



*English Country
Dance Manual*

Villiage Green English Country Dancers
Winnipeg, MB
CANADA

FOREWORD

This manual's existence is a result of the vision and dedication of Susan Stanton who has been a teacher of the Village Green English Country Dance Association for the last 15 to 20 years. John Trevenen and David Williams were the first teachers of the group. As their lives changed direction in the early 1980's, Elizabeth and a few years later, Sue began teaching. They both felt that the health of the group depended on developing a group of teachers and they encouraged experienced dancers to try teaching. They recognized a need to provide these aspiring teachers with information to enable them to teach with confidence and a need to present the dancing instruction in a standard way. To this end, Liz and Sue organized a series of training sessions.

During these sessions, there were great discussions on how to teach and dance figures, formations, and steps. These discussions were the beginning of the teaching reference manual. The writing of the manual took on a life of its own. We had many Saturday morning meetings to take a critical look at 'just how do we dance that figure', and 'just how can we describe it' in straightforward and easy-to-understand language. We wrote and rewrote and laughed at some of our interpretations; we danced and scrutinized our "form", and laughed at our many variations.

In the home stretch, we spent weekends cloistered together to concentrate on this project. It is at this point that we extend our thanks to Virginia and Wesley Stevens whose home we invaded, the wonderful coffee cakes which were provided, and thank you to Wesley who graciously welcomed these swarms of noisy teachers and who willingly appeared from his hideout to complete "sets" when a dance through was needed. Our typist, Jonathan Gilbert, tackled our script with a clear eye. He did not hesitate to ask, "did you really mean that?" or "wouldn't this phrasing be better?" Thank you, Jonathan for your clarity of thought and nimble fingers.

The teachers who worked on this manual were Elizabeth Goossen and Susan Stanton who had the foresight to encourage others to try teaching, Roger Palser and Jeannie Gilbert, the computer-literates among us who owned the laptops, Virginia Stevens who opened her doors for the weekend work sessions and was our guide through the complexities of English grammar, and Jackie Soble who kept asking "when are we going to finish this manual?" It is hard to believe it has taken almost 10 years to bring this manual to its completion. Despite all our efforts, we realize that words are a difficult medium to use to capture the essence of the dance figures and steps. There are bound to be errors and misunderstandings. It is possible to get caught up in the "right" way to dance a figure or step and lose sight of the fact that this guide was written to enhance the enjoyment of the music and the dance. We do not intend this manual to be a final statement, but rather a guide from which information can be selectively drawn and courses tailored according to the needs of any given class. We encourage you to improve and expand upon the information in this volume, and hope that this work can act as a springboard from which you can take your dancing experience in all directions.

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ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCE MANUAL

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DANCE FORMS

MINOR SET/PROGRESSIVE LONGWAYS

A dance for as many couples as wish to participate. The men, with their partners on the right face the music (top). Partners turn to face each other to form two straight lines. The dancers form groups of four (duple minor, hands four from top) or six (triple minor, hands six from top). The first couple in each sub-set is the dancing couple, and after completing the dance once, progresses one place towards the bottom or foot of the longways set. These couples continue as dancing couples (ones) to the bottom of the set. At the top and bottom of the set, the couples wait out until there are sufficient dancers to form a minor set and then continue dancing down or up the set. In a duple minor, e.g., couples are inactive for one repetition of the dance at the top or the bottom of the set and then progress down or up the set. In a triple minor set, couples are inactive for two repetitions of the dance at the top or the bottom of the set. Supporting couples progress up the set, alternating between being second or third couple.

MAJOR SET/SET DANCE

A dance in which there are a prescribed number of dancers, with usually one dancing or active couple at a time. At the end of "once through the dance", the dance may end or the dancing couple progresses down the set and the dance repeats with a new active couple at the top.

TWO-COUPLE SET DANCE

A dance in which one couple faces the other and both couples are active. This form is found as early as the renaissance, and also appears in contemporary choreography.

CIRCLE DANCES

A number of forms for circle dances exist.

1. *Big circle*: a circle of dancers all facing the centre with the women on their partners' right, e.g., Sellenger' s Round.
2. *Circle mixer*: either with all couples facing the same direction around the room with women on partner's right, or all dancers facing in with women on their partner's right. At the end of once through the music, dancers have changed partners, e.g., Gay Gordons, Lucky Seven.
3. *Sicilian circle*: couple faces couple to form a large circle. After once through the dance, the dancers progress to face a new couple. They are still facing the direction in which they started. This could be considered a duple minor longways bent into a circle, the difference being that the dancers never change numbering, e.g., Prairie Rose.

Variation: Groupings of three or four face each other and progress around keeping the same direction. Sometimes called *progressive circle*, e.g., Walpole Cottage.

SQUARES

Four couples in a square formation. Couples are numbered depending on the style of the dance. Cecil Sharp distinguishes between a square for eight, e.g., Oranges and Lemons, and a round for eight, e.g., Newcastle. Numbering is generally clockwise.

DANCE MOVEMENT AND STYLE

RELATIONSHIP OF MOVEMENT TO MUSIC

- Dynamic movement with ebbs and flows which match the music
- Movement is a physical expression of the music
- Music internalized and transformed into movement. This internalization dictates the level of energy, size and style of movement, degree of lift and buoyancy.
- Steps fall on the main beats of the bar. In duple time (2/2, 4/4, 6/8, 2/4), there are two steps per bar. In triple time (3/4, 3/2) there are three steps per bar. The time signature 6/4 can be duple or triple depending on the particular tune.

HISTORIC

English country dance movement requires dancing with one's whole body. This whole-body movement is:

Energetic	unaffected	neat
Fluid	smooth	controlled
Strong	lilting	tidy
Subtle	without exaggeration	without wasted energy
Elegant	effortless in appearance	
Relaxed	buoyant	

Since the focus is whole body movement, no individual part of the body attracts attention. All unnecessary movements are avoided. The dancer stands tall with arms and shoulders relaxed, head aligned with the spine. The body is in a line from head to foot. One can imagine the pelvis as an eggcup with the upper body resting lightly in it. The upper body of the dancer leads the dance movement (forward, backward, side to side). It might help to think of leading with the diaphragm, rather than with the chest.

The feet, while not the focus, provide the impetus and lift required. The lift needs to move from the foot to the top of the head to give the whole body the movement desired. The shoes affect how the feet contact the floor. In ballet shoes, the ball of the foot is the first point of contact and the heel often remains off the floor. In hard-soled shoes, the heel is the first point of contact, then the foot rolls through to the ball of the foot and drives forward into the next step. **Whichever type of shoe is worn, the emphasis is on lift, energy and fluidity. The appearance of the dance movement should be unaffected by the type of footwear.**

Historic dances were taught by a dancing master. Earliest published records originate in the 17th century, and the dance form remained popular throughout Europe until the late 18th century or early 19th century. Changes in fashion would have affected dance style. There was a correct way to dance each dance, and there was specific music for it. There

was no room for individual modification. The enjoyment came from learning the intricacies of the dance, and executing them so that all parts formed a perfect fit with the music – a moment of magic.

Problems:

not dancing with whole body	knees up Mother Brown
no lift	no roll-through of the feet
excessive movement of arms, knees, feet, head	dipping shoulders
being flamboyant or highly stylized	plodding, marching
failure to recognize and execute the subtleties of the dance form	airplane arms

TRADITIONAL

This dance form originated in the villages and can be considered the folk dancing of England. It is an unbroken tradition that is still evolving today. Some dances were taken over by the gentry, and modified to suit the court. These dances were the origins of the historic style.

Most of the historic descriptors (above) also apply to traditional style. The overall feeling is more relaxed, flamboyant and exuberant. The heavy solid footwear worn by villagers of the time would have affected the style and movement. Individuality of style was encouraged. Stepping, much of which has been lost, was a part of many of the dances. Reconstructive research is ongoing. The ranting in The Dorset Four-Hand Reel is an example of stepping. Improvisation within a step or figure would have occurred. Regional differences have been documented, but many have been lost.

Problems: Generally, few, since the emphasis is on participation rather than precision.

1. Lack of respect/consideration for partner(s), e.g., excessive swinging or vigour of movement.

CONTRA

Contra is an American dance form that grew from the roots of English Country Dancing and reflects the spirit of a new country. The centre of gravity is lower. Head is kept almost level, the movement is down rather than up, and there is more bend in the knees. The style was affected by limited space and the exuberant spirit of the dancers. Embellishment within the figure is acceptable. The only rules are to be home on time and not to interfere with the active couple's figure.

Whereas the handshake hold is used almost exclusively in historic and traditional English dancing, in contra, there are several acceptable handholds: handshake, arm wrestle hold, hand grasps wrist of dancer in front in star formation. The active couple is usually *improper*, i.e., man dances down the woman's side, and woman dances down the man's side. The active couple who become proper at the bottom of the set.

Problems:

1. Lack of respect/consideration for partner
2. Excessive swinging and twirling
3. Jerky movement in balance
4. Excessive embellishments may confuse newer dancers.

DANCE STEPS

BALANCE/SET

Background:

This step is a movement to acknowledge another dancer, and in former times, the "presence". In historic dances the term is 'set', in contra dances the term is 'balance'. In traditional dances 'set', 'step' and 'balance' are found. The set is light and springy, danced with upright posture, while the contra balance is lower to the ground, with the foot flatter and knees bent.

Basic movement:

A set or balance consists of a stepping movement to the right and then to the left.

Detailed technique:

The music and dance style dictate the type of set.

1. Historic '*set*': the dancer springs lightly on to the right foot, usually to the side, bringing left foot to right and shifting weight briefly to left, and then right again. Repeat to the left.
2. Contra '*balance*': the dancer steps firmly on to the right foot, swings left across and chugs (low hop) on right foot. Repeat to the left. This is not a springy step – the centre of gravity is low.
3. *Step swing*: step right, swing left across and hop right. Repeat to left. A lively figure, posture upright with a fair bit of lift.

Problems:

1. Lack of or too much springiness.
2. Omitting weight shift.
3. Problems with rhythm.
4. Lifting knees too high.
5. Shoulder dipping.

Variations:

1. *Set forward*: spring forward diagonally to the right, complete step, then spring forward diagonally to the left and complete step.
2. *Set back*: as above, but springing backwards.
3. *Set/balance*: forward and back.
4. *Set and honour*: for the woman, this is a curtsy. Step to right, close left foot behind right with knees slightly bent and weight on both feet. Men bow. Step to the right, bring feet together, and acknowledge partner with a slight bend forward from the hips. Eye contact with partner is maintained. In all forms of dance this is an acknowledgement to one's partner or another dancer.

5. In Country Dance Book volume 3 page 11, Cecil Sharp describes the set differently from Playford, whose description is given in Country Dance Book volume 2 page 41.

CHASSÉE

Basic movement:

One foot leads to the side, the other one joining it, sliding across the floor. Usually found in 3/4 time, e.g., waltz.

Detailed technique:

Usually, partners face, and take a two-hand hold. Take a step in the desired direction (it will be the right foot for one of the dancers and left for the other), slide the other foot to the foot that took a step. As the feet come together, the supporting foot rises and lowers in time to start the step again. As the feet lower the weight transfers to the foot that slid. The pattern is usually two in one direction and then two to return.

Problems:

1. Shoulders dipping.
2. Arms flapping.

Variations:

1. Ballroom hold, e.g., Bare Necessities.
2. Danced alone, e.g., Miss de Jersey's Memorial.

DANCE WALK/DANCE RUN (see [Dance Movement and Style, Historic, p. 5](#))

Basic movement:

Run or walk in time to the music, placing each foot on the floor on the beat of the music. This is a dynamic movement requiring lift. It is important to emphasize lift and forward movement.

Detailed technique:

Posture is erect and in line from head to toe. The whole body moves in the direction of the dance, forwards or backwards. The focus is on the body, not the feet. The hands and arms are relaxed at the sides, with no exaggerated motions. The steps are springy, with ankles absorbing the impact, rather than the knees. In springing from foot to foot, the heel of the foot usually contacts the floor first, rolling through to the ball of the foot and pushing off into the next step.

The dance run is a faster version of the dance walk. Again, the posture is erect, the body in line from head to toe but with a more accentuated lean in the direction of motion. The spring from foot to foot is not exaggerated. As in the walk step, the arms

are held loosely at the sides without excessive movement. This is a dynamic movement requiring lift.

Problems:

1. Steps not in time to the music.
2. Bending forward from the waist rather than leaning the whole body from the ankles. It is important not to let the upper body collapse, but rather to emphasize *lift* and *forward movement*.
3. Jogging rather than leaning the body and springing from foot to foot.
4. Exaggerated arm movements.
5. Insufficient or excessive spring.

Variations:

1. *Contra walk*: this is a walk that is low to the ground, with the knees slightly bent and the heel making contact with the floor first. The motion over the floor is a smoother movement when compared to the more springy basic dance walk step.
2. *Double*: a basic country dance step beginning with the right foot, dancing three steps and then bringing the feet together. May be danced forwards or backwards. The dancing of the double step can vary: a) the closing step may be smooth with very little movement, more like a pause; b) some dances call for a slight bounce with a closing step; c) some instructions call for a lift with the free leg swinging forward and across the other leg.

RANT

Background:

It often is used in traditional dances and is one example of stepping. The northern style is very fast and "shimmery".

Basic movement:

It is either a stationary step, or a travelling sequence of steps. When stationary, two hops are taken on one foot, prior to transferring the weight to the other foot, where the sequence is repeated. When travelling, a skip change of step is used, with emphasis on the first beat, and feet do not close.

Detailed technique:

Stationary: Posture is upright. Hop left and tap ball of right foot in front, hop left and step on to right or transfer weight to right foot. Repeat to the right. Hop right and tap left ball of foot in front, hop right again and transfer weight to left foot. The tap in front falls on the first beat of the bar and follows the hop by a marginal amount of time giving a buoyant, syncopated rhythm. No weight is transferred to the foot that is tapping in front.

Potáto chips, potáto chips, potáto chips.

HL TR HL SR HR TL HR SL HL TR HL SR

(H = Hop, T = Tap, S = Step, L & R = Left & Right.)

Travelling: Although similar to skip change of step (see below), the hop is on the pickup and emphasis on the first beat. Feet do not close. The sound of the feet tapping the floor should be the same in both the stationary and travelling rants.

Problems:

1. Body sagging.
2. Floppy feet.
3. Excessive arm waving.
4. Excessive knee action.
5. Incorrect rhythm.

Notes:

1. A low-impact version uses bouncing on the feet instead of lifting the body off the floor.
2. May replace polka steps.
3. Also called 'stepping' dancers would devise their individual steps.

SKIP CHANGE OF STEP

Basic movement:

Hop step, close step moving forward. Similar to Scottish Country skip change of step, but more relaxed and without emphasis on third position and pointed feet.

Detailed technique:

Hop on left, step forward on right, left foot closes and takes weight as right foot steps forward again. Then, hop right and step on left, etc.

Problems:

1. Insufficient lift causing lack of forward movement. Step degenerates into a shuffle.
2. Hopping at end of step instead of beginning.
3. Not closing the feet after hop step.

Variations:

1. With ballroom hold, it is danced from side to side, a quarter turn on each hop, like an old-time polka. The hop is on the pickup to the first beat.

WALTZ

Background:

Not found in early dances, but once the waltz became popular, it found its way into English Country dances, e.g., the Duke of Kent's Waltz, published in 1801. The step is found in dances set to 3/4 time.

Basic movement:

The travelling waltz step in English Country Dancing is a lilting rhythmic dance walk. It is used in figures such as lead, cast, turn single, crossover and rights and lefts. In a dance-round figure, partners would assume the usual ballroom hold.

Detailed technique:

May be danced solo or with a partner in which case the inside hands are joined. A "long, short, short" lilting walking step is used (the feet pass each other with every step and never close together as in the *ballroom waltz step*). The first or long step is accentuated and knees are slightly bent; the two short steps are on the balls of the feet. However, the long and short describe the length of the step and not the amount of time used for each step. The long and short steps take the same amount of time.

The waltz step can be used in a dance round figure or for waltzing in place. Couples turn clockwise but the figure moves counter-clockwise. When dancing with a partner using ballroom hold (see swing), the feet come together. Usually, this occurs on the second beat, allowing time for a pivot to change direction on the third beat.

Problems:

1. In ballroom hold, forgetting to shift weight between each group of steps may cause the couple to trip over each other's feet.
2. In travelling waltz step, the feet closing creates a stilted movement and the dancer may not reach his/her place in time.
3. The steps must each take the same amount of time even though the first is long and the second two are short.
4. Too much bending of the knee on the long step distorts the fluid movement; too much rigidity of the knees on the short steps likewise causes a stilted movement.

Variations:

1. When danced at a fast pace, the step shortens and becomes bouncier

FIGURES

ALLEMANDE

Background:

The term allemande is used to describe two different figures. In contra dances "*allemande right and left*" is turn by the right/left (see "Turns"). "*Allemande*" is found in a few English country dances and is described below. This figure does not occur frequently and can be considered a variation of arming.

Basic movement:

Two dancers dance once round, facing in opposite directions, arms linked behind their backs.

Detailed technique:

Two dancers approach right shoulder to right shoulder, link right arms, and put left arms behind their own backs to grasp the extended right hand of the other dancer. They move forward once round looking at each other, then separate and dance out to places. This is a smooth movement. "*Allemande reverse*," or "*Allemande left*" is left shoulder to left shoulder.

Problems:

1. Difficulty with entry into arm positions.
2. Too little eye contact.
3. Hand grasp not complete.
4. Not releasing hold soon enough.

ARMING (RIGHT AND LEFT)

Basic movement:

Two dancers link right (or left) arms and dance once round in an oval path, separating to curve into place. It is usually done first by the right and then by the left.

Detailed technique:

Begin dancing in an oval path, linking arms below or at the elbow when beside (or meeting) partner, dancing and releasing hold in time to return to place. There should be no pause as dancers link or let go, no jerkiness or distortion to the oval path they are dancing. Tension, and connection between dancers, gives arming its dynamic feel. Tension should be equal and balanced.

Problems:

1. One person using too little or too much force (limp arms/vice grip).
2. Dancers not compensating for different heights.

3. Bending and flexing arms too much.
4. Waving the other arm around.
5. Not letting go in time.
6. Last minute backing into place.

Variations:

1. According to Cecil Sharp, the turn is danced completely round while arms are linked, and then dancers fall back into place.
2. Certain historical dress would suggest linking lower forearms rather than elbows when arming.
3. Cup partner's elbow with hand, keeping thumb beside fingers to prevent pain in partner's upper arm.

BACK TO BACK

Basic movement:

Dancers approach, pass backs, and fall back to place.

Detailed technique:

Dancers remain facing same direction throughout figure. Dancers, facing, move toward each other and dance just past each other by the right shoulders, dance sideways to pass backs, and fall back, passing left shoulders to place. May be danced passing by the left.

Problems:

1. Collisions.
2. Making the figure too big.
3. Adding twirls in historic dances.

Variations:

1. In contra dancing the figure is called "do-si-do"; it is danced wider, often with twirls.

CAST

Basic movement:

Cast off or down/cast off (down) 'n 'places: face up, turn out and move down the outside of the set. When this figure is used for progression, the usual call is "*ones cast while twos dance up*".

Cast up: face down, turn out and move up the outside of the set.

Dancers cast off and dance as wide an arc as music permits, ending the figure by curving into their new place.

Detailed technique:

Cast off and dance behind the lines. Usually this figure is started facing one's partner. Partners make eye contact before turning away. When both casting and moving down the outside of the set, partners keep parallel with each other and look at each other frequently, although not continuously, throughout the figure.

Problems:

1. Failing to cover with partner.
2. Pivoting in place when starting the cast.
3. Posture of dancers – failing to maintain upright position, i.e., leaning toward partner instead of coming together, e.g., The Hole in the Wall, Fandango.

Variations:

1. In historic dances, the cast is sometimes more leisurely, with dancers stepping slightly towards partners before turning away.
2. *Assisted cast*: In contra, is usually done after dancing "down the middle and back". With nearer arms around each other's waist, the active couple continues to move forward, while the supporting dancers back up. In historic dances, nearer hands are joined, maintaining arms in 'W' position. The pivot point is then between the two dancers, who stand side by side to form a plane, sometimes called gates, e.g., Dublin Bay.
3. *Cuddle and cast*: at end of a one-hand turn, the dancers, keeping hands joined, both face the top of the set and come shoulder to shoulder (cuddle) prior to cast, e.g., Fandango.
4. Circle then cast. When the cast is at the end of a circle, dancers who are casting help each other by continuing to keep hands joined as they turn to face up the set, letting go only in time to cast off.
5. Cross and cast: see "Change places/Cross", below

CHANGE PLACES/CROSS**Basic movement:**

Dancers exchange places by passing right shoulders, unless otherwise directed, turn to the right and end facing each other as before (unless dance instructions direct otherwise).

Detailed technique:

Partners cross: partners cross and curve into place. Their path is like a letter 'J'. Partners acknowledge each other with eye contact, and a slight turn towards each other.

Corners cross: it is a curved path, a half oval, dancers maintaining gentle eye contact.

Problems:

1. No eye contact.
2. Turning the wrong direction into place.
3. Finishing too soon.

Variations:

1. *Cross and cast*: danced with or without hands. Cross, looking at partner, dance through partner's place and behind designated number of dancers to finish on the opposite side. This is **not** in fact a cast but a cross and a continuous movement behind the line of dance. The call "*cross and cast*" can cause confusion and result in dancers adding a twirl before they cast off.
2. Occasionally danced giving right or left hands.
3. Where time allows, dancers just pass, turn to face in to the center, and fall back to place; sometimes called as "change places by Hole in the Wall".
4. Dance across set, past opposite's line of dance, then curve back into line of dance on that side, using full phrase of music, e.g., Bridge of Athlone.

CIRCLE, THREE / FOUR / SIX / EIGHT HANDS ROUND**Basic movement:**

The designated number of dancers join hands to form a ring and dance to the left or right with a slip step, walk, or other step.

Detailed technique:

Slip step circle: a good circle is one in which the dancers are equidistant; they start and stop together, and the circular shape is maintained. The dancers, facing inward, position their arms in a 'W' shape with the upper arm away from the body and the hands held between shoulder and waist height. Tension is maintained between each dancer while they lean slightly backward, keeping their bodies in a straight line from head to foot. Looking across the circle at the dancer opposite helps to maintain the roundness of the circle. When the circle is danced round and back, the dancers take seven steps to the left, bring their feet together and prepare to dance in the opposite direction.

Walking or ranting circle: The arm position is the same as for the slip step circle, but the lower part of the body is turned to travel in the direction of the circle. The upper part of the body should face into the circle as much as possible so the dancer can maintain gentle eye contact with the opposite dancer. The circle should move strongly at the beginning, slowing to prepare for the change of direction or completion of the figure.

Problems:

1. Loss of arm position and insufficient tension in arms.

2. Twisting the back arm so that elbow is up and wrist is down.
3. Lack of preparation for changing direction (feet and arms).
4. Not looking at the opposite dancer.
5. Leaning forward or to one side.
6. Poor slip step – not picking up feet or dragging one foot, not closing feet.
7. Pulling other dancers off balance or moving circle too fast for all dancers.
8. Unbalanced circle because not all dancers are moving with equal energy.

Variations:

1. Circle halfway round to change orientation of the dance.
2. Circle may be drawn into center and dancers back up into place.
3. Move the circle by repeatedly balancing in and out to next place, e.g., Come, Let's Be Merry.
4. Back ring: Circle, facing out, hands held either below or above waist level.

CORNER, PARTNER, CORNER, PARTNER

Background:

Most often found in triple-major and triple-minor dances.

Basic movement:

From the position of the second couple, the active dancers turn the persons to the diagonal right (first corners), then each other, then the persons to the diagonal left (second corners), and lastly, each other again.

Detailed technique:

From second position in a triple dance, the active couple turn their first corners, usually by the right hand/arm, or with two hands. They release their hold with corners when facing back into the set (3/4 turn), the active couple turning each other and moving to their second corners. The figure is finished with the active couple turning each other again. Supporting dancers, or corners, continue dancing smoothly to place.

Problems:

1. Active dancers becoming disoriented and failing to find the correct corner.
2. Failing to release corners in time to make a smooth curve in to meet partner.
3. Corners failing to complete turns to place.

Variations:

1. The figure may be initiated, e.g., Prince William, from top position, with first man crossing in front of his partner to turn third woman at the bottom of the set, while second couple moves to top position, and first woman crosses the dance to meet her first corner (second man).

2. If figure ends the dance, the active couple often meet after turning second corners, and dance to the bottom of the set to progress.

DANCE-ROUND

Basic movement:

Couples using one of a variety of steps, e.g., waltz, take ballroom hold (see Swing) and dance counter-clockwise round each other.

Detailed technique:

With men positioned back to back, partners take ballroom hold. Couples turn clockwise but the figure moves counter-clockwise. Figure begins with men moving towards their left (leading hand) around the other couple, ending either in starting place or progressed place. Figure often describes a diamond shape on the floor.

Problems:

1. Hesitation in assuming the ballroom hold, especially when women are dancing the men's part. This may prevent completion of the figure in time.
2. Knowing which direction to start the dance round (i.e., towards men's left).
3. Allowing the figure to get too large.

Variations:

Figure may be danced half round or one-and-a-half times to progress, and may be danced with a variety of steps, e.g., waltz, polka, buzz, rant, step hop, Schottische.

DOWN THE MIDDLE AND BACK

Background:

In historical dances the figure was stately and dignified. Traditional dances required drive and purpose in the lead down. The man definitely led his partner. The informality of contra dancing allows for creativity in dancing the figure – twirls, stepping, swinging etc.

Basic movement:

The man leads his partner, with hands joined, down the middle of the set and returns to place.

Detailed technique:

Nearer hand lead: The dancers stand side by side, join inside hands with the arms well extended. The man may be slightly ahead of his partner. The timing of the figure is as follows: down for four bars turn toward the centre (changing hands) at the end of the fourth bar, lead up for three bars and out to place on the fourth. When this figure is

followed by a cast, the lead down is in a dance walk, the turn remains on the fourth bar, but the lead up is done at a faster pace, i.e., skip change of step.

Right hand lead: With right hands joined the sense of leading the partner is achieved by making eye contact, the man turning his upper body towards his partner and extending his arm well out at approximately waist level. The woman's arm, while more bent, is still held away from the body. With this hold the couple is able to turn at the bottom without letting go hands while remaining on their own side, by simply turning towards each other.

Problems:

1. The man not leading the woman with purpose – arms inadequately extended.
2. Phrasing the figure poorly: turning late and not finishing in time.
3. Not dancing strongly, the figure degenerating into an amble.
4. When the figure ends with a cast, poor phrasing by first couple making the move up difficult for second couple.

Variations:

1. Cecil Sharp suggests that the turn after the lead down can be done by turning the woman under the joined hands counter clockwise.
2. Slip step back to place with both hands joined.
3. *Turn as a couple* to end on opposite sides:
 - a. Hands joined right in right, man continues walking around his partner while raising their joined arms so that the lady turns under easily.
 - b. With nearer hands joined, the man backs up while the woman walks forward to change places.

FIGURE OF EIGHT

Basic movement:

It is a weaving figure in which a dancer passes between two standing dancers and dances round them in a figure eight pattern.

Detailed technique:



The dancers trace a figure of eight on the floor. Three dancers are involved; two standing and one moving. The active dancer passes between the standing couple round the one he/she is facing, back between the couple and around the other standing

dancer, to finish in place. Once moving, the dancer never turns back on him/herself. The loops of the figure of eight are made as large as possible.

When a couple is dancing a figure eight round another couple, the man lets his partner pass in front of him each time they dance between the standing couple.

The dancers should move strongly when dancing between the standing couple, using a catch step or skip change of step and slowing to a dance walk when dancing round the standing dancer. Halfway through the figure, the active dancers are moving through their partner's place.

Problems:

1. Woman not cutting through the centre quickly enough.
2. Dancing too close to standing couple when dancing around them.
3. Not phrasing the figure properly- should be halfway at the end of half of the musical phrase.
4. No change in dynamics of movement.
5. Covering with partner when two figures of eight are danced simultaneously, e.g., Fandango.

Variations:

1. Half figure eight.
2. Double figure eight – two couples dance a figure eight simultaneously; one couple casts to begin and the other cuts the eight to begin. There is no standing couple to dance around, but each couple dances a full figure eight.

GRAND CHAIN

[see Circular Hey, p. 23](#)

HANDS ACROSS/STAR

Basic movement:

Dancers join either right or left hands diagonally across the set, in a handshake hold, and dance in the direction they are facing. A common figure is right hands across followed by left hands back.

Detailed technique:

Dancers move strongly into the figure, then join right hands in a handshake hold. They slow for the change of direction, then move strongly into the left hands across. End the figure by letting go of hands in time to dance smoothly into place. Dancers should maintain equal spacing. For smaller or faster stars, there is more flexion in the arms.

There are several conventions as to whose hands are on top: a) First man and his corner on top; b) whoever joins hands first; c) First lady and her corner on top; d) the shortest individual and corner join beneath the other couple (this is the more common practice).

Problems:

1. Hands often incorrectly joined; no basic handshake hold taken.
2. Hands held too high.
3. Not enough arm tension given to aid strong movement.
4. Poor phrasing-not anticipating the change in direction, or finishing late.
5. Backing into place.
6. Not knowing clearly where figure finishes.
7. Not maintaining equal distance between the dancers

Variations:

1. Contra dances – the figure is called a star – the handshake hold is sometimes replaced by a wrist-hold, which is done by placing one's hand on the outstretched wrist of the person ahead – making a square shape, each hand grasping a wrist.
2. Hands across for three – two dancers take handshake hold, the third dancer places his/her hand on top.
3. A turn away from the center (left) before returning by left.

HEY

Background:

The word hey means to weave. Hey is the term used to describe the figure in historic dance; reel is sometimes used in contras; and both terms are used in traditional dances. Heys can be done with almost any step, depending on the style of the dance.

Basic movement:

It is a weaving figure for three or more dancers, without hands unless otherwise specified. There are two basic types of heys – **straight** heys and **circular** heys.

Straight Heys

Detailed technique:

Straight hey for four:

Dancers form a line. The two in the middle stand back-to-back, the two on the ends are facing them. In a right shoulder hey, the dancers begin by passing right shoulders. On reaching the end of the line each dancer makes a whole turn, bearing right, and re-enters the figure by the right. In the middle, dancers pass left shoulders. Finish the figure in original places. This same pattern can be used for six, eight, etc., dancers. Partners face each other to begin.

Straight hey for three:

In a straight line, the first dancer faces down, the other two face up. In a right shoulder hey for three, first and second dancers pass right shoulders, while third dancer moves to the right. Each dancer continues to dance a figure eight pattern, to return to place. This figure can begin with the left shoulder. When two lines of three are dancing at the same time, the heys may be *parallel* or *mirror*. In *parallel heys*, both sides start with the same shoulder. In *mirror heys* they start with the opposite shoulder.

All dancers start at the same time. They complete the figure without changing direction or looping back on themselves. The figure is phrased so that halfway through the music the dancers are halfway through the hey. Make the loops as wide as possible. If the hey is being done simultaneously by different groups (men, women) remember to cover with the corresponding dancer.

Problems:

1. Delayed start by any dancer.
2. Turning back on oneself.
3. Poor phrasing, i.e., being more or less than halfway through the figure at mid-phrase, especially a concern in eight bar heys for three.
4. Too narrow a figure of eight, losing the loops.
5. Leading with shoulder.
6. Holding on too long in a hey with hands.
7. Excessive arm movement.

Variations of hey for four:

1. The middle dancers may face each other to start, requiring a delayed start for other dancers.
2. Hey in a star formation can be danced with two perpendicular lines of four.
3. In a left shoulder hey the initial pass is by the left, and the pass in the middle is by the right.

Variations of hey for three:

1. *Crossover hey*: The three couples begin dancing the hey at the same time. The first couple crosses over and heys on the opposite side. The first woman passes in front of her partner and goes between second and third men, giving a left shoulder to the third man. Meanwhile the first man, going between the second and third women passes right shoulder with the third woman. Continue to weave on the opposite side to partner's place. As the first couple crosses, the second couple faces up and begins the hey by dancing out and up. At the same time, the third couple moves in and up to begin their hey, letting the first couple pass in front. Repeat the figure with the first couple crossing over and continuing the figure on their own side, first woman passing between the two women and the first man passing between the two

men. There are a few dances where all three couples cross over as they go through the first place. This is called '*crossover for three couples*'.

2. *The Morris hey*: Dancers in first and third positions cast to begin; dancers in second position start by moving in and up. This is a mirror hey.
3. *Sheepskin hey*: This is not a true hey, but rather a weaving figure around standing dancers (as in 'Picking up Sticks'). "Using a skip step, first man, followed by second and third men, crosses above the first woman and begins to weave around the standing women. First man passes second woman left and third woman right, second and third men following. When the third man (at the end of the line) has passed the second woman, he reverses direction by going completely around her, and weaves back, leading the hey up a line, followed by first and second men. When the second man (now at the end of the line) reaches the second woman, he does the same, dancing completely around her and reversing the direction of the hey, followed by the third and first men. When the first man becomes the end of the line and reaches the second woman, he does the same, weaves back up to the top and leads the line in a cast off to his right, around behind the women, across the bottom of the set and up to original place." (Keller and Shimer¹). Women repeat the figure around the men.
4. *Shetland hey*: This is a shadow hey in which dancers follow their partners closely, dancing as a unit so that six people dance a hey for three.
5. *Dolphin hey*: This is a variation of a shadow hey. It is well described by David Millstone and Allison Thompson ([CD+S online Vol2, April 2019](#)) as "a hey/reel-of-three for four dancers, with one couple dancing as a unit, one behind the other. As that paired couple reaches the outer end of the hey, the trailing dancer turns the corner closely to take the lead in the hey and the original leading dancer becomes the follower. This moment of overtaking is the flirtatious, "fun" part of the hey. For a visual, imagine a pas de deux of silvery dolphins cutting through blue waters, the one in the rear leaping playfully ahead of the first only to be overtaken again."

Circular Heys

Detailed technique:

The dancers stand in a circle, each dancer facing another. Each person dances in the direction they are facing, alternately passing right and left shoulders until they return home. The circular aspect of the figure is very important. The dancers are evenly spaced around the circle. When passing, two dancers create an oval, because each

¹ Keller, Kate Van Winkle and Genevieve Shimer. 1994. *The Playford Ball*. 103 Early English Country Dances. 2nd ed. The Country Dance and Song Society. 120pp.

dancer travels in an arc. This figure is sometimes danced giving hands and known as *rights and lefts* (four dancers) or *grand chain* (six or more dancers).

Circular hey for four:

Two couples, facing their partners to begin, pass right shoulders across the dance, left on the sides, right across and left on the sides to return home. Occasionally, this begins with the dancers facing on the sides, as opposed to facing across the dance.

Circular hey for six:

In a long ways set, the top couple faces across the dance and the second and third couples face down and up, respectively.

Circular hey for eight:

The top and bottom couples face across the dance to begin, and the middle dancers face on the sides.

Problems:

1. Dancing in a square rather than a circle in a circular hey for four, i.e., creating corners rather than curves.
2. Turning back on oneself.
3. Phrasing.
4. Holding on to hands too long
5. Not knowing correct direction to start the hey.

Variations:

1. *Progressive hey*: The top couple faces each other. The remaining couples face up. The top couple initiates the figure by passing right shoulders and the remaining dancers enter the hey when met by first man or woman. Once in the hey, dancers continue until home. Therefore, the first couple finishes the hey first.
2. *Right and Left through*: in contra, circular hey for four is known as *right and left through (and back)*. Dancers cross with or without hands. Dancers change places on the side, with lady moving forwards and man backwards. Dancers remain side by side with the man moving backwards as strongly as the woman moves forwards, thus maintaining a flat plane. This may be done without hands, or, more often, with an assisted turn, or occasionally, with arms around partner's waist. This is a "square" figure.

Problems:

1. Some dance instructions are unclear as to whether halfway or return to place.
 2. Failing to remain shoulder to shoulder in the same plane in the turn on the side.
-

HONOUR/SET AND HONOUR

Background:

It is the acknowledgement of one's partner at the beginning and end of the dance. This may be as brief as a nod of the head or a full bow/curtsey.

Basic movement:

Women curtsey, men bow. Women who are dancing as men curtsey.

Detailed technique:

Curtsey: Small step to right, bring left foot behind and bend. As knees straighten, step to left and bring feet together. Weight stays on the front foot; the back foot helps to maintain balance. Arms remain relaxed at sides or hold skirt.

Bow: Men, with arms relaxed at the side, take a small step, usually to the right, and bring heels together, bend slightly forward from the waist, maintaining gentle eye contact. Weight is evenly distributed on both feet. The speed and depth of the honour depends on the amount of music.

Problems:

1. Not maintaining eye contact.
2. Not keeping time with the music.
3. Using arms in an affected manner.

Variations:

1. If the music begins with only a pick-up note the honour becomes a nod of the head to acknowledge partner.
2. *Set and honour:* Curtsey/bow is done to the right and the left. Women step to the right, bringing left foot behind right slowly and curtsey, then step to the left bringing the right foot behind the left. Men step to the right and bring feet together and bow, then repeat to the left.

LADIES' CHAIN

It is found in early historic dances, but appears more commonly in traditional and contra dances.

Basic movement:

Two couples face, men with a woman on their right. Women change places by giving right hands and turn the man they meet on the opposite side by the left. Repeat to places.

Detailed technique:

In historic English country dance, after the ladies' right-hand pass, they turn their opposite once round by the left (not assisted). The man curves out to the right, ready to offer a left hand to the woman he meets. The man essentially dances two large circles on the sides, one with his partner and one with his contrary. This figure is open and flowing.

In contra and traditional English style, the turns on the side of the dance make the figure more compact. Turns on the side may be assisted or Northumbrian. In the assisted turn, while still holding the woman's left hand, the man places his right hand on the small of her back (**her** right hand is placed behind her back as well) and gently guides her around the turn, the woman dancing forward while the man backs up. In the Northumbrian turn, left arms are raised, woman turns clockwise halfway under raised arms. The man passes her behind him as he steps to the left and takes her left hand in his right.

Problems:

1. Men not moving or not in position to turn the woman.
2. Wrong hand offered to begin figure.
3. Confusion in orientation or direction of the chain across the set or up and down the set.
4. Use of inappropriate style, e.g., a contra turn in a historic dance.

Variations:

1. *Ladies' chain half*, as its name implies, the women change places and remain on that side of the dance. In contra, this is often called *ladies' chain across*.
2. *Men's chain*: the men initiate the figure, usually giving left hand and then turning with the right on the sides.
3. Men begin the figure by casting into position to turn women.

LEAD

Background:

The lead is an important component of such figures as up a *double and back*, down the *middle and up*, and *lead away and back*.

Basic movement:

Dancers take hands and move forward together using the step defined by the dance. The man, or lower number dancer, offers hand palm up. Usually nearer hands are joined, however, right-in-right may also be used.

Detailed technique:

The man initiates the figure by offering his hand palm up to his partner. He extends his slightly bent arm well in front. The hands should be no higher than chest height of the

shorter dancer. Both dancers should maintain tension in their arms and upper body. Both dancers are turned slightly toward each other. Right-in-right offers more support for faster movements. Eye contact should be made occasionally during the figure.

Problems:

1. Incorrect height of hands.
2. Arms too straight or too bent.
3. Partners too near or too far away from each other.
4. Insufficient tension in arms and upper body.

Variations:

1. Line of three (Walpole Cottage) with centre person leading.
2. Line of four.
3. Right-in-right down the middle and return up the middle with promenade hold.

POUSSETTE

Background:

Meaning 'little push' from the French *pousser*. Relatively uncommon figure.

Basic movement:

Partners face each other, joining hands with arms slightly bent, and dance round the adjacent couple up or down the set.

Detailed technique:

First man pushes his partner back a double on a diagonal, then pulls her forward a double to progressed position. Meanwhile, second man and his partner move in the opposite direction (he pulls while first man pushes). Halfway through the musical phrase, both couples will be in progressed places and covering in the center of the dance, ready to begin the second half. The first man now pulls and pushes his partner to return to original position while second man first pushes and then pulls.

Problems:

1. Aggressive pushing or pulling.
2. Forgetting in which direction to move.
3. Spaghetti arms, or excessive movement of arms.

Variations:

1. All men push, e.g., Sicilian Circle.
2. Half pousette can be used for progression.

PROMENADE

Background:

It is usually found in traditional and contra dances. Promenade may be used by one couple (*promenading the ring*) to acknowledge other couples or by all the dancers facing one direction, as in a big circle (e.g., Le Bonhomme). In a duple minor set couples dance *half promenade* to change places.

Basic movement:

Two dancers move round a specified path in a clockwise/counter-clockwise direction. The path is described in each dance. Partners are side by side and have right hands joined over left. Usually the women is on the right side of the man.

Detailed technique:

The man is slightly behind his partner. There should be sufficient tension in the arms to allow the man to lead the woman around the path. The right arm is the directing arm.

Problems:

1. Lack of tension in the arms.
2. The dancers being too far apart.

Variations:

1. In a contra dance the hand-hold and the exit out of the figure may vary.
2. Promenade is sometimes referred to as *promenade the ring*, or *promenade the circle*.

RHAPSODY (formerly known as GYPSY)

Basic movement:

Dancers travel a clockwise or counter-clockwise path around each other to place.

Detailed technique:

It is similar to a two hand turn without hands. The path is elliptical. In a clockwise rhapsody, the upper torso is turned to maintain face-to-face orientation, i.e., the right shoulder is pulled back. Keep gentle eye contact throughout the figure. When danced counter-clockwise, the left shoulder is pulled back.

Problems:

1. Failure to maintain eye contact.
2. Exaggerated leaning towards each other.
3. Penguin arms or primordial fighting pose.

Variations:

1. The rhapsody can be danced facing outward both clockwise and counter-clockwise. Eye contact with partner is maintained over the leading shoulder.

RIGHTS AND LEFTS

[see Circular Hey, p. 23](#)

SIDING: GENTLE AND FULL

Background:

The figure was interpreted by C. Sharp in one manner (full siding), but since then has been reinterpreted quite differently by Pat Shaw and others (gentle siding). Currently, either method may be danced. It is found mainly in historic style dances.

Basic movement:

Full siding: Partners change places by the left shoulder in a curved path, pivot to change direction, and return to place by the same curved path (i.e., by the right shoulder; => half rhapsody).

Gentle siding: Partners face each other, approach right/left shoulders, then fall back into place. Repeat with other shoulder, depending on the dance.

Detailed technique:

Full siding: Partners pass each other by the left shoulder, following a curved path, ending with the feet together, heels off the floor and weight forward, ready to return. This requires four steps, pivoting on the third step and bringing feet together on the fourth. Dancers follow the same path back to place, beginning with the right foot. Gentle eye contact should be maintained throughout.

Gentle siding: Partners dance forward a double, approaching right shoulders, turning to face slightly, then back a double to places. Repeat left. Stronger momentum should be given to the first steps of the phrase to give ebb and flow to the figure. The challenge is to continue to dance even when having very little distance to travel.

Problems:

Full siding:

1. Not moving strongly enough to turn and be ready to return to place.
2. Turning the wrong way, due to breaking eye contact.
3. Coming to a full stop half way through.
4. Siding by right instead of left.

Gentle siding:

1. Lack of eye contact.
2. Siding by wrong shoulder.
3. Bending knees or bobbing as dancers meet.
4. Mincing steps.
5. Poor phrasing and timing (stopping halfway through the figure).
6. Dancing past partner.

SWING**Background:**

A figure that is usually found in traditional or contra dances.

Basic movement:

Partners hold each other firmly in one of a variety of holds, using a buzz, walking, step hop, or ranting step to move around each other as fast as they wish for as long as the musical phrase lasts.

Holds:

1. *Ballroom Hold*: man places right hand just below woman's left shoulder blade. Woman's left arm rests (elbow to shoulder) on man's right upper arm. She places her right hand in his left. Maintain this "frame".
2. *Cross-hand Hold*: Handshake hold, right-in-right, left-in-left (infrequently used).
3. *Australian*: Place right hand on partner's waist. Join left hands under right arms. This places the partners more side-by-side than face-to-face.
4. *Open Contra Hold*: With partners facing and bodies offset slightly to the left, each partner put their right hand on their partner's back. Then join left hands overhead (to create the fancy display) and each pivot clockwise to swing (the weight of the centrifugal force of the swing is kept against the right hands on each back). To exit, drop left hands and open up.

Buzz step swing:**Detailed technique:**

From an article by Carl Dreher in a Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS) newsletter:

"Practise on your own.

Step 1. Place right foot forward on the ground. Sink onto the right foot and step back onto the left foot, lifting the right foot a bit. Repeat, emphasizing the SINK. Stay in rhythm, "SINK, lift, SINK, lift, SINK, lift ... " Slowly at first!!!

Step 2. Pick up the tempo a bit.

Step 3. Start doing the SINK-lift in a little circle around yourself, scooting forward a few inches on each SINK. The right foot slides² forward a bit each time. It is not really taking a step. Start slowly and pick up the tempo.

Step 4. Find yourself a partner and take a ballroom hold (see choice of holds below).

Step 5. Repeat steps 1 to 3, starting slowly.

Step 6. Congratulate yourself. You have just begun to learn a very difficult step."

Problems:

1. Right foot "cemented" to the floor.
2. Being out of sync with partner.
3. Not maintaining frame.
4. Not finishing in time for next figure.
5. Not being considerate of partner, e.g., swinging too fast.
6. Leaning in towards partner.

Variations:

1. Walking (see below)
2. Step hop
3. Ranting

Walking swing:

Detailed technique:

Taking an Australian or ballroom hold, with dancers more offset than in buzz swing, walk a circle taking small steps. Centre of gravity is low.

TURN SINGLE

Background:

Mainly found in historic style dances.

Basic movement:

It is a solo turn for one person, usually to the right. This takes four dance walk steps and should trace a circle on the floor. Note: this is NOT a spin on one foot.

Detailed technique:

The circle danced should be as large as possible. The dancer should dance slightly inside the set to begin the turn single. The arms are held comfortably at one's side to assist the momentum of the turn. It is a strong, fluid movement involving the whole body.

² With non-slip rubber soles, lift foot slightly to maintain correct pivot position

Turn single right means travelling in a clockwise direction, and turn single left means travelling in a counter-clockwise direction.

Problems:

1. Spinning on one foot/pivoting.
2. Dipping shoulders.
3. Taking mincing steps.
4. Turning in the wrong direction.
5. Not ending in starting place.

Variations:

1. *Turn single, moving forward as you turn*, e.g., Apley House or Faithless Nancy Dawson.
2. Often in combination with other figures which may modify the form.
3. *Balance and turn single*: the turn single changes if the dancer moves forward on the balance, i.e., takes the dancer out to place.

URNS

Basic movement:

Dancers join hands, right, left or both, and, giving weight/pulling slightly away from each other, move round one another.

Right/left turn

Detailed technique:

When turning right or left, partners join hands in a handshake hold, elbows slightly bent, about chest height. Dancers maintain equal tension, with body turned in the direction of movement, heads turned to make gentle eye contact. The clasped hands provide a pivotal point that remains stationary. The dancers begin the circular path, joining hands when they can and letting go in time to dance to place without losing the shape of the figure. For quicker turns, the elbows are more bent, with an increase in tension.

Two-hand turns

Detailed technique:

Partners face and take hands at chest height, elbows bent and arms held wide. Hands are dropped in time to allow dancers to dance into place, rather than backing into place. The turn is clockwise. *Once round* indicates a full turn to place; *half round* will end in partner's place.

Problems:

1. Inadequate tension in the arms.

2. Arms are held too straight or too high.
3. Elbows tucked in.
4. Lack of energy in entry.
5. Holding on too long.
6. Not maintaining a flat plane, or straight line, with each other (180°), when turning by the right or left.
7. Dipping an outside/inside shoulder in *right/left turn*.

Variations:

1. Two-hand turn may be done with dancers quite offset, almost side by side. This creates a pivot point at the joined hands, and gives feeling of a swing.
2. *Turns on the side of the dance*: nearer hands joined, the dancer going through the centre of the set dances forward while the other backs up. The pivotal point is between the two dancers and a flat plane must be maintained. This is sometimes called "eggbeater" or "gates".
3. *Assisted turn*: see Ladies' chain.
4. Modified handhold may be used in some contra dances (arm-wrestle hold, elbow grab).
5. *Two-hand turn halfway and fall back into place*. Hands may be crossed, e.g., Zephyrs and Flora.

UP A DOUBLE AND BACK

Background:

This figure is prominent in many of the early 17th and 18th century set dances. It was characterized as one of the three basic verse figures in many early dances. The other two figures were siding and arming. These three figures, usually separated by a chorus, would provide a format for many dances. This very formal and stately figure was thought to have honoured the "presence".

Basic movement:

The dancers face up the set, nearer hands joined, and dance a double step forward and back (also see [double step, and Dance walk step](#), pp. 9-10). Three steps and close feet, ready to fall back a double to place. This is often repeated.

Detailed technique:

The man extends his arm mid-way between waist and chest height, elbow slightly bent, and offers his hand to his partner. She places her hand in his, fingers slightly clasped (Bruce Hamilton suggests joining hands at sides and imagining a balloon inflating and lifting arms forward and up). In early times, the man's palm would be down, with the lady's hand placed loosely on top – no clasping of fingers. The man's body may be slightly ahead and curved toward his partner so as to be leading her. Eye contact with partner adds pleasure and dimension to this figure. As more than one couple dance this at one time, the distance between couples should remain constant. The figure is danced

with controlled energy and a strong forward/backward motion, using a *double step*. A forward tilt of the body is characteristic of English country dancing.

Problems:

1. Lack of momentum, body too rigid.
2. Hands and arms may be too high, too low or too bent.
3. Hands rise as dancing forward
4. Lack of interaction between partners.
5. Spacing between couples not maintained.

Variations:

1. The direction of the initial movement may vary: a) towards another couple (*forward a double and back*); b) down the set (*down a double and back*); c) back a double on man's / woman's side of the set, coming forward turning single.

GLOSSARY

CORNERS

- a. In a duple minor set, the first corner is first man's position and second woman's position. Second corner is first woman's and second man's position.
- b. In a longways triple minor or major set, the dancing couple is proper, and is usually in second place. Active dancers (first couple) have two corners who are diagonal to them and on the opposite side of the dance (first corners are to the right and second to the left).
- c. In a circle or square, the person beside you, who is not your partner, is your corner; sometimes termed 'neighbour'. (In longways formations, your neighbour is beside you, and is not your corner.

CASTING OFF/CASTING UP:

Dancers move down or up outside of the set.

CONTRARY/OPPOSITE

In general, the nearest person of opposite sex who is not one's partner.

HANDS FOUR/SIX FROM TOP

In longways set, two couples (hands four) or three couples (hands six) join hands to distinguish their position in a set.

IMPROPER/PROPER

Man dances on woman's side, and woman on man's. In longways duple minor, this is often the active couple, who change sides to become PROPER (man on man's side, lady on lady's) at the bottom of the set. Usually in contra.

NEIGHBOUR

Person beside you who is not your partner.

PROGRESSION

Movement of a couple up or down the set after one repetition of the dance. In squares and mixers, dancers may progress individually. [See Cast, p. 14.](#)

TOP/BOTTOM

Refers to the top (close to the music) or bottom (away from the music) of a longways set. Also applies to the top and bottom of a square.

UP and DOWN

Toward and away from the music.