

MYLECHARANES MARCH or Cutting off the Fiddler's Head

This dance was usually performed at New Year, when the Laare Vane or White Mare was carried, and after their ceremonial killing, the fiddler was raised up, blindfolded, and led to where the Laare Vane was seated. There he knelt down with his head in her lap and was asked questions by the company, his answers being supposed to be oracular. At the New Year festivities the questions generally related to courtships and marriages, but when the ritual was carried out at Boat Suppers, as sometimes happened, they more often had to do with prospects for the next season, crops, weather, etc.

Each man carries two sticks, fairly stout and about two feet long. Involved in the dance is the sand step. This step is danced in three quick kicks round and outward, the sole of the foot is just touching the ground all the time, and across behind the other foot, with a simultaneous transfer of weight. During the kicking movement the other foot takes the weight and hops in time with the kicks, which are done by R and L feet alternately, with a change of weight on each cross. It is a very difficult step to dance smoothly, and the criterion of skill with the traditional performers was to keep the sand upon which it was danced always moving under the kicking foot, but never flung off the spring board. Less skilled performers danced it with two kicks to each cross instead of three.

It is important to have the music for this dance played by a fiddler as he enters the dance in the last figure and is ceremoniously 'killed'.

♩ = 132

Music	Movements
(A music)	<i>Introduction or lead in.</i>
Bars 1-16	All dance round in a circle clockwise. Starting right, kick foot slightly forward tipping ground on forward and backward motion; then stamp, transfer the weight and repeat L. Simultaneously all swing sticks and strike them together above heads and behind on 1st and 2nd beat of each bar. They finish in two lines facing.
	(Strikers) 5 3 1 ♦ ♦ ♦ head of set ♦ ♦ ♦
	(Receivers) 6 4 2 Sticks crossing opposites and pointing downward.
A1 Bars 1-8	<i>The Links</i> Each side does a hey for 3 in skipping step. Nos. 1 and 2 turn outwards. Each man strikes his sticks together, above his head, half way (bar 4) and at the end (bar 8).
9-16	Repeat as above except on the last bar strike own sticks above head then behind as in introduction.
B1 Bars 1-12	Holding the sticks at the centre each man strikes his L stick with the R on a downward stroke (beat 2) then again with the R on an upward stroke (beat 3).

Then with the L stick strike the R on an upward stroke (beat 2) and a downward stroke (beat 3). This is all done simultaneously with the sand step, which is danced continuously through the whole music. The movements take quite some practice as the first scrape of the sand step is the first beat, then the second and 3rd scrapes are accompanied with the striking of the sticks.

- A2 Bars 1-16 *Foltyn or Cum dty heshaght* A circular hey tapping R and L sticks alternately as though 'handing', danced in skipping step. Top couple face each other, middle couple face bottom couple. Twice around finish in two lines back to back.
- B2 Bars 1-4 *Jannoo Jeel* 4 sand steps back to back passing left shoulders to face each other.
 5-8 Strikers now on R of set strikes opposite sticks upward (1st beat) and downward (2nd beat) then each tapping his own behind his back (3rd beat). This is done four times.
 9-12 All dance sand step to return to positions, back to back passing L shoulder. On last bar each strike own sticks high and then behind.
- A3 Bars 1-8 *Roie as Ratchan* Both lines cast out and down, strikers (1, 3 & 5) tapping opposites' inside sticks on 1st beat of bars 1, 2 and 3 respectively and again as they come back up the centre on the 1st beat of bars 5, 6 and 7 respectively.
 9-16 Repeat as Bars 1-8 ending in two lines face to face, each dancer holding the ends of his opposites' sticks as well as his own at shoulder level.
- B3 Bars 1-4 All dance 4 sand steps on the spot while the fiddler runs up and down again under the arches.
 5-12 Top couple break arch, cross by each other and skip right around the set tapping their sticks above their heads (1st beat) and behind them (2nd beat). The remaining four keep hold of their opposites' sticks and pass under each other's arches (middle under first), then pass under their own arches, once towards each other and then back, break and form into a single line.
- A4 Bars 1-16 *Test and Close In* No. 1 faces down the line and all others face up. All dance in skipping step up and down passing R and L shoulders and tapping R and L alternately (similar to 'handing'). When No. 1 reaches the top of the line again he skips around the fiddler and makes a circle with the other men as they come up the line enclosing the fiddler. Each man crossing hands and grasping his neighbour's sticks as well as his own.
- B4 Bars 1-12 *Cutting off the fiddler's head* Keeping this hold on the sticks the dancers change to the sand step and gradually draw their hands together making the circle smaller and smaller while dancing round clockwise. When the circle hems in the fiddler so closely that he can no longer play, each man releases his neighbour's sticks and draws his own out and upward, completely hiding and downing the fiddler by clashing all the sticks together above him with a wild shout - i.e. 'Cutting off his head'.

REEAGHYN DY VANNIN

A Dirk dance collected by Mona Douglas. Solo.

Reeaghyn dy Vannin, the Sword Dance of the Kings of Mann, has a unique place in the Manx dance tradition, for it is said to have been originally part of the ancient Celtic Tanist Ceremony in which the heir to the Manx Throne took arms and was recognised before the people. The tradition is that when the Norse rulers came in they were athletes but not dancers, and so instead of the Crown Prince performing the ceremonial dance himself a Celtic chieftain was appointed to perform it on his behalf, and the clan so honoured were designated King's Dancers. This was the family of Mac Diarmid, the later Manx form having become Kermode, and Jack Kermode of Purt Mooar, from whom the dance was first noted, claimed that it had been handed down in his family from Norse times. The Manx Gaelic names used by Kermode for the various parts of the dance were Cur Arrym (Giving honour), Curteish (Saluting), Combaasal (Encircling), Prowal y Cliwe (Testing the Sword), Giaraghyn (Slashes), Gymmyrkey ayns Oasle (Bearing in honour) and Casherickey (Dedication). The purt y beayll to which it was traditionally performed should by tradition be sung by a close female relative of the dancer, and when first noted it was sung by Jack Kermode's wife after she had offered him a ceremonial beaker of whisky, a little of the drink being poured on the ground.

The principal performer of the dance at present is a descendant of the Kermode family.

Purt y beayll.

- A1 Music — O hi-o y varriaght — O
O hi-o, my skian gial! (repeated)
- B Music — She mish cur oashley, oashley diu
O hi-o, my skian gial! (repeated)
- C Music — Hi-o, y varriaght O!
Hi-o my skian gial!
Reeaghyn dy Vannin-O
O hi-o, my skian gial!
- A2 Music — O hi-o y varriaght O
O hi-o my skian gial!
Reeaghyn dy Vannin-O
O hi-o, O hi O ho!

$\text{♩} = 69$

Music Movements

The Dirk is carried, vertically, with both hands, at arms length, point upwards.

- A1 Bars 1-8 7 M.r.s. in a circle clockwise; on 8th bar 2 low springs with feet crossed (R in front, then L in front) and crouch to place the dirk lengthwise on the ground, the dancer finishing by standing behind the hilt, with feet together and arms folded.
- B1 Bars 1-8 Facing the Dirk the whole time, 15 cross back steps round it clockwise, finishing with a 'salute' on the last note.

- C1 Bar 1 Spring sideways to the R on to the R foot (1st beat), change with a spring on to the left foot, bringing the L foot slightly behind the R (2nd beat), spring again landing on both feet together (beats 3 and 4).
 2 Two springs sideways to the left allowing the left foot to take the ground just ahead of the right.
 3-4 The same as in Bars 1 and 2 reversing the direction and footing.
 5-8 Repeat bars 1-4 picking up the dirk at the end of the phrase, and holding it as in A1.
- B2 Bars 1-8 The same as in A1. On the last note the dirk is held forward at arms' length and head height, the hilt in the R hand and the point in the L.
- C2 Bar 1 Same as in C1 Bar 1.
 2 Spring with feet together, then hop left kicking the dirk with right toe; spring with feet together, and hop right kicking the dirk with left toe.
 3-4 The same as in Bars 1 and 2 reversing the direction and footing.
 5-8 Repeat bars 1-4. On the last note the dirk is placed on ground as in A1.
- B3 Bars 1-4 8 cross back steps facing the dirk and dancing once round it clockwise.
 5-8 4 slow 'salutes' picking up the dirk on the last note and holding in the R hand.
- C3 Bar 1 Brandish the dirk above the head with the R hand, at the same time twirling round clockwise.
 2 Spring with the feet together, then hop on the left foot raising the right knee, and pass the dirk under knee from the right hand to the left.
 3 The same as in bar 1 but brandish the dirk with the left hand and twirl counter-clockwise.
 4 The same as in bar 2 but raising the left knee and passing the dirk under it from left hand to right.
 5-6 The same as in Bars 1 and 2.
 7-8 The same as in Bars 3 and 4.
- A2 Bars 1-6 The same as in A1.
 7-8 Moving forwards, spring with feet crossed (right foot in front), then with feet apart, again with feet crossed (R in front), and finally to a kneeling position on the left knee - holding the dirk well forward as in the first step. The music quickens to about double speed on these last two bars.

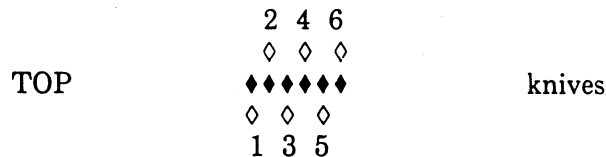
BWOAILL BACCAGH

A dance for six men noted by Mona Douglas from various persons but most complete description and demonstration of steps and figures were from Ceasar Cashin, James Quine and William Quane, Peel.

A and C $\text{♩} = 112$

Music Movements

- A1 Bars 1-8 Men dance round on a circular track and form two lines facing each other. The step is R.L.R. flick – similar to reel step, but with a quick flick forward instead of a hop. Each man carries a short fisherman's knife tucked into his belt.
- B1 Bars 1-8 1st man (top left) draws his knife and throws it down in front of him so that its point is embedded in the ground and it is upright. Opposite man, who should be about two feet down the line, does the same immediately after him. This is continued down the line. Positions should then be:



Dancers step back on R foot, close up L and spring high on both feet, coming down on R foot with L stretched out behind and arms flung out to salute the knives. Similar to salute of the sword in the dirk dance. Then all drop into squatting position.

- C1 Bars 1-8 In squatting position men perform the difficult 'frog' step i.e. kicking feet forward. All spring to upright position on the last beat.
- A2 Bars 1-4 Men dance to opposite places, each man passing his own knife by the right, using step with flicks, on the last beat spring high, turning to face knives.
5-8 Repeat as in bars 1-4 back to place. On the last beat spring high, turn and drop into squatting positions.
- C2 Bars 1-8 All dance squatting step but with side kicks instead of forward kicks, spring upright on last beat.
- A3 Bars 1-4 1st man takes up his knife in R hand and faces down the line. 2nd man takes up his knife and faces up the line to 1st man. 1st man dances down the line in 1-2-3-flick step tapping the other's knives passing R and L shoulders alternately, others stepping in and picking up their knives in turn. On the last beat, when No. 1 should be at the bottom of the line, all spring high and turn to face No. 1.
5-8 1st man dances back up the line tapping knives as before. All dancing 1-2-3-flick step No. 1 travelling, others on the spot, falling back into two lines at the end.
- C3 Bars 1-8 All with knives tucked into their belts dance the 'frog' step on the spot with arms folded, springing upright on the last beat.
- A4 Bars 1-4 All arm R crossing over into opposite places in 1-2-3-flick step.
5-8 All arm L back to place.

B2 Bars 1-8 Each dancer draws his knife in the same order as for the first throw down, but this time on the last three beats they spring down, take their knives in their R hands and spring upright in a line and hold their knives above their heads and shout 'hoh'.

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LHEIM Y BRADDAN (The Salmon Leap)

This dance has been pieced together from descriptions of the various parts of it given by a number of people, with some demonstrations. The most complete outline was given by Captain Thomas Craine of the 'Sarah Blanche', formerly skipper of a Peel fishing boat and a sailor on the Packet Company's ships, and he said it was generally thought of as a fisherman's dance, but parts of it have been described and demonstrated by Northside crofters like William Caine of Jurby Curragh, and the Leap itself was shown to me in the 1920's by a man in Patrick known as Kelly the Blackguard. Kelly the fisherman of Baldrine, Lonan also described parts of it, including the costumes worn, and said it had once been part of the Mollag Band's dance, for which the men also wore white long sleeveless coats. I have not seen any special steps used in the bits demonstrated, but would suggest the Flitterdaunsey step for the main parts, a rather slow Manx Reel step for the hey, and about 2 bars of the jig step and air for the honour before each Guilley. At the end of this part the Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr will need to take their stand quite a bit away from the top of the dance, as the Braddan should lie facing them and kneel immediately after he lands from the Leap.

Names for the dancers are: Yn Cummaltaght, Yn Eiyreydeyr, Yn Braddan and Ny Guillyn (10 men).

Lead in: Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr together, Guillyn in pairs, and Braddan last. Costumes: All except Braddan wear long white tunics and headcloths. Cummaltaght carries a short sword and Eiyreydeyr a wide criss. Braddan is bare-headed and wears only a shirt and kilt or trews. Each Guilley carries an osier rod held upright in his right hand.

Guillyn form two lines, facing, and Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr stand at top, facing down the dance. Guillyn dance across and back and then a hey, Braddan capering about between them, and during the hey Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr cross each other and dance round outside, crossing back when they reach the top. At end of hey Guillyn form a circle and Braddan dances jig steps in front of each Guilley, starting at the top and moving clockwise around the dancers, honouring before passing to the next. As he honours, the Guilley strikes him with his rod then holds it towards his left-hand neighbour, who grasps it in his right hand, forming a circle of rods as Braddan progresses. Braddan gradually slows down his steps as he reaches the last Guilley, and as he receives the final stroke of the rod he lies down flat on his back, facing Cummaltaght, within the circle (like the fiddler in Mylecharane's March). The Guillyn dance slowly round him, clockwise and then counter-clockwise, and he leaps out over the rods and kneels before Cummaltaght. Guillyn raise and flourish their rods and shout, and Cummaltaght gives Braddan the sword and raises him to face down the dance, while Eiyreydeyr places the criss round his waist. He then springs and they lift him on their shoulders and they carry him off, holding the sword upright before him, the Guillyn following with their rods held high.

Captain Craine used to say that 'In old history they were calling this dance a Hero-feat.' Probably because very few men could perform the Leap.

The above, collected by Mona Douglas, is the most complete notation of this dance.