Was the dance a good do?” “Aye,”* was the reply. *“We had t’piano ovver three times!”*

At Muker, a dance was held in an upstairs room near the Farmers Arms, a room that was fragrantly scented by the smell of the horses that had been ridden to the dance and were temporarily stabled below.

In Littondale, dancing took place in a first-floor room in an outbuilding. Piled very carefully in one corner were cow cake, crushers, bagged potatoes and sundries. Tom Bolland would be seen jauntily perched on a milking stool, playing his beloved melodeon. Tom wore a neckerchief, neatly tied, and had a clay pipe in his mouth. Sometimes the pipe was the right side up, and more often it was otherwise.

After the supper interval at one dance, an old chap turned to Bill Mitchell, of *Dalesman* fame, and his wife and said: *“Tha’ wants to git up – and shak thi supper down!”* Good advice, so let’s dance!