

A HANDBOOK OF IRISH DANCES

Complete Modernized Manual for Beginners

Based on the original 1902 handbook by J. G. O'Keeffe and Art O'Brien

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope

This manual provides complete instruction for traditional Irish round and long dances, modernized for contemporary learners while preserving historical authenticity. The content focuses on dances that can be mastered using elementary steps, making them accessible to beginners while maintaining the rich cultural heritage of Irish dancing.

Prerequisites: Before attempting the dances in this manual, dancers should acquire basic proficiency in three fundamental steps:

- **The Side-step** (foundation of most round dances)
- **The Rising-step** (used by gentlemen in jigs)
- **The Shuffle** (used by ladies in jigs)

Dance Classifications

Irish dances of the traditional period may be categorized into five distinct types:

I. STEP DANCES (Rinnci) Solo performances featuring complex footwork:

- Single and double jigs
- Single reels
- Hornpipes
- Hop-time dances

II. FIGURE/SET DANCES (Rinnci Fighe) Choreographed dances for irregular musical structures:

- St. Patrick's Day
- The Blackbird
- Rodney's Glory
- Humours of Bandon

III. ROUND DANCES (Rinnci Fáinne) Group formations in circular patterns:

- 4, 6, 8, 12, and 16-hand reels and jigs

IV. OTHER DANCES Hybrid forms combining elements:

- 3-hand reels
- Specialized 4 and 8-hand variations

V. LONG/COUNTRY DANCES (Rinnci Fada) Progressive line formations:

- Kerry Dance
- Limerick Walls

Essential Steps

The Side-Step Technique

Foundation Movement for Irish Round Dancing

Execution (Moving Right):

1. **Initial Position:** Light jump, landing simultaneously on toes of both feet with right foot forward (Beat 1)
2. **Lateral Movement:** Step right foot to the right (Beat 2)
3. **Follow Through:** Bring left foot to right (Beat 3)
4. **Continuation:** Repeat pattern through Beat 7, ending with left foot
5. **Completion:** Execute "two short threes" over 2 bars

Execution (Moving Left):

- Mirror the right-moving pattern
- Begin with left foot forward
- End sequence on right foot at Beat 7

Adaptations by Dance Type:

- **In Reels:** Complete with "two short threes" (one-two-three backward and forward movement)
- **In Jigs:** Substitute finishing movements:
 - Gentlemen: rising-step
 - Ladies: shuffle

Universal Step Application

Throughout this manual, whenever the terms "dance," "turn," "set," or "balance" appear, employ the basic one-two-three movement, modified appropriately for the specific circumstance.

PART II: FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The Lead Round (Opening Circle)

Standard opening sequence for all round dances

Formation Requirements:

- All couples arranged in circular formation
- Maintain equal spacing between couples throughout
- Synchronized movement essential for proper execution

Sequential Breakdown:

Phase 1: Preparation (2 bars)

- Stand ready in formation
- Listen carefully to establish musical timing
- Prepare for synchronized movement

Phase 2: Clockwise Circle (6 bars)

- Gentleman holds lady's left hand in his right hand
- All couples move clockwise around the circle
- Return to original starting positions

Phase 3: Counter-clockwise Return (6 bars)

- Release and exchange hand positions
- Gentleman takes lady's right hand in his left hand
- Circle counter-clockwise back to starting positions

Phase 4: Partner Turn (2 bars)

- Partners face each other directly
- Join both hands together
- Execute one complete turn together
- Return to original positions

Critical Points:

- Total duration: 16 bars of music
- Equal spacing between couples must be maintained throughout
- All couples must begin and conclude movements in perfect synchronization
- Smooth transitions between phases essential

Basic Movement Principles

Posture and Carriage:

- Maintain natural, easy body position
- Avoid artificial stiffness or excessive formality
- Keep movements flowing and graceful

Timing Precision:

- Every movement must conclude exactly with the musical beat
- Maintain symmetrical formation throughout
- Each dancer must reach proper position at proper time

Hand Positions:

- When holding partner's hands, keep both elbows well bent
 - Maintain hands at approximately shoulder level
 - Avoid excessive tension or rigidity
-

PART III: BODY MOVEMENTS

The body of every round dance consists of multiple sections that are repeated between figures. These movements form the structural foundation of Irish round dancing and must be mastered before attempting complete dances.

I. DANCE UP CENTRE

Version A: Basic Formation (8 bars)

Standard execution for most round dances

Bars 1-4: Advance Movement

- **Leading couple:** Join both hands, execute side-step toward opposite couple, conclude with "two short threes"
- **Opposite couple:** Simultaneously perform side-step toward leading couple, remaining on the outside of their movement, conclude with "two short threes"

Bars 5-8: Return Movement

- **Both couples:** Execute side-step return to original positions maintaining same relative positioning, finish with "two short threes"

Important Variation: When repeating this movement in subsequent body sections, the opposite couple dances up the center on the inside while the leading couple moves on the outside.

Version B: Asymmetrical Return (8 bars)

Bars 1-4: Advance Movement

- Executed identically to Version A

Bars 5-8: Differentiated Return

- **Leading couple:** Release hand hold, individual return to original positions moving on the outside
- **Opposite couple:** Maintain hand hold, continue dancing up center formation

Version C: Partner Exchange (8 bars)

Bars 1-4: Advance and Cross

- Execute advance movement as in Version A
- **Addition:** Partners dance around each other to the right in semicircular motion, ending in reversed positions

Bars 5-8: Return and Cross

- Return movement as in Version B
- **Addition:** Execute second semicircular partner exchange, returning to original positions

II. RIGHT HANDS ACROSS

Version A: Four-Hand Formation (8 bars)

Standard execution for smaller groups

Bars 1-4: Central Cross

- **All gentlemen:** Extend right hands to center, forming star pattern
- **All ladies:** Extend right hands to center, crossing over gentlemen's hands
- **Combined movement:** Dance complete circle to the left

Bars 5-8: Partner Return

- Release central hand connections
- Take partner's hands in standard position
- Turn into original positions

Version B: Eight-Hand Formation (16 bars)

Extended sequence for larger groups

Bars 1-4: Gentlemen's Right Star

- Four gentlemen create right-hand star in center
- Dance around circle to the left

Bars 5-8: Gentlemen's Left Star

- Release right hands, form left-hand star
- Dance back to the right

Bars 9-12: Partner Integration

- When positioned opposite own partner, extend right hand to take her left
- Continue dancing around to the right

Bars 13-16: Final Turn

- Gentlemen release left hands from center
- Take partner's other hand
- Turn into original positions

Version C: Complex Sequence (16 bars)

Advanced variation with multiple partner interactions

Bars 1-4: Approach and Circle

- **Gentlemen:** Execute side-step in front of own partner toward lady on right (2 bars)
- **Continuation:** Dance around behind that lady (2 bars)

Bars 5-8: Turn

- Turn designated lady with left hand

Bars 9-12: Center Star

- Four gentlemen form right-hand star in center
- Dance half-circle around

Bars 13-16: Return Sequence

- Branch off with left hand to lady on left of original position, turn (2 bars)
- Return to own partner with right hand (2 bars)

III. SCOTCH RIGHT AND LEFT (Chain Formation)

8-bar sequence requiring precise timing and coordination

Detailed Execution:

Bar 1: Initial Cross

- Leading gentleman and opposite lady advance simultaneously
- Give right hands to each other
- Simultaneously, opposite gentleman and leading lady advance and give right hands

Bar 2: Continued Advance

- All participants continue advancing movement

Bars 3-4: Partner Left Connection

- Leading gentleman takes own partner's left hand
- Opposite gentleman takes own partner's left hand
- All release right-hand connections
- Continue advancing for two bars

Bars 5-6: Second Cross

- Give right hands as in initial cross, release left hands
- Proceed for two additional bars

Bars 7-8: Completion

- Give left hand to own partner, release right hands
- Turn into original positions

IV. RIGHT AND LEFT (Heyes Formation)

Version A: Sequential Exchange (8 bars)

Bars 1-2: Gentlemen's Exchange

- Gentlemen of "contrary couples" exchange positions
- Pass each other left arm to left arm

Bars 3-4: Ladies' Exchange

- Ladies exchange positions
- Pass each other right arm to right arm

Bars 5-6: Gentlemen's Return

- Gentlemen return to original positions

Bars 7-8: Ladies' Return

- Ladies return to original positions

Version B: Partner Coordination (8 bars)

Bars 1-2: Joint Advance

- Partners execute side-step together without hand contact
- Move toward contrary couple position

Bars 3-4: Half Turn

- Upon reaching contrary couple's location, dance around each other in half-circle
- End in reversed positions

Bars 5-6: Return Movement

- Side-step back to original place using same technique

Bars 7-8: Complete Turn

- Execute second half-circle around each other
- Return to original positions

V. HALF RIGHT AND LEFT

Simplified 4-bar version

Execute only the first half of Right and Left Version A (bars 1-4 only).

VI. HANDS ROUND

8-bar circular formation

Bars 1-4: Circle Formation

- Contrary couples join hands to form complete circle
- Dance around the ring moving to the left

Bars 5-8: Partner Turn

- Release hands of other couple
- Take own partner's both hands
- Turn to original positions

VII. LINK ARMS

8-bar interlocking sequence

Bars 1-4: Gentlemen's Link

- Gentlemen of contrary couples link right arms
- Turn together

Bars 5-8: Chain to Partners

- Release arms, branch off to contrary lady with left hand, turn (2 bars)
- Return to own partner with right hand, turn in place (2 bars)

VIII. FULL CHAIN

Variable duration based on group size

Basic Technique:

- Gentlemen and ladies give right hands to own partner
- Advancing with musical rhythm: gentlemen give left hand to lady on right, ladies give left hand to gentleman on left
- Continue alternating right and left hands until returning to original position

Timing Specifications:

- **8-hand reel:** 16 bars
- **16-hand reel:** 32 bars

IX. HALF CHAIN

Abbreviated chain sequence

Execution:

- Begin with Full Chain technique
- When meeting own partner with right hand, retain right-hand connection
- Dance together to original position in direction gentleman was moving

Timing: Same as Full Chain

X. RETURN CHAIN

Bidirectional chain movement

Execution:

- Begin with Full Chain technique
- When meeting own partner at opposite side of circle, turn completely around
- Chain back to original position in reverse directions

Timing: Same as Full Chain

XI. SKIP ACROSS

16-bar complex crossing pattern

Bars 1-2: First Cross

- Four gentlemen cross to opposite ladies
- Leading and opposite gentlemen pass first in center (right arm to right arm)
- Side gentlemen follow immediately

Bars 3-4: Turn Opposite

- Turn opposite ladies with left hands

Bars 5-6: Move Right

- Pass to lady on right of original position

Bars 7-8: Turn Right

- Turn that lady with right hand

Bars 9-10: Second Cross

- Gentlemen cross to opposite ladies as before

Bars 11-12: Turn with Left

- Turn with left hand

Bars 13-14: Return to Partner

- Pass to own partner

Bars 15-16: Final Turn

- Turn own partner with right hand

XII. BACK TO BACK

8-bar facing formation

Bars 1-2: Approach

- Gentlemen take own partners' right hands in their right
- Execute side-step toward contrary couple

Bars 3-4: Formation

- Gentlemen give left hands to contrary ladies (without releasing partner's right hand)
- **Resulting position:** Gentlemen back to back, ladies face to face
- Set in this position

Bars 5-6: Turn Contrary

- Gentlemen release own partner's right hand
- Turn off with contrary lady

Bars 7-8: Return to Partner

- Return to own partner with right hand
- Turn in original position

XIII. SET ALL ROUND

8-bar circular setting sequence

Bars 1-2: Half Turn

- Partners take right hands, turn half round

Bars 3-4: Set Position

- All gentlemen take left hands of ladies on left
- **Position:** Gentlemen facing out, ladies facing in
- Set in this formation

Bars 5-6: Branch Off

- All release right hands
- Gentlemen branch off with lady on left, turn

Bars 7-8: Return

- Return to own partner with right hand, turn in place

XIV. SWING INTO LINE

16-bar line formation sequence

Bars 1-2: Form Line

- Leading couple turn in place and face outward from circle
- Couple on right turn and swing into line behind leading couple (lady behind lady, gentleman behind gentleman)
- Couple on left swing into line behind couple on right
- Opposite couple turn into line last

Bars 3-8: Lead Around

- Partners of leading couple turn outwards from each other and go around, followed by other couples
- Arriving at end of line, turn in to each other, take hands and lead up to place
- Make half turn inwards to face own partner

Bars 9-12: Rising Step

- Dance rising-step

Bars 13-16: Turn to Place

- Partners take right hands and turn into original positions

XV. DOUBLE QUARTER CHAIN

16-bar extended chain sequence

Bars 1-2: Turn Partner

- Gentlemen take partners' right hands in their right and turn

Bars 3-4: Chain Left

- Release hands, chain with left hand to lady on left

Bars 5-6: Turn Left

- Turn her in place

Bars 7-8: Chain Back

- Chain back to own partner with right hand

Bars 9-10: Chain Right

- Continue chain to lady on right with left hand

Bars 11-12: Turn Right

- Turn her in place

Bars 13-14: Chain to Partner

- Chain back to own partner with right hand

Bars 15-16: Final Turn

- Turn in place
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PART IV: FIGURES

Figures are specialized movements performed between body sections, creating variety and complexity in round dances. They require participation of one, two, or four couples depending on the specific figure type.

I. ADVANCE AND RETIRE

16 bars - 2 couples required

Bars 1-2: Advance

- Opposite couples advance toward center
- Gentlemen take ladies' left hands in their right

Bars 3-4: Retire

- Retreat to original positions

Bars 5-8: Turn Partners

- Partners take both hands, turn in place

Bars 9-16: Circle Dance

- Two couples retain hands, dance round each other in circle and back to place

II. FIGURE OF EIGHT

Version A: Four-hands (16 bars - 1 couple)

Bars 1-4: Advance and Retire

- Gentleman takes lady's left hand in his right
- Couple advance to opposite couple and retire

Bars 5-8: Turn Partner

- Take partner's both hands and turn in place

Bars 9-10: Advance Again

- Advance as before

Bars 11-16: Figure Eight

- Release hands, lady passes between opposite couple and circles round opposite lady (2 bars)
- Passes again between opposite couple and circles round opposite gentleman, following her partner who has meanwhile passed between opposite couple and circled round gentleman (2 bars)
- Partners meet, take both hands and turn into place (2 bars)

Version B: Eight or more hands (16 bars - 2 couples)

Bars 1-8: Advance, Retire, Turn

- Opposite couples advance, retire, and turn as described in Version A

Bars 9-16: Figure Eight

- Advance again, release hands
- Lady circles round lady of couple immediately on left, follows her partner round gentleman immediately on right
- Meet and turn into place

III. HANDS ROUND FOUR

16 bars - 1 couple

Bars 1-2: Advance

- Gentleman takes lady's left hand in his right, couple advance

Bars 3-4: Lady Circles

- Release hands, lady passes between opposite couple and round opposite gentleman
- Her partner meanwhile rests in front of opposite lady

Bars 5-8: Three-Hand Ring

- Gentleman and both ladies take hands and dance round in ring
- Opposite gentleman rests in place

Bars 9-12: Four-Hand Ring

- Ladies release hands, opposite gentleman comes between them and takes their hands
- All four dance round in ring

Bars 13-16: Turn to Place

- Release hands, take partner's both hands and turn into place

Alternative: The first part is sometimes varied by gentleman circling round opposite gentleman whilst his partner circles round opposite lady.

IV. LADIES' CHAIN

Version A (16 bars - 2 couples)

Bars 1-2: Ladies Cross

- Ladies of opposite couples advance and meet with right hands in centre

Bars 3-4: Turn Opposite

- Release hands, continue to opposite gentleman, turn with left hand

Bars 5-8: Return

- Repeat and return to own partner

Bars 9-16: Circle Dance

- Take partner's both hands; couples dance round each other in circle and back to place

Version B (16 bars - 2 couples)

Bars 1-8: Ladies Chain

- Commence as in Version A

Bars 9-16: Dance Up Centre

- When ladies return to own place, leading couple take both hands and dance side-step up centre, opposite couple doing likewise on outside
- Partners dance round each other in semi-circle so as to reverse positions
- Repeat same to place, opposite couple dancing up centre

V. GENTLEMEN'S CHAIN

16 bars (8-hand), 32 bars (16-hand) - 1 couple

Execution: Gentlemen passing towards couple on left will take right hand of lady on left, link left arm with her partner and turn, pass on to next lady with right hand, link left arm with gentleman, turn, and so on till he meets his own partner, turn in place.

VI. LADIES' RIGHT HANDS IN CENTRE

Version A: Four hands (16 bars - 2 couples)

Bars 1-4: Ladies Cross

- Ladies advance, take right hands in centre, dance round to left

Bars 5-8: Gentlemen Join

- Gentlemen advance, give right hands across in front of partners
- All dance round and fall back to place

Bars 9-12: Ladies Left

- Ladies advance again, give left hands, dance round and fall back to place
- Gentlemen advance, give left hands across behind partners

Bars 13-16: All Return

- All dance round and fall back to place

Version B: Eight hands (16 bars - 4 couples)

Bars 1-8: Ladies Right

- Four ladies give right hands across in centre, dance full round to left (6 bars)
- Give both hands to own partner and turn (2 bars)

Bars 9-16: Ladies Left

- Ladies give left hands across, dance full round (6 bars)
- Give both hands to partner, turn in place (2 bars)

VII. GENTLEMEN RIGHT HANDS IN CENTRE

16 bars - 2 couples

This is the exact opposite of Ladies' Right Hands Version A, only that ladies come in behind partners in first half, and in front of partners for second half.

VIII. ADVANCE THROUGH CENTRE

16 bars - 1 couple

Bars 1-4: Advance Through

- Gentleman takes lady's left hand in his right, couple advance towards opposite couple
- Pass between and beyond them, release hands, turn, return to opposite couple, lady's right hand in gentleman's left

Bars 5-8: Exchange Partners

- Release hands, lady takes opposite gentleman's left hand in her left, her partner takes opposite lady's right hand in his right, all turn
- Couple meet again lady giving right hand to gentleman's left, continue to place

Bars 9-12: Return Through

- Release hands, turn, advance again lady's left in gentleman's right
- Lady gives right hand to opposite gentleman's right, her partner gives left hand to opposite lady's left, turn

Bars 13-16: Final Return

- Couple return to place without taking hands

IX. CENTRE MEET

16 bars - 1 couple

Bars 1-4: First Meet

- Gentleman and opposite lady advance, meet, take both hands, dance side-step (to gentleman's right)
- Finish with two short threes

Bars 5-8: Turn Partners

- Release hands, lady takes own partner's right hand in her right, gentleman takes own partner's left hand in his left, all turn in place
- Same gentleman and lady meet again in centre

Bars 9-12: Second Meet

- Take both hands and side-step as before but in opposite direction

Bars 13-16: Final Turn

- Release hands, lady gives left hand to own partner's left, gentleman right to his partner's right, turn in place

X. RIGHT HAND TO OPPOSITE LADY

16 bars - 2 couples

Bars 1-4: Advance to Opposite

- Gentlemen advance to opposite ladies, give right hand, turn
- Return to own partner, turn with left hand

Bars 5-8: Gentlemen Link

- Gentlemen link right arms in centre and turn
- Break off to opposite lady with left hand, turn

Bars 9-12: Return

- Return to own partner, turn with right hand in place

XI. HANDS ACROSS

16 bars - 1 couple

Bars 1-4: All Cross

- Gentleman takes partner's hand, couple advance to opposite couple
- All give right hands across, dance round

Bars 5-8: Turn Partners

- Release right hands, take partner's both hands and turn to place

Bars 9-12: Gentlemen to Opposite

- Gentlemen advance to opposite ladies, turn with left hand

Bars 13-16: Return to Partners

- Return to own partner, turn with right

XII. CENTRE CROSS

16 bars - 2 couples

Bars 1-4: First Cross

- Leading gentleman and opposite lady advance to centre, dance round each other back to back

Bars 5-8: All Cross

- Leading lady and opposite gentleman advance, all give right hands across in centre, dance round
- Release hands, turn partner to place with both hands

Bars 9-16: Repeat

- Same is then repeated by leading lady and opposite gentleman

XIII. CIRCLE AND CROSS

16 bars - 1 couple

Bars 1-4: Advance

- Partners take both hands, side-step towards opposite couple, end with two short threes

Bars 5-8: Circle

- Release hands, pass between opposite couple, and circle round them
- Lady round gentleman and gentleman round lady, meet again in front

Bars 9-12: All Cross

- All give right hands across, dance round to left

Bars 13-16: Turn to Place

- Release hands of opposite couple, take partner's both hands, turn to place

XIV. LOOP AND SWING

16 bars - 2 couples

Bars 1-8: First Couple Loop

- Partners of one couple take hands, advance to opposite couple
- Release hands, pass between opposite couple, lady circle round opposite gentleman and her partner round opposite lady
- Dance back to place without taking hands, partners of both couples take both hands and turn in place

Bars 9-16: Second Couple Loop

- Same is then repeated by couple opposite

XV. LINK AT BACK

16 bars - 2 couples

Bars 1-8: Link and Cross

- Partners of one couple link right arms, turn in place
- Release arms, cross to opposite couple (lady going towards opposite lady, her partner towards opposite gentleman, thus crossing each other in centre)
- Pass round on outside to back of opposite couple, link left arms, turn
- Release arms, return to place as before, passing outside of opposite couple

Bars 9-12: Turn Partners

- Partners of both couples take both hands and turn in place

XVI. ARCH ARMS

16 bars - 2 couples

Bars 1-8: First Arch

- Partners of one couple take both hands, turn half round so as to reverse positions
- Gentleman release lady's left hand from his right, raise other hands to form arch of arms
- Meanwhile opposite couple advance, opposite lady pass under arched arms of first couple
- First couple turn half round to come to original position, gentleman release lady's right hand from his left, take other hand and raise as before
- Opposite gentleman pass under arms of first couple, partners of both couples take both hands and turn into opposite positions

Bars 9-16: Second Arch

- Same movements are repeated, couples reversing their parts and returning to own place
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PART V: COMPLETE DANCE DESCRIPTIONS

16-HAND REEL

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (8 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partner, ladies to left in front, side-step back to place, gentlemen in front, ladies behind
2. **Hands Round** (8 bars): Leading and opposite couples dance with couples on left
3. **Sides** (8 bars): As before
4. **Hands Round** (8 bars): As before, but dancing with couples on right
5. **Half Chain** (variable timing)
6. **Link Arms** (8 bars): Leading and opposite couples dance with couples on left
7. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars): Leading and opposite couples dance with couples on right

Figures (selected from Part IV) → **Finish**

12-HAND REEL

Danced exactly like 16-hand reel. In section (II) of the body the leading couples dance hands round with couples on left, the other couples arranging themselves accordingly, and similarly in all succeeding sections.

8-HAND REEL ("Half-chain")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partners, ladies to left in front, end with two short threes, all continue side-step in same direction, and end with two short threes (the leading gentleman will now be by side of opposite lady, and opposite gentleman by the side of leading lady, and similarly with the partners of side couples); four gentlemen take right hand of lady next them, turn complete, all chain on to meet own partner in the position opposite that in which they started the dance, turn
2. **Set All Round** (8 bars)
3. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as first section, this time partners chain back to original positions
4. **Skip Across** (16 bars)
5. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND REEL ("Slip-sides")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Gentlemen take partner's left hands in their right, leading and opposite couple side-step to left in direction of side couples; side couples at same time side-step to right in direction of leading and opposite couples, passing behind them; all couples finish in place vacated by contrary couple, end with two short threes, all side-step back to place, side couples this time passing in front; repeat same movement with couple on other side
2. **Right Hands Across (Version B)** (16 bars)
3. **Back to Back** (8 bars)
4. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND REEL ("Half-round")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Half-chain," but partners chain back to meet each other in own, instead of opposite, position
2. **Skip Across** (16 bars)
3. **Return Chain** (variable timing)

4. **Back to Back** (8 bars)

5. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND REEL ("Cross")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Half-chain" but partners chain back to meet each other in own, instead of opposite, position
2. **Full Chain** (variable timing)
3. **Right Hands Across (Version C)** (16 bars)
4. **Back to Back** (8 bars)
5. **Right and Left (Version B)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND REEL ("High Caul Cap")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Slip-sides"
2. **Double Quarter Chain** (16 bars)
3. **Half Chain** (variable timing)
4. **Right and Left (Version A)** (16 bars): All beat palms of hands together to 1st bar of music, mark time with right foot to 2nd bar, beat palms to time to 3rd bar, mark time with left foot to 4th bar, then right and left, mark 1-2 with hands and 1-2-3 with feet to time as previously, right and left back to place

Figures → Finish

Note: Danced to the air of the same name.

8-HAND JIG ("Glenbeigh Bridge")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (8 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partner ending with "rising step," ladies side-step to left in front, ending with "shuffle," return in reverse position

2. **Skip Across** (16 bars)
3. **Swing into Line** (16 bars)
4. **Set All Round** (8 bars)
5. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND JIG ("Quarter-chain")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Slip-sides" eight-hand reel, but men substituting the "rising-step," ladies the "shuffle," for the two short threes
2. **Double Quarter Chain** (16 bars)
3. **Full Chain** (variable timing)
4. **Link Arms** (8 bars)
5. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND JIG ("Full chain")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partner, ending in "rising-step", lady to left in front, ending in "shuffle," gentlemen turn lady on right with both hands, side-step back to place, gentlemen ending with "rising-step" and ladies with "shuffle," turn own partner with both hands
2. **Full Chain** (variable timing)
3. **Skip Across** (16 bars)
4. **Link Arms** (8 bars)
5. **Right and Left (Version B)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

8-HAND JIG ("Hands across")

Position: Partners stand facing each other in line, gentlemen on one side, ladies on other.

Sequence:

1. **Follow in Line** (16 bars): Top couple take hands (lady's left in gentleman's right), allow 2 bars of music to pass, dance down between the lines, other couples follow immediately in turn, release hands at end of lines, both partners turn outwards and return to place; take hands as before and repeat; dance two last bars in place
2. **Four Hands Across** (8 bars): Leading and 2nd couple give right hands across in centre, similarly 3rd and 4th couple; dance round to left, release hands, dance in place, left hands across in centre, dance round to right, release hands, dance in place
3. **Circle Round** (8 bars): All partners take both hands, dance round next couple (leading and 2nd couples together, and 3rd and 4th couples together) in circle and back to place
4. **Wheel Round** (8 bars): Gentlemen place right hand on partner's left shoulder, 4th couple wheel and lead round to left, followed by the other 3 couples; wheel again to left at end of line, lead down to own position, fall back to place

Note: The whole is repeated at the discretion of the dancers.

8-HAND JIG ("St. Patrick's Day")

Musical Structure: The air of 'St. Patrick's Day' consists of two unequal parts, viz., 8 bars in the first part, and 6 bars in the second part. For this dance the air should be played as follows: 1st part (8 bars), 1st part (8 bars), 1st part (8 bars), 2nd part (6 bars), 1st part (8 bars), 2nd part (6 bars), then repeat again in same order to the conclusion of the dance.

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (8 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partners, ladies to left in front, gentlemen end with rising-step, ladies with shuffle, side-step back to place in same relative positions ending as before
2. **Half Right and Left** (6 bars): Partners take right hands, turn in place, gentlemen of contrary couples exchange places right arm to right, ladies follow, left arm to left
3. **Sides** (8 bars): As in first section
4. **Half Right and Left** (6 bars): As before, bringing couples back to their original positions
5. **Double Quarter Chain** (16 bars)
6. **Sides** (14 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partner, ladies side-step to left in front, ending, gentlemen with rising-step, ladies with shuffle, all continue side-step in same direction, ending as before, gentlemen take left hands of ladies on left, turn, all chain back to original positions
7. **Full Chain** (14 bars)

Figures (All figures must be danced to 16 bars) → **Finish**

6-HAND REEL ("Fairy Reel")

Position: Danced by two gentlemen and four ladies; on one side one gentleman and two ladies, one on each side of him; on the other side and facing them, the other three similarly situated.

Sequence:

1. **Advance and Retire** (8 bars): Both sides advance holding hands, retire, advance again, retire
2. **Dance in Ring** (16 bars): The three partners on either side join hands, dance round in a ring to right, dance back to left
3. **Advance Two** (16 bars): Gentlemen take left hand (in their right) of lady on right and, turning in towards each other, dance side-step towards opposite side, lady on left dancing side-step to right at same time, all dance two short threes in this position, lady and gentleman release hands, turn, take other hand, and return to place in similar manner, the other two ladies, at same time, dancing side-step back to place, all then dance as before two short threes in this position. Repeat same figure with lady on left
4. **Link Arms** (8 bars): Gentlemen link left arm with lady on left, turn, pass to lady on right with right arm, turn, return to lady on left with left arm, turn, back to lady on right, with right arm, turn
5. **Side-step to Centre** (8 bars): Ladies on right dance side-step to left in front, and ladies on left, side-step to right behind (thus exchanging positions), gentlemen at same time dance two short threes in place, gentlemen half-turn and dance side-step towards each other, passing between ladies and meeting in centre, at same time ladies dance two short threes in position, ladies side-step back to place and gentlemen dance in position as before, gentlemen side-step back to place, and ladies dance two short threes in position as before

Note: Repeated at the discretion of the dancers.

6-HAND REEL ("Duke Reel")

Position: Danced by three couples forming a circle.

Sequence:

1. **Beat Round** (8 bars): Take hands all round in circle, dance round to left, dance in place, dance back to right, dance in place
2. **Turn Ladies** (8 bars): Gentlemen take both hands of lady on left, turn, return to partner, take both her hands, turn
3. **Link Arms** (8 bars): Gentlemen link right arms with lady on left, turn twice, return to partner with left arm, turn her twice
4. **Full Chain** (8 bars): It is unusual to give hands in passing

Note: To be repeated at the discretion of the dancers.

4-HAND REEL ("Square Reel")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Gentlemen sidestep to right behind partners, ladies to left, ending with two short threes, all side-step across towards opposite couple, finishing in position vacated by them, gentlemen passing ladies on the outside, finish with two short threes, side step as before, gentlemen to right, ladies to left, ending with two short threes, return with side-step to original position, finish with two short threes. (Note: In this manner each dancer has danced along the four sides of a square)
2. **Four Sevens** (8 bars): Gentlemen side step to right behind partners, ladies to left, side-step back to place, gentlemen in front, return again, gentlemen to right behind, ladies to left, back to place as before
3. **Right Hands Across (Version A)** (8 bars)
4. **Dance Up Centre (Version A)** (8 bars)
5. **Scotch Right and Left** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

4-HAND REEL ("Fionn-Ala")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partners, ladies to left, finish with two short threes, gentlemen advance, take opposite ladies' two hands, turn in place, in this position gentlemen side-step to right behind, ladies to left in front, ending with two short threes, gentlemen advance to own partner, turn in place with both hands
2. **Dance Up Centre (Version B)** (8 bars)
3. **Scotch Right and Left** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

4-HAND REEL ("Half-turn")

Body Sections:

1. **Sides** (4 bars): Gentlemen side-step to right behind partners, ladies to left, both side-step back in same relative positions
2. **Change Sides** (8 bars): All dance across towards opposite couple, finishing up in place vacated by them, gentlemen on the outside, dance in place, return to original position, dance in place
3. **Advance to Opposite Ladies** (8 bars): Gentlemen advance to opposite ladies, turn them in place, return to own partners, turn them in place

4. **Arch** (8 bars): Partners take hands, couples advance towards each other, leading couple raising their arms and separating slightly so as to allow opposite couple to pass between them, couples thus changing places, release hands, dance in place, return to place taking hands as before, leading couple passing between opposite couple, dance in place
5. **Right Hands Across** (8 bars): Gentlemen give each other right hands in centre and dance half round to left, ladies following between gentlemen without giving hands, dance in place, gentlemen left hands back, ladies following up as before, dance in place
6. **Dance Round** (8 bars): Gentlemen take opposite ladies' both hands, couples dance round each other, all fall back to original position
7. **Link Arms** (8 bars): Gentlemen advance to opposite ladies, link right arms, turn, return to own partners, link left arm, turn
8. **Scotch Right and Left** (8 bars)

Note: Repeated at discretion of dancers.

4-HAND REEL ("High road reel")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Square" 4 hand reel
2. **Scotch Right and Left** (8 bars)
3. **Right and Left (Version A)** (8 bars)

Figures → Finish

4-HAND REEL ("Castlebridge Reel")

Opening:

1. **Lead Round** (8 bars): Gentlemen take partner's left hand in their right, couples lead round in circle to right to their own place
2. **Change Sides** (16 bars): Both couples advance, still retaining hands, to meet in centre, retire, advance as before, opposite couple release hands, leading couple pass between partners of opposite couple, and cross to the other side, partners of opposite couple also continue across to place of leading couple, both couples advance, retire, advance again and cross back to own place, the opposite couple this time passing between the partners of leading couple

Body:

1. **Lead Round** (8 bars): As in Opening
2. **Sides** (16 bars): Same as "Square" 4 hand reel

Figure One:

1. **Advance and Retire** (8 bars): Both couples advance to centre, and retire, take both hands, couples dance round each other and back to place
2. **Dance with Opposite** (16 bars): Couples advance and retire, both gentlemen cross to opposite ladies, take both hands, couples dance round each other, and back to same position, couples advance and retire, gentlemen cross back to own partner, take both hands, couples dance round and back to place

Figure Two:

1. **Hands Round Three** (16 bars): Leading lady advances to opposite couple, passes between them, turns; all three take hands, dance round in ring to right, dance back to left, release hands, leading lady falls back to place, leading gentleman advances and performs same figure with opposite couple
2. **Dance Round** (8 bars): Partners take both hands, couples dance round each other and back to place

Figure Three: The 2nd figure repeated by opposite couple.

Figure Four:

1. **Right Hands Across** (8 bars): All give right hands across in centre, dance round to right, release right hands, give left hands across, dance back to place
2. **Ladies Chain (Version A)** (16 bars)

Finish:

1. **Bend the Ring** (8 bars): Couples meet each other, all give hands round in extended ring, all advance to centre, raising the hands, thus closing the ring, retire to extend ring, advance as before, retire, and fall back to place
2. **Chain** (16 bars): All give right hand to own partner, continue with left to opposite, right to own, left to opposite, and back to place, partners take both hands, couples dance round each other, and back to place
3. **Lead Round** (8 bars): As in Opening

Note: The Body must be danced at the end of each figure.

4-HAND JIG ("Humours of Bandon")

Lead Round (16 bars)

Body Sequence:

1. **Sides** (8 bars): Gentlemen dance side-step behind, ending in rising-step; ladies to left in front, ending with shuffle, side-step back to place, gentlemen in front, ending as before

2. **Half Right and Left** (8 bars): Partners take both hands, turn, gentlemen exchange places, passing left arm to left, ladies immediately follow, passing right arm to right, partners take both hands, turn
3. **Sides** (8 bars): Same as first section
4. **Half Right and Left** (8 bars): Same as second section

Figures → Finish

Note: The above is danced to the air of the same name.

4-HAND JIG ("Hook jig")

Sequence:

1. **Set** (8 bars): Gentlemen take partners' right hands in their right, all set to time in place, partners facing each other
2. **Ladies Link Arms** (8 bars): Ladies link right arms in centre, turn, break off to own partner with left arm, turn, dance in place
3. **Gentlemen Link Arms** (8 bars): Gentlemen repeat previous movement
4. **Change Sides** (8 bars): Same as "Half-turn" Four-hand
5. **Advance to Opposite Ladies** (8 bars): Same as "Half-turn" Four-hand
6. **Arch** (8 bars): Same as "Half-turn" Four-hand
7. **Right Hands Across** (8 bars): Same as "Half-turn" Four-hand

Note: Repeated at the discretion of the dancers.

KERRY DANCE (Long Dance)

Danced to Jig-Time (Preferably Single-jig)

Position: Partners stand facing each other, ladies on one side in line, and gentlemen opposite them in line. Dance is commenced by the two top couples, all the others awaiting their turn.

Sequence (for each pair of couples):

1. **Balance** (4 bars): Gentleman of leading couple and lady of second couple face each other, and similarly the lady of leading couple and gentleman of 2nd couple, balance to time in place
2. **Right Hands Across** (4 bars): Gentleman of leading couple gives right hand to right hand of lady of 2nd couple, similarly lady of leading couple and gentleman of 2nd couple, all dance full round to left, release hands
3. **Balance** (4 bars): As in first section
4. **Left Hands Across** (4 bars): As in second section giving left hands instead of right, dance round to right

5. **Advance Down Centre** (8 bars): Leading gentleman takes partner's right hand in his left, both advance down between lines of dancers, release hands, turn, gentleman takes partner's left hand in his right, return to place, release hands
6. **Dance Round** (8 bars): Gentleman of leading couple passes round at back of gentleman of 2nd couple, his partner at the same time passing round at back of lady of 2nd couple, each meeting the other below the 2nd couple, gentlemen of leading and 2nd couples take own partners' both hands, two couples dance round each other in circle, 2nd couple finishing up at head of line, and leading couple coming to rest in place vacated by 2nd couple

Note: The leading couple and 3rd couple now dance together (2nd couple resting), the same movements being repeated, the 3rd couple finish up in place vacated by leading couple, and leading couple come to rest in place vacated by 3rd couple. Leading couple then dance with 4th couple and 2nd and 3rd couples dance together. The movement is thus continued until all are dancing, the couples changing places each time. The dance is generally concluded when the leading couple have returned to their original position.

DIVIDED DANCE (Long Dance)

Danced to Jig-Time (Preferably Single-jig)

Position: Partners stand facing each other as in the Kerry Dance.

Sequence:

1. **Cast Off and Return** (8 bars): Gentleman advances down between the two lines of dancers, his partner advancing parallel to him on the outside behind the ladies, turn and return to place
2. **Advance Down Centre** (8 bars): Gentleman takes partner's right hand in his left, both advance down between lines, return to place
3. **Cross and Circle** (8 bars): Gentleman takes partner's right hand, lady crosses to opposite side, release hands, lady passes round back of gentleman of next couple, and follows her partner round back of lady of next couple, both return to place
4. **Dance Round** (8 bars): Partners take both hands, dance round next couple, the lower couple gaining a place each time as in "Kerry Dance."

Note: The dance is commenced only by the leading couple. The above movements are repeated with one couple after another until all are dancing.

HOP-TIME DANCE (Long Dance)

Note: The hop, or slip, jig is in the somewhat peculiar 9-8 time, and requires a particular step which should be learned before attempting this dance.

Position: As in Kerry Dance.

Sequence:

1. **Right Hands Across** (4 bars): Leading and second couple give right hands across, dance round as in Kerry Dance
2. **Left Hands Across** (4 bars): Release right hands, turn, give left hands, dance back to place
3. **Circle to Right** (4 bars): All release hands, continue to dance round in same direction in a circle to own place
4. **Circle to Left** (4 bars): Turn and repeat same in circle to left and back to place
5. **Dance in Ring to Left** (4 bars): Partners of two couples join hands round in ring, dance round thus to left
6. **Dance in Ring to Right** (4 bars): Repeat same back to place in opposite direction
7. **Dance Round** (8 bars): Gentlemen take both hands of own partner, two couples dance round each other in circle, finishing up as described in Kerry Dance

Note: The above movements are continued from couple to couple until all are dancing.

LIMERICK WALLS (Long Dance)

Danced to Reel Time

Position: Each set of two couples stands facing each other as shown in diagram:

X (1) O (2) X (3) O (4) X (5) O (6)

All couples start the dance together.

Sequence:

1. **Advance and Retire** (4 bars): Gentlemen take partners' left hands in their right, advance to other couple and retire
2. **Half Right and Left** (4 bars): Gentlemen change places with each other, passing left arm to left arm, ladies then follow and change places with each other, passing right arm to right arm
3. **Dance with Opposite** (4 bars): Gentlemen advance and take opposite ladies two hands, turn and fall back to place
4. **Turn and Reverse** (4 bars): Take own partner's two hands, turn in place finishing up to face in the opposite direction, commence dance again with couple on other side

Note: In this manner a place is gained each time and the couples opposite each other are continually changing. Thus suppose six couples, represented by numbers, to be taking part, the following diagram will give their positions at commencement of dance and on its repetition a second time:

1—2, 3—4, 5—6. (Position at start, 1 dancing with 2, 3 with 4, and 5 with 6). 2, 1—4, 3—6, 5. (Position at repetition of dance, 1 dancing with 4, 3 with 6, 2 and 5 resting).

DONEGAL DANCE (Country Dance)

Danced to Reel Time

Position: Couples stand in a ring, ladies on right of their partners.

Sequence:

1. **Beat Round** (8 bars): Take hands all round in ring, dance to left, set, dance back to right, set
 2. **Turn Ladies** (8 bars): Gentlemen take both hands of ladies on left, turn them, release hands, return to own partners, take both hands, turn in place
 3. **Link Arms** (8 bars): Gentlemen link right arm with ladies on left, turn, return to own partners with left arm, turn, return to ladies on left with right arm, turn, back again to own partners with left arm, turn in place
 4. **Lead Round** (16 bars): Gentlemen place right hand on partners' left shoulder taking her left hand in his left, lead round in circle thus, commence dance again in whatever position you finish
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PART VI: SPECIALIZED DANCES

Step Dances

Step dances refer to the ordinary "step" jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs, as distinct from Round, Long, and Figure dances. While this manual does not attempt to teach the many steps of these dances, the following information covers their general performance principles.

The Jig

Musical Structure:

- **Time:** Six-eight time
- **Structure:** May be single or double
 - Double jig: Bar consists of 6 quavers in two triplets
 - Single jig: Crotchet followed by quaver replaces triplet
- **Performance:** Divided into two parts of eight bars each, each part played twice

Dance Execution:

- Dancer commences with right foot
- Dances steps for 8 bars, then doubles the step (left foot doing what right foot did, vice versa)
- After double step, dancers give hands across and dance round to right and back to left during next 16 bars
- Steps then resumed

Formation Variations:

- **Solo:** Dancer dances round in circle during 16 bars
- **With Partner:** Couple advance 4 bars, retire 4 bars, turn partner to position opposite. Between each double step set, partners give right hands across in centre, dance round to right, fall back and shuffle, then left hands across, dance round to left, fall back
- **Two Couples:** All four cross hands in centre

The Reel

Musical Structure:

- **Time:** Two-four or common time
- **Performance:** Always danced singly (parts never doubled)

Dance Execution:

- Steps danced to 8 bars
- Dancers glide round in circle to next 8 bars
- Resume steps (usually reverse of former step)

Alternative Technique:

- "Side-step" substituted for glide round
- Man dances to right behind partner and back to place in front of her
- More fatiguing but more graceful

Traditional Division:

- Often divided into two portions
- First portion: Simple, graceful movements without trebling
- Second portion: Most difficult trebling steps
- Division marked by partners giving hands across and dancing round as in jig

Regional Variation (Donegal):

- One or two men place partners on right hand, face player in line across floor
- After dancing 4 bars, men swing partners to position facing them
- Remainder consists of dancing step to one part (8 bars) and turning partners and marking time to other part

The Hornpipe

Musical Structure:

- **Time:** Two-four or common time
- **Performance:** Usually danced by one man alone or two men opposite each other, rarely by women

Dance Execution:

- Danced to double time like jig
- 16 bars devoted to steps, 16 more to promenade or glide round in circle
- Keep time with simple one-two-three movement

Two-Dancer Format:

- Assumes character of friendly contest
- Each man dances steps in turn, one resting while other is dancing

Regional Variation (Donegal):

- Usually danced with twelve steps
- Each step has appropriate "cover" or finish differing from the steps

The Hop-Jig

Musical Structure:

- **Time:** Nine-eight time (two parts of 8 bars each)
- **Performance:** Music doubled as in jig, but dance performed like reel

Dance Execution:

- 8 bars stepping followed by 8 bars promenade round
- Usually danced by one or more couples, each dancing independently

Opening Sequence:

- Couples stand facing each other
- All go round in semi-circle to right (3 bars), turn to right (1 bar)
- Dance back to original position (3 bars), turn in position to left (1 bar)
- Steps then danced during next 8 bars

Glide Technique:

- With first beat, advance toe of right foot some distance
- At next accent, place toe of left foot behind right heel
- Repeat for next two accents (advancing 20-24 inches first time, 3-4 inches second time)
- This occupies one bar

- Fourth bar devoted to turn: beat time in one long and four short steps (right, left, right, left, right)
- Return similarly danced, left foot in front

Figure Dances

Figure or "Set" dances are very numerous and usually associated with tunes that are "irregular" in structure (not consisting of two parts of eight bars each). They consist mostly of steps joined together by a "Figure" or "Set."

Complete List of Known Figure Dances:

Traditional Names:

- Rub the Bag (Cuimir a' Mháilin)
- The Stucaire (An Stucaire)
- Funny Tailor (Tailliúirín Magaidh)
- St. Patrick's Day in the Morning
- The Garden of Daisies
- The Downfall of Paris
- Buonaparte's Retreat
- The Job of Journey Work
- Rodney's Glory
- The Three Sea Captains
- The Jockey through the Fair
- The Humours of Bandon
- The Blackthorn Stick
- The Killicrankie
- Lady Cucool
- Rocky Road to Dublin
- The Girl I Left Behind Me
- Ace and Deuce of Piping
- Drops of Brandy
- Cover the Buckle
- Short Double (Co. Cork)
- Single (Co. Cork)
- Maggie Pickins (Donegal)
- My Love She's but a Lassie yet (Donegal)

Specific Dance Descriptions:

Rub the Bag: Favourite Munster Figure Dance in six-eight or jig-time. Composed of two parts with 8 bars in first part and 14 in second.

The Stucaire: Donegal five-hand reel. Name applied to odd lady or gentleman (interloper, eavesdropper). Consists of alternate swinging and stepping; variety created by the stucaire coming into dance at each turn, fresh person being left out each time.

Funny Tailor: Figure dance of "irregular" time. Written in four phrases: first of 5 bars, second of 5 bars (repeated to form third phrase), fourth is repetition of first phrase.

Ace and Deuce of Piping: Figure dance with tune in hornpipe time, consisting of two parts with unusual number of twelve bars in each part. Name implies highest degree of excellence in pipe playing.

Job of Journey Work: "Irregular" Irish dance tune with 8 bars in first part and 14 in second. Favourite Munster Figure dance, danced by one or two people.

Drops of Brandy: In Donegal, danced as "sling" (slip) jig with fixed set of steps. In Munster, tune is favourite hop-jig tune.

Single: Dance known in East Cork, generally performed to air of "Western Dame" in jig-time. Usually danced by two persons. Also known in Tipperary.

Short Double: Dance peculiar to East Cork, usually danced by two or four people.

Lady Cucool: Dance in jig time, peculiar to East Cork, usually danced by twelve people.

Rocky Road to Dublin: Dance with chain figure, requires three people. Same tune as Scottish song "Whistle o'er the lave o't."

Maggie Pickins: Well-known Donegal "set" dance with twelve steps (or fewer) danced to particular tune. Steps always the same in any particular dance.

My Love She's but a Lassie yet: Another Donegal Figure dance danced to tune of that name.

Pantomimic Dances

These dances represent occupational activities through measured and rhythmical movements. Most bear the stamp of considerable antiquity and appear to have been, with the Hey and Rinncé Fada, the earliest forms of Irish dances.

The Planting Stick (Bata na bPlándaíde)

Description: Pantomimic representation of the whole process of potato planting. In Connaught, term applied to long pointed stick used in setting potatoes. In Munster, understood to mean stick for planting cabbages.

Musical Structure: Tune is ordinary double jig in two parts with 8 bars each.

The Butchers' March (Máirseáil na mBuistéirí)

Description: Danced to tune of same name, known throughout Munster. Appears to have been performed as sort of festal or pantomimic dance by butchers of Limerick city. Reputed to be very old.

Culog Garry (Cut ó gCúlgarraidh)

Description: Danced by two people to reel time. At one part of dance, dancers close fists and make sort of attack and defence to time of music.

Historical Context: Coolgarraidh is old Irish name of village now called Mount Uniacke in parish of Killeagh, Co. Cork. Name alteration took effect in 1703, giving indication of dance's antiquity.

Droghedy's March

Description: Another pantomimic dance of historical significance.

The Stick Dance (Rinnce an Chipín)

Description: Most remarkable of pantomimic dances, confined to Co. Wexford until quite recently.

Performance (as described in 1812): "Six men or boys stood in line at reasonable distances apart, all armed with short cudgels. When music began, feet, arms, and cudgels commenced to keep time, each dancer swaying body to right and left, described upright figure of eight with cudgels. In these movements no noise was made, but at certain periods arms moved rapidly up and down, upper and lower halves of right-hand sticks striking at lower half of left-hand stick in descent of right arm, upper half in ascent, and vice versa. At proper point of march each man commenced kind of fencing with man opposite him, and clanks of cudgels coincided with beats of music and movements of feet. Then commenced involutions, evolutions, interlacings, and windings, every one striking at person with whom movement brought him face to face. Sounds of sticks supplied the bookings in reels. Steps danced were not difficult. War dance was performed to martial tunes resembling Brian Boru's March."

Historical Significance: This is present form of sword dance (sticks substituted for swords). Evidence exists for sword dance in Ireland. Modern Rinnce an Chipín is lineal, though somewhat degenerate descendant of sword dance.

The Cake-Dance

Description: Dance existing as early as 1680, peculiar to West of Ireland. Cake set upon distaff, became signal of pleasure and reward of talent; sometimes carried off by best dancer, sometimes by archest wag.

Traditional Performance: Piper always seated on ground with hole dug near him for contributions. At end of every jig, piper paid by young man who dances it, who endeavours to enhance value of gift by first bestowing it on his fair partner.

Historical Account (Vallancey, 1680): "On patron day in most parishes, and feasts of Easter and Whitsuntide, ordinary sort of people met near ale house in afternoon and danced for cake. Cake was provided at charge of ale-wife. Advanced on board on top of pike about 10 feet high; board was round and from it rose garland beset with meadow flowers if early summer, if later, garland set out with apples on pegs. Then whole of dancers began at once in large ring, man and woman danced round about the bush; dancers who held out longest won cake and apples."

Other Round and Long Dances

Four-hand Reel (Donegal)

Sometimes called Scottish reel. Danced by two men and their partners. Men stand back to back, women face their partners. During first half of tune, dancers perform figure resembling figure of 8, men falling in with opposite partners alternately, women always returning to own place. Graceful and lively reel.

Three-hand Reel (Donegal)

Danced by one man and two women. Usual to dance two reels together. Has number of figures.

Four-hand Reel (Wexford)

Danced by competitors from Gorey at Wexford Feis held at Enn