



T
H
E

T H I S T L E

Issued by the Thistle Club

President: Dr. Norman MacKenzie, C.M.G., M.M. & Bar, Q.C., LL.D.

No. 38.

December, 1968.

EDITORIAL

Last month we managed to increase the size of The Thistle quite substantially. This month, postage rates have been increased, so we shall have to cut back a little to compensate: a pity, but we think that that is better than putting up the price of The Thistle by the amount of increased postage.

THE THISTLE

Editorial address: 3515 Fraser Street, Vancouver 10, B.C.

Editors: Douglas and Sybil Duncan, Andrew Shawyer, Murray Shoolbraid, Hugh and Nina Thurston.

Subscription: \$1.25 per year (four issues). Six or more copies to the same address: 95¢ each per year.

Back numbers: 2-18 25¢; 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 35¢. The rest out-of-print, but Xerox copies available on request at 15¢ per exposure.

Other publications: Schiehallion 10¢, Inverness reel 10¢, Inverness gathering 5¢, Argyll broadswords 20¢, Sixteen Scottish Country Dances (1945-1967) by Hugh Thurston: \$1.00.

NOTICE

The first three pamphlets of dances from Mrs. MacNab's collection have now been published by her niece and executor, Mrs. Clark Sutorius, 5020 Hawley Boulevard, San Diego, 52116, U.S.A. The dances are Perth Assembly, McKenzie of Seaforth, and the Jacobite Sword-dance. These are the official, authorized descriptions, and each pamphlet includes a brief outline of Mrs. MacNab's life and work.

OUR DANCES NO. 51: THE MERRY LADS OF AYR.

This dance first appeared in print in The Ballroom (1827), and must have been fairly popular through the nineteenth century, for it appeared also in David Anderson and Mozart Allan's manuals, as well as the Dundalk manuscript. It is one of the more stable dances : every version is the same, and indeed the same as the version in the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society's book 1. With its reel tune, its thirty-two-bar length, and its final "set to and turn corners and reel of three at the sides" it is a very typical nineteenth-century country-dance.

Readers may notice that in this series we have now covered all the dances in R.S.C.D.S. book 1. These dances (unlike some in the later books) are all traditional - that is to say, they did not die out, to be reconstructed from written descriptions, but were danced right up to the date at which they were collected. Although they have all been described in old books or manuscripts, none of them has had to rely on these written descriptions for survival. Taken as a whole, these twelve dances form a good sample of the "classical" Scottish repertoire : none very difficult, none very long (none, in fact, over 32 bars), none very short (none under 24 bars), all progressive; even the complete absence of strathspeys does not make the sample untypical, as strathspeys were far less common in the nineteenth century than they are to-day.

OUR DANCES NO. 52: JANET'S DELIGHT

Formation: Four couples in a square (as for the eightsome reel)

Music: Scottish waltzes (recorded on Waverley EP 117 by Jim Nicholson).

Steps: pas-de-valse for travelling; natural turn for waltzing.

Version 1

Figure 1

- 1- 4 All advance and retire
- 5- 8 Back-to-back with partner
- 9-12 As 1-4.
- 13-16 Back to back with corner. ("Corner" is a term from square-dancing. Your corner is the dancer on the opposite side of you from your partner).

Figure 2

- 1- 2 The women dance one-quarter of a right-hands-across
- 3- 4 Each woman turns, with the left hand, the next man to the left
- 5-16 Repeat these movements three times more. (Thus the men turned by the first women are, if numbered clockwise, the second, third, fourth and first respectively).

Figure 3

- 1- 2 Take promenade-hold with partner and dance one-quarter of the way round the set anti-clockwise (that is, in L.O.D.).
- 3- 4 Each woman turns across in front of her partner without letting go hands.

- 5-16 Repeat these movements three more times, but the second and fourth times the men turn across.
- Figure 4
- 1- 2 Join hands in a circle and dance one waltz-balance step forward and one back, swinging the joined hands forward and back.
- 3- 4 Each woman releases her left hand, turns across in front of the man on her right, to his right side, under their joined hands, and releases her right hand and takes his right in her left and the next man's left hand in her right.
- 5-16 Repeat these movements three more times.
- Figure 5
- 1-16 Couples, in ballroom hold, waltz twice round the set (anticlockwise).

Version 2

Figure 1

As version 1, but turn corner with left hands instead of back-to-back.

Figure 2

Repeat figure 1.

Figure 3-6

As figures 2-5 of version 1.

Version 3

Figures 1-2

As version 1.

Figure 3

As figure 4 of version 1, but the woman on the right turns across to the left.

Figure 4

As figure 4 of version 1.

Figure 5

As figure 3 of version 1, but the men turn first, the women second.

Figure 6

As figure 5 of version 1.

Note: Normally The Thistle takes great pains to present new dances accurately, checking with the original composers. This time we have, perhaps somewhat naughtily, not done so. These three versions were sent to us, over the years, from Australia, England, and the U.S.A. by readers who did not know the composer but liked the dance. The composer is in fact Mrs. Winchester of New Zealand. Do you want to know which, if any, of the above versions is correct? If so, you can get a copy of the dance from the R.S.C.D.S. New Zealand Branch bookshop c/o Mary Ronnie, 420 Moray Place, Dunedin. (Their notice mentions no prices : possibly they will do what we do, namely send a bill with the goods).

It should be possible to draw some conclusions about accuracy of transmission from the three versions.

REVIEW

Wierdlaw Scottish Country Dance Sheet no. 1. "The key to the door", by Iain Boyd, 4 Glasgow Street, Aramoho, Wanganui, New Zealand.

This is an example of the five-couple format that is fast becoming popular, probably because the ten dancers allow the composer to ring the changes on traditional figures at a level of complexity one step higher than hitherto. A five-couple dance can (and this one does) contain two simultaneous reels of four, for instance, or two three-hands-across at the same time as a four-hands-across. This particular dance is well put together and should appeal to dancers with initiative.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The 1968 issue of the New Zealand Scottish Country Dancer consists of nearly fifty well-printed pages, with photographs and cartoons, and will interest all dancers, whether or not they have visited New Zealand. A particularly interesting article by Florence Lesslie is entitled "Technique by stealth" : from it we will quote one sentence "It would be wonderful if everyone came to classes to learn dancing, not just dances". The magazine can be obtained from the editor, Harry Bruce, 420 Moray Place, Dunedin, New Zealand, price 4/-.

News from Scotland

A new tune "Salute to the Scottish infantry" has been composed by Lieutenant J.A. MacLellan, head of the Army School of Piping, and was played for the first time at the inauguration of the new Scottish Division of Infantry. Meanwhile the process of amalgamation of old regiments is being resisted : in particular, General Sir Gordon MacMillan is leading a movement to obtain one million signatures to a petition to preserve the independence of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. A song "Save the Argylls" (to the tune of "Johnny Cope") has been composed by a sympathiser.

According to a report in The Oban Times it was a twelve-year-old boy from Vancouver, Terry Lee, who "caught the imagination of the crowd" at the Argyllshire gathering this summer.

LOCAL NEWS

This time last year we wrote "The annual Calgary workshop was even more enjoyable than before, impossible though that may seem. This year we cannot do better than repeat the phrase. The main theme was basic figures and basic virtues and a review of dances introduced over the past few years, but a dozen or so girls learned the Scottish Lilt. The formal dance on Saturday evening and the party that followed went with their usual swing.

An interesting letter about records and record criticism, by Mr. George Clarke, appears in the current Reel. The data he would like from record critics are (a) the names of the dances played and, for each, the number of bars and the number of times through, (b) the tempo in bars per minute, (c) a statement on balance and orchestration, and (d) a comment on the quality of recording.

His own comments on (d) are as follows. "The first two Stan Hamilton LPs, beautifully orchestrated and played, were distorted in recording. The Peter White LP strangely loses its top response in The new Howford brig. As examples of excellence in all departments I give Stan Hamilton's LPs nos. 3 and 4, Andrew Rankine's "Angus McLeod", Jim McLeod's "Ladies' fancy" and Jim Johnstone's recent records, in particular "Bonny Kate".

-0-0-0-0-0-

??? YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED ???

Q. In "Cadgers in the Canongate", is the turn on bars 37-40 with right hands, left hands, or both hands.

A. Both hands. The original directions give no details, the instructions for bars 33-40 being simply "cross over one couple and turn". This was a standard figure in country-dancing at this date (1748) and a contemporary text-book (Nicholas Dukes: A concise and easy method of learning the figuring part of country dances by way of characters, 1752) describes the figure in detail and gives a two-handed turn.

Q. In D.G. MacLennan's "Highland and traditional Scottish dances" there is mention of a "Twosome or twasome strathspey" having been danced in the 18th century. I have seen a "twasome" danced over here in the U.S.. Is this an example of dance which has persisted among Scots abroad after becoming extinct in its original home, and is the dance also known in Canada?

A. No. The "twasome" you have seen will certainly be the twasome from Isobel Cramb's book "Four step dances". This dance is really a solo, entitled Scotch measure, and comes from a manuscript dated 1841. Mrs. Cramb herself arranged it as a duet and gave it the subtitle (not the title) "a twa-some", as she explained in the preface to her book. She quoted in the preface the very remark of D.G. MacLennan's that you noticed.

The remark in full is

"in the late 18th century a pleasing type of dance-tune was known as Scottish measure, and sometimes danced as a Twosome or Twasome strathspey, and in this form the Highland Schottische was born".

The suggestion that the Scottish measure was danced as a Twasome strathspey is pure speculation and indeed, certainly false, as Scottish measure rhythm is a very definite and well-known rhythm, and so is strathspey rhythm, and they are quite different. The suggestion that the Highland schottische originated as the twasome strathspey is also speculation, and the evidence seems to be against this, too, as the Twasome strathspey was a competition dance at highland games in the early nineteenth century, and it does not seem likely that the Highland schottische would have been so used.

COMPARISON CORNER

New-England contra-dances, part IV

In this part we conclude our brief survey by giving descriptions of five dances. In previous parts we have described the various steps and figures, and we have showed how the dance is organized (very like a Scottish longwise country-dance) : therefore (just as for Scottish country dances) a description of a dance normally consists of a simple sequence of figures. Readers can imagine, if they like, that each description is followed by the instruction "repeat, having passed a couple".

Lady Walpole's reel

(Two-couple dance : every first couple crossed over).

2
ST
②
→ (W. long, all way)
← (S. side, way)
②
PROM
EP

- 1- 8 The first man balances to the second woman and swings her, while the other two do the same.
- 9-16 The first couple dances down the middle and up again (the man on the left of his partner going down; on the right coming up) and casts off one place.
- 17-24 The two couples dance a ladies' chain,
- 25-28 a half-promenade, and
- 29-32 a half-right-and-left.

Hull's Victory

(Two-couple dance).

1 2-1 ②
TR B 1 TR
P
TR
R
→
←
RL

- 1- 2 The first couple turn with right hands just far enough for the first man to be able to join left hands with the second woman, and the first woman with the second man, thus forming a line of four.
- 3- 4 All balance
- 5- 8 The first couple release right hands, the two pairs so formed turn twice round with left hands.
- 9-10 Everyone releases left hands. The first couple turn each other half way round with right hands and they join left hands with the other couple to form a line once more (this time the two men have left hands joined, so do the two women)
- 11-12 All balance
- 13-16 The first couple release right hands and the two men turn twice with left hands and so do the two women
- 17-24 The first couple dance down the middle and up and cast off one place
- 25-32 The two couples dance a right-and-left.

The Green Mountain Volunteers

(Two-couple dance : every first couple crossed over).

2
ST
①
②
→
①
②
ST
②
①
→
←
RL

- 1- 8 The first man balances to and swings the second woman, while the first woman chasses down the middle and up with the second man.
- 9-16 The first woman balances to and swings the second man, while the first man chasses down the middle and up with the second woman.
- 17-24 The first couple dances down the middle and up, and cast off one place.
- 25-32 The two couples dance a right-and-left.

Money Musk

(Three-couple dance).

- 1- 8 The first couple turn once-and-a-half round with right hands and cast off one place (on opposite sides)
- 9-12 The dancers join hands to form two lines of three, facing across, and advance-and-retire.
- 13-16 The first couple turns three-quarters round with right hands
- 17-20 The dancers join hands to form two lines of three, facing up-and-down and advance-and-retire
- 21-24 The first couple turn three-quarters round with right hands
- 25-32 The first two couples dance a right-and-left.

TR 1/2
2-1-3
↑ ↓ ↑ ↓
2-1-3
← →
← →
2-1-3

[Note: it is instructive to compare this with the original Mony-musk of 1785 - see Thistle no. 7. The passage of nearly 200 years and transplanted into New England culture has left the dance quite recognisable.]

Criss-cross contra

(Two-couple dance : the starting-formation is couple-facing-couple across the set - like the first two couples in The Glasgow Highlanders after the second chord).

- 1- 4 Each man turns the woman on his left once round with the left hand (if he can : the man at the top of what would be the men's line in an ordinary contra has no woman on his left, so he waits for these four bars).
- 5- 8 Everybody swings his partner
- 9-16 Each couple, with the couple opposite dances a ladies' chain (if they can : if there are an odd number of couples the last one will have no couple opposite).
- 17-20 Each couple dances a half-right-and-left with the couple diagonally opposite to their left (if they can). Thus the couple at the top of the "women's" line dances with the couple second in the "men's" line, and so on.
- 21-24 Each couple dances a half-right-and-left with the couple directly opposite (if they can)
- 25-32 Each couple dances a left-hand-star and then a right-hand-star with the couple directly opposite.

2 2 2 2
① ① ①
ALL TR
2 3
AC
ALL
AC
LA
RA

-0-0-0-0-0-

VERSE

The teacher shouted at the set,
Shouted with all his might
He did his very best to make
The dancers do it right
And this was very hard because
It was Beginners' night.

The Chairman and the Treasurer
Were watching close at hand
They wept like anything to see
That none could understand
"If they would only concentrate"
They said, "It would be grand."

"If seven Hughs with seven tongues
Taught them for half a year
Do you suppose", the chairman said
"That they would get it clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Treasurer,
And shed a bitter tear.

"O novice, come and dance with me"
The chairman did beseech
"For this is such a pleasant dance
And well within your reach.
(When turning corners pray be sure
To give two hands to each)"

The novice rose and bounded up
All eager for the treat.
Her eye was bright, her head was high,
Her shoes were small and neat;
And this was rather odd, because
She had enormous feet.

"The time has come" the teacher said
"To talk of many things,
Of hops and skips and pas de basque
And allemandes and flings,
And how to phrase a six-bar reel
Without recourse to wings".

"Please wait" the novices exclaimed
"Before we have to start
For none of us have understood
A word about our part".
"We'll walk it through" the teacher said.
They thanked him from the heart.

When they had danced, the novice said
"I hope you found it nice"
The Treasurer said nothing but
"Your phrasing's not precise.
I wish you were not quite so dumb :
I've had to push you twice".

"Now novices" the teacher said
"We'll have a nice strathspey,
And which of you will partner me?"
But not a word said they.
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd fainted clean away.

[Reprinted from the C.R.I.E.R.,
by permission. The Hugh
referred to is Foss, not
Thurston].

-- ADVERTISEMENTS --

J.T. McHARDY CO. LTD., 538 Seymour St., Vancouver 2. Tele: 681-6616
Pipe-band supplies, highland dress, dancing shoes, Scottish
books and records, RSCDS books, dances by Hugh Foss and Hugh
Thurston. Efficient mail-order service.

CANADIAN F.D.S.

Jimmy Blair's excellent series of Scottish dance records
(LPs \$4.98, EPs \$2.45, discount on large orders), as well as
sound-equipment etc. is available from Canadian F.D.S.,
Audio-Visual Aids, 605 King Street W., Toronto 2B.

NORTHERN JUNKET

The square dance magazine that is different. \$2.50 for 12 issues,
from Ralph Page, 117 Washington Street, Keene, N.H. U.S.A. 03431.
Each issue brings you interesting articles on all phases of danc-
ing: squares, contras, folkdance, folk-song, folk-lore. Tradi-
tional recipes too, for hungry dancers.

THE ORMSKIRK SCOTTISH DANCES, By Roy Clowes

Book I

Campbeltown Loch
Lobster in the Pot
Hey Johnny Cope
The Dundee Whaler
Awa' tae the fair

Book II

New Scotland Reel
Isle of Arran strathspey
Roy's reel
Lassies and Laddies
Kishmull's Castle

From - 24 Alscot Close, Maghull, Lancashire, England.
Price - 2/6 each plus postage, or 40¢ including postage.

CANTABRIGIA BOOK SHOP, 16 Park Ave., Cambridge, Mass. U.S.A. 02138
(Folklore, Anthropology, Social History)

We stock books of interest to Scottish dancers, including
Flett, J.F. & T.M. Traditional dancing in Scotland \$8.95
McConachie, Jack. The Grampian collection of Scottish
country dances \$1.00
Scottish country dances of the eighteenth
century \$1.50

Prices are in U.S. funds. Please add 15¢ per volume for postage.
A catalogue is available.

DO YOU WANT JEWELLERY?

Custom made Gold or silver Scottish flavour
Old heirlooms cleaned Moderate charges

Kirsty Shoolbraid, 8415 Duff Street, Vancouver B.C. Tele: 321-0633
