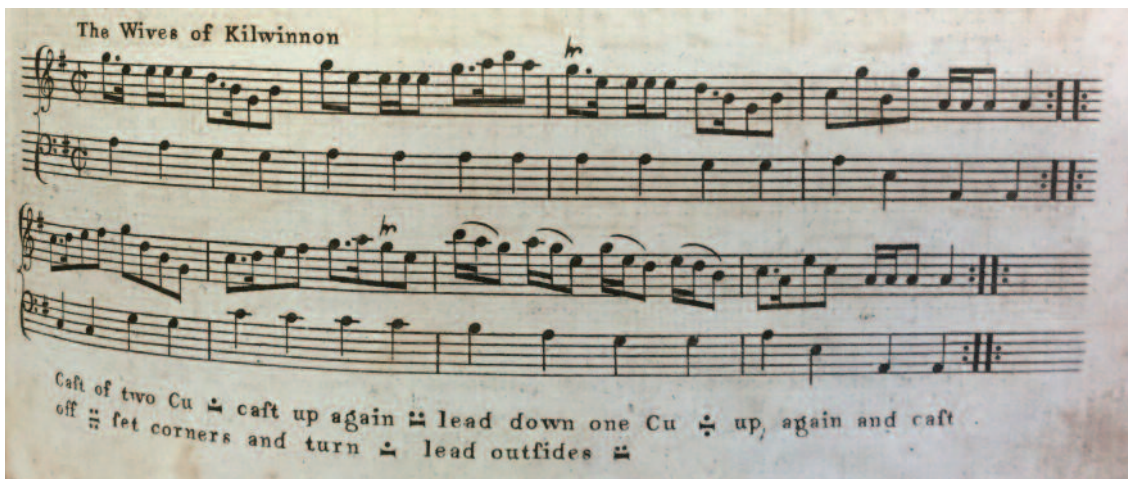


# *Six Country Dances from the 18th and 19th Centuries*



*TAS Workshop, Dumfries, May 2017*

*Reconstructed and taught  
by Jimmie Hill*

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Each dance begins with my interpretation of the instructions, followed by the original instructions and notes. One of the main reasons I chose the dances was the original tunes, some of which are well known, and some hardly known today. Any teacher or musician wishing copies of the music should email me at [macleodhill@mac.com](mailto:macleodhill@mac.com)

I am grateful to the following for allowing me access to their collections:

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*Jimmie Hill, Edinburgh*  
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# Background

## Social Dances

The RSCDS has published a relatively small number of dances from the 18th and 19th centuries. The criticism of many of them is that they are all too similar. Today we publish dances because they are 'interesting' or 'different'. The dances from the historic period were first and foremost social dances. Most appear simple, but the 18th century dancer was more concerned to show that he or she was accomplished and elegant. All teachers know that classes dance better when they are dancing familiar figures. Unfamiliar geography is often the enemy of good technique. In the 18th century a dance or ball was above all an opportunity to socialise, impress, and, with any luck, find a husband or wife!

## Country dances or Scottish country dances?

Country dances during the historic period were mostly English. The vast majority were published in London. Some, with Scottish tunes, are referred to as 'Scotch'. It is arguable whether the terms 'Scottish country dance' or 'Scottish country dancing' were in use during this period. I would claim all six dances in this collection as Scottish, but only three were published in Scotland, the others in London. English dances were danced in Scotland. Scottish dances were danced in England. Scottish tunes were in common use by English musicians. The borders are very unclear.

## Dance Instructions

Today we take dance instructions very seriously: they are written using a standard terminology; they are very explicit; many dancers frown on any deviation. This is unhistorical. In the 18th century a dance could be published one year with one set of instructions and the next year with a different set. The instructions were very cryptic with no details filled in. Some instructions contain alternative 8 bar phrases, eg *lead outsides* or *reel*. It was common for the first lady at the top of the room to decide what tune would be played and what the instructions would be. All the figures would be known to the dancers. She might put together three figures and make a 24-bar dance, four figures for a 32-bar dance, or six and make a 48-bar dance – as long as there was one progressive figure, the dance would work. The most common progressions were *down the middle and back to second place*, or *down the middle, back, and cast off to second place*. Another would be *cross, cast, and half figure of eight up round the 2s*. The *poussette* was not a progressive figure. Nor was the

*allemande*. At another dance the ladies' tickets might be numbered and the lady with no 1 would decide - and make up - the first dance, the lady with no 2 the second dance, and so on. This is why the majority of dance tunes published in the period have no instructions. The tune was the important thing. With dances where we do have instructions, it is essential to reconstruct them in the light of contemporary dance manuals. It is crazy to look at a dance of 1748 and try to work out how it went using a manual from 1848 – even worse, one from 1948.

## The Dilemma of Reconstruction

When reconstructing dances, we can take a strictly historical view and stick to the original instructions very closely or we can interpret the instructions for the modern dancer. Where I have interpreted a dance for the modern RSCDS dancer, I point this out.

## Sets

The earliest Society books recommended sets of 6 couples. After some years it was decided that 2- and 3-couple dances would be danced in 4-couple sets. In the historical period, duple minor (2-couple) and triple minor (3-couple) dances would be danced in one longwise set with couples progressing down the room.

## Dance Music

Today we are used to bands playing a number of different tunes after the so-called 'original'. They may or may not come back to the original at the end. In the historic period, it was common to play only the original tune.

## The Six Dances

The six dances I chose to teach at the Dumfries workshop range in date from 1748 to 1897. Any of them would fit happily into any modern-day dance programme. Most of the figures are identical to those we dance today. Where there are differences, I have noted them and suggested interpretations which the dancers of today will find easy. I have printed the original instructions after my interpretation of each dance. Above all, I loved all the tunes! Anyone interested in copies of the original music should contact me on [macleodhill@mac.com](mailto:macleodhill@mac.com)

*Jimmie Hill, Edinburgh, June 2017*

# 1. Blowzabella

*A Scotch country dance  
from Walsh's Caledonian Country Dances  
London 1748*

*8 x 32 bar Jig*

*Tune: Blowzabella*

- 1 – 8      1st couple set then cast off one place. They set again and cast off below 3rd couple.
- 9 – 16     1st couple dance up the middle and cast off one place, then dance down between 3rd couple and cast up into 2nd place.
- 17 – 24    All three couples turn half way, using right hands for 2 bars, then turn left hand back to sidelines for 2 bars. All three couples set then all clap 3 times.
- 25 – 32    1st man dances a reel of 3 across with the 3rd couple while 1st lady dances a reel of 3 across with 2nd couple.

Repeat from 2nd place.

## Original Instructions

*The 1st Cu. fouts it and cast off - first fouts it again and cast off below the 3d Cu  
first Cu. leads up to the top . and cast off - first Cu. leads thro the 3d Cu  
first Cu. turns hands - first Cu. turns back again - the 1st Cu. fouts it - and then clap hands  
the 1st man double figures thro the 3d Cu. - 1st Wo. at the same time double figures thro the 2nd  
Cu.*

## Notes

1. Instructions never included any indication of when to step up. There was a general rule that the 2nd couple moved up into top place as soon as 1st couple vacated it. So, I suggest 2nd couple step up on bars 3 and 4.
2. 'Footing' in 1748 involved a back-step. Modern dancers may use pas de basque.
3. Bars 17-24 originally only involved the 1st couple, but I feel the dance is more fun today if all three couples are involved. It's up to you!
4. In bars 25 - 32 to 'figure' meant a figure of eight. I can find no reference in dance manuals of the time to 'double figure'. A reel of three across makes sense in modern terms.
5. The original instructions use the term *lead*. I have replaced it with 'dance'. It is clear from contemporary dance manuals that *lead* meant 'nearer hands joined'. The current RSCDS distinction between *lead* and *dance* is historically inaccurate. Forward-facing posture is natural when nearer hands are given.
6. The title 'Blowzabella' is intriguing. The dance occurs in several collections, but Walsh describes it as 'Scotch'. There was a late 17th century English drinking song, *Blowzabella My Bouncing Doxie*. There is a modern English folk band with the same name.

## 2. *The Wives of Kilwinnon*

*A Second Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances, London, 1761,  
Printed by Robert Bremner in the Strand and Sold at his Music Shop in Edinburgh.  
Where may be had all sorts of Music and Musical Instruments, with every article in the  
Musical way, at the London price.*

*8 x 32-bar Strathspey  
Tune: The Wives of Kilwinnon*

- 1 – 8      1st couple cast off for four steps, then cast back up to place.
- 9 – 16     1st couple lead down for three steps, lead back up, then cast off to face 1st corners.
- 17 – 24    1st couple set to 1st corners then turn them, using both hands, to face 2nd corners. 1st couple set to and turn 2nd corners and finish in the centre facing the men's side, nearer hands joined.
- 25 – 32    1st couple lead outsides:  
They cross out between 2nd and 3rd men, cast into the centre, then dance out between 2nd and 3rd ladies, and finish in 2nd place own sides.

Repeat from 2nd place.

### **Original Instructions:**

*Cast of two Cu Cast up again*

*Lead down one C Up again and cast off*

*Set corners and turn*

*Lead outsides*

### **Notes**

1. It would be normal for the 2nd couple to step up on bars 9 and 10.
2. Bars 17 - 24: pas de basque was not used for turns. On bar 24 1st lady pulls back her right shoulder so that she ends on the man's right.
3. Bars 25 - 32: In *Country Dancing Made Plain and Easy*, by A.D. , Dancing-Master, London 1764, 'lead outsides' is as above. There is a separate figure called 'lead to the walls' which involves all three couples dancing away from the centre for 2 bars then back for 2 bars. In Dukes book of 1757 the diagram clearly shows the man crossing his partner in front as they dance between the two men, but not when they dance between the two ladies. Use left hands when passing the lady from right to left.
4. I am assuming that Kilwinnon is the old spelling of the Ayrshire town, Kilwinning.
5. The tune for this dance is a particularly strong strathspey.

# 3. Miss Charlotte Hope of Craigiehall

*From A Collection of Strathspey Reels and Country Dances,  
John Bowie, Perth 1789*

*8 x 32-bar Reel*

*Tune: Miss Charlotte Hope of Craigiehall*

- 1 - 8            1st couple cast off for 4 bars, then cast back up to place.
- 9 - 16           1st couple lead down the middle for three steps, back up and cast off into second place.
- 17 - 24          1st couple dance right hands across with the 3rd couple, then left hands across with the 2nd couple.
- 25 - 32          All three couples cross over using right hand and set, cross back right hand and set.

Repeat from 2nd place.

## **Original instructions**

*Cast of two Couple & up again*

*down the middle & up again & cast of*

*four hand across with the 3d Couple with right hand then hands across with the 2d Couple with left hand*

*Almand half round with regt. & back again.*

## **Note**

1. Stepping up on bars 9 and 10.

2. At this time there was no such noun as 'an allemande'. To 'allemand' was a verb. The meaning of this term has changed. At this time it is probable that to allemand involved dancers in the allemande hold: ie right shoulder to shoulder outside hand behind back ie right hand in partner's left for a half turn, then repeat back left shoulder to left. The step used is "regt" - probably the rigadaun step, a setting step which the RSCDS has not adopted. For modern dancers, I suggest the familiar cross over and set formation, for the final 8 bars.

3. The Craigiehall estate is just outside Edinburgh. The Hopes of Craigiehall were related to the Hopes of Hopetoun House, a neighbouring estate. Craigiehall House still exists. It was used as a hospital during the Second World War, and then became the headquarters of the army in Scotland. You may catch a glimpse of it when landing at Edinburgh Airport. It is only a mile or two from the runway. Miss Helen Charlotte Hope was the daughter of Charles Hope-Weir of the Craigiehall Estate. He was the second son of Charles Hope, the 1st Earl of Hopetoun.

## 4. A Medley for 1803

*Lady Mackenzie of Coul's Strathspey and the reel, Delvine House  
a favourite medley danced at the Queen's Assembly, 18th January 1803,  
in the George Street Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh*

*4 x (32 bars of Strathspey + 32 bars of Reel)*

Nathaniel Gow published Medleys every year for a number of years at the beginning of the 19th Century for his Annual Ball in the Assembly Rooms in George Street, Edinburgh. They usually consisted of a strathspey followed by a reel. His medley in 1803 begins with *Lady Mackenzie of Coul's Strathspey*, a familiar tune which today's bands play as a reel. Gow gives no dance instructions for this medley. I have put together 4 figures from contemporary sources - in the manner in which First Lady might have done. The first couple dance the dance as a strathspey then repeat it from 2nd place in quick time.

1 - 8            1st couple dance *The Snake*:

1st couple dance down between 2nd couple, then cast behind 3rd couple. 1st man dances round 3rd lady passing right shoulder while 1st lady dances round 3rd man passing left shoulder. 1st couple dance up into each other's places.

9 - 16            1st couple set, cast off, cross up and cast off to face first corners.

17 - 24            1st couple turn first corners using right hand, each other using left hand, 2nd corner using right hand, then cross over to 2nd place on own sides using left hand.

25 - 32            1st man dances right hands across with 3rd couple while 1st lady dances right hands across with 2nd couple. 1st man dances left hands across with 2nd couple while 1st lady dances left hands across with 3rd couple.

Repeat from 2nd place as a reel.

### **Note**

1. *The Snake* is a figure described by Thomas Wilson in his *Plan and Construction of a Country Dance* in his *Treasures of Terpsichore*.
2. 2nd couple would step up on bars 11 and 12.
3. *The Snake* needs careful timing if dancers are to end up in each other's places in a relaxed manner.
4. At this time dancers would finish bar 24 back on their own sides before beginning the next figure.

# 5. Lord Cathcart's Welcome to Scotland

*Button and Whitaker's no 11  
Selection of Dances, Reels and Waltzes  
London, 1809*

*A favourite Country Dance taken (and altered) from Haydn's Celebrated Military Symphony by Nathaniel Gow, 1808. Printed and Sold by Gow and Shepherd at their Music Shop No 16 Princes Street, Edinburgh.*

*8 x 32-bar Jig  
Tune: Lord Cathcart's Welcome Home*

- 1-8        1st and 2nd couples set twice, then dance rights and lefts half way.
- 9 – 16     1st and 2nd couples set twice, then dance rights and lefts half way.
- 17 – 24    1st couple dance down the middle for three steps, back up, then cast off to face 1st corners.
- 25 – 32    1st couple turn 1st corners using right hand, each other using left hand, 2nd corners, using right hand, then cross over to own sides using left hands.

Repeat from 2nd place.

## Original Instructions

*Half right and left,  
back again,  
down the mid:up again,  
& Swing corners*

## Note

1. The tune for this dance is used by modern Scottish bands as an alternative, but it is the original tune for this unpublished dance.
2. This dance is also known as Lord Cathcart's Welcome Home.
3. The music is 32 bars. Half rights and lefts only takes four bars, so I have added four bars of setting to make up the 8-bar phrase.
4. William Cathcart came from an eminent Scottish family. His father was the Ambassador to St Petersburg. William studied law at Glasgow University before going into the army. He distinguished himself during the American War of Independence and during the Napoleonic Wars. He commanded the British at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1807. On his return in 1814 he was made Viscount Cathcart of Cathcart and Baron Greenock of Greenock. The dance and tune celebrate his return to Scotland as Commander of the army in Scotland. His eldest son served as Governor General of Canada in 1846.



## 6. *The Aladdin Quadrille*

*David Anderson's Ball-room and Solo Dance Guide*  
*Dundee 1897*

*2-4 or 6-8 time plus waltz*  
*4 x (48 jig/reel + 16 waltz)*

8-bar intro: All couples honour partners and corners.  
Or chord.

- 1 – 8            All four couples in promenade hold dance round the set anti-clockwise back to original places.
- 9 – 16           All four ladies advance and retire.  
All four men advance and retire.
- 17 – 24          All set twice to partners and turn using both hands.
- 25 – 32          Head couples advance and retire then dance rights and lefts half way.
- 33 – 40          Side couples advance and retire then rights and lefts half way.
- 41 – 48          All dance a grand chain half-way (2 bars to each hand) to bring everyone back to original places.
- 49 – 64          Final 16 bars in waltz time: All take partner in ballroom hold and waltz round to places. (4 bars to each quarter of the square.)

The dance is repeated with side couples leading, then head couples, then side couples.

### **Notes**

1. This dance is from the same small book as *The New Scotia Quadrille, RSCDS Book 34*.
2. The music according to David Anderson can be jig or reel time. The dance is more interesting if danced first in jig time, then reel time, then jig time, then reel time.
3. Anderson describes the final 16 bars as "waltz poussette full round to places".
4. The story of Aladdin comes from the Arabian Nights. It has been a subject for pantomines since Victorian times.
5. At the workshop Luke Brady played bars 49 - 64 in waltz time, greatly enjoyed by all!
6. At the end of Anderson's book, he lists tunes which would be suitable for all his dances. There is no hint of any single tune being associated with any one dance.