

ABERCOON STAVE

[R.L.D.'s Stave Team in Hampshire]

GENERAL POINTS

Once to Yourself

A long stave is convenient to lean on, as discovered by many a pikeman. During once to yourself the stave can either be stood at the side of the dancer, a sort of "stand at ease" pose, or be held in the normal carrying position. When dancing it is necessary to hold the stave against the shoulder unless the weight of polehead and the tapering of the stave do it automatically. This is best done not by a firm grip in the palm of the hand as would be used to stand the stave up on its own but a pen holder grip. The stave would run between thumb and first finger but be held by the other finger tips. The stave should be lifted sufficiently off the ground that the bottom avoids grass tussocks, but not too high, nor so sloped that the top interferes with other dancers movements.

The Stepping

Travelling - "hop-one-and-two"

A "skip-change-step", step forward on the first main beat, bring the other up to it or just behind, step forward again on the next main beat, and raise the body on a slight hop. Dorset country dancing does not emphasise the hop. An energetic team makes something of the swing of the feet on the first three steps.

Stationary - "closed-sidestep"

Starting in first position with the feet turned out, bring a foot in front of the other still turned out in the same direction, step on the rear foot, step on the forward foot, then hop on the forward foot while scuffing (sliding) it backwards to the rear position. No body turn during the stepping, but can sway forward and back.

Endings

There are a number of possibilities that are better than just stopping.

- a. cross staves with opposite - held up high
- b. cross staves with opposite - butt on the ground and leaned forward
- c. stand to attention or at ease with stave by one's side
- d. cross staves in 4's - tips of emblems almost touching in centre.

Passings

It is quite easy to get dangling ribbons entangled with those of other dancers. To avoid this keep the staves away by passing left shoulders when it is immaterial to the dance whether it is right or left.

Shows

To make a show of stave dances needs a good spiel and some variety in what is done both in the formations and in the number of dancers in a set. Some can be done with 12, others 8 or 6 and some of them with only 4. Further variety is found in having mixed or single sex sets. Finally tunes of different rhythms made for interest.

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BOOTLACES

Set : 6 dancers in usual column formation
 Source : Spithead Fleet
 Title : it reminded the team of tying the laces of hiking boots.
 Music : "Three Around Three" played (AAB)⁶ lively.
 Start : All face up. All start on the same foot.
 Structure : each pair leads a complete sequence, so three times through. As the progression takes an end to the middle place it is lead from alternate ends.

SEQUENCE

- A1 Inactives face up throughout and step on the spot unless directed otherwise. The first pair cast off on their own side into the second place, the second pair moving up into the first's place. The first pair cross over to the opposite side in the middle, passing left shoulders, and turn to face up, in the second place but on the "wrong" side. The first pair cast off again on the current side into the third place, the third pair moving up into the second's place. The first pair cross over to the opposite side, passing left shoulders, and turn to face up, in the third place and on the "right" side. All then turn in to face down.
 All the casts, crossings and move ups are done as quickly as possible to leave the maximum time for the set to face up etc in the column formation, before the next cast etc. The final cross by the first pair could be a left hand turn.
- A2 Inactives face down throughout and step on spot unless directed otherwise. Starting from all facing down, the first pair repeat the movement of A1 to their original place but ending with all facing in.
- E1 Inactives face across throughout and step on the spot unless directed otherwise. This travelling movement has to be done quickly to complete within the music. The first pair go down the middle to the bottom, while the others dance on the spot, cast around the third pair, go between the third and second dancers on their own side back into the centre of the set, lead up through the second pair and cast back into the second place while the second pair move sideways up into the first's place. The first pair pass right shoulders in the centre and end facing the first corners along the diagonal - no.1 to no.6, no.2 to no.3 - with the first pair now back to back. It is easier if the second pair delay their move up as described till after the lead through, not before.
- A3 "Foot contrary corner". All dance backsteps on the spot for 4 bars. Turn dancer being faced by crossing staves and pushing round clockwise one turn. First pair pass right shoulders in the centre of the set and end facing the other diagonal still back to back in the centre and still on the "wrong" side.
- A4 Repeat with other corner. Come out of the turn, first pair passing right shoulders and crossing back to own side, in the second place, ending facing out, the other dancers also turn to face out away from their opposite by turning towards the middle dancer is "inwards".

Bootlaces 2

B2 (a) All facing out, dance away from set 1 bar, turn 180° to the left to face back on 1 bar, dance on the spot 1 bar, dance back to place 1 bar, take left hand with opposite and turn, pausing at end of 2nd bar, half way round and then onto place in 2 bars and end facing the direction to start the next sequence.

The first repeat is led by the third pair from the bottom and all starting by facing down. The second repeat is led by the original second pair from their progressed position at the top. The dance is ended after three times through will have the set reversed in order at the end.

(b) The ending in the original published notation was a reel of three, going into it the easy way, but the above from a similar dance is found better to dance.

To avoid finishing in reversed order one could use a half hey in the last 4 bars to return to starting place.

The usual backstep in A3/4 is a hopstep, placing the foot immediately behind the one carrying weight and scuffing it forward on the hop, so as not to move forward or backwards on the step. Dorset stepping also includes a sort of backwards pas de basque with the crossing foot behind. In actives in A3/4 face across their own diagonal.

The variations between sides who do this dance are a result of differences in the previously available notation to what is described above or of changes in the teaching of the dance or the memory of what has been taught or in club practice to overcome problems etc. Most of the differences are with the direction of turns in A3 - B2.

The turns in A3/4 can be left hand turns, not using the stave. The stave is an Abercorn habit. The turn can be to the normal travelling step but a "strut" walk is equally effective.

If the passing to reach the corners is by the left shoulder in end of B1 and A3 then it is better to foot it first with the second diagonal (nos. 4 and 5). The turn to face back having danced out in B3 can be to the right and would then balance the left hand turn later. Fleur de Lys prefer to do a whole-gyp rather than a turn at the end, going round face to face but not giving hands or crossing staves. Dorset Knobs and Knockers use left hand turns both with the corners and to pass partner in A3/4. They also use a Border Morris like waist swing for the final turn in B2. Bourne Bumpers simplify the second half by going the easy way into everything so that the active pair do not go round each other in the position changes.

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CHRISTCHURCH ELECTION

Set : Longways for 2 or more multiples of 4

Start : All face up towards the music

A1 First pairs cast off, go down the outside of the set one place, turn in and come up the middle to place, turning to face across. The second pair also cast out but immediately come up the middle, turn out having gone up one place, and go down the outside while the first pair is coming up the middle and end facing across in place also.



A2 First pairs cross over, passing left shoulders, and go down the outside of the opposite side of the set one place, turn in and come up the middle, changing sides and cast out from own starting place into second pairs's starting place. Face across. The second pairs also cross over, a little behind, so in echelon, go up the middle, as the firsts come down the outside, one place, turn out and go down the outside as the firsts come up the middle, one place, turn in and come up the middle again and change sides, to end in the first pair's place facing across.



B1 All 90° turn to left and dance 2 bars to the left, turn outwards 180° and return to place, 2 more bars. Face across and back to back with opposite, passing right shoulders going across and left coming back, 2 bars each half.
 B2 All 90° turn to right and dance 2 bars to the right, turn outwards 180° and return to place, turning in to face across. Back to back with opposite passing left shoulders going across and left coming back.



In the repeats where there are neutral pairs, they remain stationary in A1/2 but join in the moves in B1/2 or they will be in the way of the others.

ABERCORN STAVE

THE STEP DANCE

- Set : a longways set of 3 pairs.
Source : a combination of figures suggested by the dance list at Fifehead Magdalen, choreographed in memory of the Morrisons of Charlottesville who gave me my first lesson in flat foot clogging.
Title : we were looking for a noisy dance with the emphasis on the sound of the step rather than the music, rather like the Bedlam Morris.
Start : face across
Structure : the following sequence takes the top pair to the bottom, so three times through gets everyone back to their starting place.
Tune : Mason's Apron or Hull's Victory.

DANCE

- A1/2 - "Petronella" or "step and turn" - even though it is turn and step!
Work in own pair, but all dancers active. Dancers start by facing, then move round $\frac{1}{2}$ way to right, making 270° turn clockwise while doing so, and ending face to face along the centre line of the set, in 2 bars using the "travelling step" for this dance. Two bars of "stepping" in this formation. Repeat this movement 3 more times till back in starting place.



- B1 - "Insides" or "Big Arch"
Top pair lead down the middle, everyone follow, 4 bars of travelling step, then cast up the outside to place, using 4 bars of stepping, and perhaps all those going up making arches for the others to go under.
- A3 - "Up and stand and down and stand" - progression of top pair to bottom of set.
Top two pairs face up, dance up one place in distance on 2 bars of stepping, the second pair (behind) stop, face in and stand at ease with stave butt resting on the ground, while the top pair turn in, and dance back down the set on 2 bars of stepping, to end in the middle position. The original top pair (now in middle) and the bottom pair face down and dance down 2 bars moving one place, the top pair stops, faces in and stands at ease, in the bottom place while the bottom pair dances up the centre to the middle place. All face in - top pair has moved to the bottom and the rest moved up one.
- B2 - All step on spot 4 bars with stave butt still on ground. Then step around the stave, held in the same place, going round clockwise.
- STEP - (a) flat footed clog. The step is a 1 2 3 and something. The first step emphasises the body weight going down, the second is ahead of the first foot (ie not like a sidestep but more like a pas de basque rhythm) with a slight body rise, the third repeats the first. The slap down is emphasised for the noise. The 4th beat can be (a) lift of body but no step (b) a slight hop (c) kick of heel on ground in front (d) shuffle of free foot.

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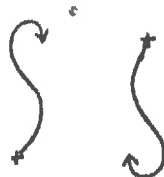
THE STOURTON CAUNDLE SET

- Set : a longways set of 4 or preferably 6 pairs
Source : the mss of "first" and "second" parts from "Start'n Candle"
Titles : either in the order in the mss by number or by title of tune used now.
Start : all face across, standing still
Structure : 5 figures followed by a different chorus for each dance, ending on a chorus. One side now starts with a chorus. Some sides vary the order of figures a little.

THE COMMON FIGURES - "The First Parts"

- 1 ONCE TO SELF : face in, in two lines.
2 CROSS OVER : as in "Speed the Plough"

Dancers pass opposite to change sides, passing left shoulders, and going a little past opposite's place, turning to the right in a loop to face back. The dancers follow a curved path. This is repeated to place, passing left shoulders again and turning to the right to face across in own place. The speed of travel and the turns are judged to avoid any pauses in the movement.



Fleur de Lys dance this rather as Cross and Turn, Ilmington, with a very small circle to turn.

- 3 ARCHES : as in "The Butterfly"

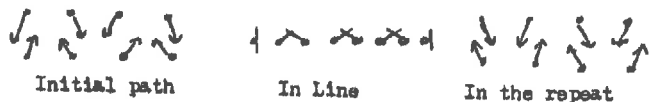
- (a) all dancers face up. The odd pairs cast out and go down the outside to the even pair's place using their staves to make an arch as they go, and turn in, into the even pair's place and shoulder staves, then dance up the middle to their own place, shoulder to shoulder, stave on shoulder, under the arch being made by the other pair. The even pair dance up the middle, staves on shoulders, shoulder to shoulder, cast out and go down forming an arch etc. Repeat all this. Each part movement takes 2 bars, 8 bars in all. Do not duck in passing under but have the staves held higher. Some sides always face in and do not turn put, it does not look good.
(b) alternatively it is done by the odd pair going down the middle and the even pair casting out and coming up the outside and making the arch, etc.

The first is preferred but it depends the team wish is to be confused with the start of "Tops Down" or the "Figure". (a) puts the onus of knowing what figure it is on the odd pair, (b) puts it on the even pair.

- 4 INTO LINE : as in "Single Change Sides" - "into line two at a time!"
Dancers move into a single line along the centre of the set, shoulder to shoulder, but in pairs, not as in a morris half-gyp.

Stourton Caundle 2.

Neighbouring pairs, 1&3, 4&6 etc go in together, making and keeping an arch with their staves between them, through the half figure, so that when in line there is a row of crossed staves along the centre line. In the repeat the staff is crossed with the dancer the other side, ie 2&4, 3&5 etc so that different arches are made. The single dancers at the end of the line on one side of the set or the other have no one to cross staves with so keep them sloped over their right shoulder.



The movement is two bars forward and two back to place, retiring with the ordinary travelling step not a backstep.

5 TOPS DOWN : as in "Double Lead Through" - "downs and ups"

In the first half, the odd pairs dance down the middle for 2 bars, between the even pairs who remain facing across and not dancing, shoulder to shoulder, with staves on shoulders not raised to form arches, and then retire backwards to places with the travelling step not a backstep.

In the second half, the even pairs dance up the middle for 2 bars and retire to place while the odd pairs face across, stationary, not marking time.

When dancing with 8, sides often make this movement symmetrical by either the end pairs dancing in to form lines of 4 facing each other across the centre of the set and then in the repeat dancing to face outwards in lines of 4 or vice versa.



In this case the inactives at least turn to face the same way, and might step throughout on the spot.

6 THE FIGURE : cast into a figure of eight - a common movement in early 19th cent.

All pairs face up. The odd pairs cast out, followed by their even pair, and as soon as the odd passes the even, they turn in to start a reel of 4 across the set, passing their opposite with the left shoulder first. The reel will be done about halfway between the odds and evens positions. Reel across and back and end in one's own place. In practice it is better if the reel starts passing left shoulders as the alternative is more of a scramble round. Again, it is better if no. 1 of the 4 does not finish the reel by passing around the back of no. 4 but outs straight to place having passed their opposite on the way back, so the even pair also goes straight across the set passing left shoulders to place.



THE DISTINCTIVE FIGURES - "The Second Parts"- Abercorn tunes quoted.

DANCE ONE - "Over the Hills and Far Away"

All 90° turn to face to their left, up and down the set, dance two travelling steps along the line of the set, turn out 180° to face back and dance two travelling steps back to place, turning in to face one's opposite and stretching out one's left arm to make a left hand turn all the way round, pausing at the half way point on the opposite side, with the dancers facing up and down the set. It may be an elbow grip although the fuller movement looks better.

Bourne Bumpers start the dance on a chorus and use the order of figures, arches, cross over, tops down line of 4 out then line of 4 in, into line, and figure.

DANCE TWO - "Ninety Five"

In 4's, all turn to face round clockwise, and dance round clockwise to the opposite diagonal's place, turning into the movement the easy way, and turning to face across the diagonal when halfway round. The circle may need to be large so that only a beat or so is on the spot at the end before the dancers cross straight back to place, passing left shoulders in the centre of the square of 4. The passing is done simultaneously and as close together as possible, always allowing the dancer on the right to pass in front and the one on the left to pass behind. Anything else loses the effect. All turn left in place 90° to face around anticlockwise and dance around the circle to opposite diagonal place again around the other half of the circle. Turn in and dance across the diagonal again, but still passing left shoulders in the middle and turning to the right in place to face front, or to the direction needed for the next figure. It is important to phrase this movement to avoid any pauses. To jigs it is an energetic dance.

DANCE THREE - "Tiptoe Polka"

In 4's, odd pairs face down the set and dance one travelling step to bring them between their even pair, who either stand still or step one bar on the spot facing across the set. This line of 4 then moves down with one travelling step, the even pair turning down the easy way to keep in line. The dancers turn to face along the line of 4, the odd pair facing out towards the ends and the even pair facing in from the ends so that each is facing their neighbour. Dance two stationary steps on the spot (or polkas or rants). Half reel of 4, passing left shoulders first with the one being faced, so that the line of 4 is reversed, end facing up, having taken 4 travelling steps. All face up and dance up 2 travelling steps, and turn to face along the line again and two bars of stepping on the spot. The line of 4 is now close to the position of the odd pair. Half reel of 4 across the set ending in original place.

Bourne Bumpers use "Over Hills and Far Away" and some different figures, namely, Cross over (passing left shoulders unlike the right when doing dance one), diagonals cross and back in turn (2 bars each crossing, left shoulders passing) repeated, rounds in 4's clockwise and turn out to come back anticlock, tops down as above, figure.