

Indian Club Swinging – Newsletter 2, April 2012

Introduction

Two years since the last newsletter is a bit tardy to say the least but here we are with a special event – a visit to Cumbria. I hope you like this short article.

Mike and Elaine, April 2012.

Adventures in Cumbria – The Search for Fancy Club Swinging

Early in 2012 Paul Wolkowski, an expert club swinger in Perth, Australia, discovered a YouTube site called “Lakelandviewer”. This site showed an elderly retired gentleman doing some fancy club swinging and using some scimitar type knives/swords in the same way as he used the Indian clubs. No one on the Indian club swinging network knew who he was and the nearest authentic fancy club swinging we had seen was Susan Poulos in St Paul, USA (YouTube site: yannisuep) where she had used both clubs and flags. I could not go to the USA to meet Susan and train with her so my knowledge of fancy club swinging was progressing slowly from her excellent videos on YouTube and the DVD set we had made to go with the second edition of the handbook.

Paul sent an email to Lakelandviewer via YouTube and we all waited. Nothing happened for weeks. We were all frustrated. Fancy club swinging was the element we were missing from our curriculum of club swinging. Plus, the fact that Lakelandviewer was obviously in the Lake District National Park in the UK which is relatively close to Sheffield was even more frustrating. Various suggestions were made as to how we might contact Lakelandviewer but none were really viable and frustration was turning to disappointment. Then came the first contact with Lakelandviewer – Mr Harry Allick. Paul put me in contact with Harry and after a few emails and phone calls we arranged to meet.

Journey to Cumbria

My wife, Elaine, and I travelled by car across country (Mortimer Road; A629, A65 and A595 – we don’t like the motorways and wanted to see more of the Pennine country) to Whitehaven on the Friday 13th April. We stopped at Haworth where the Bronte museum is and I dropped off a business card to see if I could help them defeat the proposed wind farm that would despoil the landscape that inspired the Bronte sisters to write their books. We met Harry and Pat Allick at the hotel (Howgate Premier Inn – very nice). We spent a long weekend swinging clubs and visiting places in Cumbria. Muncaster Castle is lovely.

Harry Allick - Lakelandviewer

Friday night was spent having a really excellent meal with Harry and Pat and chatting about club swinging. Harry had done his homework looking at my YouTube videos streamed from the web site (www.indianclubswinging.co.uk) and we got on really well. We arranged to meet the following day and do some videoing of us both swinging clubs and scimitars. Saturday morning was spent on the concrete (not good if you drop a club on it – which we did!) World War II gun emplacement at Nethertown videoing Harry swinging clubs and scimitars. We then went off to Seascale (near the nuclear power research plant) and did some more filming on the sea front on grass. Harry did a series of intricate fancy club swinging moves and I did my usual swinging and tried to incorporate a few new moves.



Top: Harry and Pat Allick. Bottom: (L to R) Harry, Mike, Elaine and Pat.

Monday and Wast Water

Sunday was a rest day and Elaine and I went down to visit the very pretty Muncaster Castle house, gardens, owl sanctuary and grounds. We also went to Ravenglass on the coast near Muncaster Castle.

Monday I did a video interview with Harry at his home and obtained some background to his swinging. Harry's father ran a gym way back in the 1930s and had a lot of light and heavier clubs. After the war (WWII) Harry's father taught him fancy Indian club swinging. Harry's daughters did some club swinging with Harry and his father and they were giving demonstrations at local festivals in their home town of Water near Rawtenstall in Lancashire. Harry's joke is "I bet you I can fry an egg in Water." After the age of 14 Harry and Pat's daughters no longer wanted to continue with their club swinging. Pat and Harry retired and moved to Nethertown near St Bees in Cumbria and later their grand daughters did a bit of club swinging when they came to stay.

We did some more videoing on the lawn outside Harry's house but the background noise was a bit intrusive. Later on the Sunday we went to Wast Water where the wind was more of a problem for videoing but the background was amazing. Wast Water is an enormous lake which was formed by a glacier some 20,000 years ago and the lake is over 200 feet deep in places. The herd of sheep were quite a sight. With no help at all from a sheep dog or a farmer they marched down the road as if they were going to an appointment.

I tried a number of moves and found that the wrist turn behind the back rather more difficult than I thought and so we did some extra practice on this. The large and small figure of eight was tried too but again not my forte and I was never taught this move. In fact, Harry said his father would not have approved of these moves because they were not traditional Indian club swinging. The large figure of eight is probably a derivative of some sort of Philippino stick art like Kali or Escrima. Harry was good at helping and teaching and we did some sequences together with smooth transitions which form part of his routine.

Club swinging outside was a bit chilly and Harry is not young. In fact it seems that Harry was fairly new to the idea of swinging Indian clubs outside as he seems a bit shy about it all. Although at Seascale we were approached by a small child who showed some interest in the clubs and it turned out she (Charlotte – not a little boy as we first thought) was interested in gymnastics. In the Lake District the weather can change quite quickly and despite the sunshine we were quite cold at the end of the session at Wast Water. We went for a very good meal at the local pub at the top of the Lake and Harry told us more about his life interests (sand yachting, kite making and flying kites). In some moves with the clubs, Harry said, there are similarities to manipulating the kites which was pause for thought.

Grips

There are some important points on gripping the clubs. The Sceptre and the small clubs for fancy club swinging use the basic ring grip (forefinger and thumb) with the little finger under the button and the middle and ring fingers around the shaft or handle of the club. On some swings, such as around the back at low level, the forefinger is positioned straight down the handle of the club and used to push the club around the wrist circle. The little fingers and ring fingers are released to allow the club to swing on the more intricate moves. The main issue is that the ball and socket

style of grip is also used on some moves (e.g. the daisy chain) and there seems to be a lot of changes in the grips throughout the swinging routine. Most of the work is done by the wrist but there is quite a bit of pressure on the shoulder too in holding the elbows high on the repeated wrist twists at shoulder level. The main emphasis of Harry's style is to keep the club swinging going and have smooth transitions between each movement. Some of the transitions are a bit complicated to learn at first. I used some juggling clubs to try out these moves as the size one and size two clubs were too heavy. The juggling clubs have the perfect button (spherical) but the body of the club is too fat and it is too long really. The ideal club is the V1 and the sceptre or tear drop clubs which we have on the catalogue on the web site. However, the sceptres are quite long too and some techniques are a bit tricky to do or at least I thought so. The scimitars and tomahawks used by Harry's daughters were just to make it look a bit more interesting but the same principles applied in swinging these implements.

Conclusion

Harry and Pat were the perfect hosts. We were most welcome and we made ourselves at home. It was wonderful. We have some great footage of Harry swinging clubs. We had a great time in Cumbria and want to go back there again. We made good friends with Harry and Pat and it was a pity to have to leave them and return to Sheffield. We have a lot to practice and get right and with luck we can add these moves to our existing curriculum and share these delightful moves with the Indian club swinging network.



Above: (L to R) Elaine and Harry and Pat Allick at West Water.