BONNIE BREIST KNOTS
(Scotland)

(not taught)

SOURCE: This dance was collected in Roxburghshire, Scotland, by Ion C.B. Jamieson, one of the early founders of the Scottish Country Dance Society. It was originally published outside of the Society in the Border Dance Book of Scottish Country Dances (which the Society now sells) containing many traditional dances collected by Jamieson in making his rounds as factor to the Duke of Hamilton.

There is also an RSCDS version of this dance published in their Book 10 (1935) as "The Lady's Breist Knot" and set to the same tune. The Society's version of dance bears no other relationship as its figures are taken from an English version by Walsh. The original tune seems to have been a reel and not in slow time. As the Jamieson tune was collected as a schottische, the Society edited this reel as a Strathspey (Strathspeys were danced in the borders as schottisches prior to the influence of the RSCDS as they are in country districts of Scotland to this day).

The "breist (breast) knot," a bow attached to the low neck of a lady's gown was a wedding favor. A token version of this is still found at the breast bone point of some women's clothing to this day, a custom dating back to the 18th century. The Scottish National Dance Company published (1973) a lady's solo step dance which outlines the tying of this knot in its first figure.

While the opportunities for the symbolism of this knot are unlimited, the published words seem to be innocuous. If one compares the rhythm of the words to the RSCDS and Border Book versions, one will find that the "schottische" style in the latter version seems to fit the meter of the words: "Hey the bonnie, how the bonnie. Hey the bonnie breist-knots. Tight & bonnie were they a' When they got on their breist-knots." Indicating what probably began as a reel had definitely evolved into a schottische by 1853, and a strathspey by the 1930s.

PRONUNCIATION: the BAH-nee BDEEST knots

MUSIC: Ready ... And!, TAC003 (TACSound); Strathspey (8x32 bars)

FORMATION: Longways set for 4 cpls (with 3 cpls dancing ea repeat). Ea cpl performs the dance 2 times, ending at the bottom with a new top cpl (after a wait of 1 turn) starting every 2nd repetition

STYLE: Strathspey (change of step hop) is used throughout unless a setting step is indicated. Step R fwd, close L to R heel, step R, hop R while beginning to bring L through. Repeat, starting with L ft

Common Schottische is used when setting is indicated in which case 2 steps are required (bars 1&2, 5&6, 13&14). Step R to R, close L behind R heel, step R to R, hop R as L is brought up behind R leg (toe pointing down); repeat to L

Corners, in a longways set are calculated as if 1st cpl were in 2nd cpl's place. One's 1st corners are across the set to one's R (e.g. 3rd W for 1st M and 2nd M for 1st W) and 2nd corners to one's L (e.g. 2nd W for 1st M and 3rd M for 1st W). N.B. This is not true for a square (quadrille) formation.

Stepping Up takes 2 bars and 4 counts.
1) The dancer steps diag into the set with the ft of the direction indicated - up (M L & W R)
2) The dancer crosses 1 ft (M R & W L) over the other in same direction

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3) The dancers step back into the line of the set (M L & W R)
4) The feet are closed together (M R & W L)

IGURES: Hands Round: Join hands in a circle & dance 4 strathspey steps to R

Cast: turn the long way in 1 direction to go in the other, e.g., turn 270° instead of 90°

Set to & turn corners begins with 1st cpl facing 1st crnrs, setting to them & turning them with both hands ending to face 2nd crnr to repeat

Reel of Three: This is a fig of 8 danced by 3 persons. The 1st rule is that the middle person is in charge of setting the directions of the 2 on the ends of the 8. The 2nd rule is that the 1st person passed by the middle person has the right of way in the cntr of the 8. In this reel, which is on the sides, because the 1st cpl dance in & to the L, the 2nd & 3rd cpls dance out & twd ea other to begin.

METER:	PATTERN
Meas.	
	Introduction: There is a 1 bar chord to begin, during which all 4 cpls bow or curtsey to their ptnr across the set.
	FIGURE I. (Set and Turn)
1- 2	1st M and 2nd W set to ea other
3- 4	1st M and 2nd W turn once round, R hand
5- 8	1st W wnd M repeat (bars 1-4)
	FIGURE II. (Circle, Set, and Cast)
9-12	1st and 2nd cpls circle 4 hands round to the L
13-14	1st cpl set to ea other
15-16	1st cpl cast off 1 place, crossing to face their 1st crnrs (2nd cpl stepping up on bars 15 & 16)
	FIGURE III. (Set to and Turn Corners)
17-18	1st cpl set to 1st crnrs
19-20	1st cpl turn 1st cornrs
21-24	1st cpl repeat with 2nd crnrs
	FIGURE IV. (Reels of Three)
25-30	1st cpl with crnrs dance a (6 bar) reel of 3 beginning & and to the L (crnrs dance out & twds ea other with 1st crnr passing through the middle of the 8 first)
321-32	1st cpl cross to their own sides, giving R hand in passing
	1st cpl, having moved 1 place down, repeats the dance with 3rd & 4th cpls
	CUES: 1M2W set, turn; 1W2M repeat 12 circle 4; 1s set, cast 1s set & turn corners 1 crnrs reel of 3