

ADDITIONAL NOTES

from the video:

“ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCING - An Introduction”

THE MUSIC

Before the dance came the music. The music gives momentum and drive to the dancers; it keeps them in time with each other; it even tells them when to do each move – it counts for them. Many of the tunes used for English Country dancing are 32 measures (or bars) long and the dancers take 2 steps to each measure. Once through the whole tune is once through the dance. It takes 64 steps for this and then the tune repeats so that you can do the dance again with a new couple.

Here is the tune for Softly Good Tummus:

measure or bar

Kynaston - 1718

The musical score consists of four staves labeled A1, A2, B1, and B2. Each staff contains 32 measures of music. The first 16 measures of each staff are highlighted in green. Below each staff, the count steps are listed: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 for the first 16 measures, and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 for the second 16 measures. A bracket above the first 16 measures of the first staff is labeled 'measure or bar'. The source 'Kynaston - 1718' is noted in the top right.

Even if you can't read music you can see the pattern of the notes. The first line, A1, is repeated on the second line, A2. Then the tune changes a bit in the third line, B1, and this repeats in the fourth line, B2. But the pattern of each line clearly divides at the halfway point (the measures colored in green) and you can hear this in the tune when it is played. So you can also hear the music count 8 steps for you which is a great convenience because all the moves in this dance take multiples of 8 steps. Once I understood this, I found I never had to count again; I just listen to the music and its patterns tell me when to do the next move. Not only that, but as soon as I can recognize the tune, I know when it starts again and thus when the dance pattern starts again.

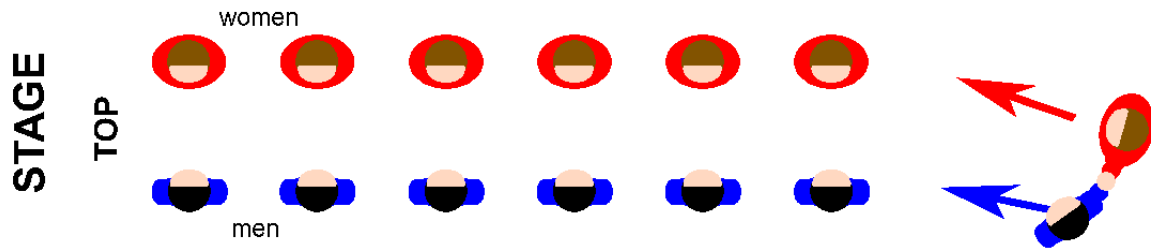
Almost all Contra Dances follow this pattern but many English Country Dances don't quite. They are often in triple time, that is, they have 3 steps to each bar instead of 2 and all the moves are done in multiples of 3 steps instead of 4. Or maybe they have 10 or 12 bars to a section instead of 8. In fact nearly half the dances in this video do not follow the rule outlined above. But the moves always follow the tune so that the music still counts for you just the same.

THE FORM OF THE DANCES

Contra Dances are almost always in the form we call “Longways for as many as will”, or simply, “Longways” and many English Country Dances are as well. But there are also a lot of dances in other forms, in fact 5 of the dances in this video are not longways sets. For example “Wooin' Mairi” has 3 couples in a longways set; “Terpsicourante” has 4 couples in a longways set; “Turning By Threes” has 3 couples in a circle. However, because Longways sets are so common, many dance groups automatically line up in this form while waiting for the caller to tell them what they really want. They then rearrange themselves if necessary, often counting off from the top of the hall (the end with the band and caller) to create the kind of sets asked for.

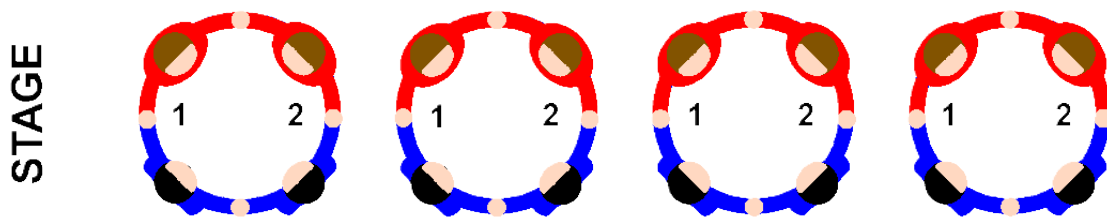
I will explain how the basic Longways set is formed because this has some rules that can be applied to the other forms once you have the idea. You and your partner line up opposite each other with the woman on the right if

you were to face the band. Convention asks that you join the growing line at the bottom – the end furthest away from the stage (band and caller). (This is so that you do not upset any hands-fours already taken and also avoids an unseemly scrum in the middle.) BTW you may dance whichever role you please, the terms ‘men’ and ‘women’ are historical and used for convenience only.

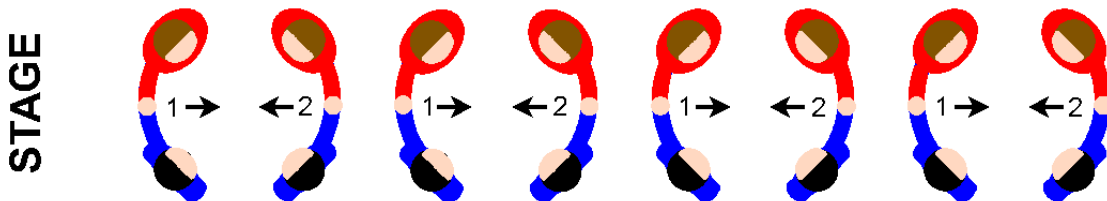


If the dance is indeed going to be a “Longways for as many as will”, the caller will ask everyone to “Take Hands Four” (or “Hands Six” for a Triple Minor.)

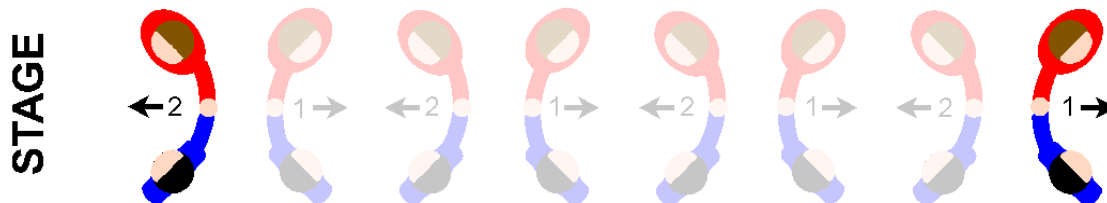
Starting at the top (nearest the stage) everyone takes hands in groups of four – two couples.



You can see that in each group of four, one couple has their backs to the stage, the other is facing the stage. The couples with their backs to the stage are referred to as the “Number one” couples; the others are the “Number two” couples. As the dance progresses, the number one couples will work their way down the hall away from the stage, while the twos will move up towards the stage.



Since everyone moves on one place, after one turn of the dance (once through the tune), there will be a couple at each end of the set with nobody to dance with.

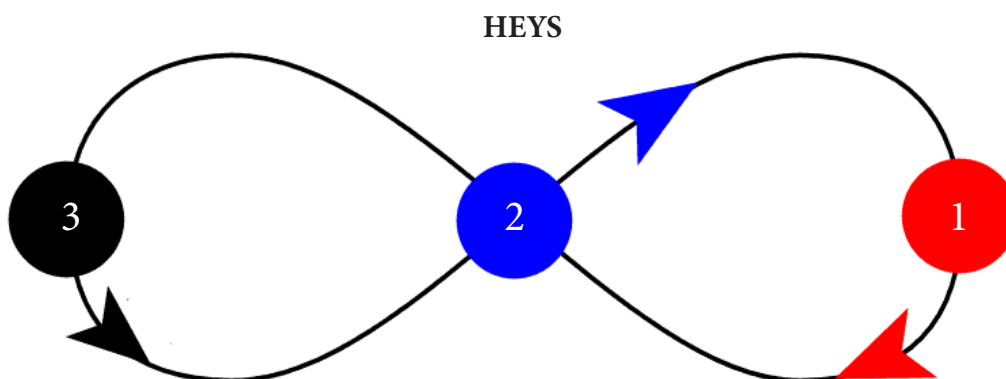


These odd couples do nothing for the next turn of the dance waiting for another couple to come to them so that they can start dancing again. When they do come back into the dance, they will have switched roles: the “number one” couple that has waited out at the bottom of the set will now dance as a “number two” couple working their way back up the set, and the “number two” couple that has waited out at the top of the set will now dance as a “number one” couple and work their way back down the set again. In English Country dancing, the roles of the ones and the twos are different, sometimes markedly so. Because of this role switch, it is a good idea to watch what the couples who are dancing your new role are doing so that you know what to do when you start the dance again.

WATCHING DANCERS

One of the things that few people teach you is how to learn a dance by watching other dancers. It took me many years before I realised that it is essential to watch just the dancer who is dancing the role that you are about to take. Try and ignore the others except as they interact with that one dancer. Imagine what it will feel like to be turning this way to face in that direction; to use this hand to connect with the dancer in that position. If you try and watch everyone, you will understand none of it.

People differ markedly in how they prefer to learn; some like to watch first, others find they must actually do it before it makes sense. Some can visualise from words quite well, others find this nearly impossible. But although you will have a preferred style, don't worry: you can train the other pathways so as to make the best use of the instructions you are given.



A hey is a weaving figure where the dancers pass each other by alternating shoulders - in principle. It can be for as many people as needed but usually it's for 3 or 4. So the weaving happens in the middle and there is a different rule for when you get to the end of the line (see 3. Ends rule). Here are detailed instructions, 3 different ways, for those who like it spelled out:

1. Technical A "Hey for 3" usually starts with the leader **1** facing two other people **2**, **3**. In this case, **1** and **2** pass by their right shoulders while **3** moves to the right. All three follow a track like a figure of 8. The leader **1**, passes **2** by the Right, passes **3** by the Left, loops Left to come back in, passes **2** Left, passes **3** Right, loops Right to place. The short form is: **Pass R, loop R, pass R; pass L, loop L, pass L**. Which is true for the middle person **2** but the others do all this except in a different order.
2. Practical Some people like the idea of always aiming to **pass through a gap** between the other two dancers. But either way, the third person to start has to hang back a bit so as to allow **1** and **2** to make their pass first. Hence the instruction to move right as their first task.
3. Ends rule At the ends in all heys, if the last pass you made was by the left, you turn left (curl around that person) to come back in and pass the next by the left also. Only then can you make a pass by the right.

In "Wooing Mairi", we have two of these heys going on at the same time but one starts by the right and the other by the left. They are Mirror Heys. The same rules apply on your own side, but because you can take hands with your partner in middle it does feel a little different - and a lot more friendly! As an end couple you pass between the middle couple, if you're a middle you go outside an end couple. The third couple hangs back a bit to let the first pairs make their first pass.

GIVING WEIGHT

Although in English Country Dancing you are not touching another person all that often, when you do have to execute a turn of some sort with another dancer, it feels very good if both people hold some tension in their arms. Without this, it feels like you are doing the move by yourself, rather like the feel of a limp handshake (shudder!) Mostly not much tension is needed and you can gauge how much by the amount of tension you get from the other dancer. But if you have to turn a long way in a short time, as in a two-hand-turn 1½, it is much easier with quite a lot of tension.

by Jacqui Morgenstein

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Dance	Choreographer	Band		Time
Dartington Hall, England Now is the Month of Maying	Jenny Beer			0:00
Pinewoods Camp, MA, USA De'il Tak' the Warr	Triple Minor version			01:14
Well Done Jack	Nathaniel Kynaston (1718)	Notorious		02:26
			Teaching	03:45
			2nd turn	05:40
			3rd turn	06:14
Benjamin's Birthday	Gary Roodman	MGM Reunion		06:50
			Teaching	08:19
			2nd turn	09:35
			3rd turn	10:09
Ore Boggy	Neal (1726)	Bare Necessities		10:50
			Teaching	12:11
			2nd turn	13:31
			3rd turn	14:06
			4th turn	14:40
Turning By Threes	Gary Roodman	MGM Reunion		15:20
			Teaching	16:19
			2nd turn	18:04
			3rd turn	18:53
Softly, Good Tummus	Kynaston (1718)	Bare Necessities		19:45
			Teaching	21:06
			2nd turn	22:48
			3rd turn	23:23
Woing Mairi	Scott Higgs	Notorious		24:00
			Teaching	24:47
			2nd turn	26:30
			3rd turn	27:04
De'il Tak' the Warr	Interpreted Andrew Shaw	Bare Necessities		27:46
			Teaching (2nd turn)	29:33
			3rd turn	31:10
Terpsicourante	Gary Roodman	MGM Reunion		32:53
			Teaching	33:44
			3rd turn	35:12
			4th turn	36:00
Benjamin's Birthday for 2 couples				36:48
Credits				36:50