



South East Region Teachers Association

Dancing for Ceilidhs and Weddings **Wendy Mumford** **September 2010**

Reporter: Wendy Mumford

Don't teach footwork. Walk the first one. This proves to those who have never tried it before that they can do it without worrying about the feet. Just make it fun.

I only use 'once to the bottom' dances and never strathspeys.

Everyone has heard of Dashing White Sergeant, but probably not danced it. Show them a 'balance' not a full blown pas de bas! Some will have problems with reels. Explain the pattern of an 8 – all 3 need to move! Demonstrate with 3 who know what they are doing. If they link arms during the reels don't worry; this is a ceilidh, not a dance class.

Always demonstrate things such as the Gay Gordons, Military Two Step, etc. with someone from the floor. Most won't know how to do it.

Call all the way through the dance, slightly ahead of the next action.

Eightsome Reel. Anyone can dance this, but apart from numbering the couples at the beginning so that they know who is in the middle,

don't use numbers! The square never stays in the same positions and the

middle person will only know who their partner is.

At a ceilidh or wedding they always want Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow, Dashing White Sergeant etc. but the rest can be easy round the room or once to the bottom dances.

Taster Sessions:

1 Use correct names for formations. 'Right hands across' is exactly what it says; it looks nothing like a teapot!

2 Include information about the background of the dance – and historical facts about the society, etc. It makes it more interesting.

3 Start with 'once to the bottom' dances. Move on to two couple dances. It is confusing for a beginner to step down from 3rd place; far easier to finish where you are on bar 32.

4 Clearly define the difference between reels and figures of eight. ('reelers' refer to reels as figures of eight.)

5 A taster session needs a strathspey but don't labour it – too much information will frighten people.

6 When you do start teaching 3 couple dances in a four couple set, avoid corners at first.

7 Beginners find it easier to start on a chord, not 'ready and....' After all, they won't have the confidence to attend a workshop for a while!

8 Be aware that if a newcomer has danced other types of dancing the numbering is often different in a square set.

It is so important to make it fun. Finish on something easy; they go away wanting more

Six week course combined with usual class

I have used this method with some of our local clubs (who have suddenly had beginners arrive.)

The least number has been 6.

Do a 'walk warm up' with a formation from the first dance with whole class.

Teach a standard, simple dance to the whole class.

Take the beginners off elsewhere to teach stepwork, new formations or revise.

Return to main class to dance final dance(s) including the new formation.

Week 1

skip change and slip step

Turn right and left – 4 and 2 bar

Right and left hands across

Hands round and back

Stepping up and down. Casting

Dances Snowball Dance, Oxo Dance, Good Hearted Glasgow, Highland Rambler

Week 2

revise steps

Figure of 8. ½ figure of 8

Promenade. Promenade with cast.

Left shoulder reels

Dances Davy's Locker, A Jig for Mrs Dunn, Sally's Reel, Royal Deeside Railway

Week 3

setting

Rights and lefts

Ladies chain

Rsh reels

Dances Rabbie's Roving Eye, Lamb Skinnet, Kendall's Hornpipe, Catch the Wind, Andrew's Dance

Week 4

revise steps

Advance and retire

Corners

2 couple allemande

Grand chain

Dances Lady Catherine Bruce's Reel, Cutty Sark, Spring in the Air, Mrs Stewart's Jig, EH3 7AF

Week 5

Introduce strathspey steps

3 couple allemande

Revision

Dances The Poet and his Lass, Dashing White Sergeant, Findlay's Jig, Craven Reel

Week 6

queries, questions, revision

Reel of 4

Corner, partner, corner, partner

Have fun

Dances White Heather Jig, Star Ladies, Delvine Side, Braes of Breadalbane, Napier's Index,

Two day starter workshop

Starters

R rr – Highland Welcome – circle, R/LHA, turn R & L, adv/ret, Slip step, travel

J 4 cpl – Snowball – cast, step up

J 2 cpl – Jindalee Jig – promenade

R rr – Borrowdale Exchange – back to back

J 2 cpl – A Jig for Mrs Dunn – promenade with cast, lead

Rights & lefts

R rr – Good Morning – rights & lefts with clap!

R 2 cpl – Galloway House – rights & lefts, 2 bar turn

J 2 cpl – Highland Fair – 2s dance up on sides
S 2 cpl – Grant’s Reel – strathspey steps

Ladies chain

J rr – Rabbie’s Roving – Eye ladies chain round room
J 2 cpl – Kendall’s Hornpipe – down, up, cross & cast, ladies chain

Setting

J 8×32 ? – Espie McNabb – set
J 8×32 ? – Lamb Skinnnet – set, ½ figure 8
J 2 cpl – It’s nae Bother –

Allemande

J 2 cpl L – Catherine Bruce’s Reel – allemande, full figure of 8
J 8×32 – Findlay’s Jig – 3 couple allemande in 3 couple set
J 8×32 – Joie de Vivre –
S 8×32 ? – The Rakes of Glasgow – circle in strathspey time

Reels

R rr – Dashing White Sergeant – all steps, right shoulder reels
R 3 cpl – Sally’s Reel – left shoulder reels across & sides
R 8×32 – Catch the Wind – double set with turn
S 3 cpl – The Poet & his Lass –

Square

R – The Barmkin – corners in square

Triangle

J – Star Ladies – promenade clockwise

More 8×32

J – St Andrews Fair – chase
R – Highland Rambler –
J – The Frisky – stepping in & up, rights & lefts ½ way
S – Braes of Breadalbane –
J – Napier’s Index – balance, corners

Wendy Mumford
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