

Pat Shuldham Shaw

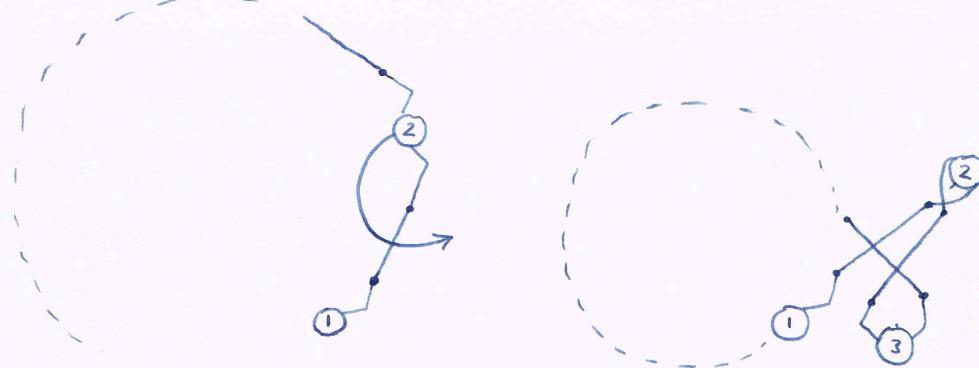
Pat has done a considerable amount of collecting of fiddle tunes in Shetland, and knows a good deal about Shetland dances. He was up in Liverpool for a concert, and we took the opportunity to ask him over to Wallasey to show the team how to perform the Papa Stour Sward Dance. He also showed us a Shetland Reel.

The following notes about the Papa Stour Sward Dance amplify the description in Alexander Johnson's pamphlet. I think the nomenclature is clear - at least to a mathematician.

Figures of the Papa Stour Sword Dance.

I. Ring. Holding hilt and point, dance twice round clockwise in a ring. The swords here are held horizontal, the ring being of fair size. The dancers begin with a bounding step, and this quietens down to the heavy tramp which continues throughout the rest of the dance.

II. Tunnel. 1 lifts up his sword, 2 passes underneath, turns to left, and dances away from 1 round the outside of the ring. Then 3 follows 2 under S_{12} ,



turns under S_{23} to the right, and follows 1. 4 follows 3 under S_{12} and S_{23} , turns under S_{34} to the left, and follows 2, and so on [as in A.T.'s description]

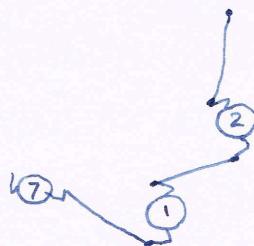
In this figure, as you turn outwards to form the roof of the tunnel, keep your two hands close together, giving a formation as shown.



The dancers enter the tunnel stooping with body almost horizontal, and straighten up as they dance through it, being erect by the end. The effect is one of tremendous flow.

At the warning note, the dancers resume their places in the ring, 2 leading them out of the tunnel into the ring. The tunnel figure should last for at least 7 minutes.

III Neighbour's Sword. Close up into a small circle, something like the formation



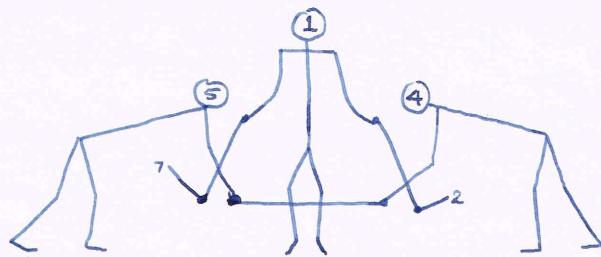
shown above, and stop. Then all put L leg over sword on left [so that the sword is between your legs], then all put R leg over sword, so that dancers face clockwise round the ring with the swords behind your back. [This can be done in one bar if polish is wanted. It was not polished when P.S-S saw it]. Then all turn by raising own sword simultaneously over head, turning to the right [on heels?]. It is essential in this figure to keep both hands firmly down when stepping over the sword. There is an awful temptation to lift one's own sword when stepping over one's neighbour's sword.

After the turn, there is immediately the

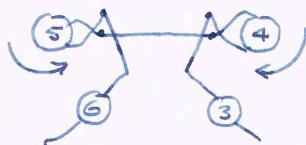
IV Ring. Twice round, as in Figure I.

V. Loom. 1 dances across the ring, passes under S₄₅, and, as soon as he is under, 4 and 5 bring S₄₅ down as low as possible [they bend from the hips, not from the knees]. 2 and 7 retain their hold on S₁₂ and S₇₁, placing their wrists

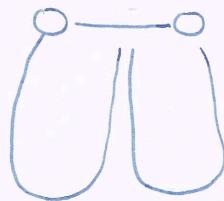
under 4 and 5's arms (respectively), so that 1 can hold his two swords as nearly vertical as possible [see below]



1 then steps backward over S₄₅, and 4 and 5 then raise their sword to allow 2 to pass under it. They then lower this sword as before, 3 and 6 now holding their ends of 2's two swords in such a way that he can keep them vertical, and 2 steps back over S₄₅. 4 and 5 then raise S₄₅, when 7 steps under it. The sword is lowered again, and 7 steps backward over it. Then 3 and 6 do the same in that order. Finally 4 and 5 turn towards each other under S₄₅ to regain the ring [see below]



When 1 goes under S₄₅, the others should keep a narrow formation [see below].



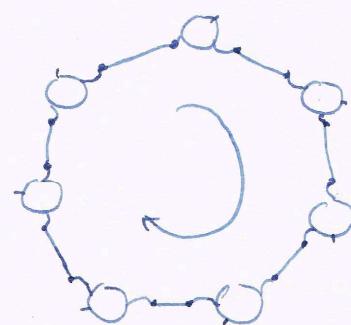
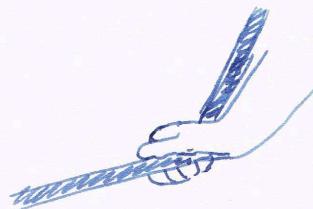
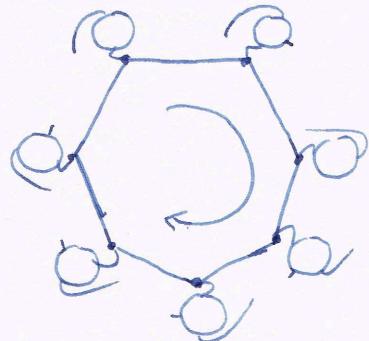
Once over, 1 and the others hold swords as convenient, merely backing out to allow the others to come clear. Immediately from this into

VI Tunnel. As in II.

VII Neighbour's Sword. As in III, save that here, once over their neighbour's sword, they dance round clockwise in a ring until 1 calls "loose", when they all turn to right under R.H. sword to end in normal ring facing in.

VIII String. 7. drops S_{71} on ground. 1 dances across middle of circle, under S_{45} , and turns to left under own sword. 2 follows, turning to right under own sword. Continue exactly as in Tunnel. 1 leads out, forming into ring, and 7 picks up sword.

IX Lock [This is different from A.J.'s description]. All done while dancing round
 Each man brings two ends of the swords he holds together, and grasps them both in R hand. He then brings L hand round behind his back and grasps the trailing sword in that hand. They then change to a ring, all facing outwards, holding hilt and point [see below]



They now all simultaneously turn to the left, bringing their R.H. swords over their heads.

This brings them all facing inwards, swords crossed, R.H. over L.H. Pull the swords together, putting R.H. sword under ~~neighbour's~~ R.H. neighbour's L.H. This gives two ends pointing towards you (your R.H. neighbour's L.H., your L.H. neighbour's R.H.). Release your own swords and grasp these two ends and pull them together to form a point, the R.H. under the L.H. The lock is now complete.

X. Finale. 1 holds lock up by two points over his head. The others take hands and form a ring and dance round him to L, then back to R. He rotates in the middle in the opposite direction to the ring. [P. S-S only went one bar each way]. 2 then comes face to face with 1 & takes lock, while 1 takes 2's place in the ring. Repeat till all have done this. Then 7 throws it on the floor and leaves it there.

There should be a tremendous rush and urgency in this figure.

I checked P. S-S's tape recording of the dance in the Cecil Sharp Library. In the prologue, each dancer had 5 seconds for his solo. In the main dance, the tempo was initially 31 steps in 15 seconds, slowing down to 29 steps in 15 seconds. The lock was made after 6 minutes, and the men went into the centre to display the sword after about 7 minutes. At $7\frac{1}{2}$ minutes from the start, the lock went down. [But I gather that this was a short performance to save tape, the tunnel figures here being cut to the minimum.]

Additional notes by Frank Rhodes on Papa Stow.

St George first. H. 1 step. Step.

Right foot.

Wild casting off. Wrist together in tunnel. This figure was repeated for seven minutes, no time limit. St George turns out to start 2nd. Over neighbours sword left foot & right foot 3 more no suggestion of moving in circle, Both hands down

3rd. First under over, right hand under over, h under o,

R2 u Over. L2 v Over. Bridge turn in to unlock.

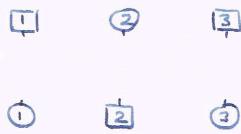
swords of man going over as nearly vertical as poss.

Mod. Bridge stand as near together as possible. They didn't keep time to music in this. This figure only done by St. George.

4th Duck o rise grad. in tunnel for 1st Step. ditto in this "string" step. St George drops left hand sword goes through whale opp. then turn R spare sword left on ground ~~at~~ introduct. individual swords leaving step with a feet kick.

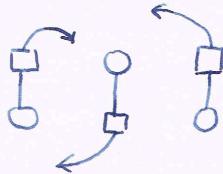
5th ~~Pass~~ Take both swords in R. hand reach behind in L don't break ring. Turn h. pass R wrist under neighbours h. Take 2 points coming towards you and cross to complete lock. No. 1. takes lock by 2 points takes it into middle ring ^{ring} round him R then L. for abt. 6 steps centre man turns opp. way to ring, repeat until all have been in centre

Shetland Reel. Form up as shown, 4 to 5 feet between partners.



The dance consists of alternate reel and set:

Reel: Ladies turn backs on partners. Then all dance figure 8, the men following closely behind partners [without putting their hands on partner's waists]. The initial movement



in the reel is as shown. Return to own places or [in Whalsay only] top couples do extra half loop and interchange places.

The step here is an easy walking step, finishing the 8-bar phrase with three stamps, RF, LF, RF, the ladies turning to face partners.

Setting: Set to partner for 8 bars, hands hanging loosely by sides or [in yell & Unst] holding partner's hands just above head level.



The setting steps here are as follows

- I. Backstep with a hop for 7 bars, followed by 3 quick stamps.
- II. 2 backsteps with a hop, RF behind, LF behind. Then stamp RF behind, stamp LF in front, stamp RF behind. Repeat this counterwise, then repeat the whole.

- III. 1.1 Hop on LF and beat R heel against L heel, feet almost parallel
 2 Hop on LF and take RF out to 2nd low aerial position, but
 with the feet almost parallel.
- 2.182 Three stamps with RF, LF, RF.
- 3.4 Perform 1, 2 counterwise
- 5-8 Repeat 1-4.

The dance can be done both with 8 bars reel + 8 bars set, or 16 bars reel and 16 bars set.

Muckle Reel of Finningar. Form up as for a Shetland Reel. Walk the reel, and then reverse the direction of it + walk it again. Repeat as often as you like. Completed by the 'Back Reel', i.e. back into a Shetland Reel danced to the tune of the 'Back Reel'.

Auld Reel of Whalsay

Muckle Reel of Papa Stow

Guisard's Reel

Flugga [from Delting]

Cross Reel

Cutty [in 6/8 Time, a bunting dance]



All probably once were special dances. Tunes still known.

Dances done in Shetland are "Rory O'More", Shetland Reel [once every third dance, now done rarely], Dashing White Sergeant, Cuckooian Circle, Eightime Reel [all in their own Shetland style], Zoula Reel, Bride's Reel [ladies only ≠ Shetland Reel. Recently revived.]

Mrs M.C.S. Holbourn, Pencaet Castle, Pencaitland, East Lothian, aged 70

Mrs Holbourn's late husband owned the island of Foula [and the ownership is still shared by her sons]. Information about Shetland as follows.

- (i) The R.S.C.D.S. Foula Reel is performed to a tune called 'the Shoads o' Foula'. She met the dance, however, as 'The Swedish Dance' in Bournemouth ca 1895. It and Sir Roger were more or less interchangeable.
- (ii) She suggested that the Papa Stour Sword Dance might have come from England. The father of Lady Jane Grey fled to Shetland when she was beheaded, and his followers brought a large number of English songs and customs with them.
- (iii) She has seen Babbit Bowster done in Foula by visitors to the island.

Mr L. A. Holbourn, 8 Eden Lane, Morningside, Edinburgh.

Interviewed at Pentland Castle, Pentland.

Mr Holbourn is one of the family of brothers who own the island of Foula. He has always been interested in folk-lore, and one of his main sources of information on the subject was an old man from Foula, Jimmy Isobister, who lived at Wester Skeld on the mainland of Shetland.

Shetland Reel. Mr Holbourn added three facts about the Shetland Reel as danced on Foula.

- (i) The setting step is the same swinging pas de Bourre described above, danced with hands joined.
- (ii) The ladies twirl at the corners.
- (iii) The reel is [sic] sunwise. So 

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Notes of Yule reel h for Mr Holbourn

removed from material sent to Sheldad & S.S. Studies
and this note above is seeked.

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On one occasion in 1937, when Mr Holbourn was visiting Jimmy Isbister, there was an old man present in the Isbister's croft who had come on a visit from "over the hills". This old man, who was in his eighties then, had once lived in Foula, although he didn't actually belong there. He told Mr Holbourn that the dance now known as the Foula Reel [i.e. the weaving dance] is not the original Foula Reel, and that there was another dance of this name which he had once done in ~~Shetland~~ Foula.

The old man tried to describe the dance, but there were considerable gaps in his knowledge. Jimmy Isbister himself denied all knowledge of the dance, but nevertheless kept interrupting the old man to correct him. The following notes are the result of about two hours conversation.

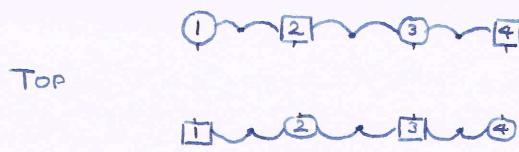
The old man died soon after this occasion, and Jimmy Isbister died in 1954 at the age of 84.

I understand that Mr Holbourn has tried to obtain further information about the dance from other old people in Foula, but without success.

Mr Holbourn has given me this information in confidence. He does not want it published, because the Foula people are very proud of their present Foula Reel, and would view a remark to the effect that is not the real one as in some way derogatory to themselves.

Toula Reel

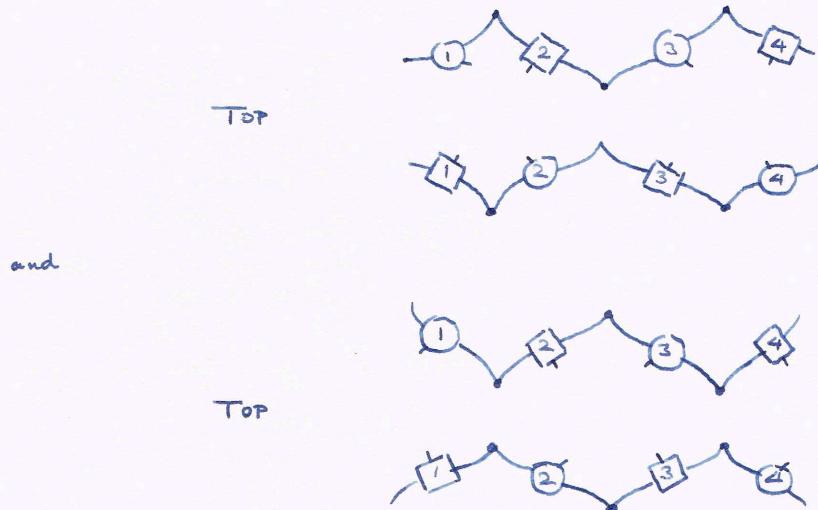
The starting position is that shown below.



The distance apart is such that any two adjacent couples form a square. The old man did not mention any courtesy [and L.A.H adds that in the somewhat similar Shetland Reel there is none]. The numbering is mine, and does not indicate that L₂ is M₂'s partner; it may have been that L₃ was.

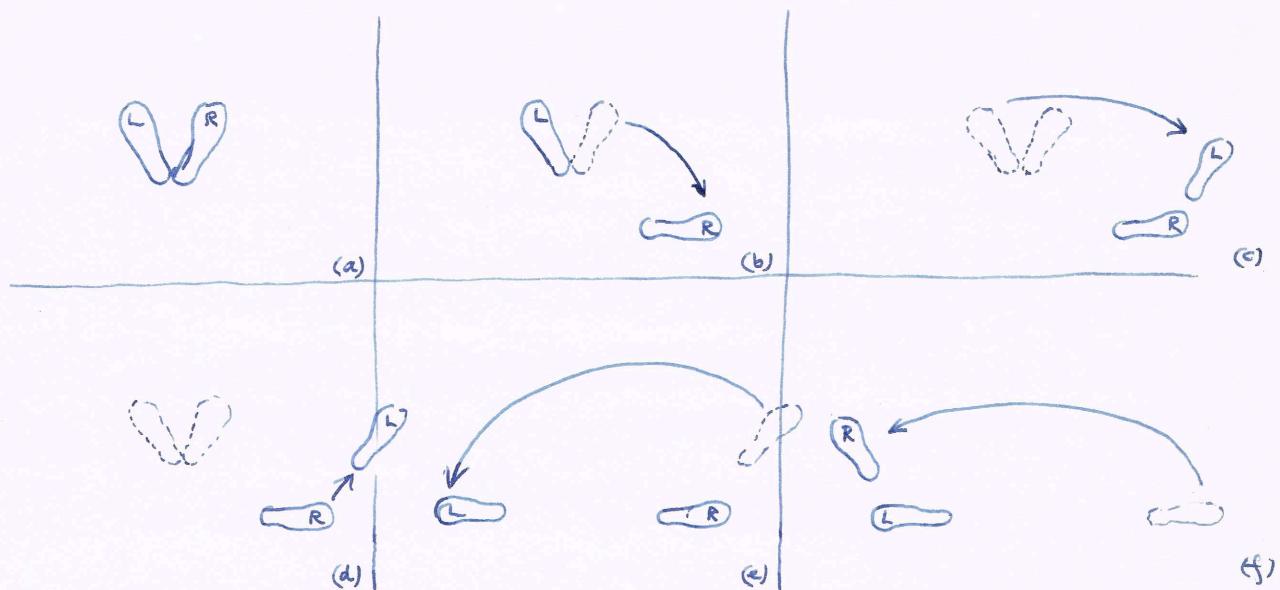
Figure I. All set. The length of the setting was not mentioned - just in time to the music.

The step here is a pas de Basque, but danced with a swinging movement, turning from side to side, so that each person is alternately facing end back to back with the people on either side. Thus the setting ~~is~~ is alternately



Presumably the swing is done in the first manner first, but there were no directions about this. No specific rule was mentioned for the outside persons' spare hands, but L.A.H added that hands on waist or raised is foreign to the Shetland style.

For those who swing to the right to begin the setting, the step is as follows.

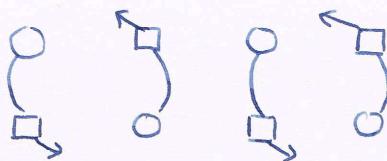


- 1.1 Carry RF in a circular arc to the position shown in (b) and spring on to it, at the same time turning the body half right.
- 8 Bring the LF to the position shown in (c), moving it also in a circular arc.
- 28 Beat with the RF on the spot on the count '2', and immediately extend the LF forward in a low aerial position [as in (d)] and hold it there for the count 2.
- 2.1 Bring the LF to the position shown in (e), moving it on a circular arc. At the same time, turn to face half left.
- 8 Bring the RF to the position shown in (f).
- 2d Beat with the LF on the spot etc.

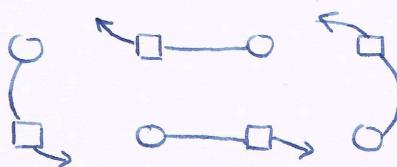
Figure II: Reel.



Here L_1 leads off as shown and M_1 follows her. Similarly L_4 leads off as shown, and M_4 follows her. [Here there is no doubt whatever; The old man used the Sketland word for *widershins*.] The movement of the other people was not clear. The old people had a long argument. One possibility is

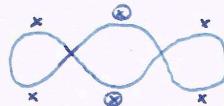


Another is



Of these two, L.A.H prefers the second [though it is not clear if the old people did]. He says that with the first there is a certain amount of difficulty with L_1 and M_2 bumping.

The pattern of the reel is the usual one given below. At the points marked



x, and possibly also at the points marked ①, the ladies turned on the spot, outwards and backwards. [L.A.H has, or had, notes of this, and the doubt about the points ① could be resolved by reference to his notes.]

They presumably return to their original places. The phrasing is not known - just in time to the music.

The step for the reel had "a sort of a hop in it" - the old people could not demonstrate it. But in the Shetland Reel they use a travelling pas de Basque, and it is probably this which was used.

There is no possibility of the men putting their hands on their partner's waists, and it is unlikely that they put them up or on their own waists, though the old people did not mention this.

Figure III. The top two couples and the bottom two couples dance a L.H. star. The 'Left' here is correct because of the direction of the reel. They then reverse and dance a R.H. star. Then in some way unknown they move into two lines across the room. Here the centre four people remain in the



centre (in their own positions?) but this is all that is known. Here again, just in time to the music.

The whole sequence of three figures is then repeated. This brings them back into two lines with all the positions reversed. This may possibly ~~explain the~~ define



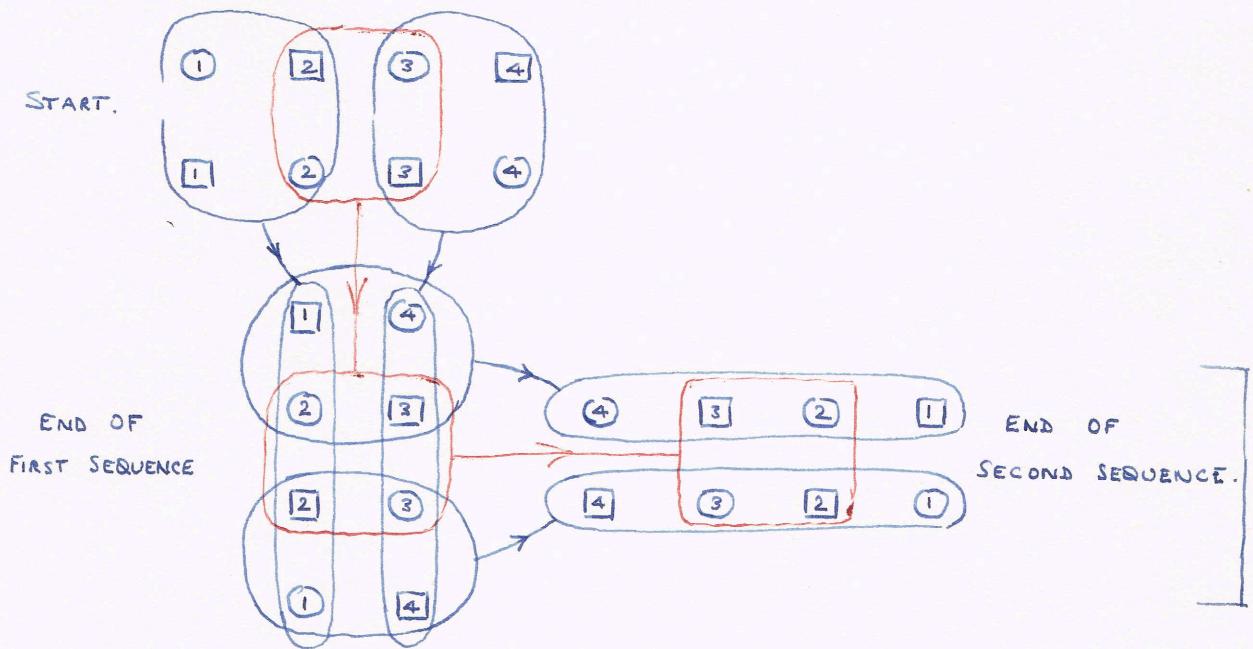
the method by which the changes are made.

If we add one natural assumption to the information obtained by Mr Holbourn, then the dance is completely determined. We have the two facts

- (i) After two repetitions of the sequence of three figures, the set has been rotated through 180°
- (ii) The four who are in the centre initially, i.e. L_1, L_2, M_2, M_3 , always occupy the central positions.

If we assume that

- (iii) the two stars in Figure III become the two sides in the next Figure I, then the pattern is fixed. In fact, (ii) and (iii), plus the condition
 - (iv) The reel shall always be widdershins,
- completely determine the pattern, and when these are satisfied, so also is the condition
- (i). The changes are thus as follows



Mr Holbourn suggested that the dance represents rope-making. The individual strands are twisted to the right, but in the Foula horse-hair ropes the strands are laid to the left. This would give the "widdershins" reel, which is most unusual. Note that the Shetland Reel is not widdershins.

Shetland Reel. Mr Holbourn added three facts about the Shetland Reel as danced in Foula.

- (i) The setting step is the same swinging pas de Basque described above, danced with hands joined.
- (ii) The ladies twiddle at the corners.
- (iii) The reel is [begun] sunrise. So 

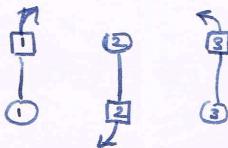
Visit to Shetland: September 7th - 25th.

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|-------|---------------------|--|
| Mon. | 7th | Wallasay to Kinross. Calls in Lanark, Dinton, Edinburgh. |
| Tues | 8th. | Kinross to Wick. Visit to Kingussie Folk Museum. |
| Wed. | 9th. | Wick to Lerwick. Visits in Lerwick |
| Thurs | 10th | Lerwick. |
| Fri | 11th. | Cunningsburgh and Sandwick. |
| Sat | 12th. | Hillswick and Esha Ness. First visit to Bressay Hospital. |
| Sun | 13th. | Visit to Jarlshof. Visits in Lerwick. |
| Mon | 14th | Second visit to Bressay Hospital. Visits in Walls. |
| Tues | 15th | Third visit to Bressay Hospital. Visits in Walls and Skeld. |
| Wed | 16th. To Sat. 19th. | Tom in Whalsay.
and Cunningsburgh. |
| Sat | 19th. | Visits by Tom in Skeld. |
| Sun | 20th | Visits by Tom in Cunningsburgh. |
| Wed | 16th To Fri. 18th | Frank in Burra Isle |
| Fri | 18th To Sun 20th | Frank in Papa Stour. |
| Mon | 21st. | Cunningsburgh. |
| Tues | 22nd. | Miscellaneous visits. |
| Wed | 23rd | Lerwick to Wick, thence to Inverness. |
| Thurs | 24th | Inverness to Dunfermline Visits in Dariot, Aberdeen, Fife. |
| Fri | 25th | Dunfermline to Wallasay. Visits in Tillyburn, Edinburgh, and
to School of Scottish Studies. |

All notes ex-Shetland are in Trad. file No. .

Sixsome Reel:

1. [Pat Shuldham-Shaw] Form up as shown, 4-5 ft between partners. Alternately reel and set. In the reel, ladies turn their backs on partners & dance fig 8, the men following immediately behind partners. Walking step, finishing on the last



bar with 3 quick stamps RLR, the ladies turning to face partners. In Whalsay they put an extra half loop on the fig 8 to change places. In the set, hands hang loosely, or (Yell + Unst) are held in a sort of double arch with partner as shown. Setting steps: backstep with a hop for 7 bars + 3 quick stamps, also backstep with a hop for 1 bar + 3 quick steps. Also a rough form of cabrolle.

Once done every third dance, now very rarely.

2. [D. G MacLennan] AF Backstep with hop, + also with stamps, as above. In addition: 1:1: Spring on LF with RF in 5th; & : point RF in front; 2: spring onto RF, cutting LF back. Then bring LF to front to repeat counterwise. Also pas de Basque.

3. [Tessie Saxby, 1932] Uses the terms "turn" and "run the figure 8" for 'set' and 'reel'. When danced as the Brides Reel, it was progressive, i.e. there must have been an extra half loop in the figure 8, since the bride danced with the three men in successive setting periods. The three couples are the bride and groom, the best man & bridesmaid, and the "married man" and "married woman" (near relations of bridegroom & bride respectively). The sequence is such that bride dances with the groom, then 'run', then with "married man", then run, then with "best man", then run, then finally with bridegroom.

[Chamber Journal, 1853] implies that the set is for more than 8 bars, and that all couples present at wedding take part. Men one rule, ladies others. Follow my leader, for all.

4. [Mr Holbourn] In Foula they hold hands on own sides & swing to alternate sides with pas de Baque. In the reel, they used a step with a sort of hop in it, probably 'dot & carry one', and the ladies twiddled outwards & backwards on the four corners of the figure 8  This has the effect of delaying the couple of which the lady is twiddling, so as to ease the difficulty of the crossing in the middle. No bow or curtsey.

Reel for more than six [Chamber's Journal, 1859]. Men in one row, ladies opposite. All set for half an hour. Then 'follow my leader, two or three times round the house, starting in response to a discordant note on the bass string of fiddle. Then set again', etc. Uses word 'run' for figure.

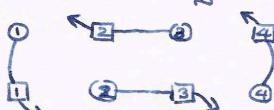
Merry Men's Reel, or Pretty Dancer's Reel [Jessie Saxby, 1932]. Music wild, steps slow and gliding, the figures simple and graceful.

Foula Reel. ~~Also known as 'Old Reel'~~ [Margaret Chalmers, 1813] Tune known also as "Old Reel" [gwen in Hibbert, 1822, and Shetland Folk Book. I, 1947]. Is "danced as a common reel, but there is also a figured dance, which admits a limited number of couples, exhibits a good deal of variety..."

[Jessie Saxby, 1932] Was introduced to Britain as The Swedish Country Dance by an English princess. {

[Hugh Thurston] Scandinavian CD on mainland of Scotland danced to Vava Nadmal [RSCDS Book IV] Figures of Scandinavia C.D. under title of Foula Reel, with tune from Hibbert.

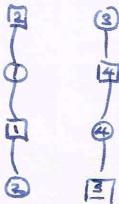
[Mr Holbourn]. Version collected from old man at Skeld who had lived on Foula this in 1937, when old man in eighties. Met in the house of John Isbister, who died in 1954 aged 84. The latter obviously knew something about this dance. Form up as shown:



1-8 Set with hands joined on own side, alternately turning to face people on either side of you.

9-24 Fig 8, starting as shown, & with turnalle outwards & backwards by ladies at .

25-32 Top two couples + bottom two couples dance LH star + RH star, finishing



Does dance represent rope-making?

Muckle Reel of Finnigarth [Pat Shuldham-Shaw] Form up as for Shetland Reel, walk the reel, then reverse the direction of it and walk it again [Does man ~~man~~ lead?]. Repeat as often as please. Completed by "back reel", i.e. back into an ordinary Shetland Reel, danced to the tune of the Back Reel.

Auld Reel of Whalsay [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]. Walk the reel continuously. Connected with chain dance?

Brides Reel. [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]. Danced by 8 ladies.

[Mrs Main] Revised at Cunninghamburgh.

Cutty [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]. A hunkering dance in 6/8 time. Probably the same as the

Trow Dance [Jessie Saxby, 1932]. "ungainly and laughter-provoking".

Sealkie's Dance [Jessie Saxby, 1932]. "More of a game than a dance".

Muckle Reel of Papa Stow [Pat Shuldham-Shaw].

Grouse's Reel [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]

Hugge [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]

Cross Reel [Pat Shuldham-Shaw]

All may have been dances.
The tunes have survived.

Da Rut (Shetland equivalent of rowlocks). [Captain Hay]. From a cousin of his who was aged ca 80 ca 1936. Done by 8 men. Three figures. One imitates rowing out in a longboat to a bigger craft, second imitates hauling in the longboat, third represents the hoisting of the sails on the bigger craft.

Dockers Dance [Captain Hay]. From the dead port of Baltiskund. Done by 4 men, who mime pulling on a rope, lifting a beam, & pushing a truck. Can have 4 girls added, who dance a fig 8 round 3 herring baskets.

Da Trunken Schipper [Captain Hay]. From Tommy Anderson. Done by 7 men, who represent 6 oarsmen & a drunken steersman. Rowers pull him away from rudder & replace him.

Cattass Dance [Captain Hay]. Merely heard of.

Cham Dance [Low, 1774]. Circular, hand in hand, done to ancient Norse 'visicle'

[Jessie Saxby, 1832] Circle, hand in hand, slowly round. Ending to a social gathering. Words improvised to allude to the members of the gathering in turn.

Nippin Grund

Da Brunt Scones o' Voe

Da Scalloway Lasses

Shak-in-troose

Kate a Knocked Com

[John Spence, 1899]. Old Reels. But may be tunes.

Papa Stow Sword Dance. [Scott, Diary; Hibbert, 1822; Wilson, 1842; Alex Johnson, 1926]

Men of Moussa [Mrs MacNab]. 8 Men with crooks. Lay down in star, and straddle with kibby step. Pick them up & link them in centre & do a star. Then link them in pairs & do a roll figure as in a sword dance. Tune a dirge. From Shetlander.

Weddings.

Bride Reel was Sixsome [Jessie Saxby, 1932].

All dances were reels, except for one or two ancient dances more like games than dances [Jessie Saxby, 1932].

Bride dances at least once with every man [Jessie Saxby, 1932].

Gusseis present, and do solo dances [John Reid, 1869]. Dance with everyone [Edmonton, 1805]

"Honest man" mentioned [John Reid, 1869].

Kiss partners [Chamber Journal, 1855]

Gussein.

Dance in pairs [R.M. Ferguson,].

At weddings [see above].

General Queries.

When did they dance [yule ball & Halloween].

Did they kiss partners

To the Secretary of the Shetland Folk Society.

Dear Sir,

For some years I have been researching into the history of dancing in Scotland, and have travelled extensively in various parts of the country in search of information about dances and dancing - though so far I have been unable to learn anything about Shetland at first hand. Together with a friend, Dr Frank Rheder, I shall be in Shetland for ten days or so from next Wednesday, September 9th, and during this visit hope to learn something of Shetland's dances. We would like to take the earliest opportunity of calling on you, and we very much hope that you will be able to help us by putting us in touch with old people who can give information on this subject.

I know that your Society has already done excellent work in this field, and I do hope that you will not feel that I am simply trying to pick up the results of your labours. I am actually preparing a book which will give an account of dancing in Scotland within living memory, based on information obtained from old people whom I have met in my travels in Scotland, and Shetland is far too important an area to be omitted from such a book. In the short time at our disposal, we would like to try to learn at first hand as much as we can of social dancing in Shetland within living memory - of the dances which we and were done, of how they were spread, and of the occasions on which they were performed. In addition we would very much like to see the Papa Stew Sword Dance, if this can

be arranged.

be arranged.

I do assure you that we would be most grateful for anything you can do to help us in all this.

I wonder if you would be so kind as to drop me a note in the enclosed envelope, so that I may pick it up when I reach Shetland.

I enclose a copy of a article which gives a preliminary account of some of our work.

Yours sincerely

T. C.

MALVERN,

37 BURGH ROAD,

LERWICK,

SHETLAND ISLES.

TELEPHONE:
LERWICK 658

8th Sept

Dear Dr. Hell,

I received your letter to-night. I don't know much about Folk Dancing myself, but am sending the addresses of some people who might give you some information.

MR. PETER J. HENRY,
1 BURGH ROAD, LERWICK, or
MR. G.M. NELSON, VIEENSGARTH,
TINGWALL would be able to tell you about dancing in

in the other days. Then we went
on the road. Mr. Henry's
number is LENWICK 586 and
Mr. Nelson's is GOT 208.

You won't get information
about the Sword Dance (and
what a demonstration, if he
comes away in) from Mr.
Spiller-Pottenger. If you

ask Mr. POTTINGER'S shoe-
shop in HARBOUR STREET
they would tell you how to
get in touch with him.

You can ask Mr. Tom
ANDERSON, QUEEN'S
PLACE for information about

Jazzie music,
any of the people of some
mentioned comes see you
soon other. If you have
differences in opinions, any
of them please see. I know
you're sincere.

Mr Robertson is the Secretary of the Shetland Folk Society. He is not keen on dancing, though has done some in his youth. He was brought up on the West Side.

The following are brief notes of a disjointed conversation

- 1) For the Cunningham's Brides Reel, see Mrs Laura Maclellan of Cunningham'sburgh.
- 2) Mr Robertson has heard of the Drunken Stepper on Whalsay; it was performed by a team of men.
- 3) He has also heard of the Flugga in the Delting area of the Mainland.
- 4) The Muckle Reel of Finningath is known by Peter Fraser, 57 Burgh Rd. His people had the croft of Finningath in West Walls. He taught it to some people from Walls, and they performed it as an exhibition at one of the Folk Society concerts. Latterly, children have done it as an exhibition.
- 5) Alex Johnson is still the Post-Master of Papa Stow.
- 6) The Pin Reel is done here.
- 7) John Harold Johnson was Convenor of the dance sub-committee of the Shetland Folk Society. He was organising exhibitions in the town hall ca 1946.
- 8) On the West Side, the Shetland Reel was a 4-some : set to partner, then a star figure. Mrs Robertson & another lady in house did one way round only.
- 9) Alastair Holbourn is now teaching on Foula. Mrs Holbourn is still alive.
- 10) At weddings, there were separate nights for young and old.
[Ref: I. B. S. Holbourn, Isle of Foula, Berwick, 1938.]
- 11) ~~The Folk Society had contemplated~~

S. S. 59/2

ii) The Folk Society had considered the publication of the Shetland Reel, together with descriptions of steps from different districts. So far, however, nothing has come of this.

Mr Henry was brought up in Walls (in the township, not in the surrounding district), but left there in 1917. His knowledge of dancing in Walls therefore refers to the period from about 1914 to 1917.

The following dances were in vogue in Walls when Mr Henry began to go to dances, i.e. ca 1914:

Shetland Reel [2- and 3-couple versions]

Toula Reel [in 5 or 6 couple sets; depending on size of room. Not done regularly]

Pini Reel [for 9 people, including one odd man]

Scotch Reel [a Foursome, starting in line, with the men back to back in centre]

Reel of Tulloch [using Mullachan hold]

Highland Schottische [a very very great favourite]

Haymakers	Waltz	Ladder & Wheel Polka
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Quadrilles	Polka	Hesitation Waltz
------------	-------	------------------

Lancers	7-step Polka	Pop goes the Weasel (a Ⓛ)
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There were many Troops in Shetland during the 1914-18 War, and a good many dances came in with them. The minister's wife in Walls, Mrs Andrew, taught dancing there ca 1912, and she probably added to the local repertoire [Her son, the Rev. Theodore Andrew, is the Church of Scotland minister at Sandwick]. Between these two sources of new dances, the repertoire ~~changed~~ increased by 1917 - 1918, the following dances being added.

Eightsome Reel, Snap the Willow, Cumberland Reel, Jacky Tar Polka, Veleeta Waltz, Boston 2-Step, Military 2-Step, Canadian 4-Step, Paul Jones, Rye Dance, Ree Raa, The May MacIndoe [the last 3 are Ⓛ dances]

The Shetland Reel (2-couple version):

Stand as shown. "Dance opposite to partners" for one "turn of the music" [8 bars], then dance a R.H. and L.H. star for the second turn of the music [8 bars]. The hand-hold for the star is the usual 'shaking hands' grasp? The setting steps used were very varied. If there were three sets performing it in a room, then in general all the men would be doing different steps at any one moment. Men usually had their hands on their hips or held up; it was unusual to see a man with his hands hanging by his sides. Ladies had their hands by their sides, though not holding frocks. For the travelling figure, the step was something between a chassé (without hop) and a travelling pas de Basque. Mr Henry demonstrated the step, and he actually demonstrated a chassé. He said, however, that if he were dancing it with plenty of space, then he would have put more vigour into it, and then it would probably have looked more like a travelling pas de Basque. The 8-bar phrase of "running" often finished with 3 stamps.

The men's stepping was vigorous, the ladies' more genteel. "Backstep with a hop" ["backstep" to Mr Henry] was the commonest step. The tempo was 10 seconds for 8 bars, and any reel time was used.

Mr Henry had never seen the 2-couple reel done anywhere other than in the Walls district. He has seen it there only in the croft kitchens, or in a barn - he has never seen it in a hall.

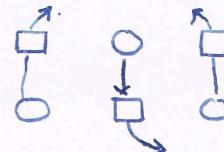
The Shetland Reel (3-couple version). Positions as shown

① ② ③

① ② ③

Alternately "dance opposite each other" and "run the figure eight". For the latter, start as shown, the ladies turning their backs on their partners to begin (there is no fixed direction for this turn). Mr Henry has seen the men put their hands on their partners shoulders during this figure 8, but this was unusual. Steps, etc, as above.

[I am not sure of the period to which this description of the 3-couple Reel refers. Mr Henry did not seem to remember it from his earlier days in Walls, and I felt that he was describing what he has performed at Folk Society dances and at meetings of his Old Time Club (see below).]



The Shetland Folk Society Committee was formed of the Conveners of the various sections, and Mr Henry was the Convenor of the Old-time dances section. He found, however, that the number of old native Shetland dances could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and that it was impossible to get a group of people together to do nothing but these dances. Accordingly, they increased their repertoire by adding the various "old-time" dances which were known to have been danced in Shetland. However, people were not content with these, and added dances like the Royal Cotillion, which "they learnt from a book". The introduction of such dances was questioned at an A.G.M. of the Folk Society, and as a result, the Old-time Society was formed, as a break-away from the Folk Society. They have about 20 regular members who meet once a week during the winter, and also have open nights. The Shetland Reel is done usually at these open nights, but rarely at the weekly meetings.

The Muckle Reel of Timigarth has been shown in public, but is probably not correct. Peter Fraser was the only man who could play it, and he tried to teach the dance from his recollections of information given to him by his sisters (now dead) and from his own recollections of it. He taught a group from Walls, including Marcus Georgeon 1, Vale of Walls
Mary Smith, Elveston, Walls.
Barbara Cheyne, Stenness, Walls
John Johnston, Voe, Walls
& they put it on at a Folk Society concert.

People have told Mr Henry that there were once 16 different figures in this Reel, and that the dance as taught by Peter Fraser consists of only one of these. Unfortunately, however, Mr Henry could not name these people.

"A certain party" in Berwick has taught and tried to spread another version which is different from the fiddler's Peter Fraser's. This "certain party" condemns the fiddler's version as incorrect.

It is a dance for 6 people.

The Bride's Reel is still known in Cummisburgh, by Mrs Malcolmson, Westlee, Cummisburgh. Apparently the final sequence at a wedding was the "bride's reel", performed by the bride & her bridesmaids, after which the bride was put to bed. Following this, there was a "men's rant", after which the bridegroom was put to bed. It has been performed at the Folk Society, but Mr Henry told us that Mrs Malcolmson now thought that perhaps she had confused part of the Bride's Reel with the Men's Rant, and that her version of the former is not correct.

The same(?) certain party " has a different version of the Bride's Reel, which she claims to have obtained from Whalsay.

At weddings on the West Side, dancing took place in the kitchens, or in the barns [which were equivalent in size to the kitchen and bedroom together]. There were separate nights for young people and old people. Dancing usually went on from 4 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The Shetland Reel is still done at weddings in Walls.

On the West Side, it was nothing unusual for a dance to start at 6 p.m. and go on until 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in the morning. The dancing too was vigorous in the extreme. Mr. Henry can remember dancing until he was steaming with perspiration; then he would go outside and stand in the frosty air until he cooled off, and then he would come back in to the dancing — and all without catching a chill.

Most of this dancing was done in someone's kitchens. The floors were of wood, or flagstones laid directly on the earth. In more recent years, there was concrete occasionally. The men danced in their boots, ladies in shoes with a heel about one inch high. [Though in Lerwick at this time, most of the men would be wearing patent leather shoes for dancing]

"Kiss the lasses". Whenever the fiddler felt like it, he drew the bow across the high strings, and this was the signal for the men to kiss their partners — the custom was known as "kiss the lasses". Generally the girls accepted this gracefully — it depended on who they were dancing with. It is probably still done at weddings as a bit of a joke — it depends who the fiddler is.

Mr Henry has never seen or heard of solo dancing.

Mr Henry knew the wooden sheds in which the "fashie" girls lived as Barracks. He confirmed that it was customary for boat crews just to go into these sheds and start a dance. So also could the local lads. He had heard the term "Tany Temples", but did not know it referred to the sheds.

This list, compiled by Mr & Mrs Peter Henry, contains all the "old-time dances" known to have been performed in Shetland.

DANCES

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Shetland Reel | Haymakers |
| Foula Reel | Shetland Reel (4) |
| Strip the Willow | Reel of Tulloch |
| Pin Reel | Petronella |
| Ladder and Wheel Polka | Circassian Circle |
| Quadrilles | Paul Jones |
| Lancers | Rye Dance |
| Boston Two Step | Ree Raa |
| Waltz Cotillion | Mary MacIndoe |
| La Carina | Cumberland Reel |
| Scotch Reel | Pop goes the Weasel |
| Handkerchief Scottische | Jackie Tar Polka |
| Highland Scottische | |
| Spanish Cavotte | |
| Eva Three Step | |
| Canadian Four Step | |
| Eightsome Reel | |
| Military Two Step | |
| La Rinka | |
| St Bernard Waltz | |
| Ladbroke | |
| Dashing White Sargent | |
| Hesitation Waltz | |
| Flirtation Waltz | |
| Maxina | |
| Britannia Waltz | |
| Seven Step Polka | |
| Valetta Waltz | |
| Doris Waltz | |
| Old Time Waltz | |
| On Leave | |
| Polka | |
| Destiny Waltz | |
| Crathantmum Waltz | |

34

12

Dear Mr Anderson,

I have been often you address by a friend, Mr Alec Grant,
who met you in Shetland a couple of years ago.

For some years I have been researching into the history of dancing in Scotland,
and have travelled extensively in various parts of the country in search of
~~any~~ information about dances and dancing. — though so far
I have been unable to learn anything about Shetland at first hand. Together
with a friend, Dr Frank Rhoderick, I shall be in Shetland for ten days or so,
from next Wednesday, September 5th, and during this visit hope to learn
~~something~~ something of Shetland's dances. We
would like to take the earliest opportunity of calling on you, and we very
much hope that, with your wide experience as a dance fiddler, you will
be able to help us.

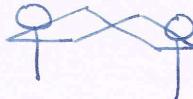
We would like to learn as much as we can of social dancing in Shetland
within living memory — of the dances which are and were done, of how
they were spread, and of the occasions on which they were performed.
In addition, we would very much like to see the Papa Stour Sword
Dance, if this can be arranged.

We would be most grateful for anything you can do to help us in all
this. I wonder if you would be so kind as to drop me a note in the
enclosed envelope to let me know when it would be convenient to see you, so that
I may pick it up when we land in Shetland. Your sincerely

A long conversation over ~~black~~ coffee, and then lunch. I took few notes, and then mainly of names of dances. One remark which I did note is that in the old days people had separate steps for separate tunes in the Shetland Reel. They knew the tunes / and danced accordingly.

He added a little to my literary information.

- (1). The formation of a double arch by each couple when setting in a Shetland Reel, etc.



was common not only in Yell and Unst but also in Hunnasting, Esha Ness, and Hillswick.

- (2) The swinging hands with a beaten pas de Basque was also done on the N. Mainland
- (3) The extra turiddles in the reel was done in the Outer Shetlands.

Mrs Mowat belongs to the Walls district. The "Muckle Reel of Unnigarth" was done in Walls as late as 1922, at dances in the school there, or in people's houses. It was for 6, with "a lot of figure 8 in it". But there was definitely dancing opposite partners in it. About normal Shetland Reel tempo, quickening at the end. It was done at any kind of dance.

In Walls, the star figure in the 4-some Shetland Reel was both R.H. and L.H.

Mr Fraser was born on the croft of Tinnigarth, near . to the west of Walls Township. He is a first class fiddler, and has given many tunes to the Shetland Folk Society. He was taught to play the fiddle by his Uncle Peter. His father was also a fiddler, but was a silent type of man, not given to communicating his thoughts.

Peter Fraser has never danced in his life, but began to play for dances at an early age. When he first went to dances, the dances which were performed on the West Side were Shetland Reels (for 2 and 3 couples), the Muckle Reel of Tinnigarth, The Polka and The 7 Step Polka, Haymakers, and the Foula Reel. The Foula Reel was then known as "The Shaaids o' Foula", and was done very often.

There were no waltzes, Quadrilles, Lancers, or Eightome Reels. These dances came in later. Mr Fraser believed that they were brought to Walls by local girls who worked in the fishing stations in Lerwick. These local girls walked over to Lerwick and stayed in the huts there, and there they met girls from the mainland of Scotland who knew the more modern dances. When the Walls girls returned home, they brought the mainland dances with them, and introduced them at local dances. The Quadrilles and Lancers first came in about 1904 in Walls.

In his young days, dances were held in the houses; there was no hall in Walls then.

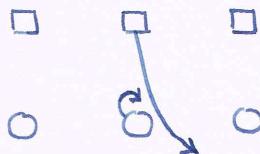
10. 3. 39/4

The Muckle Reel of Finiegorth. Peter Fraser played us a tape of himself playing the tune for this dance [it is printed in The Folk Book]. There are 7 parts in the tune, and the tune is played twice over. After the fifth part on the second playing, the tune is quickened gradually, until it is at the normal tempo for a Shetland Reel. The music is then changed to the Back Reel, for the final part of the dance, which is an ordinary Shetland Reel. The change from the tune of the Muckle Reel to the Back Reel is very smooth.

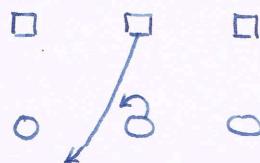
The dance is performed by 3 men and 3 ladies, and the starting positions are as shown



The first part of the dance (i.e. the part performed to the tune of the Muckle Reel) consists of continuous reeling. The centre lady begins the dance; she moves across as shown below. Her partner takes a step forward and turns and follows her, and then the others come into the reel, each man following his partner.



When they completed the first reel, they made "a graceful turn" and began the second reel. Here the initial path of the centre lady is as shown below,



Then the first reel begins again, with another turn to link the two reels; and so on.

The travelling step for the reel is a tilting walk. We timed the walk against the tape, and it was 24 steps in $13\frac{1}{2}$ seconds.

There is no "dancing" opposite partner in the Muckle Reel proper, though there is in the Back Reel.

Peter Fraser taught the dance to a group from Walls, who performed it at a Folk Society concert. His teaching was based on his own recollections of the dance, and ~~of~~ those of his sister (who died two years ago). The dance lapsed about 1880 when Peter's grandfather died, for in those days, when a death took place in a house, there was no dancing in that house for about four years [Tom Anderson amplified this a little. He told us that Peter's people were the only fiddlers within several miles, and their house was the dancing centre for the neighbourhood. Moreover, they ~~were~~ and their neighbours formed a tightly knit, very self-contained community, so that if the dance was not performed in Peter's home, then it would probably not be performed at all.] It was never danced properly after this lapse. Mr Fraser's Uncle Peter told him that the proper reversals of the reels was not done now, and that Mr Fraser's father wouldn't play it much because of this. Mr Fraser's sister learnt it from the old ~~for~~ women who came to the ~~coff~~ in her young days.

It was danced on any sort of occasion, and several times during a night's dancing. It was never performed during the first part of the night, but only during the later part, when people were beginning to tire - it was, of course, a much less vigorous dance than a Shetland Reel.

A Miss (or Mr) Belle Hunter put on a version recently at a Folk Society concert which is incorrect.

Shetland Reel. On the West Side in his young days, the Shetland Reel was either a 4-some or a 6-some. If 4 people were present, it was a 4-some; if 6 people, it was a sixsome.

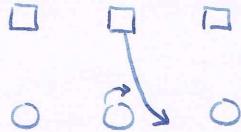
The foursome and sixsome were both alternate "dance" and "run". In the foursome, the figure was a R.H. and L.H. star. In the Sixsome, the starting position was exactly as in the Mullie Reel, and the centre lady began to move in either of the two directions shown. She was the first to move - although they all came in to the music immediately.

The tempo from his tape was 8 bars in 9 seconds.

The Shetland Reel suited a community where many of the men were sea-going, for in the dance they only had to follow their partners. Since they had little opportunity for practice, this put the onus on the women, who stayed at home [But did the women dance by themselves?]

Gusards Reel. When gusards came into a wedding, they did an ordinary Shetland Reel. This was known as the Gusardi Reel, and was done to the tune of this name.

Soles. Peter Fraser has seen only two soles in his young days. One was done to a 6/8 time called the Smugglers. At their house, when a company were gathered together, a John Williamson would perform this. He asked Peter's father for the tune, and then performed his dance - he was a fine dancer. The dance was a sort of step dance, performed with heel and toe, keeping time with



the music. He didn't move about much in the dance, merely a little from side to side. He wore boots for this dance. He went at the dance in deadly earnest".

John Williamson's daughter, Mrs Agnes Jamieson, is still alive, and lives at Cullivoe, North Yell. She is in her seventies.

Peter has a tape of himself playing the tune, and on this the tempo was 8 bars in 80 seconds.

He has also seen an old lady doing a solo dance at Burrastoe on the West Side. The lady was a Mrs Thomson; this was about 50 years ago, and she was over 70 then. "She manoeuvred with her hands and arms. She had some sort of plaid, and we could see it lifting up and down. There was not much footwork". She asked for a special tune, which Peter could not remember. She told the company that she had been taught the dance by an aunt. [Is this a sort of scarf dance?]

A "day wedding". Peter has given an excellent account of a day wedding in the Folk Book. The following notes amplify this a little. All the dances mentioned in the article, including the "He-Reel" and the one on the way to the bride's house, danced to the tune "Flodden o' Edinburgh", were Shetland Reels.

There was an old people's night "on the Contract Night, usually a Saturday". This was for the older neighbours, and married and older relations. At the "Contract Night" they had tea, and a dram, and homemade cakes; tobacco as much as they wanted. And then dancing. The bride took the last refreshment round the company, and when the men handed her back the empty glasses, they gave her her "hansel" - usually a half-crown piece [a lot of money in Shetland in those days].

For the wedding, which was often on the following Thursday, the younger unmarried people were ~~permitted~~ invited. They limited the numbers of men and girls to what a croft could accommodate - 15 or 16 of each. All were unmarried, - though married folk ~~sometimes~~ came to help with the refreshments.

All the girls were called "bridesmaids", and were dressed in white. The men were in black.

The wedding took place in the school. After the papers were signed, there was a time "Woo'd and married an a'". Then a dance, and everybody - even the minister - danced. After another 3 or 4 dances, they walked back to the bride's house; they usually reached there about 3% in the afternoon. Refreshments, and then dancing went on from about 4% until daylight next day. The chief dance was the Shetland Reel.

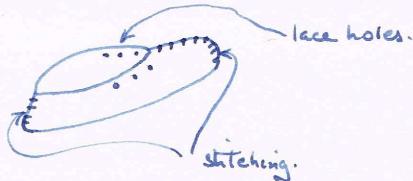
All this refers to the West Side. The name "day wedding" was used because the complete ceremony began at 9.30 or so.

Peter has never heard of ~~the~~ old people on the West Side speak of putting the bride to bed, though he has heard of this in Nesting, on the East Side.

Yule. On the West Side, Xmas was the 6th January. The animals were fed, but otherwise no work was done during the period of Yule. On Xmas day, the older men of the district came to Finnigarth, and Peter's father would play for a dance for them. After two or three dances, they would go home. Before Peter's time, the festivities "were kept up for 7 weeks, the 7 weeks of Yule. The Muckle Reel has 7 turns [parts] in it; a turn for every week of Yule, they used to say"]

Footwear. In Mr Fraser's young days, the outside wear consisted of rivlins or clogs - he wore both.

Rivilins were made of cows-hide



Clogs were made of with wooden soles and leather uppers. Mr Fraser had to make his own. In his house, every member of the house had a pair of clogs, which they wore when they were going to the hills for peat.

For dancing, men wore their Sunday boots, the ladies light shoes. But before his time, old people danced in their stockings feet. They had special "taated" (tatted?) socks for dancing, with specially thick soles. The way he learnt of this was from an old woman, older than his father, who told Peter that she had been told by an aunt the number of "taated socks" which this aunt wore out in the 7 weeks of Yule. [Miss Margaret Smith later showed us a tatted rug (used as a bed-rug), which was once a part of every bairns' dowry.]

Mainly about the Bride's Reel and weddings. Mrs Malcolmson is one of the leaders of the group of people in Cunninghamburgh who still remember the Bride's Reel, and she promised to arrange an exhibition for us.

Mrs Malcolmson learnt The Bride's Reel when it was revived about 1928 or 1929, though she had heard of it from her parents and other people of their age. The revived version was taught to the local W.R.I. by a Miss Joan Lawrenceson (now in the Breivick hospital) and was performed by members of the W.R.I. at a concert in Henrik. Since then, it has been performed occasionally at concerts, and once or twice at weddings.

Mrs Malcolmson gave us a verbal description of the dance, but since this agreed with the version which we noted from an actual performance later, I omit the description.

Weddings. We obtained from Mrs Malcolmson an account of a three-day wedding, as told to her by her parents. This account refers to her parents' young days, so would actually be fairly typical of Mrs Malcolmson's grandparents' wedding.

- (i) Boy meets girl, and they decide to marry.
- (ii) Boy goes to ask girl's father if he can marry girl. For this event, the boy takes along a spörin' bottle [spairing bottle?].
- (iii) Following the spörin, there was the Contract. Special friends of the bride and groom meet and write out invitations to the wedding. A big supper is provided, and there is dancing. Children often lowered a

bag down the linn, and the people present put cakes and sweets in this for them — to be hauled up and devoured in some secret spot.

- (iv) The wedding was usually at 3%. Probably 300 or 400 people would be present. All the invited folk met at the bride's house and paired up. They then walked to the church, with the fiddlers playing in front. There was also a gunner who loosed off shots whenever the procession passed a house [Mrs Malcolmson has actually seen a gunner at a wedding]. In the procession, the 'married folk' led, then followed the bridesmaid & best man, and then various people, the bride and bridegroom being paired with separate people.

After the ceremony, they all walked back again, the bride and groom leading, followed by the bridesmaid and best man, and the married folk. [If possible, the married folk were a lady from the bride's side, and a man from the bridegroom's side, or vice-versa. They were responsible for all arrangements for the actual ceremony, and for the catering.]

- (v) Then followed tea and toasts.
 (vi) After this, there was dancing. The dancing was usually held in the bride's parents house. The refreshments and cooking were in a neighbour's house — the "dancing house" was always kept free of other things to increase the space.
 (vii) The first dance was The Bride's Reel. Few couples took part, namely
 1. Bride and bridesmaid
 2. The married woman, and her counterpart from the groom's side.
 3. The bride's and the bridegroom's mothers.
 4. Two ladies who were the nearest kin of the bride.

These eight ladies danced the Brides Reel to a tune called Aith's Rant, now lost, with words, which were sung, beginning ending

Noo mun I leave fader and middie

Noo mun I leave sister and biddie

Noo mun I leave kith and kin

And follow the back o' a ⁺frain'd man's sin

This is the last verse; — nothing more survives.

(The dance is done nowadays to Com Rigs — it has the same litting time.)

The tune Aith's Rant is supposed to have been Mrs Malcolmson's grandfather, a man called Jamieson).

(viii) After this, there was ordinary dancing until about 1%. Mainly Shetland Reels.

(ix) There followed finally the "Men's Reel". This was performed by the groom, best man, married man, etc., corresponding exactly to the women in the Brides' Reel. "This is the bridegroom taking leave of his family". Mrs Malcolmson had never heard of a separate tune for this. The figures were the same as in the Brides Reel, but the men "maist hoppit it; they didna' dae just see a fine floating step".

(x) The bride and groom were then put to bed. When they were in bed, the men folk present came in and hansel'd the bride — i.e. gave her a present of money, and received a dram from the bridegroom. Presumably the newly married couple sat up in bed for this.

(xi) The near neighbours then went home, while those who had come some

[†] Spelling probably inaccurate. Means ~~not~~ 'of a different family'.

distance made beds in the straw.

They all slept throughout the next day, & the festivities began again at about 6 p.m.

Mrs Malcolmson attended a 2-day wedding in Cuningham when she was 21.

Mrs Margaret Smith, aged 78 }
 Miss Margaret Smith, aged 56 } Hill Cottage, Sandsgayre Wick, Sandwick.

Mrs Smith was brought up in Hoswick in Sandwick. In her young days, most of the dances performed in an evening's dancing were Shetland Reels. Other dances in vogue were Scotch Reel, Reel of Tulloch, and Highland Schottische. The Polka and Waltz came in after she began going to dances, at some time before 1901. Quadrilles and Lancers came in after 1901.

Miss Smith added that she had been told by her cousins, Bell and Jessie, ages 70 and 73, that the Schottische [Highland, presumably] came into Sandwick before it reached Cunningsburgh. When they attended dances in Cunningsburgh in their young days, a Schottische would be announced, and the Cunningsburgh people sat it out, saying "lets sit out and see the Sandwick parish'een prancing"

We enquired about the presence of fishing girls in the two districts, and the facts seem to fit Peter Fraser's theory that the girls brought in the mainland dances. Before the first World War, Sandwick was a booming fishing port, with about 20 boats based there. The gutting was done partly by local girls, and partly by girls from Scotland. A lot came from Fraserburgh and Buckie, some from Stromness. There were also coopers from Wick. For at least up to 1887, the fishing was controlled by the Laird, and probably only local labour would be employed. They probably first came up from the mainland of Scotland about 1900.

All this refers to Sandwick. Cunningsburgh, on the other hand, had virtually no fishing. After the end of the first World War, the fishing ceased in Sandwick.

Both Mrs and Miss Smith confirmed that the sheds in which the girls stayed were used by the fishermen — and by local lads — for impromptu dances. They did not know the name "Tarry Temples".

In Mrs Smith's young days, dances were held in houses. "There was just one or two houses in each village which welcomed all the young people". Generally that of some fiddler. Dances could also be held in the barns, and in her district there was also dancing in a bothy [?] down on the beach.

When Mrs Smith was married, there was a house being built nearby, with the floors in, but with no partitions. For the wedding, they obtained the use of this house to dance in.

Shetland Reel. Normally done with 6 people, but occasionally with 8. The positions, either for 6 or 8 people, were always "time about", i.e. alternately men and women on each side. Just "dance" and "run the figure eight". With 4 couples, there was an extra "turn" [i.e. loop*] in the figure eight.

Mrs Smith has seen the 4 couple version about 30 years ago. There was one odd couple left over after all the dancers had been placed in sets of three couples, so the last set did the 4-couple version. Neither Mrs nor Miss Smith had seen a 2-couple version, or a 5-couple version.)

For the travelling figure, the step was either a lifting walking step, or a chassé. When we pressed Mrs Smith to dance, she actually did a chassé. I could not be absolutely certain that there was no hop, but I

* Not an extra turn of music.

do not think there was. "With the old people, they seemed to have a gliding motion. I demonstrated also the travelling pas de Basque. She said this was done - becoming more common in her younger days.

Some of the ladies held their skirts out when setting; but there was no fixed rule for hands, either for men or ladies, in the setting. In the figure 8, hands were normally held by the sides, but men sometimes put their hands on their partner's shoulders. Men often hunched and sometimes cracked thumbs and fingers; ladies never did either.

"Backstep" ^T was a common step

Kiss the lasses. This was done occasionally at the end of a Shetland Reel. Usually one of the older men called "Kiss the lasses" just as they were coming to the end of the Reel. Some girls submitted gracefully - it depended on the partner. If the man had a bushy moustache, they would try to duck under his arm and flee away. It was not a very frequent happening, even in Mrs Smith's young days.

Bride's Reel. Mrs Smith has no memory of a special Bride's Reel. At a wedding, the bride and groom took the floor and danced the first dance, but as many as could get on the floor danced with them. This first dance was just a Shetland Reel.

Dancing teachers. Mrs Smith has not heard of dancing Teachers in Sandwick but Miss Smith recollects one in Lerwick ca 1914.

^T i.e. Backstep with a hop.

Neither Mrs Smith nor Miss Smith had heard of solas.

Both confirmed the spörni' bottle, as described by Mrs Laura Malcolmson.

We asked about the 8 Men of Monss. They had never heard of this. Monss was depopulated years ago. Mrs Smith's husband, 9 years older than her, had seen the roof being taken off the last house on Monss, and someone who actually had lived there was the same age as her father.

Miss Smith was taught the Sixsome Reel by her two cousins. One is in poor health,

Bell Malcolmson, Kingscarn, Nelson St, Grangemouth, aged 73.

The other is

Mrs Sinclair, 24 Kimberley Drive, Great Crosby, aged 69.
now Tairnglands, Sandwich.

For ordinary dancing, people wore black shoes. Mrs Smith's mother wore rivlins on the hill. Clogs were also worn, but never for dancing.

[Now living at the Missionary Guest House,

College Walk, Selly Oak, Birmingham, 29].

In company with Tommy Anderson, who took us to see Mr Johnson. Much general conversation. The following items were the main ones touched on.

- (1) Sunday started at 11 p.m. on Saturday. The week started on Monday.
- (2) The New Year started on the 12th or 13th January. They still celebrate the "Old Style" Xmas and New Year in Shetland, as well as the "New ~~Style~~" dates.
- (3) Papa Stour is the Isle of the Priests. First Priests came there ca 900[?].
- (4) There was a Shetland Folk-lore Society, which was formed in 1928, and disbanded, or faded away, with the 2nd World War. Mr Johnson was very closely associated with a Miss Jameson in the running of this Society. Its aims were to collect traditional stories, tunes, and dances, and to present them in play form on the stage. Mr Johnson wrote a good deal of these plays, and they worked in recitations, songs, dances, and so on, in the course of the play. They usually produced the Papa Stour Sword Dance as a climax.

The Folk-lore Society had a team of dancers who could perform the Papa Stour dance, and they were very "slick" indeed. When they performed the dance, they adopted a special costume. Long linen shirts, worn outside breeches, like a smock. These were in imitation of the linen shirts which knights in armour wore over chain mail. They also had stockings, ~~banded~~ cross-crossed with white tapes, and with rivets on their feet. Round their shoulders they also had coloured sashes.

Films of performances by The Folk-lore Society are in the possession of Jack MacMillan of Berwick, who works in the steamer store there. Mr Johnson has also recorded a history of the Papa Stow dance for Tommy Anderson.

- (5) The step in the "trip" in the Papa Stow Sword Dance is a 'front-step with a hop', i.e. 'hop, down the front, etc'. The sword is held in both hands over the head



- (6) When he was about 20, Mr Johnson investigated the Muckle Reel of Trinigarth for the Folk-Lore Society. His information came from 2 or 3 old people - one about 90, two others between 70 and 80 - in Walls. There were "13 different turnings". He questioned this "turning", but in case he found that the people meant different figures. It was done by 6 people, and in the course of the dance they danced [i.e. set] opposite their partners. The revised version as taught by Peter Fraser could be a part of the whole.

[Tommy Anderson interposed here to say that Peter Law had remarked that there was much more in the original than in the revised version.]

- (7) The Folk-Lore Society collected various versions of the Toula Reel from Sandness, Walls, and Papa Stow. All of these are recorded in the minutes of the Folk-Lore Society, which are in his possession.

When the film, 'The Edge of the World', was made in Toula in 1926, no-one in Toula knew the Toula Reel, and a team was imported from the mainland of Shetland. The dance is supposed to have been taught in ^{Sandness} ~~Toula~~ by a man from Toula - this is how it reached the

mainland of Shetland.

(8) A man who came up to Lerwick in 1923 had a book which he had published himself, containing the Hebridean Weaving Hilt, and Drops of Brandy. It had a tartan cover, [and was roughly of the same size as the Border Book]. It was intended to be used in conjunction with films; this was stated inside the back cover.

When Mr Johnson started to work in Lerwick, he met many girls from the Hebrides. One of the girls was Flora MacDonald, of Bravast, North Uist. He showed some of these girls, of whom Flora MacDonald was one, the Foula Reel. They turned round & did the Hebridean Weaving hilt - 6 of them in the hut. This was ca 1925.

Again, ca 1927, a Fiona MacRae from Stornoway, a dancing-teacher working at the fishing, showed the Hebridean Weaving hilt to some girls.

According to information from an old man in Foula, now dead, a Johann Johansson from Foula was wrecked in the Hebrides ca 1760, and he taught the Foula Reel there.

(9) Mr Johnson saw The Hugga Reel done at a Xmas dance in Collafirth, Delting. Every Shetland Reel ended with the Hugga - they went straight on from one to another without pause. It consisted of alternate dancing + running the reel.. For the dancing they used a code balance step
 1. Hop on LF + bend R knee backwards
 2. _____ bring RF forward in the air
 3. Repeat 1.
 4. Drop on RF + bring LF forward in the air,

The man who played for the Flugga was Baron Robertson [?].

- (10) There is a dance in Hillswick called The Maltman, which has a religious significance. See Malcolm Morat, who had heard about it from his grandfather.

A rather hurried conversation in a field, together with Tommy Anderson. Three main items.

(1) The Little Maltman. Mr Monat had been told by his father that Mr Monat's grand-uncle, John Gilkaeston, danced this at one time. The best (or main) performers in the district were Gifford Winchester, his sister Kirstie Winchester, and Robert Ratter from Hamer. Harry Gilkaeston was the fiddler. Tommy Anderson's grandfather knew Harry Gilkaeston, and John Gilkaeston died ca 1933, in his 70's or 80's. (thus c. 1870-80)

Three people took part. There was no acting, "only dancing". May have run a figure 8. The steps had a lot of knee movement in a vertical direction [Contacts here might be Arthur Sanderson, Asster, Heylor, aged ca 70. Of the Winchester family, two sons or grandsons, Andrew & Gifford, are alive. See also Jimmy and Nan Anderson in Esha Ness.]

(2) In Mr Monat's day, the first dance at a wedding was a Shetland Reel, with the obvious 6 people taking part. They were probably the only 6 people on the floor, but this may have been for lack of space rather than convention.



Mr Monat's Shetland Reel began as shown



(3) Mr Monat had also heard from his father of a "fool" at weddings. The fool was the last man bidden to the wedding. In those days the "groomsman" [i.e. best man] took the invitations round personally. The

role of the fool was effectively that of a jester. He sat beside the bride and was downed off, insulted the fiddler, and capered about during the dancing.

The fool appeared only at the reception; he took no part in the ceremony.

Mr. Mouat recalled the saying "The fiddler and the fool".

(1) After our conversation with Malcolm Monat, his memory stirred and produced faint recollections of a fool at weddings. When he and his brothers and / or sisters were being a pest at home, his mother would liken them to a fool at a wedding. He has a recollection that the fool was paid for his services.

[Tommy comes from Esha Ness].

(2) He has seen an old fishing skipper, Robert Johnson, do a solo dance in his father's house. He did a slow shuffle, and his knees upwards danced, while his fists almost boxed. The old man died about 25 years ago. [This was apropos of Malcolm Monat's knee movements].

(3) He has also seen another solo, by the father of Arthur Irvine, ~~John~~. schoolmaster, Gribsta. The old man danced a tap type of dance, and used a scuttle as a sort of tambourine, banging it on his elbows and head.

A quarter of an hour's conversation about the Bride's Reel in Cunninghamburgh.

- 1) Her two brothers were fiddlers, and she attended most of the weddings in C^h.
- 2) At a wedding in her young days, the bride was welcomed home with a tune, "The Bride's Welcome Home". Then they took the wine and the bride's loaf. After this [and tea?], there was dancing.
- 3) The first dance was "The Bride's Reel". This was performed by 4 men and 4 ladies, the four couples being the bride and groom, the bridesmaid and best man, the married folk, and ~~two people~~ who were the nearest kin to the bride and groom. She actually said first that it was the last dance, then altered this in response to our questioning.
- 4) She never saw, or heard of, a dance done by women alone (either 6 or 8) or by men alone (either 6 or 8).
- 5) She spoke of Schottisches, and Shetland Reels, Waltzes, and Polka. She was absolutely clear that the Shetland Reel was by 6 people, and that the Schottische was of Circle Dance type.
- 6) She showed the Bride's Reel to a Minister, the Rev Mr Wilson (Established Church). She also taught it to a number of people who came to her house for the purpose of learning it.
- 7) She quoted the same verse as given to us by Mrs Malcolmson, but it was not clear how this was connected (if at all) with the Bride's Reel.

Has the verse any connection with

Ask her whether it was done at other times?

Mr Moar comes from the island of Unst. He is a Norse enthusiast, and has little time for things Scottish. He is Secretary of the Fiddle Tunes Committee of the Shetland Folk Society.

The following are brief notes on the topics touched on in our conversation.

- 1) Mr Moar says that there are very few native Shetland dances. Orkney has no native dances; Mr Moar has seen the Axum Reel, and it is purely Scottish.
- 2) When the Folk Society was formed, the Old-time dance committee was supposed to obtain information about the old dances. "They failed", and Mr Moar set to work to find it. He now feels that he "knows everything there is to be known about Shetland dances".
- 3) Doon da Rooth. The tune of this was collected by Pat Shaw [Mr Moar has collected much material in the way of fiddle tunes "through the offices of Pat Shuldham Shaw"]. The tune is in 2½ Time, and is one of the few tunes known in this time in Britain.

Captain Hay, whom Peter Moar knows well, heard and liked the tune, and constructed a dance to fit it. Captain Hay's dance, however, is based on a misconception concerning the name of the tune. The "rooth" has two meanings - it is both the part of a rowing boat on which the oars slide, and a part of a spinning wheel. Captain Hay has taken the first meaning, and concocted a dance connected with boats. Mr Moar, however, says that you cannot row to the tune, so that it cannot be connected with rowing, and that it is in fact the tune of a spinning song. Mr Moar considers this concocting of a dance as a criminal act.

- 4) There exist three forms of the Shetland Reel. These are
- the sixsome, as performed on the Mainland of Shetland, with the second couple improper;
 - the sixsome, as performed on Whalsay, in which two of the couples change places in the figure 8; the third couple always return to their own place.
 - the foursome, performed on the West Side. The figure consists simply of a R.H + L.H. star. This foursome is probably the dance known as the 'Cross Reel,' which has been mentioned.
- 5) When the Shetland Folk Society Committee considered the suggestion that they should publish a description of the Shetland Reel, together with steps from different districts, Mr Moar vetoed this. His reasons for this were that the R.S.C.D.S had performed such a travesty of the Papa Stour Sword Dance at the Edinburgh Festival (in thigh boots!), and he did not want other Shetland dances similarly travestied.
- 6) The Bride's Reel. Mr Moar had heard of this in Unst, and saw it at a wedding in Unst about 10 years ago. It was performed by four couples, the bride and groom, bridesmaid and best man, the married folk, and some other couple whom Mr Moar did not specify.

The dance was performed three times at the ~~first~~ beginning of the wedding festivities. The first time, the bride dances with the best man; the second time, the bride dances with the married man; ~~the third time~~ in these two times, the bridesmaid and married woman dance with those of the three chief characters (groom, best man, married man) who are not partnered by the bride; the fourth couple stay together. Finally, the third time,

everyone dances with their 'proper' partners.

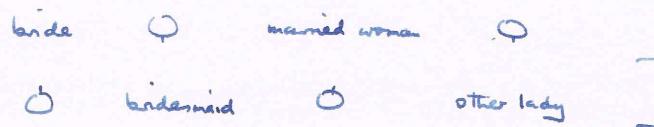
The starting positions are as shown.



[We did not question him on the positions



occupied by the bride, bridesmaid, etc., but we got the impression that these were



The dance consists of alternate "running the reel" and "dancing" [He was quite definite that the reel figure came first]. The figure of the reel is simply that of an ordinary Fousome (Scotch) Reel, save that the men follow closely behind their partners. The phrasing is simply that of an ordinary Shetland Reel, i.e. 8 bars of a Common time reel for each of the "run" and "dance".

7) Mr Moat has never heard of a dance called "The Maltman". The tune has been collected by Pat Sheldham-Shaw, and is again in 2 1/8 Time.

*

At this point, I produced my list of dances; his comments on the items are as follows.

- 8) I asked him his opinion of Jessie Saxby as a folklorist (she worked in Unst). He said that she would be likely to ~~slide over~~^{slide over} anything which was not genteel.
- (9) He had never heard of a big reel as in the Chambers Magazine.
- (10) He had heard of a Merry Men's Reel as a "Scottish Tune", and was quite adamant that it was not a dance, even when I quoted Jessie Saxby's description. He said that "there can't be such a dance. I would have heard about it".
- (11) I mentioned the story that there were possibly two Foula Reels. He said that he had heard that on the West Side -in Walls - they danced two versions

of the Tonla Reel. One version was danced to 'Drops of Brandy', the other to the usual tune for the Tonla Reel. Mr Moan's own opinion is that this story is false. It probably arose from confusion between the name of the dance, i.e. 'Tonla Reel', and the name of the tune to which it is usually performed, i.e. "Tonla Shaaldo".

12) I asked him about the Muckle Reel of Fingal. He told us that "Mr Arne Bjørndal, the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle player, who visited Shetland in 1949, stated that this tune was a "Halling" [Folk Book, iii, 35].

[Tommy Anderson told us that Bjørndal had ^(considerable) difficulty in understanding English, and even more difficulty in understanding Peter Moar, & when he did not understand a question properly, he would answer with a non-committal "Ja".
Peter Moar asked him whether he felt that the Muckle Reel ^(tune) was Norse, and to this received the reply "Ja", which was greeted with great joy. Since then, Bjørndal's answer has been quoted as evidence that the Muckle Reel is Norse.]

Mr Moar told us that this tune consists of 7 parts, i.e. 7 bars in each, with 2 bars at the end(!) Peter Fraser had taught the dance to various people, but these people had found it impossible to phrase the dance to the tune. Mr Moar had investigated the dance, and found a young man who had been told by his grandmother that in the dance the reel was first done the usual way, and then "in the opposite way". Mr Moar tried to do the dance according to these instructions, starting with the reel danced in the usual way,



and then followed by the reversed reel,



but found that the tune wasn't long enough for the required 7 reels. It occurred to him that "the word opposite admits more than one interpretation", and that an alternative was 'reel of three in pairs, followed by reels of three on the sides, followed by reel in pairs, etc'. He tried this with a team [supplied by

12.5.55/14

Belle Hunter?], and found that the paired reels could be done in 4 bars [8?] and the single reels in 3 bars [6?], thus filling the 7 bar parts. When his team performed the dance, they finished exactly with the music, and he feels that this confirms his theory. He has put his team on at a Folk Society concert, and announced the dance as a reconstruction of the Muckle Reel of Tynigarth.

We feel that comment is superfluous!

13) I mentioned the Dockers Dance. He said that this was another concoction of Captain Hay's.

14) There are no solos on Shetland.

(5) The Drunken Skipper is a men's dance from Whalsay. Sometimes, it happens that a Shetland Reel is performed by men only. In two places in Shetland, such a Reel is called a Ram Reel or a Bull's Reel. In Whalsay, it is called the Drunken Skipper.

In a Shetland boat, there are 6 oarsmen, the four front oarsmen being the "fore men" and one of the rearmost two being the skipper. In Whalsay, the Drunken Skipper is performed only in front of men, the women being sent out of the room. Six men dance it, and take the part of the six oarsmen. Usually some "soft mark" is chosen for the role of skipper. They dance an ordinary Shetland Reel, and in the course of this they 'become' drunker and drunker. They carry on dancing until they can no longer stand, and eventually fall over - always on top of the skipper. There are then a few slow strains of music, while they climb to their feet, and then they dance again.

(6) Mr Mac's grandfather told him that when he was a lad of 15 or so, he took part in a Sword Dance on Unst. He did not know the dance, but the girl with whom he was partnered knew it, and they managed to ~~do~~ get through it together without mistake. Mr Mac's grandfather was born in 1825, so that this would have been about 1840.

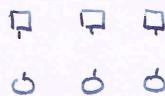
Mr James Brown, 42 Brechin Rd, Lemwick, aged 76.

With John Graham.

Brother and sister, brought up in North Roe. Mr Brown played the fiddle.

(1) When they began to dance, the dances in vogue were the Shetland Reel, Polka, Waltz, and the modern Sixsome Reel. Lancers and Quadrilles came in later.

(2) The Shetland Reel — in their district was a Sixsome, begun as

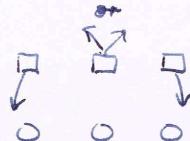


[They were quite insistent on this.] Mr Brown thought the starting movements for the reel

were as shown, but

I do not think his

memory is reliable.



(3) Mr Brown said that 6/8 times were not used for the Shetland Reel.

(4) The Backstep was apparently the only step they could remember [but Mrs Swindell, Mr Brown's daughter, remembers a swinging beaten pas de Basque, as shown by Mr Holbourn]

(5) The Bride's Reel was simply the first dance at a wedding. The bride and groom took the floor first and other couples filled up the floor. The dance was always a Shetland Reel, but there may have been more than one couple.

(6) The third couple were the Honest Folk in North Roe.

(7) Dancing was very infrequent in North Roe in their day, just on New Year Day, Xmas, and weddings.

(8) They had not seen or heard of the Fowla Reel until 25 to 30 years ago.

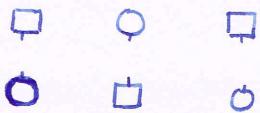
(9) At their mother's wedding, the bride [and groom's?] parents provided the refreshments only for the first day. If the company wanted another day, the women provided the food & the men provided the drink.

Further questions about the Bride's Reel. The information given below is in our opinion completely trustworthy.

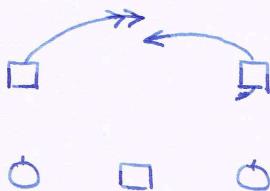
- 1) Miss Lawrenson was born and brought up in Cullingsburgh.
- 2) The procedure at a wedding in her young days was briefly as follows.
 - (i) The Bride's March to the church. The fiddler played a tune, and one of the verses to this tune was "Noo I mun have etc".
 - (ii) They walked back to the place where the reception was to be held. The fiddlers stayed outside, playing "The Bride's Welcome Home", and as each person entered they were given wine and cake.
 - (iii) Then followed tea. Meanwhile the bride and groom might go off to take refreshments to old friends who could not (?) attend the wedding.
 - (iv) Dancing began. The bride and groom might not have returned by this time. Most of the dances were Shetland Reels.
 - (v) The last dance was the Bride's Reel [She was absolutely certain of this].
 - (vi) For the Bride's Reel, the bride and groom took the floor first. Then followed "the best folk" [i.e. best man + bridesmaid], and then the married folk. Near relations of the bride and groom then made up the remaining couples - as many as there was room for on the floor.
 - (vii) The dance was simply a processional. Partners linked arms, i.e. the lady simply took the man's arm, and they danced round the room with a simple step-hop. [Miss Lawrenson actually demonstrated this step on my arm, and there is no doubt whatever about this.] They actually went anywhere in the room, following the bride and groom. We demonstrated Mr Malcolmson's step & 2-hand hold, and both she said she had never seen either.

(viii) There was a special time for this, and a special set of words. She gave both words and time to a Mr Wilson, an Established Church minister at Cummingsburgh. He played them at Henrick.

- 3) As a check of her accuracy, we asked her about the Shetland Reel, and received the clearest account yet of it. Stood as shown



They "danced", and then reeled, and so on alternately. To begin the reel, the two women on the same side pass each other by the right hand [This is Miss L's own instructions.] The other women simply came into the reel in



the obvious way. She said something about the other way next time, but when I questioned her on this, she said the two women always passed R.H.

Miss L. demonstrated the setting step, and it was simply a beaten par de Barque, moving from side to side. The travelling step was something the same (and not as in the Brides Reel).

She had never seen 4 couples in a Shetland Reel, nor 2 couples either.

- 4) In her young days, there were only Shetland Reels and Schottisches in Cummingsburgh.

- 5) She never went to W.R.I.

- 6) Her actual words for the step for the Brides Reel was "first one foot, then the other", turn about.

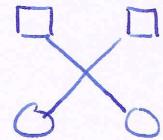
- 1) Born in Foula, stayed there until she was 10, and then moved to the Mainland of Shetland, to a place called "Rearwick" [near Skeld].
- 2) She has memories of Foula dancing. She mentioned a "jig" first. Couldn't remember how many people took part. There was a four-man reel and an eight-man reel. In response to a question whether there was a six-man reel, she said, "Yes, there was." She thought the four-man reel had 4 people on one side, 4 on the other. When she first said this, we got the impression that there were 4 men on one side. Further questions on this point led only to confusion.
She said something about "~~cross~~" hands in this four-man's reel, but Frank and I are divided as to meaning. He thought she meant take hands and change places, I thought a star. But she definitely said "change sides".
- 3) ~~We~~ We thought she was confused as to numbers, ~~but~~ and asked her whether there was a reel with 8 people on one side, 8 on the other. She said: Yes, there was. We then asked her if there was a "2-man's reel". She said that's the polka - you go right round the room with it.
- 4) She had heard of a man doing a "step-dance" on Foula [This was in reply to a question by Frank about solos; the word step-dance is her own.] He showed the steps of a step-dance, and showed waltzing".
- 5) There were no dancing-teachers on Foula.
- 6) The Foula Reel and the Shaaids of Foula were the same. There was a dance to these tunes [This time], but we couldn't discover whether it was

one of the reels.

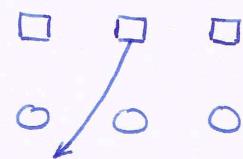
- 7) She had never heard of a fool at a wedding.

Miss Pole is a fiddler, and can still play. She was also very keen on dancing in her younger days.

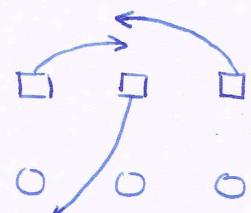
We asked her first about the dances which were done in her youth : "In my young time it was nearly always Shetland Reels. Maybe a four, two and two. You join hands" ~~as~~ as shown in the diagram, and dance a R.H. and L.H. star. Then you "dance" opposite your partner. There were "also polkas. And the Keel rows, like a Schottische. And Haymakers."



There was also a Shetland Reel here in which they ran a figure 8. This was done with 6 people, 3 men on one side, 3 ladies on the other. Miss Pole has never seen a Shetland Reel with 8 people. We asked her about the figure 8 in the Reel. Her first impression was that "the middle part start first", as shown: but "I cannot mind unless I was on the floor". Later on in the interview we got her to walk a figure 8 with us, and she was fairly certain that the pattern was as shown.



In the Shetland Reel for four, the travelling step was a walk ["just walked it"]. Definitely not a step-hop or a chassé. In the Reel for 6, the travelling step was usually a walk, though sometimes people chasséd.



When "dancing", the men had their hands down, or on their waist, or up in the air. She had never seen them crack fingers and thumbs. The ladies kept their hands down. I asked if they held their skirts. With a smile, she said

14.9.59/6

"No! we let them go". Was there hooching? "Plenty o' that. Sometimes you could hardly hear the fiddle".

Ladies sometimes did the backstep. "It depended on the music. When there was good music, we might do the backstep".

I asked her about the beaten pas de Basque with the body swng. She said that it was sometimes done in her young days, particularly by the older ladies. "I have been at parties where there were old people - people much older than me - and they held their skirts and turned" [from side to side]. But only the ladies did this.

Mrs Pole had heard of the dance, the Muckle Reel of Finninggarth in her youth, though she has never seen the dance. There were 24 parts in the ^(she learnt these from her father) tune, and she knows two of them; these are regular in structure, 8 bars in length. She confirmed Tommy Anderson's story that Peter's community was self-contained: "When I was young, people in West Walls never came to Walls for a dance, though they had plenty of dances of their own out there".

Mrs Pole danced the Shaalds o' Toula in her youngest days; she was about 20 before she heard it called the Toula Reel. You need at least 8 for it, "but 8 on a side usually". It was never done with two or more sets in a row, but only with one set from top to bottom. She started to give us the instructions: Go down the centre and turn at the bottom. She stopped there, because she didn't want to say anything in case it was wrong. (She did in fact say more, namely that they turned up the sides, but then retracted it in case she was ^{wrong}.) Mrs Pole has not heard of any solos.

At a wedding, the bride & groom, best man & bridesmaid, & the married folk, took part in the first dance, but as many as could get on the 82

floor also took part. She had not heard of a Bride's Reel.

Peter Fraser's "day wedding" was before her time; she was never at a wedding of this type.

She had never heard of a fool at a wedding.

She has heard the terms '4-man's Reel' and '8-Man's Reel', though not of a '6-Man's Reel'. The ^{first two} terms were quite common in her youth. They were connected with the Shetland Reel, (and definitely not with the Shetlands' Tonka. We asked her how many people took part in them. She ~~said~~ "didn't really know", but thought there were 4 on each side in the 4-Man's Reel, and 8 on each side in the 8-Man's Reel. She thought the 4-Man's Reel consisted of two 2-Couple Shetland Reels side by side.

Mary Ann Nicolson, late of Inntankes, Northmavon, now living near Lena Voe,

Walls, aged 74.

We gave her a lift, and asked her one or two questions.

The principal dance in Northmavon in her young days was the Shetland Reel, begun in alternate positions.

She did not know of any soles.

The Foula Reel, or Shaalds of Foula, were not done in Northmavon in her young days.

Mr Fraser began to dance when he was 16 or so. In his young days the dances performed were mostly Shetland Reels. There were also "one they called Tonka Shaalda, Haymakers, Schottisches, Polkas, Reel of Tulloch, Irish Washerwoman, and the Auld Reel of Tinnigarth.

The Auld Reel of Tinnigarth was just one of the dances done in an evening's dancing. Mr Fraser often went to Tinnigarth on Christmas night (— January 6th), and he frequently danced it then. It was also known as the "Muckle Reel of Tinnigarth, or ~~the~~ just the "Reel of Tinnigarth".

We asked a series of questions about this Reel.

Question : How many people took part in it?

Answer : "6 normally." [Presumably you might have 2 sets on the floor. Shetland folk tend to regard this as 12 people "taking part".]

Question : How did it differ from the Shetland Reel?

Answer : In The Shetland Reel, you danced opposite your partner, then ran the reel. In the Auld Reel you just danced the figure 8 nearly all the time.

Question : Have you heard of the Back Reel?

Answer : No.

Question : Did you "dance" opposite your partner in The Auld Reel.

Answer : Yes.

Question : Was it sometimes quick & sometimes slow?

Answer : "Yes. It was sometimes quicker, sometimes slower. You just kept going round all the time. Then you finished with a Shetland Reel. Some parts had a slow step, others a quick step."

Question : Were the couples placed alternately?

Answer : No, the men were on one side and the ladies on the other.

Question : Was the figure like the figure 8 of a Shetland Reel.

Answer : "Yes."

Question : Was there any dancing at any time while they were going round.

Answer : "There is no dancing while the Muckle Reel is being played"

Question : Is it then only in The Shetland Reel at the end that there is 'dancing'?

Answer Yes.

Question . Was it sometimes slow & sometimes quick even when the Muckle Reel was being played

Answer Yes. *

Further questions elicited the fact that ~~you~~ the man just stayed behind his partner until ~~they~~ ~~an~~ end of the Muckle Reel. At no time during the Muckle Reel did ~~they~~ reform their original two lines. There were no extra turns in the figure 8.

There were not many people who could play it, mainly the fiddlers, though there were also a few older fiddlers who could play it.

Shetland Reel. This was either for 2 couples or 3 couples. The 2-couple version had a R.H & L.H star, the 3-couple version a figure 8. The 3 men stood on one side, the 3 ladies on the other, in The 3-couple version.

Irish Washerwoman. Danced opposite partner and whirled her round. Didn't change places. They stand in two lines to begin.

Mr Fraser has heard of a "fig": "Shetland Reels have a fig".

Shaalds o' Foula (also known as Foula Reel in his young days). C, down the centre and turn at the bottom. Then M, turns bottom L, L, turns bottom man, C, turn, M, + L, turn the next pair, and so on up to the top. After this, there was confusion. You took both hands, and everybody "duckit doon". Then you went backwards and forwards and over each one in turn.

They stood in two lines for this, as many as they could get in.

Kiss the lasses was done. ~~They were~~ He was reluctant to talk about this.

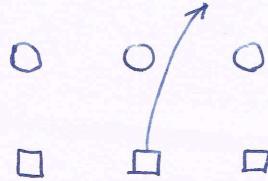
He knew of nothing special at weddings.

Mrs Jamieson, aged 82
Mr Fraser, aged 73

} Scarpigarth, West Walls,

Brother and sister, cousins of Peter Fraser of Finningarth; their father was his Uncle Peter.

- (1) They had done the Muckle Reel of Finningarth in their youth; They knew it both by this name and as The Auld Reel of Finningarth. They started in two lines as shown, and the middle lady started off in the reel. They "keep it



going till the Big Reel was finished", and then broke into an ordinary Shetland Reel.

We could not obtain any information from them about changing the direction of the reels.

- (2) The Toula Shaalds, also known as the Toula Reel, was danced frequently in their young days. It contained a figure in which they joined hands and passed in a zig-zag manner through the couples.

Not sure whether from top to bottom, or the reverse.



- (3) Solos. They had seen an old lady, Maggie Williamson, dance a solo dance to the Tune Bunker Hill. This was long ago, and the old lady would have been about 70 then.

- (4) On Xmas day, the old men would pay a visit to their craft, or to Finningarth, and would have a few dances. All men took part - such dances were known as "He-reels".

(5) Mrs Jamieson remembers a day wedding of the type described by Peter Fraser in the Folk Book. When the men lined up to be paired with the bridesmaids, the girls went right along the line, and were kissed by each man in turn.

They danced the first dance to Wood and Flannel a' a'. Simply a 2-couple Shetland Reel. Mrs Jamieson did not remember any particular dance during the evening being given the name of 'the Bride's Reel'.

Thomas Fraser, Crabs, Scarpigarth, West Walls, aged 74.

We asked him about the Muckle Reel of Finingarth. He knew it best under the name "The Auld Reel of Finingarth".

"They say there are about 13 turns in it". [Here Mr Fraser is referring explicitly to the music, not to the dance. Mr Fraser can actually play a version of the tune. His fiddle-playing is now rusty, but he is still worth recording for this tune.]

We then asked him about the figures of the dance.

"The dance is fairly simple. It's done with 6 people. They just run it as a figure 8. The girls run first and the boys follow, and they run the figure 8."

We asked him about a change of direction.

"Some said there was a change or a turn in it, but I've never seen it." Apparently he heard this said "a good long time ago"; he did not hear it from his parents.

The dance was done now and again during the night at every dance.

Mr Waterson, West Walls, aged 74

He could only remember that they kept reeling in the Auld Reel.

Adam Waterson, Auld Schoolhouse, Dale of Walls, aged 84.

Could give us no information on dancing.

Mrs Cheyne is one of the three people responsible for the revival of the Muckle Reel of Tinnigarth in Walls, the other two being Miss Mary Smith, and a nurse, who is now in New Zealand. Mrs Cheyne saw it done by old people, and had done it herself, in her youth, in Walls. She and her friends revived the dance from their recollections of it, and, although Peter Fraser played for them, they did not receive any instructions about the dance from him. ~~Her father could play the~~

The dance consists of successive reels, in which the men follow immediately behind their partners. The first reel is begun as in Diagram I, the second as in Diagram II.



There is no break in the successive reels. The lady does not turn to face her partner until the end of the Muckle Reel proper, and then the final finish is marked with 3 stamps. The end of each successive reel is not marked in any particular way.

In her young days, ^(but not all) some of the old people started the Muckle Reel in the position shown in Diagram III, but this gives a slightly more complicated start, and when they revived the dance they preferred to use the alternate positions above



Diag III.

The step in the Muckle Reel was a lifting walk.

Shetland Reel. She has done both the 2-couple & 3-couple Reels in her young days - both were quite common. Usually, she did the 3-couple Reel starting in the alternate positions, but some of the old people used to tell you that you should start with 3 men on one side, 3 ladies on the other. This is a more complicated form - the middle lady has to cross past her partner at the beginning, and he has to cross past her at the end.

In the "dancing," "I remember the old ladies swinging from side to side". Backstep? "The men usually did that". At the end, always the stamp. For travelling, either a chassé without a lift, or sometimes a lifting walk.

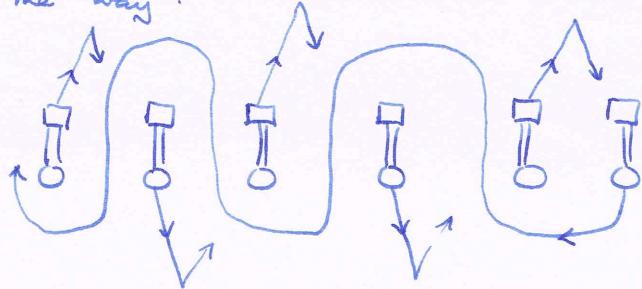
Bride's Reel. Mrs Cheyne's mother used to tell her about the Bride's Reel. The wedding started at 9%. All the girls were called "bridesmaids". They didn't have much room, since they only used their houses - only about 20 couples. You danced the Bride's Reel at the beginning. On the Saturday before the wedding, you had the Contract. But no further information on all this. [This clearly refers to a day wedding.]

She had never heard of a fool at a wedding.

Threesome Reel. Her mother had told her about a Threesome Reel, just danced with three. But Mrs Cheyne has never heard of The Maltman. [Mrs Cheyne's mother was Peter Fraser's aunt, and had never been out of Shetland.]

Shaelds o' Foula [not known as Foula Reel] Men one side, ladies the other, 6 or 8 couples. C₁ and C₂ dance R.H & L.H. star. Then C₁ turn, L₁ turns M₂, M₁ turns L₂, C₁ turn, repeat with M₃ L₃, etc, to bottom. C₁ take hands at bottom, other couples also join hands. Then

C₁ threads their way to the top in & out of the other couples, who move out of the way.



L₁ stays inside, M₁ outside, down over the ladies (still with both hands joined), up over ~~the~~ men. The other people bend down and clap hands.

C₁ swing (link elbows, join own hands together) to bottom. C₂ repeat, etc.

1) We requestioned her on the Brides Reel and weddings. I even set traps to check whether the Brides Reel was the first or last dance at a wedding, but she was perfectly certain of her information. She confirmed 2). (ii) - (vi) ~~copy~~ of my previous notes (14.9.59). She also confirmed that the dancers in the Brides Reel simply went round the hall, and did not do a figure eight. She added two further pieces of information:

(i) The words to the Brides Reel were

Theo'le be kist and T'se be kist

Well a' be kist the morn

The best meat that ever we got

Was kale and knucket corn.

(ii) When she was saying that in the Brides Reel the dances simply went round the room, she accompanied this with an anti-clockwise wave of her hand.

2) She showed Mr Wilson the Brides Reel, and danced with him. She also gave him the words and music. She had no recollection of ever having shown the dance to younger people.

i) We asked her about the "8-Man's Reel" and the "Jig".

Question. How many people took part in the 8-Man's Reel?

Answer. "8 on each side".

Question. How was it done?

Answer. "~~They~~ They danced on both sides and when it came to the turn o' The Spring they joined hands [here she took my left hand in her left. I tried to give my right hand to her right, but she refused it.] and one go to his place and the other go to the other's place. The man gaed to the woman's ~~face~~ side and the woman gaed to the man's side".

Question. Was this the dance called the "jig"?

Answer "Yes, this 8-Man's Reel was the 'jig'".

Some confusion followed, and then something about "dance so long, and then go round the room, like chasing one another".

2) 'Shoulds & Tonla' & 'Tonla Reel' are the same tune. But she had no clear recollection of a dance to this tune.

3) I described the alternate lines $= + //$ of Mr Holloman's Reel to her, but this was clearly unfamiliar.

Mrs Barbara Johnson, Birsay Hospital, aged 90

15. 9. 59/3

Lived in Yell after she was 15. The Shetland Reel in Yell in her young days was done with 3 men on one side & 3 on the other. She had not done either the Tonle Reel or the Tonle Shaaolds.

Mrs Jessie Gifford, Birsay Hospital, aged 80

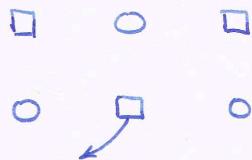
Lived in Bressay. The Shetland Reel in her young days was done with 3 men on one side and three on the other.

The Brides Reel was the first dance at a wedding; it was done by six people only.

Miss Smith is one of the three people responsible for the revival of the Muckle Reel in Walls.[†] She saw the dance done in her youth, probably at a house wedding. It was last done regularly about 50 years ago, usually "just as a kind of light dance" at the old weddings. It was not done much once the hall was built.

Her father, who died 20 years ago at the age of 87, could play the tune, and her brother [Captain Andrew Smith, 27 Boswell Drive, Wardie, Edinburgh 7] still can.

The Muckle Reel is begun with the couples as shown:



There is no break between the successive reels, in which the centre woman turns successively right and left on going through her own place. She never turns to face her partner until the end of the Muckle Reel proper.

Peter Fraser came to their first practice to play for them, and he didn't say they were ~~wrongly~~ doing it wrongly.

She knew about the different starting positions, i.e. either 3 men on one side, or as shown above. She told us the old people used either.

Shetland Reel steps. The old ladies had a step

1. 1 Hop on LF and point RF in semi 4th int. position

2 Repeat 1. 1.

2 Take 3 steps R, L, R, moving to the side (more precisely, move R to side, close L to R, move R to side).

[†] Actually, she and Mrs Barbara Cheyne were chiefly responsible.

15. 3. 55/5

Younger ladies' used a form of beaten pas de Basque.

Toula Shaalds. Two lines, men one side, ladies the other, as many couples as room will hold.

C₁ & C₂ dance R.H. and L.H. star.

L₁ turns men & partner alternately, while M₁ turns the women & partner alternately, until they reach the bottom of the set.

C₁ meet at the foot, join both hands, pass up over men's heads, then over 3 ladies' heads to the bottom.

C₁ pass in and out between the other couples until they reach the top of the set

C₁ scissor (?) to bottom.

I questioned Mrs Isbister in order to identify her as the widow of the James Isbister in whose house Mr Holbourn obtained ~~the~~ his Reel. I then went on to mention the dance, and she immediately said that "that would be the 8-Man's Reel. And then there was the "4-Man's Reel".

Question. How many people took part in an 8-Man's Reel.

Answer "8 on each side". The third from the left started to run the figure 8".

I then interposed some questions about her upbringing and early days. She was brought up, and lived until ~~at~~ a year or so ago, in Wester Skeld. The 4-Man's Reel and the 8-Man's Reel were danced there in her young days. It is now over 50 years since she was at a dance.

I then went back to the 4-Man's Reel, and asked her about that:

Answer. "That was 4, 2 on each side. No, I think there were. No there was just 2 and 2. And they crossed hands and went one way & then they went the other way. And in the 8-Man's Reel they ran from the centre and they formed the figure 8".

I then asked her about the 8-Man's Reel.

Answer. "4 on each side facing each other. 4 and 4. They ran the reel. The second one on [~~an~~ an unclear word here] side ran out and the others followed and they formed the figure 8".

"And when they danced the 4-Man's Reel they went twice round one way and twice round the other".

Question : Have you heard of the Shetland Reel.

Answer : "Yes."

Question : How many took part in it

Answer : "6."

"The Shetland Reel was something like the 8-Man's Reel".

She then went back to the 4-Man's Reel, and was quite definite that 4 people took part, and that they crossed hands and went twice round and twice back.

We then returned to the 8-Man's Reel. Frank tried to sort out the muddle between '8 people' & '8 on each side'. The result was hopeless confusion. One minute she said one thing, the next she said the other.

We then turned to general topics. In her young days the dances done in W. Skeld were the 4 Men's and 8-Men's Reels, the Shetland Reel, Highland Schottische, Polka, and Foula Shaalds. A "Muckle Reel" was danced there well before her time.

There were no solos.

The Bride's Reel was the first dance at a wedding. She thought 6 people took part. She had never seen a dance with women only at a wedding; both men & women took part in the Bride's Reel.

She had never heard of a fool at a wedding.

They used to dance in a sail-loft in W. Skeld. There would be about 100 at a wedding.

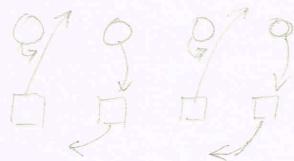
We returned finally to the 8-Man's Reel. "They danced opposite each other, and then ran the reel". The men followed immediately behind partners. "It was the 'second from the right who ran the reel'".

Question . Was it 2nd lady?

Answer . "I think it was the 2nd lady".

She actually had no ~~no~~ recollection of the occasion when Mr Holbourn collected the dance in her house. I described the alternate = + II times, and they clearly meant nothing to her.

N.B. There is less confusion here than I thought during the actual interview if we except that the 8-Man's Reel had 8 people (and I think the fact that 8-Man's Reel = 8-penny Reel implies this), then she was simply giving the instruction from a lady's point of view. And with four ladies on the same side, the 'third from the left' is the 'second from the right', and with a normal 'reel of four', this lady does "begin" the reel by running across, in exactly the same sense that the lady in the middle of the 6-some begins that by running across.



The confusion between 8 on each side & 8 in a set is not unreasonable for Shetland folk consider that all the people on the floor are taking part in the dance (a point of view we find met in several other people).

Very deaf. The conversation was not helped by a younger woman, who insisted on trying to impose her own memories on those of Miss Hay.

We asked her whether she had ever done the "8-Men's Reel." She said yes.

Question : How many took part?

Answer : "4 Men on one side, 4 women on the other".

She was quite certain of this, and we could not shake her. There was also the 6-Man's Reel, where there were three men on one side, and three women on the other.

Question : How did they do the 8-Men's Reel?

Answer : They danced opposite each other. Then "when the spring turned, they all turned".

We tried to get her to amplify this last bit. It was apparently not a figure 8 or 8. "They turned until they were just opposite each other again". We tried to find out if they changed places. I am not sure she understood the question on this point. All I could get was "They didn't have much room, they just turned, without changing places."

Apparently in her young days, the only dances in use in Wester Skeld were the 6-Man's and 8-Man's Reels.

She knew the words of the song 'Shaalds o' Tonle', but had apparently never seen a dance to this tune in her young days.

Mrs Laura Malcolmson, Westlea,
 Miss Agnes Johnson, Ligg.
 Mrs Nancy Johnson, Bealka
 Mrs Janet Malcolmson, Millburn
 Mrs Wallerson, Dykes
 Mrs Dearness, Eldigarth,
 Mrs Tarmson, Heatherbrae,
 Mr Adamson, Post Office
 Mr John Irvine, fiddler, Roadside, Cunninghamburgh.

A very fine performance of the Cunninghamburgh Bride's Reel, performed in old dresses.

Tune Com Rigo, tempo 8 bars in 10 seconds.

The dancers begin in pairs. Each pair stand side by side, with left hands joined & held out in front, with right hands joined and placed on the right waist of the R.H. person, the L.H. person's right arm being round the R.H. person's waist.



The step is a peculiar one, rather like the pivot step.

1.1 Bend both knees, & drop on RF (heel can touch floor) so that RF moves forward a little, the R heel being about level with L toe.

2 Bring ball of LF level with R toe & transfer weight to LF, straightening R knee.

2 Repeat count '1'

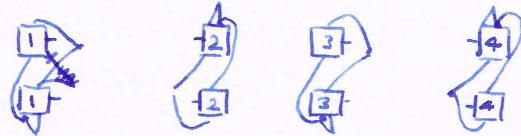
8 Repeat Count '8'.

etc.

There is considerable rise & fall of the body. The RF is always kept as the forward one, i.e. the step is not performed contrariwise ["a change destroys the lift" - Mrs Watterson]

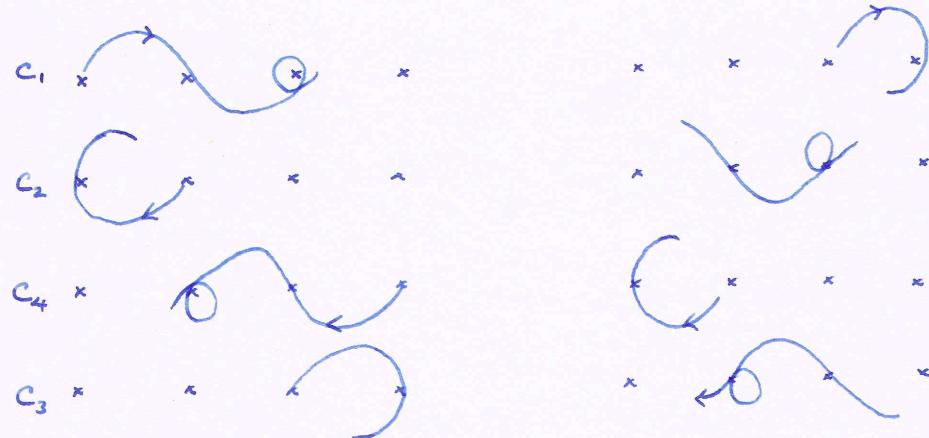
The step, in fact, gives the appearance of a steady shuffle forward [using shuffle in its non-technical sense].

Begin



1-24 Reel of four, all returning to places.

25-32 Continuing with a second reel of four, C₂ and C₃ just dance as before, but when C₁ and C₄ reach 3rd and 2nd place respectively, they wheel completely round to their left. C₂ and C₃ slow up their step to allow C₁ and C₄ to do this.



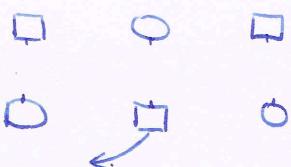
33-40 Continuing with this reel, C₂ and C₃ reach 3rd and 2nd place respectively, & wheel to the left. C₁ and C₄ slow up their step to allow the other two couples to do this.

41 - 48 They now complete the second reel of four. As they regain their original places, the L.H. person releases hands, & drops immediately behind the R.H. person.

49 - 72 They now dance a third reel of four, the L.H. person following immediately behind their partners. As they regain their original places, they do take up their original holds.

73 - 120 Repeat 1 - 48.

They also showed us a Shetland Reel. Start as shown.



Phrasing completely erratic. Roughly 12 bars reel & 12 bars set. Started with 8 bar setting, then alternately reel and set.

When the time changed on one occasion, they did ~~all~~ two reels in succession.



Shetland Islands Council

SHETLAND ARCHIVES

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Mrs Joan Flett
64 Kingfield Road
Sheffield S11 9AU

2 December 1996

Dear Mrs Flett

I now write to acknowledge, formally, your gift of the xerox copies of the Shetland dance mss., and the useful index. I have spent a long time reading them with the greatest interest. The ms. is a model of how such things should be done. Have you ever thought of working them up into a book?

I am very grateful for your gift, and I am sure it will be most useful to researchers here.

Yours sincerely

Brian Smith
Archivist

Folk Music and Dance in Shetland

BY PATRICK SHULDHAM-SHAW

SHELTON is a place alive with traditional music and, I should think, must claim more fiddlers in proportion to the total population than any other part of the British Isles. The standard of playing is extraordinarily high, almost all the players having learnt the instrument in their childhood from their fathers or grandfathers. A few have taught themselves to read music but the great majority learn and play everything by ear. Many of the instruments are home-made, some being wonderful pieces of craftsmanship, with elaborate designs inlaid on the back and having a fine full tone. Unfortunately the younger generation is losing interest in the fiddle and although there are still plenty of young fiddlers (one of the finest players I heard was a boy of fourteen or fifteen) many of them prefer the piano-accordion which they play with great verve and dexterity. The interest in the old Shetland tunes is rapidly waning and the younger players play mostly the Scottish and Irish tunes they hear on the radio, particularly the compositions of Scott Skinner. This is all the more unfortunate as some of the old Shetland tunes are of great beauty and interest, and it is my aim to collect as many of them as possible before they die out. I have made a start and I hope shortly to continue the search. I should here like to place on record my indebtedness and gratitude to the Shetland Folk Society, particularly to the Fiddle Tune Committee. The Society has recently been formed and is doing excellent work during the limited leisure of its more active members in the way of preserving old Shetland Folk-lore of all kinds.

It will probably be gathered from the foregoing remarks that the Shetlanders' main musical interest is instrumental rather than vocal. Songs are always appreciated by a Shetland audience, but the people themselves prefer playing to singing, with the result that there are extraordinarily few Shetland Folk songs. Most of the songs in the dialect are comparatively modern though there are one or two lullabies and children's songs that are of interest. I heard a number of variants of English, Irish and Scottish ballads and songs which proved interesting. I also heard one song in the Norn language—a dialect of old Norse at one time spoken in Shetland. This has already been noted down by William Ratter and published by the Viking Society for Northern Research under the title of "A Boat Song from Unst."

In the matter of the living traditional dance, again Shetland is not particularly rich, though such dances as do survive are of considerable interest. The Papa Stour Sword Dance is still practised and performed with its play. Much has already been written about this dance and I would refer all who are interested to the written description of the dance by Alex Johnson published by the *Shetland Times* Office.

The Foula Reel is still occasionally danced, particularly in the Skerries and the West Mainland of Shetland. It is essentially a weaving dance showing affinities not with only the Swedish "Weaving Dance" but also with "Thady you gander" and the Flamborough Sword Dance. The exact method of dancing differs from place to place and I could hardly get two people to agree about it. The version published in Book IV of the Scottish Country Dance Society's series is perhaps as authentic as any; the tune there given is taken from Hibbert's *Description of the Shetland Islands*, published in 1822. Many other variants of the tune are still played to-day.

The Shetland Reel is still a regular feature of Shetland weddings and is also occasionally danced at ordinary social dances. At a wedding the first set usually consists of the bride and best man, the best maid and bridegroom and the bride's father and the bridegroom's mother. Like the Scottish Foursome it consists of "walking the reel" and "stepping" alternately, each taking up one turning* of the music. Occasionally the reel is done twice in succession and the stepping continued for twice as long. The reel is performed in a curious way. The set forms up as for a longways country dance with the middle couple "improper." The reel is then started by the first woman casting down and the second woman casting up each followed by her partner. The third couple join in, the woman followed by her partner casting up. The figure-of-eight track is continued, each man closely following his partner and each couple acting as one unit, until everyone is back in their original place. (In Whalsay they do one extra change so that each time the two top couples change places). The reel is followed by stepping to partners. In some places partners join hands holding them fairly high, and in others the hands hang loosely by the side. Choice of step is left entirely to the individual but the commonest is the "back step" which consists in putting one foot behind the other and hopping on it. The stepping usually finishes with three quick stamps.

The Scottish Eightsome Reel has taken on a distinct character of its own during its residence in Shetland. It is done—usually in reel time, though sometimes in jig time—with a walking step all through and a great amount of swinging with the pivot step. The figures remain almost unchanged except that the windmill figure in the introduction is omitted. The "Pin Reel" appears to be a game of the "Jolly Miller" type and is now seldom danced.

The "Muckle Reel" of Finnigarth and the "Auld Reel" from Whalsay have long ago died out, though the tunes have been remembered. According to such information as I could get, both consisted of walking the reel continuously and in the case of the "Muckle Reel" reversing the direction of the reel at the end of every turning of the music. It seems possible that these may have had some connection with the Faroese chain dance, though the latter has a vocal accompaniment.

* Shetlanders use the term "1st turning," "2nd turning" to denote what is often called "A" music "B" music, etc., i.e. the sections of a dance tune.

Another dance of which the tune only has survived is "Cutty." The only thing I could learn about the dance was that it was danced entirely in a sitting-on-the-heels position. The paucity of songs and dances is amply made up for by the wealth of fiddle tunes.

These may be divided roughly into four main types:—

1. Tunes associated with weddings.
2. Shetland Reel and other dance tunes.
3. Trowie tunes (The Trows are the equivalent of the Norwegian Trolls or "The Little People" in Ireland).
4. Miscellaneous airs not associated with any particular occasion.

Many tunes are of Scottish, Irish or English origin but very often they become so "Shetlandised" as to be scarcely recognisable. A pentatonic basis is common, and particularly among some of the older tunes one finds a curious habit of repeating a melodic fragment twice or more. There is a curious Irish flavour both of tune and style of playing due possibly to the fact so many Shetlanders who went to sea mixed with the Irish population in such ports as Liverpool and Glasgow.

The style of playing varies very considerably from place to place ranging from a single flowing melodic line with little ornamentation to a highly elaborate style with so many "shivers" and so much playing across the strings that it is difficult to distinguish the tune, and the instrument becomes harmonic and rhythmic rather than melodic. The Shetland style is quite distinct from the Scottish, though, as mentioned above, it has certain affinities with the Irish style of playing. At its best it is clear, melodious and very vital with a certain amount of ornamentation, performed so neatly as never to interfere with the rhythm and flow of melody. The third and seventh degrees of the scale are often neither flat nor sharp but somewhere between the two, though in these cases I usually found that the player had a very definite impression of the tune being major or minor in flavour. This I found by playing back the tunes, after noting them, on a keyboard instrument, with both major and minor intervals, and the player invariably decided that one version was right and the other wrong.

Another small point, but perhaps of interest, is that one tune may appear under three or four different names in different localities and that the same name may be applied to four different tunes.

In illustration of the above brief account the following songs and tunes have been selected from about 160 I have collected on two visits in the summer of 1946 and the winter and early spring of 1947.

BALLADS

THE DOWIE DEN'S O' YARROW

Collected from the singing of Mr. A. Sutherland, a native of Caithness, 20th March, 1947, by P. N. Shuldharn-Shaw.

Slow.

The musical notation consists of two staves of music in 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The second staff begins with a bass clef and a 3/4 time signature. Both staves feature eighth-note patterns with some sixteenth-note grace notes indicated by small vertical strokes above the main notes.

Two he slew and two withdrew
On the Dowie Den's o' Yarrow.

Mr. Sutherland could only recall these two lines of what he believed to be a Caithness version. Other versions of the words such as may be found in Greig and Keith's *Last Leaves of Aberdeen Ballads* collection adapt themselves readily to this tune. P.N.S-S.

There is a family resemblance, of course to those in The Folk-song Society's *Journal* No. 19 (1915) where is also a history of the ballad.—F.K.

Den "a deep valley," *Dowie* "sad" according to Greig, in his *Last Leaves*. Skeat derives *Den* from A. S. *denn* with an allied A. S. word *denu*—a valley. The provincial English use of *Dene* as an excavation (*dene-hole*) or grave, as well as "a flat sandy strip of shore, or hollows behind sandhills" may be cognate; cp. the place-name Deepdene.—E.A.W., M.D.S.

KING ORFEO

Collected from the singing of Mr. John Stickle of Baltasound, Unst, 28th April, 1947, by P. N. Shuldharn-Shaw.

Moderate.

The musical notation consists of three staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff begins with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The third staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes:

Will ye come in in - to our Ha', Scowan Earl grey, Yes
we'll come in in - to your ha', For yetter kangra norla

Verse 4. Then they played the good old gab-ber reel, Scow - an Earl etc.

And we'll come in into your ha'
And we'll come in among ye a'
First they played the notes o noy
Then they played the notes o joy
Then they played the good old gabber reel
Scowan Earl Grey.
Which might a made a sick heart heal,
For gettar kangra norla.

This is all of the ballad that Mr. Stickle could remember. For complete versions of the text see *The Oxford Book of Ballads* and also *The Shetland Times*. The chorus-lines seem to be a corruption of "Scowan urla grun" (Early green is the wood) and "Whar giorten han grun oarlac" (Where the hart goes yearly)—P.N.S.-S.

A text of ten verses of "King Orfeo" was remembered by the Rev. Biot Edmonston as sung by old Andrew Coutts in Unst, as late as 1840. His sister, Mrs. Jessie M. E. Saxby prints his version (unfortunately without the tune) in Chapter IV of her *Shetland Traditional Lore* (first published 1932) in which year she celebrated her 90th birthday. Prof. Child identified it as the ballad known in Denmark, where the Orpheus story has a happier ending than in Greek mythology, as King Orfeo won his wife back by his pipe playing of "da gude gabber reel" obtaining her as his chosen reward.—A.G.G.

CHARMING POLLY

Collected from the singing of Mr. John Stickle of Baltasound, Unst, 3rd February, 1947, by P. N. Shuldharn-Shaw.

1. When first to the ci - ty of Dun - dee I came, I ask - ed her
parents for the come - ly young dame; The answer they gave me "She's
married and a - wa' You've lost your bon - ny lass - ie by court-ing too slow."

2. But since she is gone and she served me so,
My people I'll leave and to sea I will go,
And if ever I return again it's married I shall be
And forget the false lassie I left in Dundee.
3. All the ships in the ocean shall sail without sail,
And the smallest of fishes shall turn into whales,
And the rocks they shall rent and the mountains shall move,
If ever I prove false to the girl that I love.
4. The sun and the elements shall give no more light
The moon and the stars they shall fall down by night,
In the middle of the ocean shall grow a green tree,
If ever I prove false to my charming Polly.

There is an obvious gap in the story between verses 2 and 3, but this is all that Mr. Stickle could remember of the song. The words of the last two verses show a connection with "The Turtle Dove" though rather later in style than the usual versions. The tune seems to be of Irish origin.—P.N.S.-S.

verses 3 and 4 show very clearly the popular adoption of that "Theory of the Elements" well-known amongst educated people until the early 17th century, and frequently expressed by Shakespeare and his contemporaries addressing an audience who could be trusted to pick up the allusion. This system of philosophy, whose greatest exponent was probably Dante, and whose last, in England, Milton, has been set forth in our own day by Prof. Tillyard, but it is interesting to see how widespread among "the folk" has been its persistence with variations suitable to its environment, as an asseveration of eternal love.—M.D-S.

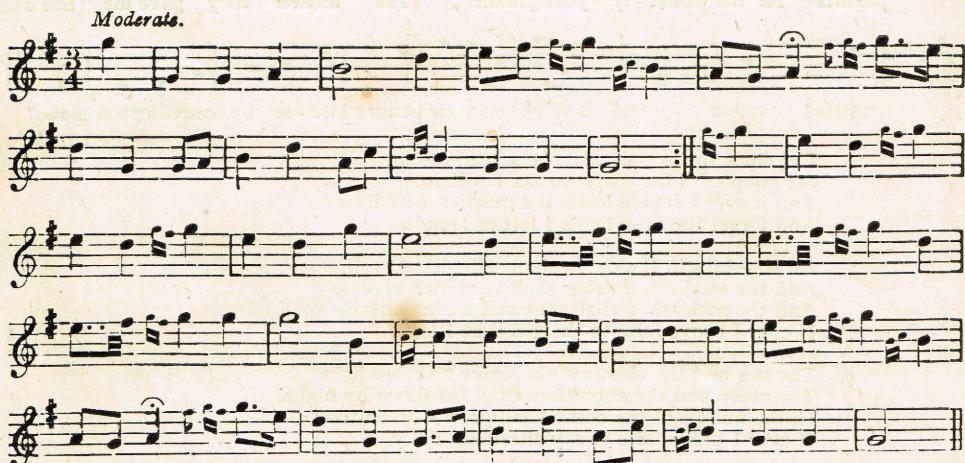
SHETLAND FIDDLE TUNES

WEDDING TUNES

BRIDES MARCH FROM UNST

Collected from the playing of Mr. John Stickle of Balfasound, Unst, 3rd July, 1946, by P. N. Shuldham-Shaw.

Moderato.



This tune was used to accompany the procession from the Kirk after the marriage service. From almost every house passed on the way there would come a fiddler onto the doorstep who would play this tune as the procession passed.—P.N.S-S.

DA BRIDE IS A BOANIE TING

(THE BRIDE IS A BONNY THING)

Collected from the playing of Mr. John Stickle of Baltasound, Unst, 3rd July, 1946 by P. N. Shuldhham-Shaw.



This is another example of a Bride's March. The repetition of a short motif in the second parts of both these tunes is very typical.—P.N.S-S.

DA FARDER BEIN, DA WELCOMER

(THE FARTHER WITHIN, THE MORE WELCOMED)

Collected from the playing of Mr. John Stickle of Baltasound, Unst, 4th July, 1946, by P. N. Shuldhham-Shaw.



This tune was used to welcome guests at a wedding reception. Another version was collected by Otto Andersson in the West Mainland of Shetland and has been published by him in his monograph on Shetland wedding-music, along with many other interesting examples. Among other wedding tunes not quoted here, I found variants of "The Black Joke" and "Woo'd an' married an' a'" —P.N.S-S.

The "but" was the outer compartment of the cot, the "ben" the inner and cosier. "Come ben the hoose!" was a warm greeting.—A.G.G.