

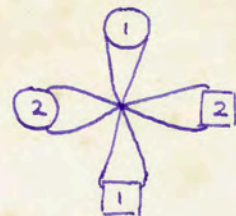
Mr MacNeill knew several of the dances on our list of "lost and forgotten" dances. He is a piper, and used to play for them.

Ruidhleach nan coileach dubha. This is a reel for two couples which is danced to the well known tune of this name. To begin the dance the two couples face each other, the men on the left of their partners. The man and the lady of one couple both go down on one knee while the other couple set to them with "any reel steps" for 8 bars. Then the second couple kneel while the first couple rise to their feet and set for 8 bars. The second couple then rise and all four join hands in a ring and dance round to the left for 8 bars. This was repeated as often as the dancers pleased. [The two couples are, of course, respectively the "tannaig" and the "coileach dubha" of the part-a-bent.]

The information about the dance was quite precise, but since Mr MacNeill could not dance the steps now, I could only show him various steps and ask him which were most like those used originally. There were no special steps for this dance, and as stated above, "any reel steps" could be used. I showed him 'P. de B', 'P. de B. and balance', and 'kick out and to the side', and he said that all those were used. But he had never seen 'highcutting' used. The men used hand movements - opposite hand to foot - and the ladies had arms akimbo. All danced fairly gently, and there was no difference between the men's steps and the ladies' steps. When dancing round in a ring, they used something like skip-change-of-step [definitely not the slip-step].

This dance was taught at a dancing-school held in Castlebay by an old man called "Ronald the Dancing-master". It was, however, danced at gatherings in houses all over the island. It has not been danced for about 60 years.

Cath nan coileach. This is a reel for two couples, danced to the tune of the same name. It is intended to represent the bickering of the cocks, and the way in which they circle round each other. To begin the dance, partners stand diagonally opposite each other, with crossed hands joined (see fig). They remain in this formation for the whole of the dance.



The dance consists of two parts, the first played at very slightly less than

normal reel time, the second much faster.

First part: The four dancers dance round in a circle to the left, using a step something like skip-change-of-step, while the first part of the tune is played through twice. They then set on the spot (with hands still joined), using "any reel steps" for the same length of time.

Second part: The tune now quickens. The dancers dance round in a circle to the left, but using the pivot step, for the same length of music as before, and then set on the spot, using the 'backstep with a hop', again for the same length of music.

The whole dance can be repeated as often as desired. See the note above for further information about the steps.

This dance also was taught by "Ronald the Dancing-master", and has not been danced for about 60 years.

Coille Bharrach [The Barra Wood] A variant of the foursome reel for as many as will. Any number of dancers take hands and dance round in a ring, leaving one man in the centre. He chooses a lady from the ring, ~~who~~ goes into the centre with him and links her left arm in his right arm. He then chooses another lady, who links up on his left arm, and then another man, who links up with the two ladies. The centre four now release arms and dance a foursome reel while the ring dances round them. At the end of the reel, the four take their places in the ring, and another man jumps into the centre to repeat the dance.

White Cockade. This is danced by two couples, who join hands and dance round in a circle. The music starts slowly, and quickens until it is in normal reel time. The two couples then stop and set to the other couple on the spot. Then repeat as often as desired. The only feature in common with the usual version is that partners began by kissing.

Ruidhleach nam Banntraicheann [The Widower's Dance] This is a version of the Pin Reel. Three men and two ladies take part. They join hands in a circle and dance round to the left. The pipes stops suddenly, when the men try to catch a partner. The odd man out is the "widower". The music then starts again, when all five dance round in a circle, and repeat the process. When ~~one~~ a man has been "widower" three times, he sits down and another man takes his place. Can also be done by any odd number of dancers.

Mr MacNeill knew no other dance on our list. He had never heard of the Hebridean dances before their reappearance ca 1920. He did not know a Gaelic name for the Scotch Reel.

I showed him also the "sussone" step to see if he had ever seen it. He told me that he had seen it performed using open intermediate instead of 2nd.

10. 4. 53

JOHN MACLEAN . THE GLEN, CASTLEBAY, ISLE OF BARRA

(Aged 89).

He had no knowledge of old dances. But in spite of having no English, he called the Foursome the "Scotch Reel".

NEIL MACDONALD . CASTLEBAY SCHOOL , ISLE OF BARRA.

10. 4. 53.

His mother told him of the teacher in S. Uist who taught the "Hebridean" dances.

He knew the tune "Aberdonian Lassies" before Farquhar MacNeill's dance appeared. He had been told by an Aberdonian living in Inverness (a Mr Ellis) that "Aberdonian Lassies" was an East Coast dance. Note that the Barra men would often be in the East coast harbours on their fishing exhibition.

7. 4. 53

BARMAN , SCARINISH HOTEL , ISLE OF TIRRE.

(Aged c30)

He had seen Damsadh na Tunnaig as a children's game in Harris. The children just got down on their hunkers with their hands clasped beneath their thighs, and just danced about like that.