

Presented by Elinor Mackenzie Vandegrift

CLUTHA
Scotland

The Clutha is a reel time square dance dated about 1890, but upon examination, its figures might well have come from many sources as far back as 1822. The first is similar to many in early Nineteenth Century Quadrilles. Figures two to four are closely related to "le Pantalon," and "Circassin Circle" (RSCDS Book 1, 1924). Figures five and six are an interpretation of the last sixteen bars of "la Finale" from the quadrille, "The Carbineers."*

As there is some question as to whether the name, "Clutha" refers to the Clyde or a Clyde steamer, two references are in order. The source used by the R.S.C.D.S. is: Strathclyde Regional Archives (Glasgow). Thomas Murphy's Aide Memoire (MS.), cl890. As this manuscript does not contain the score attached to this dance "The Bow-Legged Bosun," by J. M. Hunter, there are no lyrics which might indicate an attribution to a Clyde steamer.

From 1884 until 1903, there existed a passenger steamer service on the Clyde in Scotland. Although it carried 2-1/2 million passengers annually at its peak, by the early Twentieth Century this service was made redundant by more modern forms of land based transportation. All twelve of these steamers were named "Clutha".

Cluth is related to the Gaelic name for the River Clyde which gave it's name (or that of it's goddess - the washer or cleanser) meaning "drain" (as in cloaca-Latin for sewer or guitear-Gaelic for gutter) to the ancient north British kingdom of Strathclyde with it's Welsh speaking capital at Dumbarton (fortress of the Britons) then known as "alclut" (Rock of the Clyde). The last king of an independant Strathclyde was that Duncan (I) who later became the first king of a united (mainland) Scotland (Pict-land, Scotland or Argyll, Lothia, and Cumbria or Strathclyde) from 1034 to 1040 (when he was killed by MacBeth).

With local government reform in the 1970's, the capitals of two of these kingdoms were used as the basis of the new regions of Lothian (Edinburgh a Saxon capitol) and Strathclyde (Glasgow). The translation "drain" is quite appropriate as the Clyde (river, estuary, and firth) literally drains an area of the west within which over half of the population of Scotland now lives.

PRONUNCIATION: CLOO-tha or, according to Duncan MacLeod, CLOO'-a)**

MUSIC: Diamond Jubilee 1923-1983. Royal Scottish Country Dance Music for Eight Scottish Country Dances, Book 31. Rob Gordon and His Band (RSCDS12). R.S.C.D.S., 12 Coats Crescent, Edinburgh EH3-7AF (Scotland), 1983. Side 1, Band 2 - 3'29" or mml11 (a bit slow as the RSCDS standard would be 3'18" or mml16).

Continued..

FORMATION: Dancers are arranged in a square (quadrille) set and numbered CW with #1 at the top (back to the music), #2 to the L facing #4 to the R, and #3 at the bottom (facing the music). The dance is performed four times and is led by ladies #1 through #4 with their opp M (3, 4, 1, 2).

STEPS: Skip change of step is used throughout unless a setting step is indicated. Hop on L as R extends fwd, step R fwd, close L to R heel, step R fwd. (1 skip change per bar.)

Pas de basque (PDB) is used when setting is indicated, in which case two steps are required (bars 9-10, 13-14, 35-36). Step R with R, close L to R instep, step R in place as L is extended diag L fwd. (1 PDB per bar.)

A balance is a specific form of setting when the dancers are facing in alternate directions with hands joined either in a line of four (bars 9-10; 13-16) or in a circle with the M facing out (bars 35-36). In the former case it is quite common to combine a balance with a turn of partner or opp person. In it's French form, "balancez" often means "set."

PATTERNS:

*****Rights-and-lefts as used by the RSCDS, should be interpreted as a chain of four. This present usage is a modern variant which combines two different but related historical figures: the chain of four (R and L hands), and a circular reel (hey) of four (passing R and L shldr).

*****Ladies Chain, in this dance, begin with the M facing out and the W in. As the W cross (two steps) to their opp place (taking R hands in passing), and turn their opp 1/2 (with L hand), the M dance twice round a circle (CCW--two bars to each 1/2 circle), on bars 3-4 and 7-8 they give L hands to the W to make 1/2 a turn.

METER: 2/4 (Reel)

PATTERN

Meas (Bars)

INTRODUCTION:

DANCE:

- 1-2 1st W & 3rd M turn each other by the R (two steps).
- 3-6 They then dance round ptr passing R shldr. See Fig. 1.
- 7-8 They turn each other with the R hand (two steps), to give L hand to ptr (while in ctr retain R hand with each other).

- 9-10 1st & 3rd cpls balance (set 2 PDB) in a line of four.
- 11-12 1st & 3rd cpls turn ptr, 1/2 with the L hand to form a new line of four with 1st M & 3rd W giving R hands to each other (retaining L hand with ptr).
- 13-16 Repeat bars 9-12 ending back in orig pos (facing across the set with all W on M's R).
- 17-24 1st & 3rd cpls dance R's and L's (a chain of four) two bars to each hand, ending with the M facing out of the set, W facing in.*****
- 25-32 1st & 3rd cpls dance a ladies chain, ending with each person in the set facing a corner.*****
- 33-34 All turn corner once round (two steps) with the R hand. End with L hands joined with ptr, R with corner.
- 35-36 All balance (two PDB) in a circle of eight.
- 37-40 All turn ptr 3/4 round with the L hand to face CCW round the set in promenade pos (hands joined R in R, L in L, R over L). See Fig. 3.
- 41-48 All promenade once round the set CCW to place.

Repeat dance 3 times, beginning with 2nd W & 4th M, 3rd W & 1st M, 4th W & 2nd M (when persons 2 and 4 are indicated, it is understood that cpls 2 & 4 are to be substituted for 1 & 3).

CUES: 1W 3M turn R cast R round ptr turn R//
 1,3 balance turn 1/2 R / rpt // 1,3 rights & lefts //
 1,3 ladies chain // all with corners turn R balance //
 turn ptrs 3/4 L // all promenade //

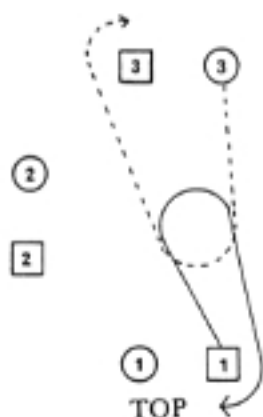


FIG. 1

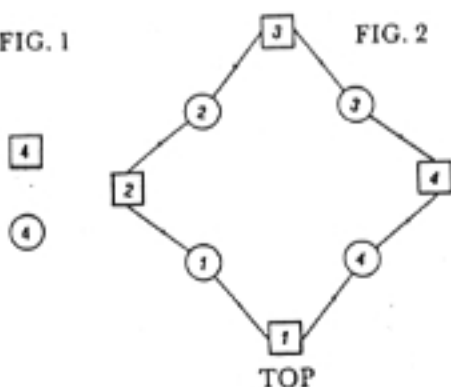


FIG. 2

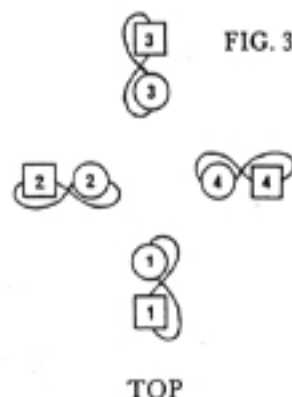


FIG. 3

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* Chivers, G. M. S. The Modern Dancing Master. London 1822.

**Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Pub. Diamond Jubilee 1923-1983: The Scottish Country Dance Book 31. London: Paterson's Publications, Ltd., 1983. Notes taken in Fully Certified Class at the 1983 Summer School in St. Andrews (Scotland) when the dance was officially presented to the members of the Society.

***Watson, William J. The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland: Shannon (Irish University Press, 1973. Dickinson, W. Croft. Scotland: From the Earliest Times to 1603, 3ed. (Duncan, Archibald A.M.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Dance notes by Richard Goss