

BRIDE'S REELS

NAMES

"Bride" is very ancient and nobody knows what it means. She was so important that the groom was named after her. He was called the "brydguma" or bridegona, guma being the equivalent of Latin homo, man; therefore the bride's man. In time guma became confused with groom, which once meant a boy or man before it was narrowed down to a man-servant. The wedding guests used to be known as bridallers. The leading bridesmaid was the "best maid" to match the "best man". Unmarried girls used to wear white to a wedding and were called "bridesmaidens". The "honest folk" at a wedding were a married couple related to the bride, the woman equivalent to the Matron of Honour. The brydealu or "bride-ale" was specifically the wedding banquet or feast, later known as the wedding breakfast. A literal break fast when one had to have fasted since midnight to take communion. Bride Ale has contracted to Bridal which sounds like an adjective and it became used as one.

DANCES

The first dance after the meal was often "Bonny Breast Knots" led by the bride and groom, best man and bridesmaid.

Wedding reels for 4, 6 or 8 were usually started by that 4 with the help of the honest folk and close relatives.

The Bride's reels started before the bride and groom went to bed. They were first danced by the bride, best maid, the married woman, the bride's mother and other close female relatives. During the reels the men "swept the bride" with straw brushes made from straw with the grain removed. The bottoms would be bound with one ribbon and the heads in 2's and 3's with separate ribbons. However they were not to touch the bride, only irritate the rest.

There are traditional Scottish tunes - the Bride's March, Woo'd and Married an' a' and The Bride's Welcome Home.

THE ARRANGEMENT

Reels are alternate stepping and reeling and usually only one form of the reel was used in any one place. Within a display, the significance to the dancers is unimportant and it is more effective to string several different forms together. The following combines 4 and 8 handed versions.

THE STEPS

- Travelling: forms of the 1 2 3 hop ie Chasse and Hop-one-&-two which close the rear foot up behind the other on the 2nd beat.
- Setting : Backstep with hop or the Pas de Basque
- Speed : different musicians had various speeds. Fast was 60 bars/min and slow 40 bars/min (60= country dance, 48= normal morris). Could alternate passages.

End each reel with three stamps.

Some of the setting is done with hands linked with neighbours and some facing partner with both hands touching r+l, l+r - arms straight, body upright and not leaning onto hands.

ONCE TO YOURSELF - just two chords.

Starting position



STEPPING 1

In starting position, facing in.



REEL 1 - in 4's



start, right hand in front



circle



end and face

STEPPING 2 - in one line, facing partner



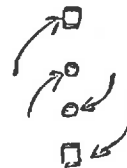
REEL 1 continued



start



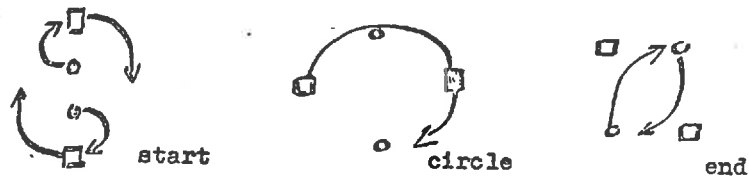
circle



end

STEPPING 3 - in two lines of 4 across the set

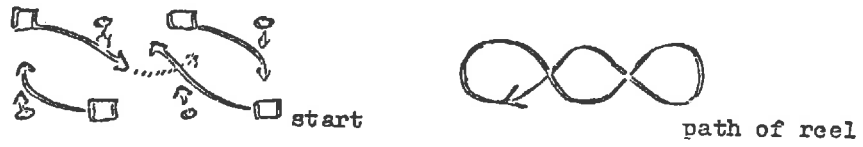




STEPPING 4 - in two lines of 4 along set and facing partner, hands touch



REEL 2 - all 8 follow in pairs in a reel of 4 along the set



STEPPING 5 - in two lines of 4 along set, facing across, joined hands



REEL 3 - in 4's - into two loops



right hand crosses first. so other waits and dances out of phase.

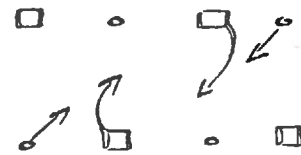
STEPPING 6 - like 1



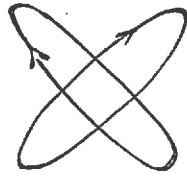
REEL 4 - all 8 in two interlacing loops of 4



starts

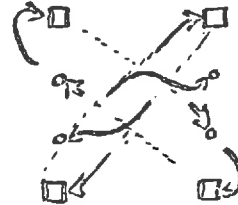


wait a little



loops

to

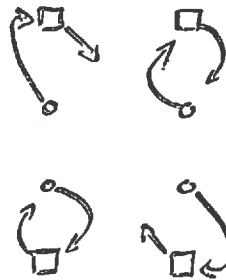


end

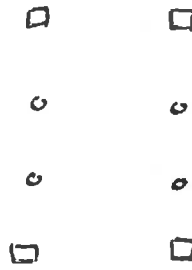
STEPPING 7 - like 3



REEL 4 continued

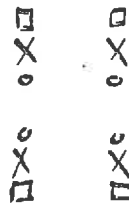


start



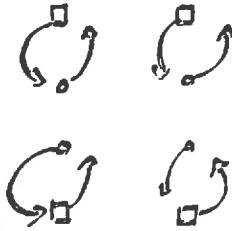
end again

REEL 5 - swing in pairs - go round at steady pace and all 4 at same rate

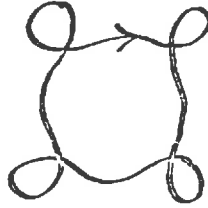


end as at start

REEL 6 - for all 8 - in two halves



start - pass by left



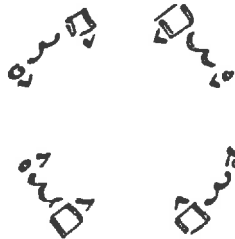
path

do not come off a loop
till someone else
enters

STEPPING 8 - like 3/7 but both hands touch as in 4

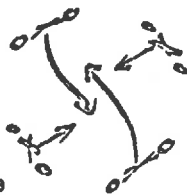
REEL 6 continued to place as at start of reel

STEPPING 9 - face in in a square



join inside hands

REEL 7 - reel of 4 across the set - pairs linked up with arms round waists



this corner
wait a little

start



track

lead off

Dance takes about 3 minutes.

A special person or a newly married (engaged) couple could stand in the middle throughout.

Reel 6 can be used on its own with the couple standing in the middle back to back with arms linked. The musician stops suddenly and they have to attempt to unlink their arms and turn and kiss each other before any of those in the reel can reach them.

"The Drunken Skipper" is a reel in which during the stepping the dancers stagger about as if drunk. After about the 6th bar the tune is slowed down considerably and the apparent drunkenness is increased till they collapse on the floor. Rise on a chord and reel again. The dancers try to fall on top of each other, each trying to be topmost.

The straw brush is a suitable traditional alternative for females to the morris mens' bladder and tail.