Offprint from Scottish Studies Volume 16 1972

The History of the Scottish Reel as a Dance-Form

I

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In the early years of this century, and for as far back in living memory as we can go, the term 'Reel' meant one of the four main types of social dance in use in Scotland, *i.e.* Reels, Country Dances, Square Dances (Quadrilles, Lancers, *etc.*), and Circle Dances (Waltz, Polka, *etc.*). Today the distinctions between Reels and Country Dances have become blurred, and the name Reel is often applied to any Country Dance set to a common time tune in quick tempo.[1] However, to older people Reels and Country Dances were clearly differentiated, both in their structure and in their style of performance.

A true Reel consists of setting steps danced on the spot, alternated with a travelling figure—the setting steps can be as varied as the dancers please, while the travelling figure is usually the same throughout the dance. In many Reels there is also a change in musical rhythm in the course of the dance, an unusual feature in social dances.

A typical example of a true Reel is the Scotch Reel, now more commonly known as the Foursome Reel, which is performed by two couples.[2] In this dance the setting steps are performed with the dancers in a line of four, and the travelling figure, which is known as a 'reel of four', has the pattern of a figure 8 with a third loop added (Fig. 1(a)). This particular Reel also displays the change in rhythm, for it is usually begun to a strathspey, and in the course of the dance the music changes to a reel.

The patterns of the travelling figures of some of the other Reels mentioned later in this article are shown in Fig. 1(b)–(d).

In addition to the true Reels, the general class of Reels also includes a few dances, not constructed in the manner of the true Reels, but performed in the same style as them; the best known of these dances is the modern Eightsome Reel, which was composed about 1870.[3]

The traditional style of performance of Reels was vigorous, and distinctive features were the use of arms, either raised or placed akimbo, and the snapping of finger and thumb; in Scotland these were regarded as part of the dance, even by professional dancing-masters.

In contrast, in Country Dances and Square Dances the dancers held their arms loosely by their sides (ladies held their skirts if they wished) and there was no snapping of

fingers. Another feature of Reel dancing was the 'heuching' by the men (and sometimes ladies), though this was frowned on by the dancing-masters.

In our book *Traditional Dancing in Scotland*, we have given descriptions of the Reels that survived in Scotland within living memory, together with details of steps and style of performance. In that work, which we refer to as TDS, we confined ourselves primarily to a record of what could be gleaned from oral tradition, and we gave historical references only where we wished to establish the antiquity of the customs and usages which we recorded from our informants. In this paper our object is to complement this traditional account with a study of the history of Reels as a form of dance, and to put forward some theories concerning their origins. To some extent this note is a sequel to an earlier article, 'The Scottish Country Dance; its origins and development', published in two parts of volume II of *Scottish Studies*, which we refer to as SCD I, II.

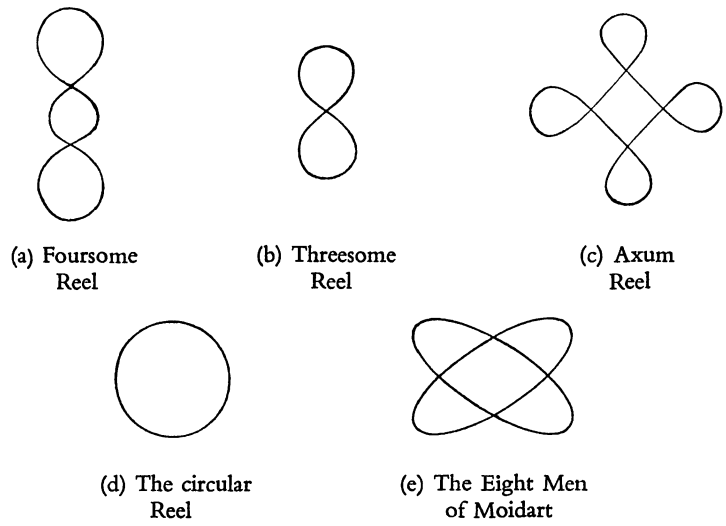

FIG. I

The study of Reels divides naturally into two periods, from 1525 to 1600, and from 1600 to the present day. In the first part of the second period, up to about 1820, almost all the known references to Reels are concerned with the Threesome and Foursome Reels, and other Reels, although they undoubtedly existed, are hardly mentioned. Fortunately, even for this period up to 1820 we are able to supplement our literary research with information drawn from oral tradition.

In this first part of the paper, we are concerned primarily with literary sources of information, and we introduce only such traditional information, mainly concerning the West Highland circular Reel and its allied forms, as is necessary for our purposes. In a second part, we will deal with the remaining Scottish Reels, including the Reel

of Tulloch, various double forms of the Threesome and Foursome Reels, and the Reels of Orkney and Shetland, and there our reliance on traditional information will be much greater.

Early References: 1525–1600

The earliest reference to 'reeling' as a form of dancing occurs in Gavin Douglas's translation of Virgil, *c.* 1525 (Douglas 1839:895):

> And gan do dowbill brangillys and gambatis,
> Dansys and rowndis traysing mony gatis
> Athir throu other *reland*, on thar gys;
> Thai fut it so that lang war to devys
> Thar hasty fair, thar revellyng and deray,
> Thar morysis and syk ryot, quhil neir day.

'Reilling' is also mentioned in the poem 'Peblis to the play', allegedly written by James I (1394–1437),

> All the wenchis of the west
> war vp or the cok crew
> ffor reilling yair micht na man rest
> ffor garray and for glew,

but the earliest extant version of this poem is in the Maitland Folio MS, compiled *c.* 1580 (Craigie 1919:176).

The word 'brangillys' used by Gavin Douglas is presumably the same as the word 'branles', and this is the name of a type of choral dance, in which the dancers linked hands in line or ring formation. A large number of such dances, including a 'Branle d'Escosse', are described by the French priest Thoinot Arbeau in his *Orchesographie* (Arbeau 1588), and seven tunes for the Branle d'Escosse can be found in Jean d'Estrée's *Premier Livre de Danseries* (Paris, 1559). The meaning of 'gambatis' is less clear, but the word is obviously derived from the French *gambade*, to leap or caper. In any case, Douglas makes a clear contrast between those who performed 'dowbill brangillys and gambatis, Dansys and rowndis traysing mony gatis' and those dancers who reeled 'athir throu other'. However, it should be noted that Douglas does not tell us that there were dances called Reels at that time, but only that there was a dance movement which was sufficiently described by the word 'reeling'.

It is not until about 1583 that we find the word Reel (or rather reill) definitely used to mean a dance, and this occurs in an obscure line in Montgomerie's *Flyting with Polwart* (Stevenson 1910:168):

> Bot rameist ran reid-wood, and raveld [in] ye reill[s].

The only other reference to a Reel in the sixteenth century occurs in the trial of the North Berwick witches in 1591, as reported in *Newes from Scotland* (Ritson 1794):

> Agnes Tompson being brought before the king's [James VI] and his councell ... confessed that vpon the night of All hollon euen last she was accompanied ... with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundreth; and that they all together went to sea, each one in a riddle or ciue ... with flaggons of wine, making merrie and drinking by the way in the same riddles or ciues, to the kirke of North Barrick in Lowthian; and that after they had landed, tooke handes on the lande and daunced this reill or short daunce, singing all with one voice,
>
> Commer goe ye befor, commer goe ye,
> Gif ye will not goe before, commer let me.
>
> At which time she confessed that this Geilles Duncan [a servant girl] did goe before them playing this reill or daunce vpon a small trumpe, called a Jewes trump, vntill they entered into the kerk of North Barrick. These confessions made the king in a wonderfull admiration, and sent for the saide Geilles Duncane, who vpon the like trump did play the saide daunce before the kinges maiestie.

The same incident is described in Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials* (Pitcairn 1833:239, 245), but although Geilles Duncan is reported there to have 'led ye ring' playing 'on ane trump', the word 'reill' is not mentioned in Pitcairn's account.

We note that the witches 'reill' was a 'short daunce', and the word 'short' may again have indicated a contrast with the long line dance of Branle type. But the witches 'tooke handes', which seems to conflict with Montgomerie's dancers who 'raveld' in their Reels.

The period 1600–1820: The Threesome and Foursome Reels

We have remarked (in SCD 1) that the seventeenth century saw little social dancing in Scotland, particularly in those parts that came most strongly under the influence of the Presbyterian Church.[4] There are very few references during this century to any form of social dancing in Scotland, and we know of only one such reference which mentions a Reel. This occurs in a manuscript Cantus, 'not older than 1670 or 1680', which now appears to be lost, quoted by Dauney in his *Ancient Melodies of Scotland* (Dauney 1838:55):

> The reill, the reill of Aves
> The joliest reill that ever wes.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, a more tolerant attitude towards dancing began to develop in Scotland as a whole, and this is the period that saw the introduction of the English Country Dance and the Minuet to Scottish Society. Dances called Reels now reappear, presumably having been preserved in the remoter parts of the country; it is also possible that they were preserved in less remote spots as dances to be performed behind closed shutters when the Church elders were elsewhere.[5]

The first signs of the rapid rise in popularity of Reels appear in the music collections of the early eighteenth century. Approximately contemporary with the revival of

dancing about 1700, and obviously related to it, is the appearance of dance music set for the fiddle and the pipes in Scottish manuscript collections. This may be taken to be evidence of the acceptance of these essentially folk instruments in polite society, for the ability to write down music presupposes a fair level of education. Tunes called reels appear immediately in such collections as a fully developed musical form, and this is exactly what we might expect from the prior history of Reels as dances.[6]

For example, George Skene's Music Book of 1717, a collection of fiddle and pipe tunes (Adv. MS. 5.2.21), contains two tunes labelled simply 'Reill' (or 'Reel'), two 'New Reills', 'A Reell Jannie', 'Mr David Skene's Reell', and 'Mr Campbell's Reell'.[7] Again, the Duke of Perth's manuscript, compiled by David Young in 1737 for the Duke of Perth, contains, in addition to the four dozen Country Dances referred to in SCD I and II, a second part consisting of '*A collection of the Best Highland Reels*'. This second part contains 45 reel tunes, and is the earliest source for a number of well-known tunes, including the Reel of Tulloch (unfortunately it does not include a description of the figures of the Highland Reel). An even more extensive collection of reels is to be found in the two extant volumes of the McFarlan Manuscripts (N.L.S. MS 2084–5), written by David Young 'for the use of Walter McFarlan OF THAT ILK', the first volume in 1740, the second *c.* 1743. There are also a number of reels with Country Dance figures set to them in the Young Manuscript of 1740 (SCD I: 4), and also in the various volumes of the Walshs' *Caledonian Country Dances* published in London from 1733 onwards (SCD I: 8; II: 144).

Rather surprisingly, strathspeys are absent from the early Scottish manuscript and printed collections of music. There are slight traces of the distinctive strathspey characteristics in the McFarlan Manuscript, and also possibly in a tune entitled 'Strath sprays Rant' in Book III of the Walshs' *Caledonian Country Dances* (*c.* 1740), but the earliest tunes known to us that are unmistakably strathspeys are two tunes each entitled 'A new Strathspey Reel' (and marked 'slow') in Part 3 of Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, *c.* 1751. There is also a note 'a Strathspey Reel(e)' against two of the Country Dances in the Menzies Manuscript of 1749 (SCD I: 5), namely 'The Montgomrie's Rant' and 'Conteraller's Rant', but this manuscript does not give the music for the dances. John Bremner's *Collection of Scots Reels*, of which the first twelve parts were published in Edinburgh between 1757 and 1761, contains over ten tunes labelled as 'Strathspeys', but even at this date Bremner thought it necessary to add an *N.B.* to the first such tune (The Fir Tree, in Part 5, 1758) stating that 'The Strathspey Reels are play'd much slower than the others'.

Popular tradition current in the north-east of Scotland about 1785 named the Browns of Kincardine-on-Spey, and after them the Cummings of Castle Grant, as the first composers of strathspeys (Newte 1791:163), and there seems no reason to doubt this tradition. Certainly the absence of strathspeys from the early manuscripts indicates that they evolved at some time after 1700, for had they been a fully developed musical form by 1700, they would have appeared in the manuscripts at the same time as reels.

We should mention also the conclusions reached in SCD II (pp. 141–2) that, before about 1740, tunes in Common time for Country Dances were played at a tempo of about 28–32 bars per minute, *i.e.* less than half that of present-day Country Dances in quick tempo. These conclusions tend to confirm that at this period the distinction between reels and strathspeys had not yet emerged.

The fact that the early strathspeys are referred to as 'Strathspey Reels' indicates that they were played for the dancing of Reels, and there is confirmation of this in the titles of some of the later music collections, for example Angus Cumming's *A Collection of Strathspeys or old Highland Reels*, published in Edinburgh in 1780, and Alexander McGlashan's *A Collection of Reels, consisting chiefly of Strathspeys, Athole Reels, etc.*, published in Edinburgh in 1786. However, it should be mentioned that there was also another dance that was performed to strathspeys, namely the Strathspey Minuet. This repeatedly intrudes into our story, and we return to it in an Appendix.

The term 'Athole Reel' used above was simply a new name for the old fast reels, to distinguish them from 'Strathspey Reels'. In 1798, the poet and song-collector Alexander Campbell makes the following comment on their distribution (Campbell 1798):

> The reel seems prevalent in the Braes of Athol, and over the west part of Perthshire, and is pretty universal throughout Argyleshire. The strathspey seems peculiar to the great tract of country through which the river Spey runs. Through the North-Highlands, and western Isles, a species of melody, partaking somewhat of the reel, and strathspey, seems more relished by the natives, to which they dance, in a manner peculiar to these parts of the Hebrides. The Athol reel is lively, and animating in a high degree. The strathspey is much slower, better accented, . . . The movements to the former are spirited, yet less graceful.

We note for future reference the sentence concerning the North-Highlands and western Isles.

Although the manuscript and printed collections of Scottish music provide plentiful evidence of the popularity of Reels in the eighteenth century, they tell us little of the nature of these Reels, and for this we have to turn to the literature of the period.

In the glossary to Ruddiman's edition of Douglas's Virgil, printed in Edinburgh in 1710 (Ruddiman 1710), we find the term *Reel* defined as 'a *dance*, as *a threesom Reel*, where three dance together'. Ruddiman also defines the terms *Ring Dances* and *Rounds*, and these definitions are of interest since they describe two types of dances that Ruddiman considered were *not* Reels. To Ruddiman, Ring Dances were 'a kind of dance of many together in a ring or circle taking one another by the hands, and quitting them again at certain turns of the Tune (or Spring, as Scot. we call it,) and sometimes the piper is put in the center'. On the other hand, Rounds were '*merry* Dances in which the body makes a great deal of motion, and often turns *round*. The country Swains and Damsels call them S. *Roundels*'.

Although Ruddiman's definition of the term Reel leaves open the possibility that

at that time there were Reels for more or fewer than three people, until 1775 those references which mention the number of dancers refer to three people only.[8]

The first such occurrence is in Allan Ramsay's second Canto to 'Christ's Kirk on the Green', written in 1716 (Ramsay 1800):

> Furth started neist a pensy blade,
> . . .
> They said that he was Falkland bred,
> And danced by the book;
> . . .
> When a' cry'd out he did sae weel,
> He Meg and Bess did call up;
> The lasses babb'd about the reel,
> Gar'd a' their hurdies wallop,
> And swat like pownies when they speel
> Up braes, or when they gallop,
> But a thrawn knublock hit his heel,
> And wives had him to haul up,
> Haff fell'd that day.

Another such incident is recorded in the autobiography of Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk (Burton 1910). In 1741 Carlyle was at Lucky Vint's, a celebrated tavern in Edinburgh, with Lord Lovat and Erskine of Grange. The latter had provided a piper

> to entertain Lovat after dinner; but though he was reckoned the best piper in the country, Lovat despised him, and said he was only fit to play reels to Grange's oyster-women. He [Lovat] grew frisky at last, however, and upon Kate Vint, the landlady's daughter, coming into the room, he insisted on her staying to dance with him. . . . Lovat was at this time seventy-five, and Grange not much younger; yet the wine and the young woman emboldened them to dance a reel, till Kate, observing Lovat's legs as thick as posts, fell a-laughing, and ran off. She missed her second course of kisses, as was then the fashion of the country, though she had endured the first. This was a scene not easily forgotten.

The 1745 Rising brought many Lowland and English people into contact with the Highlanders for the first time, and might be thought to have given rise to several descriptions of Reels, but unfortunately this is not so. The Highlanders certainly danced; indeed James Gib, who served Prince Charles as 'Master-Houshold and provisor for the Prince's own Table' told Robert Forbes that 'the Highlanders were the most surprising men he had ever seen. For after making very long marches, and coming to their quarters, they would have got up to the dancing as nimbly as if they had not been marching at all, whenever they heard the pipes begin to play; which made him frequently say, "I believe the devil is in their legs" ' (Forbes 1895: II. 171). It is highly probable that the dances performed on such occasions were Reels, but the only confirmation of this is from Lord George Murray, who recorded that on crossing the Esk

'the pipes began to play so soon as they pass'd, and the men all danced reels, which in a moment dry'd them' (Murray 1908:126).[9]

Robert Forbes also records that when Prince Charles arrived at the house of Lude on 2 September 1745, 'he was very cheerful and took his share in several dances, such as minuets, Highland reels (the first reel the Prince called for was "This is not mine ain house", *etc*), and a Strathspey minuet' (Forbes 1895: I. 208). This is the earliest reference to the Strathspey minuet, and indeed is the earliest reference to the term 'strathspey' in connection with dancing or music.[10]

It is interesting to note that although Reels were danced from the highest to the lowest strata of society, from the Prince, the Duke of Perth, and Lord Lovat, to Grange's oyster-women, the dances performed at the Edinburgh Assemblies from their inception in 1723 up to as late as 1753 seem to have consisted only of Country Dances and Minuets (Flett 1967).

The next reference to Reels is given by Giovanni Gallini (Sir John Gallini), a London dancing-master, in his *Treatise on the art of dancing* (London 1765):

> It is to the Highlanders of North-Britain, that I am told we are indebted for a dance in the comic vein, called the *Scotch Reel*, executed generally, and, I believe always in *trio*, or by three. When well danced, it has a very pleasing effect, and indeed nothing can be imagined more lively and brilliant than the steps in many of the Scotch dances. There is a great variety of very natural and pleasing ones.

This description of the Reel as 'a dance in the comic vein' sounds as though Gallini may only have seen it as a 'character' dance, performed as an interlude on the London stage. Although there was at this time a 'Scotch dancing assembly' in London (Alexander Carlyle mentions that in 1769 it 'met in the King's Arms Tavern, in Cheapside' (Burton 1910:524)), it is probable that Gallini, as a prominent dancing-master, would not have visited it.

Gallini is the first writer to use the name 'Scotch Reel'. Later this name appears to have been applied to both the Threesome and Foursome Reels, and it was then retained by the Foursome Reel as the Threesome Reel died out.

Yet another reference to a Reel for three occurs in Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (Boswell 1936:323). At Inchkenneth, on 18 October 1773, 'I [Boswell] proposed a reel, so Miss Sibby and Coll and I danced, while Miss MacLean played' [on a harpischord]. Earlier, on 10th September, Boswell took part in another Reel on the top of Duncaan in Raasay, where 'we danced a reel, to which he [Malcolm, son of Raasay] and Donald Macqueen sang' (*op. cit.*: 137). This reel on Duncaan, which was described simply as a 'Highland Dance' in the printed version of the tour issued by Boswell (Boswell 1785), was the subject of the cartoon reproduced in Plate I; this was issued in 1786, and is one of the earliest known pictures of a Reel.[11]

There is substantial evidence that the eighteenth century Threesome Reel consisted of setting steps danced on the spot, alternated with the travelling figure known today

PLATE V Boswell's Reel on Duncaan. This cartoon is one of the earliest known pictures of a Reel.

as a 'reel of three', in the pattern of a figure 8 (Fig. 1(b)). This evidence, which is set out in detail in SCD II (pages 132–7), is to be found in the early Scottish manuscript collections of Country Dances, where the term 'reel of three' is used as the name of one of the Country Dance figures. We remark here only that, although no description of a 'reel of three' figure is known before 1811 (see p. 105), the meaning of the term 'reel of three' as used in the Scottish manuscripts can be positively identified, for the 'reel of three' of the manuscripts can be shown to be the same as the English Country Dance figure 'hey', of which a clear description was given in 1752.[12]

The first explicit mention of a Reel for four people (as well as a further mention of a Reel for three) occurs in the letters of Major Topham, an English soldier stationed in Edinburgh in 1774–5 (Topham 1776). Although Topham's description of Reel dancing has often been quoted, it conveys so vividly the Scots' attitude to Reels that it will bear repetition:

> The general Dance here is a Reel, which requires that particular sort of step to dance properly, of which none but people of the country can have any idea. . . . The perseverance which the Scotch Ladies discover in these Reels is not less surprising, than their attachment to them in preference to all others. They will sit totally unmoved at the most sprightly airs of an English Country Dance; but the moment one of these tunes is played, . . . up they start, animated with new life, and you would imagine they had received an electrical shock, or been bit by a tarantula. . . . The young people in England . . . only consider Dancing as an agreeable means of bringing them together. . . . But the Scotch admire the Reel for its own merit alone, and may truly be said to dance for the sake of Dancing. I have often sat a very wearied spectator of one of these Dances, in which not one graceful movement is seen, the same invariably, if continued for hours. . . . A Scotchman comes into an Assembly-room as he would into a field of exercise, dances till he is literally tired, possibly without ever looking at his partner, or almost knowing who he dances with. In most countries the men have a partiality for dancing with a woman; but here I have frequently seen four gentlemen perform one of these Reels seemingly with the same pleasure and perseverance as they would have done, had they the most sprightly girl for a partner. . . .
>
> The Ladies, however, to do them justice, dance much better than the men. But I once had the honour of being witness to a reel in the Highlands, where the party consisted of three maiden ladies, the youngest of whom was above fifty, which was conducted with gestures so uncouth, and a vivacity so hideous, that you would have thought they were acting some midnight ceremonies, or enchanting the moon.

And again:

> Besides minuets and Country Dances, they in general dance reels in separate parts of the room. . . . Their great agility, vivacity, and variety of hornpipe steps[13] render it to them a most entertaining dance; but to a stranger the sameness of the figure makes it trifling and insipid, though you are employed during the whole time of its operation, which is indeed the reason why it is so peculiarly adapted to the Scotch who are little acquainted with the attitude of standing still.

The references here to the 'sameness of the figure' and the variety of steps are highly suggestive of the alternate setting and reeling of the true Reels, and the other comments are to be expected of a spectator who had the misfortune never to have danced a Reel himself.

Topham is not the only writer to comment on the vigour with which Reels were danced. For instance, the Frenchman de LaTocnaye recorded that in Elgin in 1793

> j'aperçus une danse, cela me donna envie de connaitre quels étaient les reels écossais, . . . j'en avais bien vu, mais c'était parmi des gens riches dans un bal. Ici c'était la simple nature, je fus surpris de la vivacité des pas; ils n'étaient pas élégans, mes ces bonnes gens semblaient avoir bien du plaisir; ils se tournaient et se retournaient faisaient des sauts, poussaient des cris de joie; il y avait particulièrement quelques montagnards dont la joie excessive dérangeait souvent le philibeg, mais personne n'y prenait garde—L'usage fait tout (de LaTocnaye 1801).

There are also contemporary references to the raised arms and the finger-snapping, for example, in Alexander Ross's *The Fortunate Shepherdess* (Ross 1768):

> When dinner's o'er, the dancing neist began,
> An throw an' throw they lap, they flang, they ran;
> The cuintray dances an' the cuintray reels,
> Wi' strecked arms yeed round, an' nimble heels.

Again, in 'Pate's and Maggie's Courtship' in David Herd's *Scottish Songs* (Herd 1776):

> They danced as well as they dow'd,
> Wi' a crack o' their thumbs and a kappie.

And yet again, in a description of a kirn at Harviestoun in 1813 that deserves to be reproduced in full (Wake 1909):

> At Harviestoun the kirn always took place in a very large building, a sort of barn loft, at one end of which was one of the many agricultural machines in which the laird delighted, and which for the evening was covered over with napery, and thus was transformed into a splendid buffet, on which there was a profusion of everything that was most esteemed in the way of refreshment by the class of guests for whom it was prepared. Whisky toddy, punch, cold and steaming hot, and mountains of shortbread cake, were the most favoured among the good things provided for the occasion, and innumerable were the visits made to the buffet by the panting couples, who for a brief space broke away from the dance at the upper end. Fast and faster still, each foot kept that wonderful time, of which none who have not witnessed real Scottish dancing can form the faintest idea . . . every limb answers to the marvellous music of the Scottish reel and Highland strathspey. Feet stamping, fingers snapping, eyes as it were on fire, heads thrown back, while shouts mark the crisis of the dance,—it must have been seen to be imagined.

Finally, we cannot forbear from quoting Felix MacDonough's exquisite male who finds a 'set of ultras' in Edinburgh, among whom

> one is not obliged to look all flurried with their d-d reels, whereby, (from ill-judged complaisance) I once broke my stay-lace, and which make a man's hair all out of order, and render the active performer not a *aspiring*, but a *perspiring* hero . . . we dance nothing but waltzes and quadrilles . . . (MacDonough 1824:179).

After 1775, when a Reel for four is first mentioned, there are several references to Reels that seem to imply that the only Reels in current use were Threesome and Foursome Reels. For example, there are the well-known lines

> There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,
> There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man,

in Burns 'The De'il's awa' wi' th' Exciseman', which appears in the fourth volume of *The Scots Musical Museum* in 1792 (Johnson 1839). The 'strathspeys' here may well have been the Strathspey Minuet, as may also have been the 'Twasome' in the following lines written by the Duke of Gordon to the tune 'Cauld Kail in Aberdeen' (*op. cit.* vol. 2):

> In Cotillons the French excel,
> John Bull, in Countra-dances;
> The Spaniards dance Fandangos well,
> Mynheer an All'amande prances;
> In Foursome Reels the Scots delight,
> The Threesome maist dance wondrous light,
> But Twasome ding a' out o' sight,
> Danc'd to the Reel of Bogie.

Another interesting reference, which we return to in the Appendix, occurs in Robert Riddell's *Collection of Scotch Galwegian and Border Tunes* (Edinburgh, 1794) in a note on the tune 'Symon Brodie':

> Tunes of this measure were in use formerly to be danced by two persons. Generally a Man and a Woman—on the west-border, these dances were called Cumberland's, In the Midland Counties they were Called Jigs, and in the Highland and Northern Shires, Strathspeys: and when danced by two men, armed with sword, and Target, they were called the Sword dance—of late years Reels, danced by three, or Four persons, have supplanted, the more ancient dances above mentioned.

In this context we should mention also Francis Peacock's *Sketches relative to the history and theory but more especially to the practice and art of dancing*, published in Aberdeen in 1805 (Peacock 1805). The fifth of these sketches consists of: 'Observations on the Scotch Reel, with a description of the Fundamental steps made use of in that Dance and their appropriate Gaelic Names', and contains the earliest (though unfortunately rather imprecise) description of Reel steps. The value of these 'Observations' is considerably enhanced by the fact that Peacock was an old man when he wrote them. He taught dancing in Aberdeen from 1747 until his death in 1807 at the age of 84,

so that his observations presumably refer to the period about 1750–1800. Moreover, as he remarks, his position in Aberdeen gave him a knowledge of the different styles of dancing used throughout the Highlands:

> Our Colleges draw hither, every year, a number of students from the Western Isles, as well as from the Highlands, and the greater part of them excel in [Reels] . . .; some of them, indeed, in so superior a degree that I, myself, have thought them worthy of imitation.

Concerning the Scotch Reel itself, Peacock remarks that

> The fondness the Highlanders have for this quartett or trio (for it is either the one or the other) is unbounded; and so is their ambition to excell in it. This pleasing propensity one would think, was born with them, . . . I have seen children of theirs, at five or six years of age, attempt, nay even execute, some of the steps so well as almost to surpass belief.

On the music for the dance he comments that strathspeys are 'in many parts of the Highlands, preferred to the common reel'. On the other hand, the reel, 'by reason of its being the most lively of the two, is more generally made choice of in the dance'.

Among his Reel steps, Peacock gives a 'Forward step', which 'is the common step for the *promenade*, or figure of the Reel', and he tells us that this figure (which is unfortunately not described) occupies the first 8 bars of the measure (*i.e.* the first half of the tune played twice). The setting steps similarly occupy the second 8 bars of the measure.[14]

Not until 1804 do we find a reference that allows the possibility of Reels for more than four dancers. This occurs in one of the notes to Alexander Campbell's long poem *The Grampians Desolate* (Campbell 1804), in which the dances of the Highlanders are classified as (i) 'Dances of one performer', (ii) 'Dances of two, or twa-some dances, as they are called by the lowlanders', (iii) 'Dances of three or more . . . are reels and Strathspeys . . .', (iv) 'Dances of character or dramatic cast'.[15] In the poem itself (*op. cit.* p. 128), Campbell seems to imply that the musician may change the tempo in the course of a Reel by switching without pause from a strathspey to a reel. Earlier references do not preclude such a change of tempo in the course of the dance, but the passages from Peacock's *Sketches* already quoted seem to imply that Reels were usually performed either entirely to reels or entirely to strathspeys, and it is likely that this was the normal usage for most of the second half of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the use of a combination of strathspeys and reels, and indeed other types of tune, seems to have been firmly established by about 1820, for in *The Companion to the Reticule* (Edinburgh, *c.* 1820)

> each page consists of a Reel, Strathspey, and a Jig, upon the same key; so that by playing each of them three or four times over alternately, the dancing, by undergoing so many changes in the time, is kept up with the utmost spirit throughout a whole Reel, which may be performed by three, four, six, eight, or twelve ladies and gentlemen, agreeable to the number or taste of the party.

This, incidentally, is almost the last reference to a Threesome Reel.

The earliest precise descriptions of true Reels in either manuscript or printed works are dated between 1808 and 1818, and these are discussed in the next section. Slightly earlier than this, however, we have descriptions of dances called Reels that do not possess the 'alternate reeling and setting' structure of the true Reels. The first of these occur in a manuscript collection of dances taught at Blantyre Farm in 1805 by a dancing master, Mr William Seymour, from Kilbride (a copy of the manuscript is in the Atholl Collection in the Sandeman Public Library, Perth). Most of the dances described in this manuscript are Country Dances but it also includes a version of the Bumpkin (Flett 1965) and three Eightsome Reels.

These three Eightsome Reels are in longways form, and consist of sequences of Contry Dance figures, but there is no progression of the couples down the set as in a Country Dance. For example, the instructions for the first Eightsome Reel in the manuscript are: 'Gentlemen all come up—follow after head gentleman. Ladies do same after head lady. right and left full round to places, change sides with right hand, change again with left, Allaman all,[16] change sides, chace, change sides, back again, right and left, hands all round' (it is likely that this sequence of figures was performed as a complete dance in itself, without any repetition, but the manuscript gives no instructions on this point). It is not clear why these dances should be called Reels, for they have none of the characteristic features of the true Reels. It is possible that they were performed in the same vigorous style as the true Reels, but it is also likely that the name 'Reel' was used simply to distinguish their non-progressive character from the progressive longways Country Dances.

Another such non-progressive longways Reel of Eight is described in a manuscript of 1818 (N.L.S. MS 3860; see the next section), and this manuscript also contains a Reel of Eight in square formation, involving simple figures from the Quadrilles. This latter dance persisted for the next 50 years or more, and was then embodied in the modern Eightsome Reel to form the opening and closing sequences of that dance (see Flett 1966–7: part III). Other dances called Reels, but again lacking the characteristic Reel structure, are described in a manuscript collection of dances compiled by a Frederick Hill in Aberdeenshire in 1841. However, here the dances are at least performed to a combination of strathspeys and reels.

In addition to these dances, there were a number of dances in use in Scotland in the nineteenth century which combined the increased variety of figure of the preceding dances with the characteristic 8-bar setting periods and the vigorous style of performance of the true Reels. A number of very fine dances of this type, some of which have been published in pamphlet form (MacNab 1947–62), were collected in Canada from the descendants of emigrants from Scotland by the late Mary Isdale MacNab of Vancouver. Several others, collected from oral tradition in Scotland, can be found in Professor H. A. Thurston's *Scotland's Dances* (Thurston 1954: Appendix B), and also in TDS, pages 164, 175 and 197.

All these dances are of considerable interest in themselves, but they add little to our

knowledge of the development of the Reel as a form of dance, and we therefore leave them aside, and confine our attention only to those dances that exhibit the 'alternate reeling and setting' structure of the true Reels.

Detailed descriptions of the Threesome and Foursome Reels: 1811–1914

The first detailed descriptions of true Reels occur in Thomas Wilson's *An Analysis of Country Dancing*. Thomas Wilson was a London dancing-master who practised from about 1800 to at least 1852, and was the author of a number of books on dancing, all published in London. He composed well over six hundred Country Dances, and it is through some of these that he is best known today. Most of the Country Dances that he composed were published in two of his own books, entitled *Treasures of Terpsichore* (1809) and *Companion to the Ballroom* (1816), but he also composed the figures of the Country Dances in three collections, each entitled *Le Sylphe*, published by Button and Whittaker in 1813, 1814, and 1815. To some extent his Country Dances were not typical of his time. The history of the Country Dance in England shows a long decline throughout the eighteenth century, ending in utter triviality by about 1820, and Wilson, in his books on Country Dancing, was attempting to inject fresh ideas into the Country Dance with the aim of restoring it to its former popularity. However, the decline had gone too far, and his attempts failed. None of Wilson's Country Dances survived in either England or Scotland within living memory, but a substantial number of them, particularly those set to Scottish tunes, have been reconstructed from his original descriptions by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and published in their books.

In the section on etiquette in his *Companion to the Ballroom* Wilson makes an interesting comment on the style of performance of Reels:

> Snapping the fingers in Country Dancing and Reels, and the sudden howl or yell too frequently practised (introduced in some Scotch parties as partly national with them),[17] ought particularly to be avoided, as partaking too much of the customs of barbarous nations; the character and effect by such means given to the dance, being adapted only to the stage, and by no means suited to the Ballroom.

In view of his comment about 'barbarous nations', it is amusing that Wilson's own compositions should have been so completely forgotten in England, and yet are so enthusiastically danced in present-day Scotland.

The frontispiece to the *Companion to the Ballroom*, which shows a ballroom in which a Reel, a Country Dance and a Waltz are being performed simultaneously, is reproduced in Plate II.

The first edition of Wilson's *An Analysis of Country Dancing*, which was published in 1808, is a small handbook containing diagrams showing the various figures used in Country Dances. It includes also descriptions of some 'New Reels' composed by

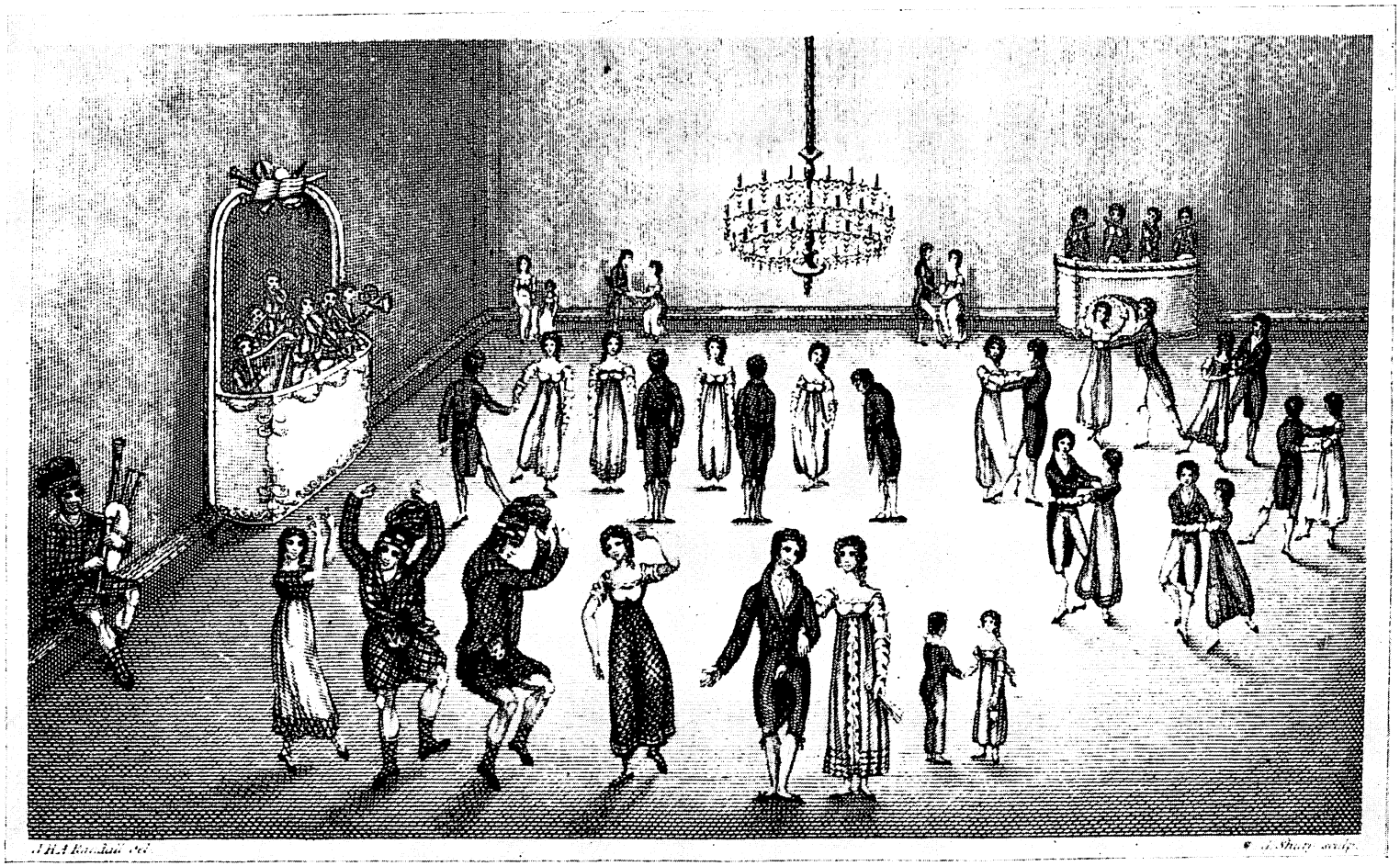

PLATE VI Frontispiece to Thomas Wilson's *Companion to the Ballroom* (1816), showing a Reel, a Country Dance and a Waltz.

Wilson, and also that of 'the common Reel of five', which was added 'to render the work more complete'. The second edition of the *Analysis*, published in 1811, is a much larger book, which contains not only diagrams of Country Dance figures (including many of Wilson's own ideas), but also elaborate rules which enable the reader to compose Country Dances for himself, together with hints on technique and etiquette. The section on Reels is extended, and it now includes descriptions of a 'Reel of Three' and a 'Reel of Four'. A recension of the *Analysis* entitled *The Complete System of English Country Dancing* appeared in 1821, and in this Wilson prefaced the descriptions of the Reels of Three and Four with the following introduction:

> *The Old Scotch Threesome and Foursome Reels.* These reels have for a number of years been a very favorite, and most generally approved species of dancing, not only with the English, but also with the Irish and Scotch, and particularly with the latter, from whom they derive their origin. They have, likewise, been introduced into most of the foreign Courts of Europe, and are universally practised in all our extensive Colonies, and so marked in their favoritism, that not only among the amusements afforded at all Balls, these reels are invariably introduced, but Assemblies are very frequently held for the purpose of dancing them only . . .

Before describing Wilson's versions of the Threesome and Foursome Reels we mention two further sources, almost contemporary with Wilson, which contain a little detailed information about Reels.

One of these is Barclay Dun's *Translation of nine of the most fashionable Quadrilles . . .*, published in Edinburgh in 1818,[18] which gives an incomplete description of the Foursome Reel, here called 'the Scotch Reel'.

The second is a manuscript entitled *Contre-Danses à Paris* 1818 in the National Library of Scotland (N.L.S. MS 3860). The title of this manuscript is misleading, for the author was evidently an expert on dancing in Scotland, and the manuscript, which is written in English, is concerned primarily with Scottish practice. It is in the form of a small bound notebook, and contains descriptions of steps and figures used in Reels, Country Dances, and Quadrilles, together with the descriptions of a few Country Dances. The numbering of the pages is not consecutive, suggesting that the manuscript may consist of extracts from some larger manuscript or printed work, but no such larger work is known either in this country or in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The manuscript was bought some years ago in a Paris bookshop by a London book-dealer, and nothing is known of its origin. It is possible that it was written by a Scottish dancing-master while studying in Paris under one of the leading French masters.

The descriptions of the Foursome Reel given in these various sources are best discussed with reference to the version of the dance that was most widely used within living memory. In this version, the setting steps are performed with the dancers in a line of four, with the ladies at the ends facing inwards and the men back to back in the centre. The dancers begin the 'reel of four' (Fig. 1(a)) by passing the person facing

them with the right shoulder, so that the end loops are described clockwise; each lady dances the complete figure and returns to her own place, while the men exchange places by omitting the last half of the centre loop. To begin the dance, the dancers stand in a line of four, facing partners, with the men in the centre, and the dance commences with the 'reel of four', followed by setting, then the 'reel of four' again, and so on, each man setting first to the opposite lady, then to his partner, and so alternately. There is also an alternative starting position for the dance, with partners side-by-side facing the opposite couple, each man having his partner on his right. Whichever starting position is used, the setting is always performed with the dancers in line.

The version of the Foursome Reel described by Wilson in his *Analysis* of 1811 differs from this traditional version in several ways. In Wilson's version the dance begins with the dancers in a line of four, with the *men* at the ends and the ladies back to back in the centre. Further, the dancers begin the 'reel of four' by passing with the *left* shoulder (so that the end loops are described anti-clockwise), and *all* the dancers return to their original places, where they set to partners. In *The Complete System* of 1821 Wilson adds a footnote to say the dancers 'may, with equal propriety', begin the 'reel of four' with the right shoulder.[19]

Barclay Dun's description gives only the starting positions (in line) and the initial movements of the dancers in the 'reel of four', and, as far as it goes, it agrees exactly with the traditional version, *i.e.* the men are in the centre, and the reel is 'right-shoulder'.

The manuscript *Contre-Danses à Paris* gives only the pattern of the 'reel of four', and, as in Wilson's first version, the dancers begin by passing with left shoulders. The manuscript does not give the position of the men and ladies, but it does mention that the men set alternately to the ladies, so that there is some change of position with each 'reel of four'.

The manuscript mentions also an alternative travelling figure in which the dancers follow each other round in an elongated circle, and it adds the comment 'that the practice of going quite round [in the circle] is not nearly so elegant [as the "reel of four"] but it was introduced from England two or three years ago under the name of "fashionable", most probably because in England this reel was never properly understood or valued'. We return to this circle figure in the next section.

None of these sources mentions the alternative side-by-side starting position of the traditional version.

The Threesome Reel (or Reel of Three), like the Foursome Reel, consists of alternate reeling and setting, and here the reeling figure is the well-known 'reel of three', in the pattern of a figure 8 (Fig. 1(b)). In the *Analysis* of 1811 Wilson states that the dance can be performed by either a man and two ladies or a lady and two men, and that the dancers start in a line of three with the odd person in the middle facing one of the others. The reeling figure is begun by the two dancers who are initially facing each other passing with the left shoulders, and all three return to their own places. In *The Complete System* Wilson adds that in each setting period the centre person sets for half

the time to one partner, then sets for the remaining time to the other, and then turns back to the first partner to begin the reeling figure. He also mentions another version in which each dancer comes into the centre in turn.

The manuscript *Contre-Danses à Paris* gives both the versions of the Threesome Reel described by Wilson, and it also specifies that in the version where the dancers change position this is achieved by the centre person and one partner repeating half a loop of the 'reel of three'. However, it does not state the direction of the 'reel of three'.

Following the books of Wilson and Dun and the Paris manuscripts, we have a long series of small pocket ballroom guides and other books published by Scottish dancing-masters,[20] of which the earliest containing information about Reels is *Lowe's Ball-Conductor and Assembly Guide*, published by J., R., J., and J. S. Lowe, four members of a family of dancing-teachers. This work ran through several editions, and the only surviving copies known to us are a copy of the third edition, *c.* 1830, in the National Library of Scotland, and an incomplete copy of a later edition, *c.* 1860, in our possession. The first author, Joseph Lowe, taught in Edinburgh in the winter and in Inverness in the summer, and *circa* 1840 was the leading member of his profession in Scotland. At the time of the third edition, the other three authors covered between them the towns of Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, Montrose, Brechin, Arbroath, and Elgin, as well as parts of Fife!

The *Ball-Conductor* contains descriptions of Reels of Four, Five, and Six. In the Foursome Reel the Lowes place the ladies at the ends, as in the traditional version, but they do not state the direction of the 'reel of four'. They are also the first to mention the alternative side-by-side starting position.

The Foursome Reel is described in every Scottish ballroom guide subsequent to 1830, and in every case the description agrees with that of the traditional version. On the other hand, the Threesome Reel is described only by J. G. Atkinson in his *Scottish National Dances* (Atkinson 1900), and his description agrees with that of the first version described by Wilson. We ourselves have never met anyone in Scotland who has actually danced the Threesome Reel as a social dance, though one of our informants remembered having seen it performed several times in his youth, at Tomnahurich Bridge near Inverness, about the year 1895. In view of its omission from the Lowes' *Ball-Conductor*, it seems probable that it began to drop out of use about 1820. There is also confirmation of this in the manuscript records of the piping and dancing competitions organised by the Highland Society of Edinburgh, for, from at least 1816 onwards the only Reels performed at the competitions were for four dancers (Flett 1956*b*).

The West Highland circular Reel and its allied forms

In order to complete our history of the Threesome and Foursome Reels, it is necessary to take into account another group of Reels, of which the most widely known was the West Highland circular Reel. This circular Reel is a dance for two couples, its travelling

figure being a simple circle in which the dancers follow each other round in a clockwise direction, without joining hands.

To begin, the dancers stand beside their partners, each lady on her partner's right, facing the other couple. The ladies start by passing across in front of their partners, and the men join in the circle behind them. They all finish in a line of four, and set to partners. The circle figure and setting are now repeated as often as desired, all the setting being performed in line as before.

There is good evidence that this dance was once the principal Reel in the Western Highlands and the Western Isles, and that in these areas the ordinary Foursome Reel with its 'reel of four' was introduced only comparatively recently. This evidence is provided partly by our own researches in Scotland (Flett 1953–4; TDS: 156–9), and partly by the researches of Dr Frank Rhodes in Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia (published in the appendix to TDS).

We have ourselves recorded the circular Reel in the mainland districts of Moidart, Morar, and Arisaig, and the islands of Barra, South Uist, Benbecula, Eigg, and Skye. In South Uist, Benbecula, Eigg, and the Torrin district of Skye, the circular Reel was in general use up to about 1885 or even later, and at that time the Foursome Reel with its 'reel of four' was not danced at all there. In the other places mentioned, Moidart, Morar, Arisaig, and Barra, the circular Reel was understood to have been the 'original' Reel for four danced there, but the actual date when it began to be replaced by the Foursome Reel was outside living memory.

This information, which was gathered in 1953–6, enables us to speak with absolute certainty only for the period from about 1860 onwards. However, the information gathered by Dr Rhodes in Cape Breton Island provides evidence covering a much earlier period.

The western part of Cape Breton Island was largely settled *c.* 1800–1820 by emigrants from the Western Isles and the West Highlands, and also from more central regions of the Highlands such as Lochaber (the eastern part of the island was settled earlier by emigrants from all parts of Britain). Among the descendants of these Scottish settlers, the only social dances of Scottish origin found by Dr Rhodes were 'four-handed Reels', together with traces of 'eight-handed Reels' and a few of the old Gaelic dance games.

The 'four-handed Reel' existed in a variety of forms, and most of these had close affinities with the form of circular Reel described above, *i.e.* they consisted of setting steps danced on the spot alternated with a circling figure, the setting steps being performed with the dancers either in a line or in a square formation. The most primitive version found by Dr Rhodes was in square formation, with the women on their partner's left, facing the opposite couple, and the dancers simply alternately circled clockwise (one behind the other) and set to their partners, without changing their relative positions. Other versions more closely resembled the circular Reel described above.

Up to 1939 the Foursome Reel with its 'reel of four' was known only to those people on Cape Breton Island who had travelled outside the island, and Dr Rhodes could find no indication that it was ever danced among the descendants of the old Scottish settlers. From this evidence, together with that from Scotland itself, we may reasonably infer that the Foursome Reel was absent from the West Highlands and the Western Isles at the time, *c.* 1800–20, when the emigrants left for Cape Breton Island, and indeed right up to about 1870, and that the circular Reel was then in general use in those parts of Scotland. It is possibly this use of the circular Reel to which Alexander Campbell was referring when he wrote in 1798 in the passage quoted earlier that the people of the North Highlands and the Western Isles 'dance, in a manner peculiar to those parts of the Hebrides' (Campbell 1798).

We have already mentioned in the preceding section that the circle figure is given in the manuscript *Contre-Danses à Paris 1818* as an alternative to the 'reel of four' in the Foursome Reel, with the comment that the circle figure was introduced from England. Since the circle figure was then quite widely used in parts of Scotland, this comment seems unlikely, to say the least. The circle is also given as an alternative to the 'reel of four' by Atkinson in his *Scottish National Dances* (Atkinson 1900), but apart from these two occurrences it is not mentioned in the literature.

The existence of the circular Reel in Nova Scotia and the absence there of the Foursome Reel were first brought to light by Mr Angus MacDonald, the late premier of Nova Scotia, in a letter to Professor Thurston (Thurston 1954). On the basis of this letter Professor Thurston inferred that the circular Reel was the predecessor of the Foursome Reel in Scotland, but the evidence from oral tradition concerning the distribution of the two dances in Scotland itself was not then available.

We should add that the circular Reel, both in Scotland and in Nova Scotia, was performed to a combination of reel and strathspey tunes. However, in Nova Scotia the tempo for reels was about 52 bars per minute (*i.e.* slower than the traditional Scottish tempo), while that for strathspeys was about 44–48 bars per minute (*i.e.* faster than the traditional Scottish tempo of 40–42 bars per minute).

A number of other Reels have been recorded in the West Highlands and the Western Isles which have obvious affinities with the circular Reel. Two of these are Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha (The Reel of the Blackcocks) and Cath nan Coileach (The Combat of the Cocks), which were performed in Barra up to about 1885. Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha is essentially a version of the circular Reel containing an element of mime occasioned by the words of the dance-song with the same title[21]; it differs from the circular Reel principally in that the four dancers join hands in a ring for the circling figure.

Cath nan Coileach is also a dance for two couples, who stand in the form of a cross, opposite to their partners, with whom they join crossed hands. The hand-holds are retained throughout the dance, which consists of alternate setting and circling. It is performed to a 6/8 jig, and alternate repetitions of the complete sequence of setting

and circling are danced at tempos of about 60–64 bars per minute (*i.e.* normal quick tempo) and about 75–80 bars per minute (*i.e.* as fast as the piper can play!).

The titles of both these dances are mentioned by Alexander Carmichael in his *Carmina Gadelica* (Carmichael 1900:208–9), but he gives no description of them. Both were recorded by us in 1953, and precise descriptions can be found in Flett 1953–4 and in TDS, chapter 6.

We should add that another dance called Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha was collected by Dr Rhodes both in South Uist and Cape Breton Island. This too is danced by two couples, but it involves alternate swinging and a crossing figure (TDS: 172, 278–9).

Another dance which is obviously derived from the circular Reel is The Eight Men of Moidart, which belonged to the district of Glenuig in Moidart. This fine dance is a 'double' version of the circular Reel, in which two circular Reels are performed simultaneously in a 'St Andrew's cross' formation, the two circles being flattened and interlaced (Fig. 1(e)). It was first recorded by Dr Rhodes and one of the authors in 1956, and a detailed description is given in TDS, chapter 6.

The only other Reel which has affinities with the circular Reel is Ruidhleadh Mòr (The Big Reel), which is essentially a version of the circular Reel for as many dancers as please. It was performed up to about 1895 in the Torrin district of Skye, where one of our informants had seen it danced at a wedding (Flett 1953–4; TDS: 159). On that occasion the twenty or so people present formed one big ring round the room. When the music began—the dance was performed to reels throughout—the dancers moved round clockwise in a circle, one behind the other (without joining hands), then stopped and danced ordinary Reel setting steps, then danced round in the circle again, and so on.

It should be noted that the most primitive version of the Cape Breton 'four-handed Reel' recorded by Dr Rhodes has precisely the same form as this dance.

It is interesting to observe that, although the traditional evidence proves that the circular Reel was the principal Reel in use in the West Highlands and the Western Isles from at least 1800 to about 1870, the existence of this dance cannot be deduced from any literary references, either in a printed work or in a manuscript, before about 1950. All we have are the references in the Paris Manuscript and in Atkinson's book to the circle figure as an alternative to the reel of four, and these give no indication that the figures belonged to different dances, while the Paris Manuscript adds the misleading information that the circle figure came from England.[22] Moreover, the only reference before 1950 to the four allied dances described above is Carmichael's mention of the names of Cath nan Coileach and Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha in 1900, and this reference does not allow us to assert even that these dances were Reels. *Thus a widely distributed type of dance can exist for 150 years and yet leave so little trace in the contemporary literature that its existence would not even be suspected by a dance-historian who relied on literary evidence alone.*

The circular Reel, particularly in the primitive form discovered by Dr Rhodes in

Cape Breton Island, and in its 'big' form Ruidhleadh Mòr, is an unsophisticated dance which could be of very great antiquity. Moreover, many parts of the West Highlands and the Western Isles retained their Catholic faith throughout the Reformation period, so that social dancing would have taken place there in an unbroken tradition dating back to mediaeval times, and the circular Reel could be part of this tradition.

It is possible that the big Reel, Ruidhleadh Mòr, is actually the progenitor of the circular Reel, for it would obviously have been well suited to the old 'black houses' of the West Highlands and the Western Isles, with the fire in the middle of the floor—the dancers could simply have circled the fire. It is also possible that Ruidhleadh Mòr is itself in turn descended from some mediaeval ring dance, in which the ring of linked hands was broken while the dancers performed steps on the spot. In this connection, it is of interest to note that John Leyden, writing in 1801, records that, although the Ring Dance, which 'was formerly a favourite in the south of Scotland, . . . has now gone into desuetude', it 'is still retained among the Scottish Highlanders, who frequently dance the Ring in the open fields, when they visit the south of Scotland as reapers, during the Autumnal months' (Leyden 1801).

We should mention also that we have recorded a dance on Eigg, An Dannsa Mòr (The Big Dance), which may be a survival of a ring dance of the type of the mediaeval carole. In this dance, which was performed by men only, to a particular song, the dancers form a ring round the room. The verses are sung by two of the dancers who come inside the ring to do so, each singing alternate lines, while the other dancers stand still. These two men then jump back into the ring, and all the dancers join in the chorus as they dance round with linked hands (Flett 1953–4).

The origins of the Threesome and Foursome Reels

We have seen in the preceding sections that a Threesome Reel was the earliest form of Reel to be recorded when social dancing again became generally possible in Scotland at the end of the seventeenth century. Explicit references to Reels for four occur only much later, the earliest being that of Topham in 1776, but we can infer from Peacock's mention of the Scotch Reel as a 'quartett or trio' that Reels for four were almost certainly known in 1747, when Peacock first began teaching. Although there remains a disparity of nearly 40 years between this last date and the earliest reference to a Threesome Reel (in 1710), it would be rash to conclude that the Foursome Reel was unknown at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for the example of the circular Reel shows that a dance may exist for far longer than 40 years and yet leave no trace in the contemporary literature.

The eighteenth century Threesome Reel almost certainly possessed the characteristic Reel structure, its travelling figure being the 'reel of three', in the pattern of a figure 8. We cannot be so certain that the travelling figure in the early Foursome Reel was the

'reel of four', but it is extremely likely that this was so, and that the Foursome Reel of Topham, Burns, the Duke of Gordon and Riddell was more or less the Foursome Reel as known today. Further, if our theories concerning the antiquity of the circular Reel are correct, we may also infer that the Threesome and Foursome Reels are primarily dances of the Eastern Highlands and the Lowlands.

It is obvious from these remarks that the origins of the Threesome Reel, and possibly also those of the Foursome Reel, must be sought in the period before 1700, but for this period the Scottish evidence is fragmentary. However, a possible clue may be found in the fact that the 'reel of three' figure of the Threesome Reel is the same as the English figure 'hey' (for three).

The English figure 'hey' is derived from one or more dances known by the name *Hey* or *Hay*. The earliest occurrences given by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED for short) are in the works of John Skelton (1529): 'Enforce me nothing to write but hay the gy of thre', and 'To dauns the hay and run the ray'. Further references to 'hay the gy', with spellings varying from 'Hey de Gie' to 'hey-day guise' (Hey de Guise?) continue up to 1638 (see Cunningham 1962), though it is not certain that all these refer to the same dance, and only the passage from Skelton quoted above specifies the number of dancers.

In addition to these references to 'hay the gy', there are also numerous further references to dances simply called Heys (Heyes, Hays), continuing to an even later date than those to 'hay the gy' (see, *e.g.* note 12). It is not clear whether the earliest uses of the term Hey refer to a type of dance rather than to a single specific dance, but certainly by about 1590 the word Hey was used, both in England and France, to mean a general type of dance or dance figure in which the dancers wound in and out among each other (for instance, Sir John Davies in his poem Orchestra (1596; see Cunningham 1962) speaks of 'winding Heyes'; *cf.* also Butler (1609; quoted in OED), 'playing in and out as if they were dancing the Hey', and Arbeau, *Orchesographie* (Arbeau 1588, fo. 90 r°), 'Les danceurs . . . s'entrelacent & font la haye les uns parmy les aultres'). This usage is still strongly evident some fifty years later in the earliest extant collections of English Country Dances (Playford's *The English Dancing Master*, London 1651, and the British Museum Sloan Ms 3858, *c.* 1645), and there the figures called Heys include heys for three and four in a line, a 'double hey' for six, a hey for four in a square, and, in a long line, 'the single Hey all handing as you pass till you come to your own places'. Most of these figures disappeared in the next 50 years as the longways progressive Country Dances slowly superseded the earlier forms (SCD 1: 7), and by about 1730 the only surviving hey in English Country Dancing was the hey for three.

It is of particular interest that Sir William Davenant in one of his plays (1656; quoted in OED) refers to an 'Irish hey', for in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the word Irish could mean 'belonging to the Scottish Highlands or the Gaelic inhabitants of them'.[23]

The word hey is derived from the French *haie* or *haye*, a hedge, with derivative

meanings of a row of shrubs or stakes forming a hedge, thence a row or line of people (particularly troops), and thence a dance.

The number three in the earliest reference to the 'hay the gy' is suggestive of the three dancers in the Threesome Reel, and it is possible that about the year 1500 a dance, involving a figure similar to the 'reel of three' or 'hey for three', was imported from France to both Scotland and England, and that this dance was the original source from which both the Threesome Reel in Scotland and the Hey in England descended. A possible candidate here is the 'haye d'Alemaigne' mentioned in 1538 in the works of the French poet Marot[24] (Mayer 1964:107), for this, under the title 'alman haye', is one of the dances listed in *The Complaynt of Scotland* (Murray 1872–3:66).

It is obvious that any dance which was imported from the Continent would be more likely to be a court dance than a folk dance, and this accords with the nature of the Threesome Reel and the 'hay the gy of thre', for the uneven matching of the sexes in these two dances is suggestive of the artificial atmosphere of a Court, where 'one saw . . . between two ladies fair a knight unblemished dance'. The word 'reeling' might well have been applied in Scotland to the figure of such a dance,[25] and in time this could have led to the name Reel being applied to the dance as a whole.

If the Threesome Reel were a development during the sixteenth century from such an importation, then it is likely that the Foursome Reel also developed at about the same time, for we might expect the development of these dances in Scotland to parallel that of the Hey in England. The subsequent disappearance in Scotland of forms involving more than three or four dancers could well have been caused by the religious prohibitions on social dancing during the seventeenth century, for only compact forms such as the Threesome and Foursome Reels would have been suitable for performance in secret behind closed doors and shutters.

This theory, that the Threesome and Foursome Reels were derived from some importation from Europe, would also explain the restriction of the Threesome and Foursome Reels to the Lowlands and the Eastern Highlands, for any such imported dance would certainly have arrived first in the Lowlands, and would then have spread slowly into the more accessible parts of the Highlands as it was adapted to the native idiom.

Appendix

The Strathspey Minuet and the Jig

A short account of the history of the Strathspey Minuet has been given (in Flett 1956*b*), and here we amplify only one or two points.

The Strathspey Minuet is first mentioned on the occasion when Prince Charles visited Lude House in 1745 (see above). That it was a dance for two is clear from a reference to it in 1756 when two Scots danced it at a ballroom run by a Scotsman in Spa in Belgium: 'There was a family of Jews there . . . [who] were the keenest dancers

and the worst at it ever was. . . . Lady Hellen and Lord Garless danced a strathspey minuet; whenever the Jews saw that they fell to it, they lap, they flaghtered so like hens with their feet tied together, that you might have bound the whole company with a straw' (Calderwood 1756).

The Strathspey Minuet is almost certainly the same as the 'Straspae' which was seen by Topham in the Edinburgh ballrooms in 1774–5. This was again a dance for two people, 'a kind of quick minuet. . . . We in England are said to *walk* a minuet: this is galloping a minuet . . . every idea of grace seems inverted and the whole is a burlesque: Nothing of the minuet is preserved except the figure; the steps and time most resemble a hornpipe' (Topham 1776).

Riddell, in his note on the tune Symon Brodie quoted above, says that the Strathspey, as a dance for two persons, belonged to the 'Highland and Northern Shires', and refers to the Jig as being the counterpart of the Strathspey 'in the Midland Counties'. The Jig is also mentioned by John MacDonald, a coachman, who performed it *circa* 1778 at a ball given by a gentleman's servant to his friends in London. MacDonald first danced a minuet with his partner. Then

> when we had danced the minuet, I asked the favour of the lady to dance a jig; she answered she would. She buttoned up the skirts of her gown, and I called for Lady Kitty Carstair's Reel. We both danced together in the form of the minuet, though quick. When we were done, the company called *encore, encore* (MacDonald 1790).

Riddell comments that in 1794 these dances were becoming obsolete, and nothing more is heard of the Jig after that date. However, the Strathspey was resurrected for a brief period by the organising Committee of the Edinburgh piping and dancing competitions. In 1812 the Committee resolved 'that Robert Gunn, Alexander MacLellan and two others dance a Strathspey Reel at the Competition if they can be learned to do so against next year'. The 'Strathspey Reel' here may be a copyist's mistake for 'Strathspey', or may have been a genuine misunderstanding on the part of the Committee. In any case, whatever the intention of the Committee, the dance which Robert Gunn and his fellows brought to the competitions in 1813 in response to this resolution was the twasome Strathspey. This dance was almost certainly the same as the Strathspey Minuet, and it was performed regularly at the competitions until 1832. At the next competition, in 1835, there was one competitor who wished to perform it, but no one could be found to partner him, and there appears to have been no fresh move to preserve the dance (Flett 1956*b*).

At this period the Strathspey was presumably almost an exhibition piece, and at the Peer's Ball on the occasion of the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 'a lady and a gentleman in a Highland dress danced a strathspey with much taste, which the King so much admired, that he clapped his hands in token of approbation' (Mudie 1822). However, not even royal approbation was enough to restore the dance to popularity, and it does not seem to have survived in the ballroom after this date.

NOTES

1 The confusion also extends to tunes, and the name 'reel' is nowadays often wrongly applied to other quick common time tunes such as Scotch measures. Properly, a reel (we use the small 'r' in contrast to the capital 'R' for Reels as dances) is a very smoothly flowing tune—good examples are 'The High Road to Linton' and 'Mrs Macleod of Raasay'. The essential musical rhythm of a reel is a quaver rhythm, and the four beats in each bar are almost evenly accented. A Scotch measure is a much more 'bouncy' tune than a reel, typical examples being 'Corn Rigs' and 'Flowers of Edinburgh'; it has a crotchet rhythm, with two main beats, and two weaker beats, in each bar.

2 This and other Reels were often performed with only men or only women taking part. However, since we are writing here of social dances, we assume in our descriptions of dances that they are being performed by both sexes together.

3 For an account of the development of the modern Eightsome Reel see Flett 1966–7: part III.

4 There is one point in SCD 1 where we may not have been sufficiently explicit. Our remarks there concerning the religious disapproval of dancing during the seventeenth century refer to *social* dancing by *adults*. There are a number of references from this period in old family papers concerning payment of fees for dancing lessons for children, which indicate that children were encouraged to dance, as a healthy form (indeed possibly the only form) of exercise. On the other hand, social dancing by adults, in which members of the opposite sex danced together, was 'promiscuous dancing', and, as such, came under the condemnation of the Church. We do not know of any explicit references to social dancing in seventeenth century Scotland where the dancing did not evoke censure by the Church, though there are perhaps two implicit references. These occur in the Journals of Sir John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall (Lauder 1900), and refer to payments to musicians at the weddings of two of Sir John's servants, in 1670 and 1673: it is a fair assumption that the presence of musicians implies dancing.

5 A vivid account of a situation of this type in Lewis in the nineteenth century is given by Alexander Carmichael in his *Carmina Gadelica* (Carmichael 1900: xxv).

6 The account of the history of reels and strathspeys that follows is an amplification of what we have written in Flett 1956*b*.

7 As far as we know, the first occurrence of a tune labelled 'reel' is in Henry Playford's *A Collection of Original Scotch-Tunes* (London, 1700). The tune in question is 'The comers [cummers] of Largo, A reell', and is in 9/8 time!

In George Skene's Music Book, 'A Reell Jannie' is in 12/8 time, but all the other tunes from this manuscript listed here are in common time.

8 Between 1700 and 1775 there are some fourteen references to Reels as dances. We quote all those of value, omitting only those of the 'lambkins dance reels on the green' type.

9 A very similar account is given in Mounsey 1846.

10 A writer in *Notes and Queries* in 1861 put forward the theory that the term 'strathspey', referring to a dance (and so presumably to a tune as well), was a popular corruption of the word 'stravetspy', said to be the name of a dance mentioned in the works of Zachary Boyd, *c.* 1610. However, as remarked in Flett 1955, the writer's 'stravetspy' is probably a misreading of 'strive to essay', and is certainly not the name of a dance.

11 We are indebted to Dr. J. L. Campbell of Canna for telling us of the existence of this cartoon.

12 The first precise description of the 'hey' occurs in Nicholas Duke's *A concise and easy method of learning the figuring of country dancing* (London, 1752), and is given by means of a diagram. However, there is a much earlier description implicit in a passage in the play *The Rehearsal* by George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham, published in 1672. In this passage, a playwright explains how he would attempt to represent on the stage an eclipse of the sun followed on the same day (!) by an eclipse of the moon:

'But, Sir, you have heard, I suppose, that your Eclipse of the Moon, is nothing else, but an interposition of the Earth, between the Sun and Moon: as likewise your Eclipse of the Sun is caus'd by an interlocation of the Moon, betwixt the Earth and Sun? . . . Well, Sir; what do I, but make the Earth, Sun, and Moon, come out upon the Stage, and dance the Hey. . . . And, of necessity, by the very nature of this Dance, the Earth must be sometimes between the Sun and the Moon, and the Moon between the Earth and Sun; and there you have both your Eclipses. That is new, I gad, ha?' (Arber 1869).

13 The reference here to steps as 'hornpipe steps' does not necessarily imply any particular style of performance, since at this period the term 'hornpipe' seemed to apply to any solo step or dance.

14 Peacock's descriptions of steps are too long to be reproduced here. Some information about them can be found in TDS, chapter 5.

15 For further information about the solo and dramatic dances mentioned by Campbell see Flett 1956*a*.

16 It should be noted that the Allemand (Allaman) was originally a non-progressive figure. The progressive figure of this name used in present-day Scottish Country Dancing seems to be a modern invention.

17 In the original this parenthesis is a footnote.

18 Barclay Dun was a dancing-master who practised in Edinburgh from about 1800 to at least 1838.

19 We recorded a version of the Foursome Reel in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire in which the strathspey portion was exactly as in Wilson's last description (TDS: 147). The starting-position with the men at the ends also survives in two Four-handed Reels recorded in Dorset and Devon by the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

20 A list of these ballroom guides, many of which are now very rare, can be found in the bibliography in TDS.

21 On the subject of such miming, see Flett 1956*a*.

22 The circle figure is also used as one of the movements in the earliest recorded version of the Reel of Tulloch, in 1844 (see part II of this article), but again there is nothing to indicate the existence of the circular Reel as a separate dance.

23 For example, Skelton in 1529 speaks of Scottish Highlanders as 'Irish keterings', while Spottiswood in 1655 (quoted in OED) says 'We oft finde the Scots called Irishes, like as we yet term commonly our Highlandmen, in regard they speak the Irish language'.

24 The words occur in *Le Temple de Cupido*, in an edition of Marot's works published in 1538:

'Les hayes d'Alemaigne frisques;
Passepiedz, Bransles, Tourdions'.

The poem was written *c.* 1515, but in a version published at about that date the two lines above appear differently, *viz*:

'Branles gays alemandes frisques
Basses dances et Tordions'

(Mayer 1964: 107). The OED refers to the former version as '15th century French'.

Huguet's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise du Seizième Siècle* mentions also a reference to a 'haye de Bretaigne' [Brittany] in Marot's works.We are indebted to Professor Mayer for the information that the reference actually occurs in an anonymous poem *Epitre du Biau fys de Pazy*, first published in 1549:

'Pour dansez haye de Bretaigne
Et les passepié d'Allemaigne'.

25 The use of the word *reel* to mean to waver, to stagger, and to sway unsteadily from side to side, goes back to about 1400 (OED).

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Offprint from Scottish Studies Volume 17 1973

The History of the Scottish Reel as a Dance-Form

II

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In Part I of this article (Scottish Studies 16:91) we discussed the Threesome and Foursome Reels, and the West Highland circular Reel and its allied forms, *viz.*, The Eight Men of Moidart, Cath nan Coileach, Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha, and Ruidhleadh Mòr. In this second part, our principal purpose is to survey the history and development of the remaining Scottish Reels, of which there are over a dozen. These Reels, most of which are unfamiliar to present-day Scottish dancers, fall fairly naturally into three groups, namely (i) The Reel of Tulloch and the double Reel of Tulloch, (ii) double versions of the Threesome and Foursome Reels, the Reel of Nine, and the Hankies Reel, and (iii) Orkney and Shetland Reels. We discuss each group in turn, and in order to make our survey comprehensive we employ both literary and traditional sources of information.

As in Part I, we refer to our book *Traditional Dancing in Scotland* by the abbreviation TDS.

The Reel of Tulloch

The tune called 'The Reel of Tulloch', or in Gaelic 'Ruidhleadh Thulachain', first occurs in the 'Collection of the best Highland Reels' in the Duke of Perth's MS of 1737, where it is entitled 'Tullich Reel'. In the manuscript it was probably intended for use simply as a reel tune, though it is heavily overlaid with variations, and runs to nearly twenty parts. It occurs also, with even more variations, in the McFarlan MS of 1740, where it is entitled 'Reel of Tullich'.

Several local traditions concerning the origin of the tune were recorded in the nineteenth century. One of these traditions claims that the tune was composed during a wild impromptu dance at the Kirk of Tullich, near Ballater, one bitterly cold Sunday about the year 1690: the minister had failed to arrive to take the service, and his waiting parishioners kept themselves warm with a potent mixture of whisky and dancing, which sufficiently inspired the fiddler to compose the tune (Grant 1861:83–5). Another tradition attributes the tune to Black John M'Gregor of Roro, Glenlyon, about the year 1690. M'Gregor was one of two rival suitors for the hand of Isabella, the daughter of the

laird of Tulloch, near Nethybridge in Strathspey, and the tune, together with accompanying Gaelic verses, is said to have been composed after M'Gregor, with Isabella's aid, had narrowly defeated an attempt on his life by his rival (Shaw 1859).[1]

Of these two traditions, the former seems the more likely, in view of the reference to 'Tullich' rather than 'Tulloch' in the Duke of Perth's and the McFarlan MSS.[2]

Although the tune 'The Reel of Tulloch' is undoubtedly one of the older reel tunes, the dance of the same name seems to be more recent, and it was probably composed about the year 1800. So far as we know, the first reference to it is in the *Caledonian Mercury* for 27 March 1819: in a report of a ball held by the Edinburgh Society of Highlanders we are told that 'the ball opened with the Reel of Tulloch by four of the office-bearers'.

The dance next appears at the piping and dancing competitions held by the Highland Society of Edinburgh in 1829, when it was performed by two sets of four men. At the next competition, in 1832 (at this time the competitions were triennial), all the dancing competitors performed the Reel of Tulloch at the preliminary test, but at the final performance, which was held in an Edinburgh theatre, they seem to have performed only ordinary Foursome Reels. In 1835 the Reel of Tulloch did not feature in either the preliminary test or the final performance, but it reappeared in 1838 and 1844 (Flett 1956).

In 1835 a competitor who was new to the competitions that year wrote to the Secretary requesting 'to have the Breadalbane Ball reel [ ] mostly termed, the reel of Tulloch danced' (the manuscript of the letter is damaged at the point in brackets and a word may be missing). This letter would seem to indicate that the Reel of Tulloch was originally a 'Society' dance which was developed at the Breadalbane Balls, just as the modern Eightsome Reel was developed at the Northern Meeting Balls and the Skye Balls. The Breadalbane Ball referred to here was probably held at Taymouth Castle, for in Joseph Lowe's *Collection of Reels, Strathspeys and Jigs*, Edinburgh, *c.* 1844, there is the following note on the tune 'The Reel of Tulloch':

> The Queen's Favourite or Reel O'Thulichan. It was this Reel which so especially delighted her Majesty, Queen Victoria, when on a visit to Scotland, in 1842. At the Ball given by the Marquis of Breadalbane, at Taymouth Castle, the original figure of the Reel o'Thulichan was danced in the Royal presence, with admirable characteristic spirit, by the Marquis of Abercorn, the Hon. Fox Maule, Cluny McPherson, and Davidson of Tulloch: the Queen seemed quite elated during the performance of this ancient Reel, and expressed herself much delighted and astonished at the lively execution displayed by the Dancers.

There are also other indications that the Reel of Tulloch was at this time more a 'Society' dance than a dance of the ordinary people. For instance, at the celebration to welcome the newly married Marquis of Lorn on his return to Inverary, which is described in the following report from the *Inverness Courier* for 2 October 1844, the Highland Fling and the Sword Dance were performed by anonymous Celts or Highlanders, but the Reel of Tulloch was performed by four of the cadets of Clan Campbell:

> About ten o'clock . . . a low platform was erected in front of the portico, and the Highlanders in the garb joined in the dance, by torchlight, to the music of the pipes. They displayed no small amount of agility and animation, in which they did not spare the floor. . . . A Highlander danced the Gille Callum, or sword-dance—a most difficult performance indeed—with rare beauty and admirable precision; and another Celt vied with him in another line of excellence, viz., the spirit and vigour with which he performed the Highland Fling. One of the most animated performances of the whole was the 'Rille Thallachain', or Reel of Tulloch, danced by Campbell younger of Islay, Campbell of Glendaruel, Campbell of Balenaby, and Campbell of Ormsary, the graceful performance of which called forth the loudest plaudits.

The first printed description of the Reel of Tulloch is that in *The Ballroom Annual*, London, 1844, where the dance is given under the title 'The Duchess of Sutherland's New Highland Reel'. The identification of this 'New Highland Reel' with the Reel of Tulloch presents no difficulty in spite of the different title, for this same description is given in the ballroom guides of Willock (Willock 1865) and Wallace (Wallace *c.* 1872, 1881) under the title 'Hullachan', an English rendering of the Gaelic 'Thulachain'. We may safely ignore the title in *The Ballroom Annual*, for several of the other dances described in this work have been assigned new aristocratic titles by the author.

The instructions from *The Ballroom Annual* are given below: we have added in brackets the number of bars of music required for each part of the dance—these are specified in Willock's and Wallace's guides.

> Four stand up in a line, ladies outside, and set [8]; reel, or figure of eight [i.e. 'reel of four', 8]; the two gentlemen face and set [8]; all go round [after] each other in a circle [8], and ladies take the centre and set to* partners [8]; the reel as before [8]; gentlemen take the centre, and set to* reverse partners [8]; the circle as before [8]; the two gentlemen set and turn all round, with right arms locked [8]; again set and turn with left arms [8]; the reel as before [8]; ladies take the centre and set and turn each other [16]; the circle as before [8]; gentlemen take the centre, set and turn the ladies [16], and finale [?].[3]

The turns 'with arms locked' are more fully explained in later ballroom guides: to turn with right arms locked the two dancers concerned link right arms, and each passes the left hand behind the back to grasp the other person's right hand.

The dance as described above employs three travelling figures, namely the 'reel of four' from the (Scotch) Foursome Reel, the circle from the West Highland circular Reel, and a turning figure 'with arms locked'. Thus to some extent the dance is a hybrid derived from both the Foursome Reel and the circular Reel. We have seen in Part I of this paper that about 1800–20 the circular Reel was the principal Reel in use in the West and west Central Highlands, and that the Foursome Reel belonged to the Eastern Highlands and the Lowlands. We should naturally expect a hybrid between these two dances to be produced where the two traditions met, and Breadalbane is just such a region.

The turning figure is also not new, for there is a reference to 'setting and wheeling

round each other' in the description of the dance 'America' seen by Samuel Johnson and Boswell at Armadale in Skye in 1773 (Boswell 1936:242). However, we know of no reference to the 'locked arms' prior to the description in *The Ballroom Annual.*

The Reel of Tulloch as described above is not an easy dance to perform, for it involves frequent changes of position, with no clear guiding principle to indicate at each point what the next change should be. It is therefore not surprising that various simplified forms of the dance arose.

In the most widely accepted of these simplified forms, only the 'swinging' portion is preserved, and this is added as a coda to a Foursome Reel.[4] The 'reeling and setting' sequence of the Foursome Reel is performed three or four times in strathspey tempo, then once in reel tempo, and this is followed by the swinging and setting of the Reel of Tulloch. Such a composite dance is first described in the second volume of McIntyre North's *Book of the Club of True Highlanders* (North 1881), an encyclopaediac survey of general Highland matters. However, the part of this composite dance that is in reel tempo is described *c.* 1870 in W. E. Allan's ballroom guide (Allan *c.* 1870), the description being as follows (there is no indication that this sequence follows the strathspey part of the Foursome Reel):

> Stand as for Reel of Four. 1. All reel, or figure of 8.
> 2. Gentlemen set to ladies, turn round, taking hold of hands, the left being behind the back, then right hand behind—ladies forward to centre.
> 3. Ladies set to each other and turn as above.
> 4. Ladies set to gentlemen and turn as above.
> 5. Gentlemen to the centre, set and turn.

It is probable that this simplification of the Reel of Tulloch and its combination with the Foursome Reel took place independently of the professional dancing-masters, for in a revised edition of his ballroom guide W. E. Allan (Allan *c.* 1880) substituted a version of the Reel of Tulloch rather similar to that given in *The Ballroom Annual,* and this version was retained in Mozart Allan's well-known recension of Allan's guide (Allan *c.* 1890). Moreover, it is not until 1900 that we find the complete composite dance described in any work written by a professional dancing-master.

In addition to the ordinary Reel of Tulloch, there were also 'double' forms consisting of two Reels of Tulloch performed simultaneously in the form of a cross. Such a double Reel of Tulloch is described in Atkinson's *Scottish National Dances* (1900), and we have also recorded two such versions from oral tradition in Lochaber and Ardgour (TDS:153).

To sum up, the Reel of Tulloch was most probably composed about 1800 somewhere in the Central Highlands, as a dance of the upper classes, though drawing on the folk traditions of the region. Indeed, it is possible that the dance was a formalization of traditional Reels, danced by all strata of society in the Central Highlands throughout the late eighteenth century, in which the 'reel of four', the circle figure, and swinging were combined as desired. Whatever its origin, the earliest recorded version of the Reel of Tulloch was patently a badly devised dance, and over the period from about 1860

to 1900 various simplified forms arose, owing more to folk influence than to the cultivated ballroom. These simplifications culminated in the combination of the Reel of Tulloch with the Foursome Reel, to produce a dance that embodies the essence of Highland dancing.

Double Threesome and Foursome Reels, the Reel of Nine, and the Hankies Reel

All the dances in this group are obviously derived from either the Threesome or the Foursome Reel. The first three dances discussed below, namely the Reel of Five, the Reel of Six, and the Double Foursome Reel, are 'double' versions of the Threesome and Foursome Reels, consisting essentially of two Threesome or two Foursome Reels performed in the form of a cross. Atkinson, in his *Scottish National Dances* (Atkinson 1900), comments that all three of these 'double' Reels 'are seldom seen except in the Dancing School', and none of our informants in Scotland had ever either performed them or seen them performed.

The Reel of Five

This is a double Threesome Reel, performed by five people standing in cross formation, with one person at the centre of the cross. The Threesome Reels are performed alternately on the two arms of the cross, and the centre person takes part in each Reel. The first Scottish reference to the dance is in the Lowes' *Ball-Conductor* (Lowe *c.* 1830), where the description is as follows:

> (Places—one Lady at the top of the room, one at the bottom, one at each side, and the Gentleman in the middle.) The Gentleman, with two of the Ladies, makes a reel of three, while the other two Ladies circle round them; all set, during which the Gentleman turns to each Lady alternately; he then forms the reel of three with the other two Ladies.

Two other versions, differing slightly from each other, are given by Wilson in the two editions of his *Analysis* (1808, 1811); in these each dancer comes into the centre in turn. The only other writer to mention the Reel of Five is Atkinson (*op. cit.*), who gives the same version as the Lowes, except that 'circle round' is replaced by 'circle part way round and back'.

The Reel of Six

This is a form of double Foursome, but with the centre two people taking part in each of the cross Reels. It appears first in the Lowes' *Ball-Conductor* (*c.* 1830), their description being as follows:

> (Places the same as in the Reel of Five, only two Gentlemen in the middle.) The Gentlemen, with two of the Ladies, form a reel of four, during which, and when the two Ladies are close together in the middle, the other two Ladies cross over, and re-cross, when the first two

Ladies are in the middle again; all set, the Gentlemen turning to the Ladies alternately; they then reel with the other Ladies.

Virtually the same description is given in the ballroom guides of Smythe (1830), Wallace (*c.* 1872) and McLeod (1897), and also by Atkinson (1900). The dance was collected from oral tradition at some time prior to 1930 by the late I. C. B. Jamieson and was published by him in *The Border Dance Book* (Scottish Country Dance Club 1936). Jamieson has left no record of his informants, but we have reason to believe that this dance was recorded from someone who had learnt it in Inverness.[5]

The Double Foursome

This is performed by four couples, and consists of two Foursome Reels performed simultaneously in cross formation. In the 'reels of four' the four ladies pass simultaneously through the centre, and the men likewise. It is mentioned only by Atkinson (Atkinson 1900), who gives a clear description. It is in fact the best of the three 'double' Reels discussed so far, and when combined with a double Reel of Tulloch is both enjoyable and spectacular.

The Reel of Nine

Three basically similar dances of this name are given in the ballroom guides of Willock (1865), Anderson (*c.* 1886–1902) and McLeod (1897), and we have collected from oral tradition another similar dance entitled The Rob Roy Reel, which was performed in Lanark before 1890 as an exhibition dance for children. The name Reel of Nine or Ninesome Reel is also used nowadays for the Bumpkin, a dance which was popular in the early nineteenth century and which is probably the progenitor of the other four. Of all these dances, only Willock's Reel of Nine and The Rob Roy Reel involve the characteristic 8-bar setting periods of the true Reels, and these two dances are essentially 'triple' Threesome Reels. (Descriptions of both dances, and of Anderson's Reel of Nine have been given in Flett 1966–7, part IV; and the description and early history of the Bumpkin in Flett 1965.)

The Threesome (Hankies) Reel

This dance is performed by a man and two ladies, who stand in a line across the room, facing the top, with the man between the two ladies. The man is linked to each lady by a handkerchief held in their nearer hands, and this link is retained throughout.

The dance consists of alternate setting and reeling, and in the reeling figure the two ladies each circle twice round the man in opposite directions. The man and his left-hand lady form an arch, and the right-hand lady passes beneath it, the man following this lady under his own arch. All are now facing down the room, and the man and his right-hand lady form the arch while the left-hand lady passes beneath it. They are now

again facing the top, and they repeat the 'arches figure' once more, ending in original places.

We recorded this dance in the Borders, where it was common up to about 1920, and in parts of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, where it was in use (less commonly) up to about 1905. In all these places it was used purely as a social dance, and was performed to strathspey tunes only (TDS:173).

Another version of the dance, which was performed to a combination of strathspeys and reels, was collected in Perthshire and Angus by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (R.S.C.D.S. 1930), but among our informants we have met this version only as an exhibition dance for children.

We do not know of any literary reference to the dance in Scotland, but the first version above was published by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, who collected it at Kielder in Northumberland.

Orkney and Shetland Reels

With the exception of the North Ronaldshay Axum Reel, which is discussed separately at the end of this section, the Orkney and Shetland Reels are basically similar.

As recently as 1880 the only dances in use in the country districts of the Mainland of Orkney and on most of the smaller Orkney islands were the Foursome Reel, which was identical to that of the mainland of Scotland, the Sixsome and Eightsome Reels, which were peculiar to Orkney, and the ubiquitous kissing dance Babbity Bowster (TDS Chs. 3, 7).

The Orkney Sixsome and Eightsome Reels are danced by three and four couples respectively, and in both dances the setting steps are performed with the dancers placed in two parallel lines, all the men being in one line, with their partners opposite to them in the other. In the travelling figure in the Sixsome Reel the dancers perform the 'reel of three' in pairs, each couple moving as a single unit, with the lady leading and her partner following immediately behind her. In the Eightsome Reel the travelling figure is a 'reel of four', performed in pairs in a similar manner. Like the Foursome Reel, these Orkney Sixsome and Eightsome Reels are both performed to a combination of strathspeys and reels.

The first reference to these Orkney Reels known to us is dated 1905 (Dennison 1905), but this and other subsequent references give only the names of the dances and the number of couples required in each.[6] Detailed descriptions of the dances were first given by one of us in a series of articles in the *Orkney Herald* in 1956, and are reproduced in TDS.

The Shetland Reels, which are for two, three, or four couples, were the principal dances in Shetland up to about 1900 (detailed descriptions of all the forms mentioned here can be found in TDS).

The three-couple and four-couple Shetland Reels existed in a variety of forms, in all

of which the setting steps are performed with the dancers in two parallel lines, with partners in opposite lines. In some forms (and these seem to us to be the oldest), all the men are in one line and the ladies in the other, exactly as in the Orkney Reels. In other forms, however, the couples are arranged so that the lines consist of alternate men and women. In all the known forms the travelling figures are basically similar to those of the Orkney Reels, *i.e.* they consist of the 'reel of three' or the 'reel of four' performed in pairs, though there are differences of detail between the Shetland and Orkney versions.

The two-couple Shetland Reel is exceptional: in this the setting steps are performed with the dancers placed approximately at the corners of a square, and the travelling figure is simply 'four-hands across and back'.

There is one major difference between these Shetland Reels and those of Orkney and the other parts of Scotland, namely that the strathspey tunes so popular elsewhere do not appear to have been accepted in Shetland. Shetland Reels are in fact performed to reel tunes and Scotch measures only—in Shetland both types of tune are called reels, and are usually played at a tempo of about 52–54 bars per minute.[7]

At least one version of the three-couple Reel was known in every district of Shetland. On the other hand, within living memory the two-couple Reel was confined to the western part of the Mainland of Shetland, while the four-couple Reels were confined to the south and west Mainland and to Burra Isle (which is neighbouring to the south and west Mainland).

In most places all these dances were known simply as 'Shetland Reels'. However, in the district of Skeld on the west Mainland of Shetland the local versions of the two-, three-, and four-couple Reels were known as the 'Four-man's Reel', the 'Six-man's Reel', and the 'Eight-man's Reel' (or the 'Fourpenny, Sixpenny, and Eightpenny Reels'), and there the term 'Shetland Reel' seems usually to have meant the three-couple Reel.

These Shetland Reels have attracted more attention from writers than the Orkney Reels. The earliest reference known to us which gives specific information about the form of the dances is the following description of dancing at a Shetland wedding published in the *Shetland Journal* for 1 July 1837.[8]

> The [wedding] dinner being finished, the house is 'red up' (cleared) for dancing. Two fiddlers are perched up on high seats on one side of the room, the lasses, decked out in their best, are ranged on seats along the opposite side, each putting on her most agreeable airs and as fully bent on conquest as the finest drawing-room belle. The young men are also spruced up, and trying to do the agreeable in their best way. The fiddlers begin to tune, the men start up, and selecting their partners, prepare to 'tak da flûre' (take the floor). The 'Foula reel', a native air, is perhaps called for, the fiddlers strike up, and the dancers perform 'a saxome reel', a very simple sort of dance in which the dancers merely perform a figure of 8 in pairs, setting and dancing a jig at each turn of the tune. It must be confessed that there is more of hard work than grace in the dancing of the Shetland peasantry, but there are no people who enjoy that diversion more, and were a fashionable quadriller to see the leaping, shuffling, snapping of fingers, and shouting of a Shetland 'saxome reel', however he might

miss the elegance, he would be obliged to own that in *spirit* his tame performance would bear no comparison with it.

Two other descriptions of Shetland weddings, the first in the *Shetland Times* for 8 February 1875,[9] and the second in George Stewart's *Shetland Fireside Tales* (Stewart 1877), both refer to four couples dancing Reels. The *Shetland Times* article describes a wedding which took place in the Scousburgh district in the south Mainland of Shetland about 1837, and, although the article is unsigned, the account itself leaves little doubt that it too was written by George Stewart. Unfortunately, the article is written with such masterly, if unintentional, ambiguity that one cannot say with certainty that the four couples mentioned are dancing a four-couple Shetland Reel—they could equally well be dancing two Scotch (Foursome) Reels.

The second description, in *Shetland Fireside Tales*, is a little less ambiguous, and here one can be almost certain that the four couples in question are dancing a four-couple Shetland Reel, involving a 'reel of four' performed in pairs. We may therefore take it that such a four-couple Reel goes back at least to Stewart's early youth about 1840.[10]

Yet another description of a Shetland wedding occurs in *Chambers Journal* for 1859 (Chambers Journal 1859). On the occasion referred to, the dancers were in two lines, with all the men in one line and with the women in the other, and in the reeling figure they 'run once or twice round the house', whilst the setting period continued for 'half an hour, thumping and pelting at it, till perspiration streams to the ground and mist ascends in clouds'.

In more recent years detailed descriptions of two versions of the three-couple Reel have been given by Shuldham-Shaw (1949) and MacLennan (1950), and there is also a somewhat misleading description of one of these versions by Saxby (1932). The other versions, and the two-couple and four-couple Reels are first described in TDS.

It is interesting to note that when the dancers perform the travelling figures in any of these Orkney and Shetland Reels they are said to 'run the reel'. This usage is an old one, for in two of the Country Dances in the Young MS of 1740 (Flett 1967) we find the instruction to 'run the Heys' (*i.e.* run the 'reels of three'). We recall also the lines from Ross's *The Fortunate Shepherdess* of 1768, quoted in Part I, where 'throw an' throw they lap, they flang, they ran; The cuintray dances an' the cuintray reels . . .'.

It is possible that a Reel of the same general form as the Orkney and Shetland Sixsome Reels was once known also on the mainland of Scotland, for there is a nineteenth-century reference to a Reel for three couples in the Highlands, and another in North-east Scotland. The first of these occurs in W. Grant Stewart's *The Popular Superstitions and the Festive Amusements of the Highlanders* (Stewart 1822), where, at a wedding:

> The dinner being over, the 'shemit reel' is the next object of attention. All the company assemble on the lawn with flambeaux and form into a circle. The bridal pair and their retinue then dance a *sixsome* reel, each putting a piece of silver into the musician's hand. Those desirous may then succeed, and dance with the bride and the two maids of honour; and are gratified at the commencement and termination of a reel by the usual salutes.

The second reference, which also concerns the 'shemit' or 'shamit' reel is given in Gregor's *Notes on the Folk-lore of the North-East of Scotland* (Gregor 1881: 95).

> The dancing [at the wedding] was begun by the *shaimit reel*. This dance was performed by the bride, the bride's maidens, the bridegroom, and the best young men. The music to which it was danced was called the *shaim-spring*, and the bride had the privilege of choosing the music. The male dancers then paid the musician his fee. Another dance was performed by the same six, after which the floor was open.

Gregor goes on to remark that in other districts the 'shaimit reel' was a Foursome Reel performed by the bride and her best maid with the two sens as partners. A similar use of the Foursome Reel, under the name 'Shame-Reel' or 'Shamit Dance', is mentioned in the 1879 edition of Jamieson's *Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, with the remark that 'this dance was common in Forfarshire twenty years ago', *i.e. c.* 1860. The same use of the Foursome Reel is described by John Grant in *The Penny Wedding*, referring to the Elgin area about 1806. Grant says that the name 'Shamit Reel' arose 'as it was considered that it [*i.e.* this Reel] would take away the shame and bashfulness which the bride laboured under before so many people' (Grant 1836:30). The 'sens' mentioned by Gregor may possibly be the messengers sent to bring the bride to the wedding.

We cannot be certain that the Reels referred to by Stewart and Gregor were of the same form as the Orkney and Shetland Reels, for neither author describes the travelling figure, but it is perhaps significant that in most districts of Orkney and Shetland the first dance at a wedding was a Sixsome Reel, performed by the bride and bridegroom and their attendants.

We should mention also that a simple 'Six Reel' for three couples, involving a 'reel of three' performed in pairs, was collected by Cecil Sharp in Goathland in Yorkshire in 1914. Moreover, the usage 'to run the reel' also occurs in Yorkshire, as is seen in the following lines from the Cleveland district:

> Beeath awd an' yung wad hev a dance
> Tell they gat tired weel;
> They'd crack their fingers an' cry *Yuck!*
> As they ran t'kuntry reel

(Gutch 1901:256; *cf.* the passage from *The Fortunate Shepherdess* on p. 99).

It is natural to wonder why strathspey tunes have never taken root in Shetland, and a possible reason may lie in the extreme popularity of the Sixsome Reel there, for a reel is much better suited to this dance than is a strathspey.[11] In Shetland the Sixsome Reel was normally danced in the confined space of a croft kitchen, and in the travelling figure the dancers had to pass closely round each other as they performed the 'reel of three' in pairs. With the quick tempo of a reel, the travelling steps tended to be short, and the figure fitted perfectly to the music—the dancers returned to their places with just enough time for the three quick stamps which terminated the reeling part of the measure.

On the other hand, to the slower tempo of a strathspey dancers tend to take longer steps, and the use of a strathspey in the Shetland Sixsome Reel would therefore have meant either that the dancers would have tended to finish the reeling figure well before the music, or that their steps would have had to be unnaturally cramped. It is true that the very similar Orkney Sixsome Reel was danced to a combination of strathspeys and reels, but in a confined space the strathspey part of the Orkney dance fits the music much less well than does the reel part.

The popularity of the Sixsome Reel in Shetland might also explain why the (Scotch) Foursome Reel was not accepted into the repertoire of Shetland dances until about 1900. The Sixsome Reel does in fact make a better use of the dancing space available in the small croft kitchens of Shetland than does the Foursome Reel.

If the popularity of the Sixsome Reel in Shetland was responsible for the non-acceptance there of strathspeys and the Foursome Reel, then we may infer a little more about the age of the Shetland Sixsome Reel than is provided by the earliest literary reference, in 1837. We have seen in Part I of this paper that strathspey tunes first became common on the mainland of Scotland about 1760–70, and that the Foursome Reel came into general favour in Scotland (except in the West Highlands and the Western Isles) about 1775–1800. A knowledge of the existence of these new fashions would have travelled almost immediately to Shetland, either *via* polite society or *via* fishermen, but the new tunes and the new dance would not have been adopted into local repertoires if the Sixsome Reel was already well established there.

On the other hand, true Reels involving alternate setting and reeling do not seem to be native to Shetland. This may be inferred from a paper given to George Low in 1774 by the Reverend William Archibald, Minister of the island of Unst in Shetland, and printed in Low's *Tour* (Low 1879:163). Of the people of Unst Archibald wrote:

> Diversions obtain only in winter, and consist in dancing on some stated days about and after Christmas, when they meet in considerable numbers. . . . There is one species of dance which seems peculiar to themselves, in which they do not proceed from one end of the floor to the other in a figure [*i.e.* as in a Country Dance], nor is it after the manner of a Scotch reel, but a dozen or so form themselves into a circle, and taking each other by the hand, perform a sort of circular dance, one of the company all the while singing a Norn Visick. This was formerly their only dance, but has now given entire way to the reel.

The ring dance described by Archibald survived in Unst up to about 1860 (Saxby 1932), and similar dances still survive in the Faroe Islands. However, what is relevant here is the assertion, implicit in Archibald's statement, that the Reel is not native to Unst, and that it had been brought into the island not too long before 1774, possibly shortly after 1700.

We have already remarked in Part I of this paper that the beginning of the eighteenth century saw a revival of social dancing in Scotland, following the religious prohibitions of the preceding century, and this is obviously the period at which we should expect Reels to have spread into regions where they had hitherto been unknown. However,

the form of Reel most likely to have come to Shetland in this way would have been the Threesome Reel, for in the first half of the eighteenth century the Threesome Reel seems to have been the principal Reel in those parts of the mainland of Scotland having closest links with Shetland. A possible relic of such an importation is a dance for three people called The Little Maltman, which was performed in Esha Ness on the Mainland of Shetland about 1875, though unfortunately our information about this dance is fragmentary (Mouat 1959). The Sixsome Reel might well be a Shetland development of the Threesome Reel obtained by 'doubling up' the participants[12] to obtain a more even matching of the sexes. From Shetland the Sixsome Reel could then easily have been exported to Orkney and North-east Scotland, and also to the Yorkshire coast, by the crews of the fishing vessels who used Shetland as a base during the summer months.

We must mention here the 'Auld Reels' of Shetland. These too existed in various forms, for three or four couples, and consist of a 'reel of three' or a 'reel of four' which is repeated over and over without pause, each couple dancing as a single unit, with partners either side by side or one behind the other. The Auld Reels are thus essentially similar to a three-couple or four-couple Shetland Reel from which the setting steps are omitted. However, the similarity of the Auld Reels to the Shetland Reels does not extend to the music, for the surviving Auld Reel tunes are strongly Scandinavian in character: in particular, one of them has exactly the same form as a type of Norwegian dance-tune known as a Halling, while another, if not of exactly the same form as the Halling tunes, has at least close affinities with them (see TDS Chs. 4, 8; Flett 1971, and references given there).[13]

The Auld Reels are first referred to in 1813, but no details of the form of the dance are given (see Flett 1971).[14] As the 'Bride's or Bridegroom's Reels' the Auld Reels were once performed as the closing dances (or dance) of a Shetland wedding, just prior to the bedding of the bride (TDS Ch. 4), and a version for eight dancers under the title of the 'Brides Reels' is mentioned in *Shetland Fireside Tales* (Stewart 1877).

The undoubted antiquity of the Auld Reel tunes, and their equally undoubted Scandinavian origin, make it certain that the Auld Reels, as dances, existed in Shetland prior to the introduction of the true Reels. However, they may not originally have employed the 'reel of three' or the 'reel of four'. The Halling dance, as known in Norway today, is a couple dance involving feats of athleticism by the male partner, and it is possible that the Auld Reels were originally couple dances in which the couples simply circled the floor. After the introduction of true Reels, this circling could easily have given way to a reeling figure, which makes a more interesting use of the space available. It is also possible that the existence of a couple dance in Shetland at that time might have accelerated the 'doubling up' of the participants in Reels.

So far, we have said little about the Orkney and Shetland Reels for four couples. Those which involve a 'reel of four' performed in pairs seem to us to be developments from the Sixsome Reel, and are not very successful. Within living memory they were distinctly uncommon, and their reeling figures do not fit the music particularly well.

On the other hand, the interesting Eightsome or Axum Reel from the Orkney island of North Ronaldshay, which has the most complicated travelling figure of all Scottish Reels, is a well-constructed dance which deserves to be better known.

The figure of the Axum Reel, which is illustrated in Fig. 1(c) in Part I, consists essentially of two 'reels of four' arranged in the form of a cross, but, in contrast to the Double Foursome, here each dancer passes from one 'reel of four' to the other on entering the central loop. The dance commences with alternate setting and reeling, performed to a strathspey, and in this part each dancer covers half the travelling figure in each reeling period. Following the call 'Run it oot', the music gradually becomes faster and faster, and the dancers thereupon continuously traverse the travelling figure, without setting, until the fiddler brings the dance to an end.

The continuous reeling of the last part has obvious features in common with the Shetland Auld Reels, and, like the Auld Reels in Shetland, the Axum Reel was once the closing dance in North Ronaldshay weddings.

In spite of its unusual nature, the Axum Reel was unknown outside Orkney until recently. A detailed description was first given by one of us in a series of articles in the *Orkney Herald* in 1956, and is reproduced in TDS, Chapter 7. An inaccurate description is given in *Scottish Country Dance Book 18* (R.S.C.D.S. 1955): this is based on correspondence with the same sources from whom we recorded the dance.

Conclusion

It is interesting to note the extent to which we have had to rely on information collected recently from oral tradition for our knowledge of Scottish Reels. An historian of the dance, writing in 1948 (when we began our research) and employing only printed and manuscript sources, would have had available detailed information of only eleven of the twenty-one Reels described in this paper [15] (and there would have been some doubt whether one of these, the Shetland Eightsome Reel, really existed). In addition, he would have known that there once existed Reels in Orkney for three and four couples, but would not have known any details of these dances. He would also have known that there once existed dances with the titles Cath nan Coileach and Ruidhleadh nan Coileach Dubha, but would not have known that these were Reels. As we have remarked in Part I, he would have been entirely unaware of the existence of the circular Reel and the allied Ruidhleadh Mòr and The Eight Men of Moidart. He would also have been unaware of the existence of the Axum Reel from North Ronaldshay, the Shetland Foursome Reel and the Shetland Auld Reels. Perhaps more important, he would also have been largely unaware of the extent to which Reels once dominated local dance repertoires in Scotland outside the Lowlands and the immediately adjacent Highlands. Indeed, without the evidence from oral tradition concerning this last point, he might well have given Reels less than their due as the most universal and the most national dance-form in Scotland.[16]

NOTES

1 The Gaelic verses given by Shaw were recorded from 'an old Highlander' who was born *c.* 1760. The song is also given in Sinclair's *An t-Oranaiche*, Glasgow, 1879.

K. N. MacDonald, in his *Puirt-a-beul*, Glasgow, 1901, gives a similar tradition concerning Black John M'Gregor, and says that this was first recorded by a Dr Benjamin Taylor in an article in *Atlanta*. The date of this is said to be *c.* 1840.

2 It should be noted that the Duke of Perth's MS and the McFarlan MS were compiled by the same person, David Young (see Part I).

3 The material in *The Ballroom Annual* also appears in *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen; . . . to which is added the Ball-Room Manual*, London, n.d. In this, the part of the instructions for 'The Duchess of Sutherland's New Highland Reel' between the asterisks marked in the text is omitted, probably by a compositor's error.

An abbreviated version of *The Ballroom Annual*, including 'The Duchess of Sutherland's New Highland Reel', again with the omission of the part between the asterisks, was published under the title *The Art of Dancing*, London, n.d., and in this form seems to have had a fairly wide circulation in Scotland.

4 Further details of the various forms of the Reel of Tulloch known within living memory are given in TDS, Chapter 6.

5 There was also another Reel of Six, the 'Scotch Reel for Six', which was used by the Dundee dancing-master David Anderson as an exhibition dance *c.* 1895–1910 (see Flett 1966–7: parts I, IV). In this dance the dancers performed their setting steps in a line of six, and to begin the travelling figure they faced in pairs. The pattern of the travelling figure was similar to that of the 'reel of four', but with an additional loop at each end, and each dancer performed exactly half this figure in the reeling period.

6 According to Dennison (1905: 34) the dances performed at an Orkney wedding 'were generally "Reels". There were the "twasome", that was the two-couple reel; the "treesome", the three-couple reel; and the "aichtsome", the four-couple reel.' Dennison was born in 1826, and was a native of the island of Sanday, where he resided for most of his life. His account presumably refers to the period *c.* 1840.

The same three Reels are mentioned in almost the same words by John Firth in 1910 (see TDS: 50), referring to the district of Finstown on the mainland of Orkney.

7 There was considerable variation in tempo between one fiddler and another, and we have recorded speeds varying from 62 to 48 bars per minute (we have also met one fiddler who played as slowly as 40 bars per minute, but he was completely exceptional).

8 The issue of the *Shetland Journal* for 1 July 1837 was the mourning issue announcing the death of William IV on June 20, and two editions were printed. The article 'A Shetland CountryWedding' quoted in the text occurs only in the earlier edition, which was apparently sent to subscribers outside Shetland (a copy is in the Orkney County Library in Kirkwall). In the later edition (copies of which are in the Shetland County Library in Lerwick), the article is replaced by an editorial on Queen Victoria's accession and other material on the life of William IV. We are indebted for this information to Mr D. M. N. Tinch, Deputy County Librarian of Orkney, and Mr G. W. Longmuir, County Librarian of Shetland.

The article is reprinted in *Peace's Almanac and County Directory for 1903*, Kirkwall 1902, with a reference to the *Shetland Journal* of the above date. (We first found the article in Peace's reprint some years ago, but at that time we were unable to trace the original of the reprint, for we consulted the Lerwick copies of the *Shetland Journal*, which we now know to be of the wrong edition. The existence of the earlier 'overseas' edition was discovered recently by Mr Tinch when we wrote to him with the faint hope that Peace's original source might be somewhere in the Kirkwall library.)

9 This description is reprinted in *The Orkney and Shetland American* (published in Chicago) vol. 3, Nos. 10, 11, April, May 1890, and also in *Anderson's Orkney and Shetland Guide, Directory and Almanac for 1891*, Kirkwall 1890. An abbreviated version is given in Ursula Venables, *Life in Shetland*, Edinburgh, 1956, p. 34, and a short extract is also given in TDS, p. 65.

In all these works the original source of the description is not specified.

We are indebted to Mr G. W. Longmuir for much bibliographical assistance in relation to these and other references.

10 Stewart was born in 1825.

11 Mr Peter Cooke has kindly pointed out to us that it is not quite accurate to say that strathspeys were absent from Shetland. In fact a small number of tunes that were played by Shetland fiddlers as tunes for the Shetland Reel (at the appropriate reel tempo) can be traced back to Scottish strathspey tunes, and it seems that Shetlanders pressed into service any tune that was to hand and that could be made suitable for the Shetland Reel. However, with the exception of the one fiddler mentioned in note 7, it is true that strathspey tempo was not used for Reels in Shetland, and our remarks should be interpreted as referring to strathspey *tempo*.

12 We have seen such a 'doubling up' of a 'reel of three' take place extemporaneously in the modern Eightsome Reel during the last twenty years.

13 Some of the Auld Reel tunes have features in common with the tune for the Papa Stour Sword Dance.

14 The first (partial) descriptions of the Auld Reels are given by Shuldham-Shaw (1949). Complete details can be found in TDS, Chapter 8.

15 This total does not distinguish between the various forms of the Shetland Sixsome Reel, and similarly for the other Reels.

16 *Cf.* the albums of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, which contain only four true Reels.

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