

ANGUS JOHN MACLELLAN, HACKETT, ISLE OF BENBECULA.

(Aged c. 7)

Cailleach an Durdain. Mr Macellan had seen this performed in his own home and elsewhere in Benbecula about 55 years ago, his own father often being one of the dancers. "It isn't a dance really it is more a sort of a play". Two men take part, one being dressed as a cailleach, with a shawl round her head, and wearing a coat and skirt. The other man is supposed to be the cailleach's husband [not necessarily supposed to be old].

The cailleach is extremely fond of drink, and her husband often comes home from work and finds her missing - out in some bar, no doubt. The dance portrays such an occasion.

It opens with the husband standing waiting for his wife in his kitchen, with a stick in his hand. He dances three or four times round the room, looking under the chairs and table and peering closely at the people in the room to make sure that she isn't there. The cailleach now enters, leaning on a stick, and "shaking all over with fear and the effects of drink." She ~~shuffles~~[#] into the centre of the room, and her enraged husband dances round her, belabouring her with his stick. She makes no attempt to defend herself, but just stands trembling. He then kicks her on the bottom, and she falls down on the floor. She is now a piteous sight, lying on the floor, with her head slightly raised with her knees drawn up, gripping her stick in both hands, moaning, and quivering all over. As she is lying there, her husband dances round her kicking her occasionally, and brandishing his stick at her.[#] Finally she staggers to her feet, and the dance concludes with the husband kicking her from the room..

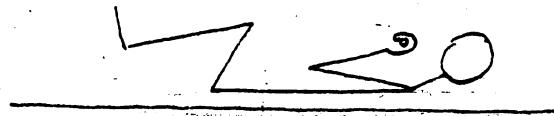


Fig. ..

It was danced at any time when friends were gathered together, either in the kitchens of the houses, or at dances in the schoolhouse. It was always done

[†] As he goes round the room here he leans well forward so that he can see under the chairs, etc. The stick is ^{just} held normally in his hand. There is no particular direction of circling, either here or elsewhere in the dance.

[#] The cailleach has no "steps".

[#] She grasps her stick with palms upward.

[#] He does not hit her with the stick while she is lying on the floor. His other arm hangs freely.

to the pipes, the tune being that noted by Alexander Curnichaill for the Gesto Collection. Mr MacLellan had never heard a song of this name.

There were no elaborate steps. "It was not a step dance". The step used by the husband while dancing round the cailleach is as follows.

Bar 1. Count "and ONE" Full step forward on R

"and" Small step of about 3" forward, on L
"TWO." A similar step forward on R.

Bar 2 Repeat the "and Two" of Bar 1 twice.

Bars 3,4. or of Bars 1,2.

Note that the R foot stays in front of the L foot during the whole of the first two bars, then the L foot stays in front of the R foot during the next two bars, so on. The dancer leans slightly forward, and the knees are slightly bent.

Time: 60 bars per minute.

The whole performance lasted 15-20 minutes.

Dannsadh na Tunnag. The dancers danced round in a circle, on their number with hands clasped under their thighs.

Trio Croidhan Caorach (Three Sheep Trouers). This "dance" is for men only. It was performed at dances and parties, to the music of the pipes, the last occasion on which Mr MacLellan saw it done being about 55 years ago. It is danced by three men in a line. The two outer men stand still, facing inwards, each holding his right elbow with his left hand and holding his right hand against his left cheek, palm outwards. The centre man faces one of the outer men, and dances about in front of him, keeping time to the music, but not necessarily using proper steps. While dancing about, he smacks this outer man's right hand, while the outer man tries to catch the centre man's hand as he does so. The outer man is only allowed to clutch at the centre man's hand just as his own hand is being smacked - he must not remove the back of his hand from his cheek nor use his left hand - so that the centre man has a very good chance of getting away uncaught. If he succeeds in smacking this outer man he turns to the other and tries him. If he is caught, he exchanges places with that outer man, who now dances in the centre.

The dance usually lasted about 10 minutes.

Warning! it does not pay to sit hard; you might not always be in the centre.

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White Cockade [The following description was actually noted from Mrs (Fenny) MacLellan.]

This was usually the last dance of the evening, and was always danced to + pipes. A young man, usually the M.C., takes his handkerchief in his hand, + walks clockwise round the room to the tune "The White Cockade". He throws the handkerchief to the girl he selects; who joins him on the floor. As she does so the piper breaks off the tune, and plays the phrase "pög an Toiseach" [kiss first] several times. At this the young man puts his arm round his partner and pög an toiseach
iauu ta ta dee
C B C low A.

kisses her. The piper then resumes "The White Cockade", when the couple link arms and walk on round the room. The girl then throws the handkerchief to another man who falls in behind the first couple, and all three walk on round the floor. This second man throws the handkerchief to another girl, who joins him + kisses him to the accompaniment "pög an toiseach", and the new couple then fall in behind the first couple. This is repeated until all the couples are on the floor, or until the supply of men or girls runs out. The piper then changes to a reel when the dancers split up into fours and dance a Four-in-a-Reel. [There was no particular tune played for this reel.]

Often the girls were shy, and when the handkerchief was thrown at one, + would quickly pass it on to a neighbour.

Mr MacLellan had seen the first man twist the handkerchief into a rope lay it on the floor and dance a few steps round it before walking round with it. We asked him if the steps were like those of Gillic Callum, and he said they were, "the very same". But this was about 55 years ago^T

Scotch Reel. The men's steps were not the same as the ladies. The men use hand movements, but the ladies didn't. The men (only), hopped.

- Reel steps in use were (i) Pas de Basque
(ii) Pas de Basque and backstep with a hop.
(iii) Plain scânce.
(iv) An "open" step as follows.

Bar 1. Count "one". Sprung, landing on both feet with R well across in front of L (see Fig 2)

^T Mrs MacLellan was younger than her husband.

- A.S.
- Count "two" ~ of "one".
 Bar 2. Count "one" As "one" of bar 1.
 "and" Spring to land on both feet, with feet apart (Fig. 3)
 "two" As "one" of bar 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

Mr MacLellan had never seen 'high-cutting' or 'Pas de Basque and Balance' in his young days.

Neither he nor his wife had heard the tune "The Twist of August", nor had they heard of the weaving hilt, nor heard the tune. They knew no others on our list of tunes.

Mr MacLellan's father had been taught by Ewen Macnaulian of Eochair, and danced Highland Faddie just like Tom Macneod does at present.

17
 Raggy
 Bacchula
 10th Aug. 1953.

Dear Tom,

Just a few lines
 to tell you what has
 been done so far during
 summer, but anyway I have
 been very satisfied
 with "Circles on Down"
 and this is the exact
 version which Angus John
 played for me recently.
 Tell Tom anything else
 you want I can do it.
 Yours of "Hobson's Choice"

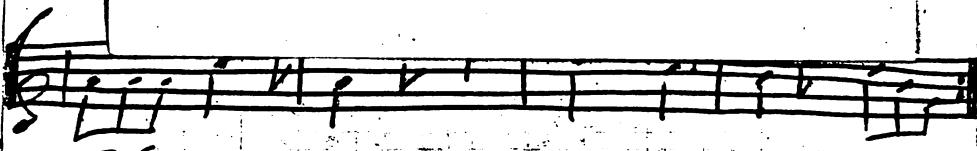
P.T.O.

as I should say, I wish try
to be - of the best
help I can. That Jane, Rose
is an itchy person very
much like to have, if
you could give me and
send me an "Illustrated
Tune Book" containing old
and new Hymns, Psalms,
Scholarics, Praises, Valentines and
figs. I can't find a better
book myself but being
you did send me an
old book & would
like you very much to
send me one or the
"Illustrated Tune Book" enclosed
then and sometime for same.

P. S. O.

Please let me know soon
if you think this
is the exact version
of Angus John's. If it is
so tell how you hear.

Yours sincerely
J. B. MacCallum



P. S. o.

