

## STAVE DANCES ~~1st~~ 1st Issue

A Stave is particularly a symbol of the various Friendly Societies who had an annual Club walk with banners and band. There were a number of Women's Societies - at least one still exists at Nether Stowey which meets at the Rose and Crown Inn and whose feast is the last Friday before Midsummer Day. A men's club still exists at Priddy, the Victoria Inn, with its feast on Whit Monday. Several clubs still existed and had their annual walk in the 1930's, for example Crowkerne and Timberscombe and at some places, such as Warminster, several clubs would combine for the day.

The Staves only appeared on Feast Day. The "club stick" varied from 4 to 8 ft long and was stained or painted either in a single colour or striped. At Kilmersdon the 4 ft stave was painted blue with red and white spiral stripes, decorated with red, white and blue tassel and ribbons hanging below the polehead. In and around Somersetshire the poleheads were often brass emblems. Wooden stave heads were very common, they have just not survived to be collected. At Wookoy, where they met at the Ring O' Bells Inn, the wooden knob was painted red and mounted on a blue pole 6'4" long. At Donyatt by Ilminster the 4'4" stave had a gilt head with blue tassel and ribbon a yard long. Brass heads were used at Combe Hay, Corston, Dunkerton, Kolston, Larkhall, Tinsbury, Tunley and Wellow near Bath. A wide variety of shapes were used - some can be seen in the Blaise Castle Folk Museum and one from Soundwell, Gloucester, in the Holburne Museum, Bath.

The usual colour for hat ribbons was blue. Combe Hay had a cockade of purple and pink ribbons on the hat. Top hats were common and the ribbon would be round the top of the crown with the rosette pinned to the side with its tails flowing down below the brim. Sashes would be worn over the right shoulder, often 3" wide, crossed at the waist and pinned with a rosette.

The Societies usually had banners or flags. Early on these were very often locally made and examples of folk art but later they were usually a plain ensign with the Union Jack in the first quarter and the name of the Society across the lower half.

Interesting accounts exist in William Barnes "Poems of Rural Life in Dorset Dialect" - 'Whitsuntide an' Club Walken' - and Harvey "Club Day, being a description of a Kilmersdon 'Old Club' Annual Parade" pub. 1927. Many Societies ended the day with a dance and some included dancing in the activities during the Club Walk. Raymond in "English Country Life", 1934, mentions the dancing of Hunt the Squirrel and Four Hand Reels. At Faulton step dancing is mentioned in a local history.

Where formal dancing was done it was derived directly from contemporary social, that is country dance. To produce effective display dances some amalgamation is necessary of the available material and the following is a rationalisation similar to that adopted by the Shropshire Bedlams with the Fordor Dance material. It is then impossible to ascribe the dances to a particular place but to the general district where Somerset, Dorset and Wilts meet around Zeals, although to say that restricts it to too small an area.

Set ; normally for 8 in two lines.

Music ; usually hornpipes played sedately.

Step ; hornpipe 123hop - not a morris step but a travelling step with foot brought up behind the other on the second beat.

Stave carried over right shoulder - top of stave can be decorated with a garland of flowers.

Style ; steady - phrase the movements to just fill the music so as to avoid pauses with marking time: it must flow along.

Usual to pass left shoulders to avoid staves and their decoration coming into contact.

Start with left foot.

Notations

Stave Dances 2 (2)

COMMON FIGURES

ONCE TO SELF : Face in in the two lines.

CROSS OVER : as in Speed the Plough - pass opposite by left shoulders, crossing and passing opposite's place, turning to right to face back and repeat to place, passing left shoulders again and turning right into place

ARCHES : odd and even pairs face alternately down and up. The pairs change places and return along the set - the pair going down the set passing on the outside and using their staves to make an arch while that coming up the centre keep their staves sloped over their shoulders and do not duck. The movement is done twice through.

INTO LINE : as in Single Change Sides - into line along the centre of the set shoulder to shoulder, but in pairs not as in a morris half-cyp.



Initial path.



Making Arches.

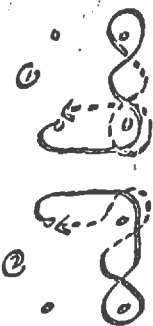


In the repeat.

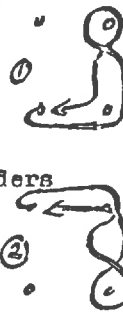
The pairs from each side make and keep an arch with their staves through the half of the figure, in the repeat to the other side different arches are made. The single persons at the ends keep their staves at the slope.

LEAD DOWN : odd and even pairs face alternately down and up the set again. In the first half the odd pairs go down the middle, shoulder to shoulder with their opposite, and retire backwards to place, staves remaining on their shoulders and not used to form arches. In the second half the even pairs go up the middle and retire to their places. The inactive pairs in each half remain stationary and do not mark time.

FIGURE or CAST : all pairs face up. The odd pairs cast out and go down to the evens place, and then make a figure eight across the set and back, returning to place. The even pairs follow the odds but first move up the set towards the odds places, letting them pass left shoulders down the outside.



There are two ways of doing the figure, the odd pair passing right or left shoulders first. The first way is more of a scramble.



DISTINCTIVE FIGURES

The following three movements are the distinctive or chorus movement for each dance, used to follow each Common Figure. The dance ends with a chorus and the dancers stop at attention, in place, facing across the set, stave sloped over right shoulder.

DANCE ONE

All face to left, up and down the set, dance two travelling steps along the line of the set and turn out to face back. dance two travelling steps back to place along the line of the set, turning to face opposite. Turn opposite once round with a left hand elbow grip and return to own place. *ghan.*

DANCE TWO

All face down the set. Odd pairs dance one travelling step to bring them between the even pair, who mark time, to form a line of four across the set all facing down. Then all move down the set one travelling step. Turn on the next two bars so that the odd pair in the middle face out and the even pair on the outside face in, ready for a half reel of four across the set, passing left shoulders first, taking four travelling steps. All face up and move up the set two travelling steps, turn to face out and in as before and second half of reel of four across the set ending in original places. *16 bars.*

DANCE THREE

In fours, circle clockwise half way round to opposite diagonal's place, turning into the movement the easy way. All cross back to places along the diagonals, all passing left shoulders in the middle as close together as possible simultaneously, turning to left in place into a circle anticlockwise to opposite diagonals place and cross back along the diagonals and again passing left shoulders and turning the easy way in ones own place to face front. Particularly important not to have any pauses in this movement so must be phrased very carefully.

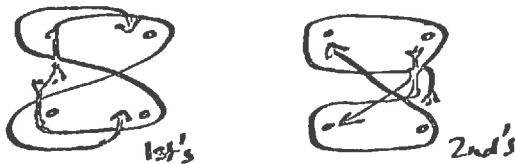
"CHRISTCHURCH FLECTION"

- Set : Longways for 3 or more multiples of 4.  
 Implement : decorated staves or boughs.  
 Stop : travelling "hop-one-and-two"  
 Dance : start facing up.

A1 first pairs cast off, go down outside of set one place, turn in and come up middle to place turning to face in. Second pair also cast out but immediately come up the middle, turn out and go down outside while first pairs come up middle and end facing in in place.



A2 First pairs cross over, passing left shoulders, and go down outside of opposite side of set, turn in and come up middle changing sides and cast out from own place in second pairs place. Second pairs also cross over, a little behind so in echelon, go up the middle, turn out and down the outside, turn in and up the middle changing sides to end in first pairs place.



- B1 All turn to left and go to left, turn out and return to place and go back-to-back with opposite passing right shoulders first.  
 B2 All turn to right and go to right, turn out and return to place and go back-to-back with opposite passing left shoulders first ending facing up.



In repeats where there are neutral pairs, they may remain stationary in A1/2 or join in the cast and the cross over in a simplified way, but they must join in B1/2.

DECORATED STAVES OR BOUGHS - "SPITHEAD FLEET" *(B) 4.*

Set : 6 in usual column

Implement - decorated stave or bough over right shoulder throughout.

Step : Travelling - "hop-one-and-two".

Hop on last beat of bar, step forward on first beat, bring other foot up behind on second beat, step forward again on third and hop.

Stationary - "closed-side-step".

Starting in first position with feet turned out, bring a foot in front of other still turned out in same direction, step on rear foot, step on forward foot, hop on forward foot while sliding it back to the rear position.



The body does not turn during the step.

Dance :

A1 First pair cast off into Second place, second pair moving up to first's place. First Pair cross over to opposite side, passing left shoulders and turn to face up.

First pair cast off again from Second place into Third place, third pair moving up into second's place. First pair left hand turn to own side and all face down.

A2 Starting from all facing down, the first pair etc repeat to original place, ending with all facing in.

B1 First pair go down the middle, while the second pair again move up into first's place, cast round the third pair into the second place, lead through the second pair at the top and cast off back to second place. Cross, passing right shoulders and end back-to-back along the diagonal facing first corners.

A3 "Foot contrary corner" - balance steps with hops and turn opposite once round with the left, end facing other corner.

A4 Repeat with other corner, end all facing out.

B2 Lines move out, turn to left to face front, approach and left turn with opposite one complete turn and end all facing down or up as required by next movement.

During A1-B1 the in-active dancers step on the spot as described above, facing up during A1, turning to face down in bar 8, facing down during A2, turning to face front in bar 8, and facing front in B1, turning to face across the set diagonals in bar 8.

The first repeat is lead by the third pair from the bottom and all starting by facing down. The second repeat is lead by the original second pair from the top. The final B2 swing can be a half hey to original or starting places.

<1 <2 <3

>2 >3 >

<2 <3 <

STAVE DANCE OR COUNTRY DANCE

Collected Seend, Wiltshire by Maud Karpeles 1929.

"BRICKS AND MORTAR" a version of Up the Sides and Down the Middle. (see tune, p. )

Used as a finishing dance for the annual club walk.

Longways for as many as will.

A 1 & 2 First couple followed by rest go down the middle and cast up the outside,

B 1 All step in position facing partner,

B 2 All cross over giving hands in passing, turn to face back & step on spot,

A 1 & 2 Down middle and cast up outside as before,

B 1 & 2 As before..

Repeat ad lib.

"WEDDING REEL" a version of 6 hand reel danced at Buckhorn Weston

Tune - Spanish Lady - after Katherine of Aragon, first wife of Prince Arthur and Prince Henry (VIII) who changed the world and probably helped bring the country dance and the morris to England.

A1 bars 1-4 set steps on spot to opposite

5-8 change sides by middle going between the ends & turning to their left into opposite's place facing back, and ends change over passing right shoulder, so that it looks like half a hey.

A2 ditto: to place.



B1 Dance a figure eight in close pairs. Follow partner and do not let other dances cut between. Important that no.3 dives across quickly so as to let 5 & 6 cross going up as 1 is waiting to come down.



B2 Turn and repeat going the other way round the figure eight - 4 crosses middle first and then 2 and 1.

Repeat all about 3 times.

Dance quite effective with garlands.