

The Beginner's Guide to Clog Dancing

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THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO CLOG DANCING

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Introduction

This beginners' guide is the end result of our own frustration in attempting to recommend a basic introduction to this type of dance. Those who have been caught by the desire to learn to clog or even discover a little about the background of the dances which they have already learnt will know that, although information is available on particular dancers and their steps, little of this is really suitable for the beginner. What we hope to have achieved in the following pages is to fill that gap and provide a body of material which we hope will prove useful to teacher and pupil alike.

It has not been our aim to write a definitive set of directions on how to dance, but to open the world of clog dancing and to provide a springboard for those who have just discovered the joys of this type of dance and need a channel for their raw enthusiasm.

People begin to clog dance for a wide variety of reasons, and via a variety of routes. Some are the friends of existing dancers who become curious enough to go along to a class or persuade their friend to give them a few basic lessons. Many more attend clog workshops at folk festivals and come out keen to find a local group with whom to practise and eventually perform. But however YOU became interested in this absorbing hobby we hope you will want to learn more. A book is no substitute for a good basic grounding where any form of dance is concerned, and it is best to learn from an experienced teacher. Ideally one should be in a position to be able to experiment with the various styles in order to find that which suits you best. This is not, of course, always possible, but we hope that the following pages will at least give the reader some idea of the material currently available.

Although we do not recommend learning from step notations, it is extremely useful to be able to read step notations, for use as an aide memoire if nothing else. To this end we have included several sets of steps in various styles at the end of this booklet. Whatever style you choose to learn, we hope that this booklet will help you to achieve your goal by offering what the authors have found in their experience to be sound advice on the best methods to use.

Good luck.

Choosing a Pair of Clogs

For the beginner this is difficult. It's rather similar to the situation for the beginner taking up the violin and trying to choose an instrument without being able to play it.

The first basic is that the clogs should fit and be comfortable. It is impossible to dance properly in a pair of clogs which are too tight or which allow the feet to move whilst dancing. The best advice is not to order clogs by mail but to wait until you can choose a pair on the spot. Would you buy a pair of shoes sight unseen? Of course not. You would want to try them on. Just so with a pair of clogs. The next point to watch for is the soles. These are now mostly machine made and are often of very variable quality. Pick a pair that match, with a good tight grain and no obvious knots. Ideally the sole should be as thin as possible; certainly not more than 3/8 of an inch. It is impossible to dance well in thick soled clogs.

The best clogs one of the authors has are hand made, but although this ensures a good fit they are rather expensive.

When ordering a pair of clogs, make sure that the maker knows what you want them for. If you just tell him that you want them for "clog dancing", he may think that you intend to use them for clog morris and your clogs will turn up complete with rubbers or irons.

Many dancers blame their clogs when they miss a beat, do a step badly or turn out a bad performance. If your clogs are that bad get a new pair. There is a lot of truth in the old adage that a bad workman always blames his tools, and blaming your clogs is usually an excuse for lack of practice.

Clogs must be worn in to make them comfortable. Try wearing them around the house for a few days until your feet get used to them.

Clogs are expensive. If you treat them well they will last for years. If you wear them outdoors they will wear down very quickly and you will not be able to dance properly in them, this being particularly noticeable where the heels are concerned. Once clog soles get wet they may be ruined for ever as this often causes the soles to split at the edges. Watch out for grit as well, as this not only gouges holes in your soles but also scratches floors if left embedded in the clogs.

One final point to note is that what suits one person does not necessarily suit another. Many dancers have a favourite clog maker in whose clogs they have danced for years and who they swear by, and yet another dancer might actively dislike clogs made by the same clogger.

How to Start

Having acquired a pair of clogs what do you do next? Here are some ideas.

1) First and foremost, find someone to teach you, but, and this is the catch, find someone good. Don't accept any old Tom, Dick or Harry. Teaching this type of dance is not easy and mistakes learnt at the beginners' stage are difficult to unlearn later. Regretably many dancers of little experience feel able to try and teach what little they know. Make sure you do not turn out to be the fourth rate pupil of a third rate dancer.

2) Find a group to dance with. Practising on your own can be a soul destroying pastime and in any case it's more fun to get together with others. A list of groups is published each year in Instep magazine.

3) Avoid "stamp collecting" steps. It's tempting to try and "collect" as many steps as possible in the early stages. There seems to be an inbuilt feeling that the steps will in some way be lost if you don't learn them. This is fortunately not now true and a large percentage of steps so far found are published and freely available to anyone, and the number grows by leaps and bounds each year. "Stamp collecting" is also pointless because:

a) You probably won't be able to dance most of the steps anyway.

b) You certainly won't be able to remember 99 percent of the steps and if you try and write down steps you cannot dance you will find the results unintelligible.

c) A large number of steps have already been published and are freely available to anyone. Many more are in the process of publication so the information is not going to be lost.

d) It is better (at least in our opinion) to dance a few steps well than to dance a lot of different steps to a low standard. It's also much more rewarding.

4) Once you have found someone to teach you and/or a team to dance with try and copy the team's best dancer. You should aim to be better than that dancer.

5) How do you go about that? Quite simply. Practice. Given that you are of average ability the rate at which you progress will be proportional to the amount which you practise. There is no substitute. Improvement made a little at a time but regularly is easy to achieve and quickly builds up and up. You won't get there overnight but regular practice will ensure that you get there in the end.

6) On average it takes about two years to attain a sufficient standard to perform adequately. If you can make it quicker, then maybe you are an above average dancer. But beware that you are not just kidding yourself and that your sights are set too low.

7) Don't despair. You will see many excellent and even a few great dancers, but many of these have been dancing for years. Look around you and see how many mediocre dancers there are. All you have to do as a first step is to rise above mediocrity.

8) Don't make excuses for yourself. Don't fall into the trap of blaming the music or the floor or your clogs when you can't do a step. Almost certainly it's just lack of practice, or, and this is just as common, that you are trying to do a step which is too difficult for you at the stage you have reached.

If all this sounds daunting and elitist it is not intended to be so, but it's no use kidding ourselves, clog dancing is not easy. To become a good dancer you have to start well, practise a lot and perhaps most important of all, learn self criticism. If you follow the suggestions in this section we hope you will become a good, maybe a great, dancer, so take things slowly, step by step (sorry about the pun) and above all, ENJOY YOURSELF.

Music

This is always a difficult problem. Ideally a musician playing for clog should be a dancer as well. Unfortunately only a few teams in the country are able to enjoy this luxury.

Try to avoid dancing to a tape if possible, there is no substitute for live music, even for practice. Having said that however, a tape is preferable to no music at all.

Remember, the musician is there to help you do what you want. Learn to control the speed at which you want to dance and ask your musician to produce the right speed. Dancing is a partnership between dancer and musician. Don't be put off by musicians who tell you that you speed up or slow down whilst dancing, that's your prerogative, provided you don't change speed abruptly or use very wide variations. More important still, don't change speed within a step. Contrary to popular opinion it's not necessary to keep to a rigid speed whilst dancing (unless you are in a competition). It's important however that the musician knows what to expect so warn him in advance just what you want.

Please remember this. Playing for dancing, particularly for beginners, can be deathly boring, so just occasionally remember the musician in the corner.

Here are some recommendations for tunes to accompany the types of dance we have notated in this volume. Remember that they are recommendations only and if you have a favourite tune in the right rhythm then use it. Try not to stick to the same tunes all the time however. Firstly it's boring for you and the musician and secondly it's bad for you. You should learn to dance to the widest variety of tunes possible, provided that they fit the dance. In this way you will get used to the rhythmic pattern and structure of the music which leads to a better understanding of the dance.

THE MANCHESTER HORNPIPE



FISHER'S HORNPPIPE



THE SOLDIER'S JOY.



STARRY NIGHT IN SHETLAND



The Styles of Clog Dancing

It has become common to split clog steps up on a regional basis. Whether there is in fact a true difference between steps from different areas, or whether the differences which may be seen are of a personal nature, is a difficult question which has not yet been satisfactorily answered. For the moment we shall confine ourselves to a consideration of some of the personalities of clog dancing and the styles in which they dance.

In and around Tyneside, two families have dominated clog dancing for many years. The Ellwoods and the Farrells. Most traditional dancers on Tyneside can trace their steps back to either Jimmy Ellwood or Dickie Farrell, both of whom were in their dancing prime at the turn of the century. Here are some of the names you may hear of, divided by descent from these two.

Jimmy Ellwood

Johnson Ellwood (son)
Mary Jamieson (g-dau)
Hyltom Pomeroy
Doris Hawkes
Brenda Walker
Sam Bell

Dickie Farrell

Tiny Allison
Jackie Toaduff
Ivy Sands

The Ellwood family's steps are perhaps the most commonly seen "North East" steps. There are certainly a large number to choose from - we have notations for well over a hundred in triple time hornpipe rhythm alone. The Ellwoods have always favoured a "competition" style in which the dancer's upright posture and ability to dance on the spot are all important.

Sam Bell learnt to dance from Jimmy Ellwood and has two routines, one in hornpipe time and a set of particularly fine waltz steps which have become rather popular in recent years.

Whilst on the subject of waltz time dancing, mention must be made of John Surtees who specialised in this rhythm although he has also passed on to us a number of fine hornpipe and schottische steps.

Turning now to the Farrell side of the coin, Dickie's daughter Lily has taught a few of his steps and a larger repertoire has been collected from Kit Haggerty who died in 1982.

Mrs Ivy Sands has been a major source of information on the Farrell steps and has taught us a "Single Hornpipe" (6 steps), a "Double Hornpipe" (8 steps) and about a dozen exhibition steps.

Tiny Allison, a dancing teacher from Stanley, Co. Durham, taught many local dancers until her untimely death in 1982. Pre-eminent among these was Jackie Toaduff, now performing professionally. We have recovered about two dozen hornpipe steps as well as a waltz routine.

All these dancers specialise in triple time hornpipe steps, although most have also danced in waltz, schottische and even jig rhythm. It should be noted that many also learnt tap dancing.

The Robinson family dominated clog dancing in North Lancashire and Westmorland and, together with their pupils, ran classes over much of the Lake District. Their style is commonly called "Westmorland" or "Lakeland". The Robinsons' steps are all in duple time hornpipe rhythm, although they also taught a number of speciality dances, these being performed by the children at their classes. Some of the names you may hear mentioned are:

Old Jos Robinson
Young Jos Robinson (his son)
Norman Robinson (Y Jos' nephew)
Diddy Dixon
Tommy Cannon
Fred Coward

It is not common today to follow any one dancer's Lakeland repertoire, but rather to put together a routine of one's own choosing. The exception is the exhibition routine of Mrs Diddy Dixon which is so distinctive as to warrant separate attention.

To the north of the Robinsons' stamping ground lay the area covered by Oliver Cowper, his sons Harold and Roland and today by his granddaughter Marion. The Cowper style is quite different although the rhythm is the same as that found in the Robinsons' steps. In addition to hornpipes however the Cowper family also have a waltz routine and a family version of the crossed sword dance. The family dancing school is based in Whitehaven.

Moving further south down the west coast we come to a number of very individualistic dancers all resident in Lancashire, but all with completely different styles.

Sam Sherry - music hall performer, who learnt from his father and brothers. Has a number of routines in different rhythms and of varying difficulty. In particular, a hornpipe routine composed of steps learnt from his father mixed with others learnt from published notations, two waltz routines of varying difficulty, a lengthy routine in jig time and a magnificent exhibition routine.

Bill Gibbons - ex bargeman, with his own unique style of clog stepping, based on a much freer interpretation of the music than is found in most other dancers.

Bert Bowden - a recent(1983) discovery, Bert is another music hall performer.

Elsie Brooks - not particularly well known steps in hornpipe time, also has a few exquisite waltz steps.

No account of dancing in Lancashire would be complete without mentioning Pat Tracey. Pat has collected a large repertoire in Lancashire and is the leading expert on the toe and heel style of Lancashire dancing. Pat regularly teaches her steps, splitting them into routines of ever increasing difficulty. As well as her toe and heel steps however, Pat also has several triple time hornpipe routines, not to mention an incredible Sailor's Hornpipe and a number of superb jig time steps.

Further south again, clog dancing is found in Wales, normally in conjunction with a broom dance, although to be fair the authors are not in a position to speak authoritatively on this type of clog dancing.

Although not clog dancers, Bob Cann and Leslie Rice are well known to revivalist dancers. Both are step (i.e. hard shoe) dancers from Devon, whose stepping style is at the same time similar yet intriguingly different from clog stepping. The same may be said of Dick Hewitt from Norfolk, although the style and content of his dancing is quite different. Little has been published concerning Southern stepping, but the authors are aware that dancers are still to be found in several areas of the South and hopefully this style of dancing will become more popular as more material becomes available.

Finally mention must be made of clog dancing in Scotland. It seems that clog dancing was surprisingly common in Scotland, indeed the last World Champion, George Mackintosh, came from Motherwell. Only one set of steps is known to survive, collected by the late Professor Tom Flett from William Adamson of Fife, and commonly known as the East Fife Clog Hornpipe.

The above thumbnail sketches represent only the tip of the iceberg. Much greater detail will be found in the works referred to in the bibliography. Collecting is still going on in many areas and new dancers are still being discovered, and by the time this book is in print the list will have expanded. There is already however, enough material available to keep the average dancer going for a lifetime (or two).

The Basic Movements

It is acutely difficult to describe the different movements used in clog dancing in a lucid and understandable way and it may well be that the following descriptions are totally unintelligible to you. If this is so do not despair, it is probably not your fault but the fault of the descriptions themselves.

Each STEP is made up of a number of discrete movements which are surprisingly few in number, but which, when glued together in different orders produce a large number of different STEPS. The following is a far from exhaustive description of a few of the

commonest. Read the descriptions from the beginning and don't move on to the next unit until you have mastered the previous movement. The descriptions are intended to be read sequentially and follow on one from the other.

N.B. Other less common movements are briefly explained under the notations in which they occur.

- 1) The simplest movement of all is the "step". This is always done on the ball of the foot. As the weight is taken on the ball of one foot, the other foot should be lifted a few inches off the ground. i.e. the weight is only ever on one foot.

e.g. Stand with the weight on the ball of the left foot, heel slightly off the ground and with the right foot next to the left, a few inches off the ground. Now place the ball of the right foot on the ground next to the left foot and having done so raise the left foot a few inches, keeping it next to the right foot. This is what we define as "step", in fact a step made with the right foot. This is written in the subsequent notations as step.

Note the following:

- 1) Use only the ball of the foot.
 - 2) Keep the heels off the ground.
 - 3) Do not jump or spring from foot to foot. Transfer the weight evenly.
 - 4) Do not travel across the floor. The step is presumed to be made on the spot and NO movement forwards or backwards is implied.
 - 5) Always raise the non-supporting foot 2 or 3 inches off the ground. Never have both feet on the ground at the end of a step.
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- 2) The next movement is the "tap". This is made by moving the foot either forwards or backwards and hitting the floor with the ball of the foot once during the movement. The foot starts and ends in the air, a few inches off the floor.
- e.g. Stand on the ball of the left foot, heel slightly off the ground (as if you had just stepped on it). Place the right foot, which is of course in the air with the toe of the foot level with the instep of the left foot, keeping it a few inches off the ground. Swing the right foot forwards like a pendulum, from the knee so that it ends with the heel of the foot next to the toe of the left foot, and a few inches off the floor. During the course of this slight swing hit the floor with the ball of the foot as it moves, approximately next to the left foot. This is written in later notations as "tap"

Note the following:

- 1) Use only the ball of the foot.
 - 2) Start and finish with the foot a few inches off the floor.
 - 3) Try and make the beat sharp and crisp. Do not scuff or slide the foot.
 - 4) Keep the swing short and neat.
 - 5) Keep the heel of the supporting foot off the ground, and make the tap with the ball of the foot only.
 - 6) For the moment the tap is always made next to the supporting foot.
 - 7) Do not move the tapping foot vertically - swing it.
- 3) We now come to a combination movement known as a "lazy shuffle". This consists of a tap followed by a step, both made with the same foot. Once again this is always done on the ball of the foot.

e.g. Stand with the weight on the ball of the left foot. Swing the right foot back a few inches, then swing it forwards making a tap with the right foot and follow this with a step made with the right foot. You should end up standing on the right foot with the left a few inches off the ground next to it. You have just performed a lazy shuffle with the right foot. The tap and subsequent step should be made on approximately the same spot. This is written in the subsequent notations as -

tap)
step) lazy

The reason behind the underlining of "step" will become apparent when you read the notation section.

Note the Following:

- 1) Use only the ball of the foot.
- 2) Always end with the free foot a few inches off the ground.
- 3) Try and keep the beats crisp and sharp.
- 4) Don't forget to tap and step on the same spot next to the supporting foot.
- 5) Keep the movements small and neat. Try to move the foot only a few inches.
- 6) Always swing the free foot from behind the level of the supporting foot to make the tap.

Now try repeating the movement with first one foot and then the other. Slowly at first and then getting faster and faster. Try and make the taps as rhythmic as possible. The listener with his eyes shut should not be able to tell whether you are tapping or stepping i.e. the beats should all be of the same loudness. Repeated lazy shuffles off alternate feet is rather like running on the spot.

- 4) When steps are "danced" it is commonly found that " spring " is substituted for " step " , this gives more life to the performance and most good dancers do this almost automatically without realising the change. Again this movement is always made on the ball of the foot.

e.g. Stand with the weight on the ball of the left foot, heel slightly off the ground and with the right foot next to the left foot and a few inches off the ground. Leap upwards off the left foot so that both feet are momentarily in the air. Land on the ball of the right foot, ending with the left foot next to the right and a few inches off the ground. This is a spring, in fact a spring made with the right foot. This is written in subsequent notations as spring .

Note the following:

- 1) Use only the ball of the foot.
- 2) Always end with the free foot a few inches off the ground.
- 3) Remember that during the movement both feet are briefly in the air.
- 4) Keep the movement small and neat. The feet should never be more than a few inches off the ground.
- 5) Always keep the non-supporting foot off the ground. Never have both feet on the ground at the beginning or the end of a spring.

The observant amongst you will have noticed that the only difference between a "spring" and a "step" is that in the latter the foot to be stepped on contacts the floor before the supporting foot is raised. In the former, essentially, the supporting foot is raised first, before the foot to be sprung onto hits the ground.

- 5) We now come to the movement which causes the beginner the most difficulty: the "shuffle". Once this movement is mastered however, the way is open to a vast number of steps. The shuffle, like the lazy shuffle, is a combination movement, this time however it consists of two taps.

e.g. Stand on the ball of the left foot and perform a tap with the right foot, but this time beginning with the right foot level with the left instead of slightly behind it. You should now have the right foot in the air, a couple of inches off the ground with the heel of the right foot level with the toe of the left. Now perform the tap IN REVERSE. Begin with the right foot in its current position, swing it back like a pendulum, so that it ends level with the left foot and a couple of inches in the air. During the course of the movement hit the floor with the ball of the foot as it moves. You should now be back in your starting position.

Note the following.

- 1) Start and finish with the feet level with one another. The working foot in a shuffle NEVER goes behind the plane of the supporting foot.
 - 2) The pendulum movement is from the knee.
 - 3) Make the beats crisp and precise. Do not scuff the foot. This is very important.
 - 4) Make sure both beats are of the same strength.
 - 5) Keep the whole movement as neat and contained as possible. In all the foot should move forwards only about 6-8 inches and rise only 2-3 inches off the ground.
- 6) The "hop" is a fairly self explanatory movement and should not detain us long.

e.g. Stand on the ball of the left foot, heel slightly off the ground. Keeping the right foot off the ground hop on the left foot landing on the same spot, on the ball of the foot.

Note the following:

- 1) Make sure your heel does not touch the ground.
 - 2) Don't make the vertical movement too high. A few inches is normally enough but make sure the beat is crisp and loud.
 - 3) It is possible to travel on a hop - by landing in a different place from the take off! At this stage we ignore this possibility.
- 7) You will have noticed that all the movements described so far have been performed on the ball of the foot. Indeed, we have at pains to stress this. Occasionally it becomes necessary to make a beat by dropping the heel on the ground. We call this movement heel drop .

e.g. Stand on the ball of the left foot, heel slightly off the ground (once again, as though you have just "stepped" on it). Lower the left heel smartly to the ground to make a good loud beat, ending up on a flat foot. This is written in later notations as heel drop.

Note the following:

- 1) Start the movement on the ball of the foot.
- 2) Finish on a flat foot.
- 3) Make sure that the beat made with the heel is crisp and above all loud. A very common fault is for heel drops to be much softer than the other beats which go to make up a step, often appearing to be missing altogether because of this.
- 4) Keep the non-supporting foot off the ground.
- 5) Do not shunt the foot across the floor. As the beat is made the supporting foot remains rooted to the spot.

Learning to Practise

With the best intentions in the world many people simply don't know how to set about practising. Some suggestions may help.

1) Warming Up

When you first put your clogs on, always "warm up" a little before you start to practise. This is even more important before you perform. You could liken this process to tuning up a musical instrument before starting to play. This does not mean that you have to wear yourself out with a series of balletic physical jerks. You should be aware however that clog dancing reaches muscles normal exercise does not reach and warming up first will help prevent painful muscles and joints later. It may even save you a painful pulled muscle or torn ligament.

After putting on your clogs, rock forwards onto the balls of your feet until you are comfortably balanced. Hold that position for a few seconds flexing your calf muscles and then gently roll backwards onto the flat of your feet. Repeat this movement a few times.

With the weight on the balls of the feet, experiment with springing from foot to foot and performing a series of heel drops (see pg 12 for an explanation of this term).

For all clog dancers the best possible loosening up exercise is the single shuffle. This is performed in the following way:

- 1) Perform a step with the right foot.

- 2) Perform a shuffle with the left foot.
- 3) Perform a step with the left foot.
- 4) Perform a shuffle with the right foot.

Keep on repeating this sequence and you are dancing single shuffles. Refer back to the section on basic movements for descriptions of " step " and "shuffle".

As you learn more you will find you develop a preference for other warming up exercises. The maxim is that it matters not what you do as long as you do it!

2) Practice

As you learn a step, break it into its constituent parts. This helps to highlight where the difficulties are within a step and to overcome them.

Always practise the parts over and over again off both feet before beginning to put the step back together again, particularly the parts you find difficult!

Always listen carefully to the rhythm and beats of the step. Make sure you are reproducing the rhythm faithfully. Are you missing any beats? If so you have not practised the individual units of which the step is made up sufficiently. Listen to the dynamics of the step, make your feet do what you want them to. Are all the beats to be of equal strength or are some to be accentuated? Make a decision and practise until your choice has been achieved.

Always try to practise a step to music once you have got to the stage of dancing the whole step through.

Set a time and stick to it. If you cannot do all the parts of the step at that speed, slow it down. Keep to the same speed throughout the step. This is vital. Resist the temptation to dance faster than you are able.

Steps are usually performed in groups. Once you know more than one step, after practising each individually until you have mastered it, try dancing one step after another. In this way you will learn continuity in your dancing right from the start.

Finally, and most important of all, learn to be self critical. Many dancers spend too much time in unwarranted self congratulation. The secret is to know when you have danced a step well and when you need more practice. It helps when you are learning with a group to take it in turns to dance solo and to criticise one another. This helps you learn to give and take criticism constructively.

Remember that you dance with your whole body, although your feet and legs do the most work. If you can practise in front of a mirror this will help your carriage and ensure that you look good when you dance. It also helps you see what your feet are doing

without looking down at them. This is something to be avoided at all costs, and is something you may not even realise you are doing. Ask a friend to tell you, and remember the old theatrical trick of looking above the heads of the audience.

Practice is all about setting goals and achieving them.. Set a sensible goal for each practice period and review your success at the end. Practise little and often. There is much truth in the cliché: "To improve by the inch is a cinch, but to improve by the yard is hard"

What is a Clog Step?

A STEP at least as far as this book is concerned consists of 8 bars of movement. The exception are waltz time steps which always take twice as long, that is 16 bars.

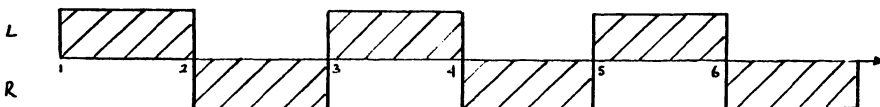
All the STEPS you are likely to meet in the near future consist of 6 bars of movements which are unique to that STEP followed by 2 bars of "finish" (also sometimes called a "break" or a "shuffle-off"). In waltz time a STEP is 12 bars of unique movement and a 4 bar finish. For the beginner, the same finish may be used for many STEPS, and indeed some traditional dancers insisted on this.

The movements of the first 6 bars (12 in waltz time) are not randomly arranged. They follow distinct patterns which are easily analysed. This part of a STEP is usually made up of a unit or units which are then repeated in set patterns to fill out the 6 bars available.

Each STEP may be broken down in one of several ways.

Firstly we deal with the Lakeland and dotted hornpipe steps.

a)



i.e. A one bar unit repeated 6 times beginning each repeat on alternate feet.

OR

b)



i.e. Two distinct units, A and B, each one bar long, repeated in the pattern ABABBB. Note that in this pattern the first AB section consists of an A unit beginning with the left foot, followed by a B unit also beginning with the left foot. In later notations this is written

A B	or	A B
L		L L

This is followed by A and B units both beginning with the right foot

i.e.	A B	or	A B
	R		R R

Finally to complete the six bars come two B units danced firstly with the left and then with the right. The whole pattern may thus be written:

A B A B B B	and finish
L R L R L	L

This is the method employed in later notations.

Waltz steps are somewhat different. In this book all steps consist of a two bar "platform" section, alternating with two bars of unique movement to fill out the first 12 bars, followed by a four bar finish.



It will be seen that there is normally no alteration of feet within the step.

Finally we deal with the Lancashire toe and heel steps.

Here the pattern is simple, but subject to rather more variation. Each STEP is made up of A and B units, each of two bar length, followed by a two bar finish. The pattern of A's and B's is however variable, and the foot on which each unit begins varies also. Refer to the step notations given later and you'll see what we mean.

Some dancers used to repeat each 8 bar STEP first starting on the left foot and then repeating it again starting with the right foot. Others danced the step only once beginning either left or right as the whim took them or whichever foot seemed to be easiest to start on. In Lakeland the norms seem to have been to perform each 8 bar STEP once only, always beginning with the left foot. Dotted hornpipe steps were usually done off both feet. For the waltz and toe and heel steps the choice is yours.

One final word.

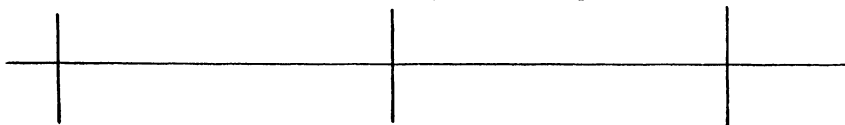
The phrases "on the left", "off the left" and "starting left" tend to be used somewhat indiscriminately, and indeed we have chosen not to standardise on one phrase in this work. All mean that the STEP or unit is begun with the weight being taken on the left foot on beat 1 of the relevant bar.

Step Notations

Writing steps down is a rather difficult exercise and is perhaps best left to an expert, although there is no reason why you should not become one. Reading notations is however quite simple, especially to the degree of accuracy required by a novice. Do not be daunted by the following notations, with a little study they are easy to understand. All the notations published in the Newcastle Series are written in "Newcastle Notation", a system of writing down clog and step dances specially devised for this purpose in 1981. The following is a simplified description of the method used. Remember it is simplified and if you try to read other books in the Newcastle Series you will need to be familiar with the full system.

Each STEP is written in four columns, vertically down the page. Normally it is not necessary to write out a whole STEP, as, as has already been explained, a STEP is usually made up of a unit or units which are then repeated to fill out the 6 bars which a STEP takes, followed by a 2 bar finish.

In Newcastle Notation the page is divided into four columns and the movements are read vertically down the page.



The leftmost column is used to indicate the timing of the movements of which the step is made up. The next two columns (called the "movement columns") are used to describe precisely the movement which occurs on any particular time unit of a step. The final column, called the "modifier column", defines the position of the foot or feet for each movement. This latter is perhaps the part of the notation which causes the most difficulty.

a) Timing

As stated previously, each STEP is of a uniform length. For the purposes of this book only steps in hornpipe time and waltz time are considered. Each hornpipe step is 8 bars long, and each bar is split into 4 strong beats. In musical terms we would say that the time signature is 4/4. Thus:



The count represents a verbalisation of the rhythm of the beats of the clog step. Notice that the numbers do not exceed 8.

Looking now at each individual bar, these may be subdivided in one of two ways, either into a three beat or triple rhythm, or a two beat or duple rhythm. A series of STEPS may be either in triple or duple time hornpipe depending on the dominant rhythm pattern. Luckily you don't need to decide this for yourself, the notation tells you exactly what to do.

In triple time a bar may be split into a maximum of 12 beats:



In a particular sequence of movements however, particular beats may be missing, and thus a typical count might be:



In duple time a bar may first be split into 8 beats:



and then for more complex STEPS, none of which are printed here, into 16 beats:




Once again particular beats may of course be missing in any given sequence of movements.

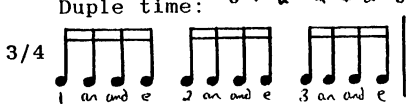
In waltz time, each step is 16 bars long and each bar contains three strong beats:



Note that this time the numbers in the count do not exceed 6.

Each bar may once again be subdivided on a triple time or duple time basis, although commonly both are found within a particular set of STEPs.

e.g. Triple time: 

Duple time: 

b) The Movement Columns

These are the core of the system. The movements, all of which have unique names and are closely defined, are labels for describing what each foot does on a particular beat. The movement is written in the appropriate column, next to the beat upon which it occurs.

All the commonest movements have already been described in the basic movements section, pages 8 - 13. A few extra, less common, movements are described below the steps in which they occur.

One final point. Movements upon which weight is taken are underlined. It therefore follows that if a movement is not underlined, no weight is taken.

c) The Modifier Column

Here the system begins to get more complex. Basically, the modifier column shows, with considerable accuracy, the position of the foot as it performs the movement given in the movement column alongside.

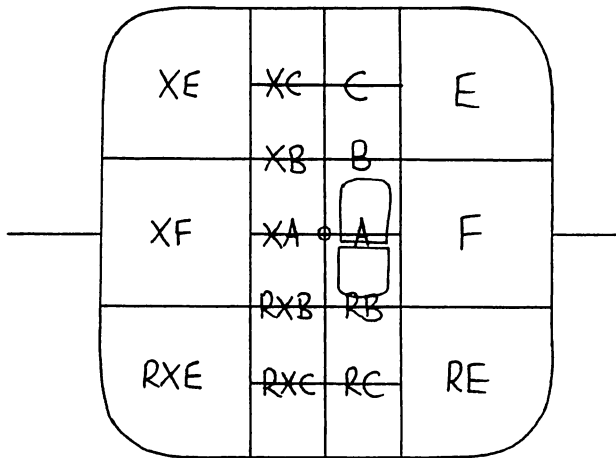
For the beginner it is perhaps best to ignore the modifier column completely and merely use the first three columns as an aide memoire. For those of you of a more masochistic nature however, here is a simplified breakdown.

1) The modifiers are separated by a colon (:). Everything to the right of the colon relates to the right foot, everything to the left of the colon to the left foot.

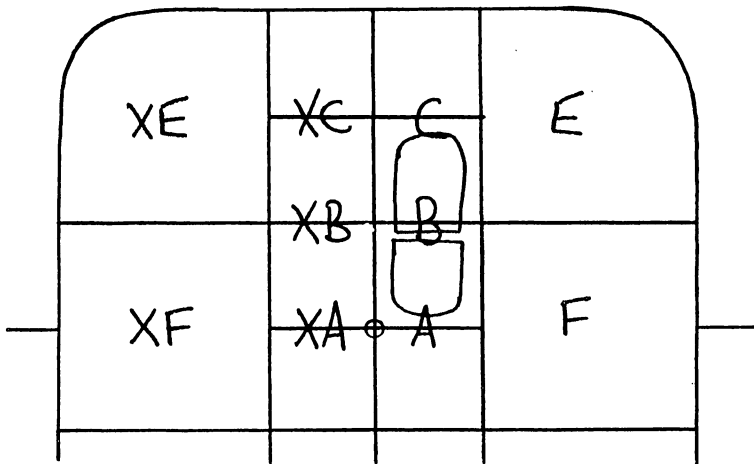
2) The area around each foot is divided into a number of uniquely labelled boxes. It is therefore possible to uniquely define the position in which any movement takes place.

3) The following boxes relate only to the right foot. The origin, marked (⊙) is next to and a few inches to the left of the instep of the right foot.

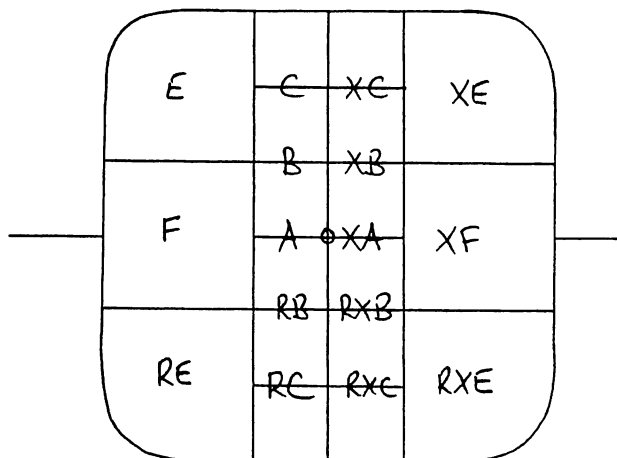
In this diagram the right foot is in position :A



Here is a closeup with the foot in position :B



4) Here is the equivalent diagram for the left foot.



5) The whole foot must be placed in any box referred to, not just the part of the foot which is touching the ground. This is vital .

e.g. for step in :A and heel drop in :A the foot remains in the same place.

6) The foot is presumed to be slightly turned out.

If more out-turning than normal is required, an outwards accent is placed over the modifier.

e.g. :A (right foot) or A: (left foot)

7) in the modifier column (and also in the movement column in some cases) shows that the foot is not touching the ground. These positions are explained in the notations where they occur.

8) Confused already? It really is easier than it looks, but then it looks pretty difficult! Despair not. Familiarity breeds contempt.

DOTTED HORNPIPE eg: Lancashire or North East

N.B. Each step is danced first off the left foot and then off the right

Break "Bob's Your Uncle"

1	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
a	)		|	shuffle	|	:C,C
2	)		|		|
a	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	:A
3	|		|		|	A:
a	)		|	shuffle	|	:C,C
4	)		|		|
a	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	:A
5	|	tap	|		|	C:
6	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
7	|		|	touch	|	:XC
(8)	|		|		|	

The tricky bit to watch here is "a 5" when you quickly change your weight onto the R and immediately touch your L foot forward (no weight on it mind), then step onto your L foot, touch your R across and hold it steady!

Step 1. 1st Lancs

1		<u>step</u>				A:
a	)		|	shuffle	|	:C,C
2	)		|		|
a	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	:A
3	|	<u>hop</u>	|		|	A:
4	|		|		|	A:

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and break with the left.

The next step follows on, so make sure you are quite confident before continuing.

Step. 2 2nd Lancs

1	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
a	)		|	shuffle	|	;C,C
2	)		|		|
a	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	:A
3	|	<u>hop</u>	|		|	A:
4	|		|		|	A:
&	)		|	shuffle	|	:C,C
a	)		|		|

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and break with the left.

Step 3. Swanee

1	<u>step</u>		A:
a		<u>heel swivel</u>	:C
2	<u>step</u>		A:
3		<u>step</u>	:A
a	<u>heel swivel</u>		C:
4		<u>step</u>	:A
5	<u>step</u>		A:
a		<u>heel swivel</u>	:C
6	<u>step</u>		A:
a		<u>toe swivel</u>	:C
7	<u>step</u>		A:
a		<u>heel swivel</u>	:C
8	<u>step</u>		

A B A B B B Break
 ' ' ' ' ' ' '
 L L R R L R L

A swivel is simply a step in which the foot is rotated. Imagine that your right foot is pinned to the floor through the ball of your foot. Begin with the foot turned out. Rotate it anticlockwise about the pin through your foot until it is turned in. Heel swivel is the equivalent movement but made with the heel on the ground and the foot always commencing in a turned in position.

Practise this step without swivelling at first, until you are confident. Don't forget to step (put weight) onto each heel and toe beat, whether you are swivelling or not.

Why, you may ask, is this step called "Swanee"? I don't know. Presumably at some time the step was characteristic of a dance which went to the tune of Swanee River.

Step 4. Cross the Buckle

1	<u>step</u>		A:
a		shuffle	:C,C
2		<u>step</u>	:XC
&		<u>heel drop</u>	:XC
a	<u>step</u>		A:
3	<u>hop</u>		A:
4		shuffle	:C,C
&			
a			

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and break with the left.

This is not an easy step, so don't worry if it needs practice. To make your heel drop sound, bend your front knee and pick up your other foot (just a little way) preparatory to stepping onto it. Watch the rhythm - there is a slight pause before the first shuffle.

Step 5.

A	1	<u>step</u>	<u>heel step</u>	A:
	a			:C
	2	<u>step</u>		A:
	&)		shuffle	:C,C
	a)			
	3		<u>step</u>	:A
	a	<u>heel step</u>		C:
	4		<u>step</u>	:A
B	&)	shuffle		C,C:
	a)			
	5	<u>step</u>		A:
	&)		shuffle	:C,C
	a)			
	6		<u>step</u>	:A
	&)	shuffle		C,C:
	a)			
	7	<u>step</u>		A:
	a		<u>heel step</u>	:C
	8	<u>step</u>		A:
	&)		shuffle	:C,C
	a)			

A B A B B B Break
 | | | | |
 L L R R L R L

Heel step is just what it says it is. A step made with the heel of the clog instead of the ball of the foot. Don't forget to take the weight on it and to note the position of the foot.

Step 6. Double Shuffles

1	<u>step</u>	shuffle	A:
&)			:C,C
a)			
2	<u>hop</u>		A:
&)		shuffle	:C,C
a)			
3		<u>step</u>	:A
&)	shuffle		C,C:
a)			
4		<u>hop</u>	:A
&)	shuffle		C,C:
a)			

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and break with the left.

The traditional compulsory step to finish with in NE competitions, this is very good practice. Watch that you keep the rhythm even and make your hop sound clearly.

LAKELAND

N.B. All steps are danced off the left foot only.

Shuffle-Off

1	<u>step</u>		A:
and		tap) lazy	: RB
2		<u>spring</u>)	: A
and	tap) lazy		RB:
3	<u>spring</u>)		A:
and)		shuffle	: C, C
4)			
and	<u>hop</u>		A:
5		<u>step</u>	: RXC
6	<u>step</u>		A:
7		<u>step</u>	: A
(8)			

N.B. It is most important to spring from foot to foot at the beginning, with the foot being brought from behind (bend your knee) and not travelling forward past the other foot. The next point to practise is the hop(L) followed by the step(R) (with weight remember!) behind a pace.

Single Shuffle

1	↑	<u>hop</u>	C↑: A
and	catch in		C↑, XC, XA↑:
2	<u>spring</u>		XA:
3	<u>hop</u>		XA: E
and		↑	: C↑, XC, XA↑
4		<u>spring</u>	: XA

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and shuffle off.

This is a lovely step if you don't trip yourself up. The secret is to always anticipate the next movement.

Treble & Hop

1	<u>step</u>		A:
and)		shuffle	: E, C
2)			
and	<u>step</u>	<u>spring</u>	: XC
3	<u>hop</u>		A:
4		↑	A: E↑

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and shuffle off.

In Lakeland, and indeed elsewhere, beats 1 and 2 and 3 of this step are known as a "treble".

Treble & Flatter

1		<u>step</u>				A:	É,Ć
and	)			shuffle			
2)						
and				<u>spring</u>			XĆ
3		<u>step</u>				A:	
4		<u>hop</u>				A:	
&	)			shuffle			Ć,Ć
a)						

Repeat off alternate feet 6 times and shuffle off

Note that the "shuffle" on & a is much quicker (called in Lakeland a "flatter") than the shuffle on and 2 . Practise 4 & a "hop shuffle" until you can get all the beats in at the right speed.

When you know where your feet are going you should try and dance these steps with the characteristic style of Lakeland stepping - bent knees on the beats 'and 3', straightened out on '4'. Watch someone good to see what I mean.

Triples

A	1		<u>step</u>				A:	É,Ć
	and	)			shuffle			
	2)						
	and				<u>step</u>			XĆ
	3		<u>step</u>				A:	
	and	)			shuffle			Ć,Ć
	4)						
	and				<u>step</u>			A
B	5		<u>step</u>				A:	É,Ć
	and	)			shuffle			
	6)						
	and				<u>spring</u>			XĆ
	7		<u>step</u>				A:	
	8		<u>hop</u>				A:	
	&	)			shuffle			Ć,Ć
	a)						

A B A B B B and shuffle off
 | | | | | |
 L L R R L R L

LANCASHIRE TOE AND HEEL STEPS

These steps are rather difficult to decipher from notations unless you really know what you're doing.

Use the notations as an aide-memoire only please.

First, two definitions.

TH in these notations is "shorthand" for the following movements:

catch out	:Á↑,B,B↑
heel tap	:B

THT is "shorthand" for:

catch out	:Á↑,B,B↑
heel tap	:B
catch in	:B↑,B,A↑

These abbreviations are used to save repetition in these steps, the above combinations of movements being extremely common. Note however that no rhythm has been given as this may change from step to step and is notated in the first column of the particular step as normal.

Step 1

A

1	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
2	)		|	TH	|	
and	)		|		|	:A
3	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	A:
4	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	:A
5	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	
6	)	TH	|		|	
and	)		|		|
7	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
8	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	:A

B

1	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
2	)		|	TH	|	
and	)		|		|	:A
3	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	A:
4	)	TH	|		|	
and	)		|		|
5	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
6	)		|	TH	|	
and	)		|		|	:A
7	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	A:
8	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	

Finish

1	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	A:
2	)		|	TH	|	
and	)		|		|	:A
3	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	A:
4	)	TH	|		|	
and	)		|		|
5	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	RXC:
6	|		|	<u>step</u>	|	:A
7	|	<u>step</u>	|		|	RXC:
8	|		|		|	

Step Pattern is A B A and finish
 / / / /
 L L R L

Step 2

1		<u>step</u>			A:
and)				
2	)			THT	
and)				
3	)			<u>step</u>	: A
and)				
4	)	THT			
and)				
5	)	<u>step</u>			A:
and)				
6	)			THT	
and)				
7	)			<u>step</u>	: A
8	)	<u>step</u>			A:
1		<u>step</u>			A:
and)				
2	)			THT	
and)				
3	)			<u>step</u>	: A
4	)	<u>step</u>			A:
5	)			<u>step</u>	: A
and)				
6	)	THT			
and)				
7	)	<u>step</u>			A:
8	)			<u>step</u>	: A

Finish

1		<u>step</u>			A:
and)				
2	)			THT	
and)				
3	)			<u>step</u>	: A
and)				
4	)	THT			
and)				
5	)	<u>step</u>			RXC:
6	)			<u>step</u>	: A
7	)	<u>step</u>			RXC:
8)				

Step pattern is A A B and finish
 | | | |
 L R L L

Step 3

A

1		<u>step</u>		A:
and)			
2	)		THT	
and)			
3			<u>step</u>	:A
4		<u>step</u>		A:
5			<u>step</u>	:A
and)			
6	)	THT		
and)			
7		<u>step</u>		A:
8			<u>step</u>	:A

B

1		<u>step</u>		A:
and)			
2	)		THT	
and)			
3			<u>step</u>	:A
and)			
4	)	THT		
and)			
5		<u>step</u>		A:
and)			
6	)		THT	
and)			
7			<u>step</u>	:A
8		<u>step</u>		

Finish

1			<u>step</u>	:A
and)			
2	)	THT		
and)			
3		<u>step</u>		A:
and)			
4	)		THT	
and)			
5			<u>step</u>	:RXC
6		<u>step</u>		A:
7			<u>step</u>	:RXC
8				

Step pattern is A B A and finish
 | | | |
 L L R R

WALTZ

Platform

1		<u>step</u>						A:
and)					shuffle			:C,C
2)								
and		<u>step</u>			<u>step</u>			:A
3								A:
4					<u>step</u>			:A
and)		shuffle						C,C:
5)								
and		<u>step</u>						A:
6					<u>step</u>			:A

This preliminary step forms the basis of many waltz steps.

The PATTERN of all the steps included in this book is:

P Step	P Step	P Step	P Break	P=Platform
L	L	L	L	

N.B. Except step2 all the steps and platforms start on the left foot throughout. They may be repeated off the right.

Break

This begins with a platform off the left, followed by:

1		<u>step</u>				A:
2				catch out		:A↑,A,D↑
3		<u>hop</u>				A:
4				heel touch		:XE
5						
6						

Catch out is a beat made with the ball of the foot, the leg moving in a pendulum motion, beginning from a rear aerial position and ending in a front aerial position.

Step 1. Kick Across

1		<u>step</u>				A:
2				catch out		:A↑,A,D↑
3		<u>hop</u>				A:
4				<u>step</u>		:A
5		catch out				A↑,A,D↑:
6				<u>hop</u>		:A

Step 2. Single Shuffles

1		<u>step</u>				A:
and	)			shuffle		:C,C
2)					
and	)			<u>step</u>		:A
3	)	shuffle				C,C:
and)					
4	)	<u>step</u>				A:
and	)			shuffle		:C,C
5)					
and	)			<u>step</u>		:A
6	)	<u>step</u>				A:

P Step P Step P Step P Break
 | | | | | | | |
 L L R R L L R R

This step is very effective as, although not difficult to perform, it goes across the music, so sounds interesting and unusual. You can dance it moving forwards or backwards to add variety.

Step 3.

1		<u>step</u>				A:
2				catch out		:B↑,B,B↑
3		<u>hop</u>				A:
&	)			shuffle		C,C
a)					
4				<u>step</u>		:A
5		catch out				B↑,B,B↑:
6				<u>hop</u>		:A
&	)	shuffle				C,C:
a)					

Step 4. Scissors

1			<u>jump</u> =			X̂C:Â
2			<u>jump</u> =			F̂:F̂
3			<u>jump</u> =			Â:X̂C
4				<u>step</u>		:A
5		catch out				A↑,A,C↑:
6				<u>hop</u>		:A

This step is easy once you remember that it is always the same - L in front of R, then apart, then R in front of L - with the weight moved onto the back foot (L), so that you can step onto the R.

Jump = is quite simply a jump onto the balls of both feet, weight evenly distributed.

Step 5.

1					
2	<u>step</u>				A:
3			catch out		:B↑,B,C↑
4	<u>hop</u>				A:
5	tip tap		spring		:A
6	tip tap				RD:
					RD:

"tip tap", sometimes known as "pick behind", is exactly what it sounds like: a light tap with the tip of the toe of the clog.