

***tasc** An Introduction to Folk Dancing (with a few tunes and songs)*

Traditional Arts Support in the Community (TASC) is a Mid Wales charity that encourages people to play, sing and dance traditional music, or folk music as it is usually called.

This is music that people made up to amuse themselves on holidays or after work, and sometimes to help the time pass. If you have a song to sing, even the most boring job can be enjoyable. Sometimes songs can make the work easier, as with sea shanties where you pull on a rope to raise the anchor of a ship; by singing a song you can all pull together at the right time.

This booklet has some of the tunes and dances we put together for a project at Montgomery Church in Wales School in 2015, and other things that you might find interesting.

The first tune is a Welsh song, though the tune is also used for other songs such as the *Grand Old Duke of York*.

Jac y Do

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1. Mi welais Jac y Do yn eistedd ar ben to
Het wen ar ei ben a dwy goes bren
Ho ho ho ho ho ho.
2. Mi welais iar fach yr ha yn mynd i werthu ffa
Fe'i gwerthodd yn rhes ond collodd y pres
Ha ha ha ha ha ha
3. Hen fwnci bach o Llyn a aeth i dynnu'i lun
Edrychodd yn syn a chwarddodd fel hyn
Hi hi hi hi hi hi.
4. Hen geiliog dandi do a redodd i'r cwt glo
Mi welodd gi mawr a gwaeddodd fel cawr
Go go go go go go.
5. Daeth mochyn bach i'r dre i chwilio am bwys o de
Fe welodd ful bach yn rhowlio mewn sach
He he he he he he

Jac y Do is also the name of an easy Welsh folk dance. This is our version:

Jac y Do



Stand in two equal lines facing each other:

The person facing you is your partner.
The top of the room is where the music is, and the couple nearest the music are the **TOP COUPLE**

- A1 (count 1-4) Hold hands along the lines (NOT with your partner) and dance towards each other.
(count 1-4) Then all dance backwards to where you started
(count 1-4) Hold hands and dance towards each other again but when you meet the opposite line loose hands and dance straight past them.
(count 1-4) Carry on dancing forward and then turn to face your partner

A2 Do the same again so you get back to where started. Let go hands.

B1 **TOP COUPLE** (nearest the music) hold hands and make two sideways steps away from the music and then two sideways steps back. Then loose hands, separate and dance down the outside of the other dancers until you get to the bottom. Everyone follow in two lines.

B2 When the **TOP COUPLE** get to the bottom of the set they make an arch and the two lines following them dance underneath the arch. You should each meet your partner and hold hands with them and dance back into your starting lines. There will now be a new **TOP COUPLE** and the dance will start all over again.

The whole dance should be completed while the music is played through twice. If the dancers are finding it difficult to fit in two sideways steps they can be missed out and go straight to the separating out and making an arch which is called **CASTING** - though it is sometimes called 'Peeling the Banana' because that's what it looks like!



Quick Step in the Battle of Prague

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adapted from the from John Clare Manuscripts

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We don't really know where most of the folk tunes and songs come from. People passed them on or heard someone else playing them and remembered them as well as they could. Travelling people, who used to be called Gypsies, helped to spread them around Britain as they went from place to place.

More than a hundred and fifty years ago, a poet called John Clare wrote a lot of songs down that he had heard from the people he met. The tune above was written down by him. The tune is also called simply *The Battle of Prague* or sometimes *The Turks March*.

We do know that this piece was written by a man called Franz Kotzwara and was very popular in its day. Jane Austen had a copy of the piano version.

John Clare

John Clare was born in Northamptonshire in the village of Helpston. In later life he suffered from mental illness and died in an asylum.

"I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smiled or wept;
There to abide with my Creator, GOD,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below--above the vaulted sky."

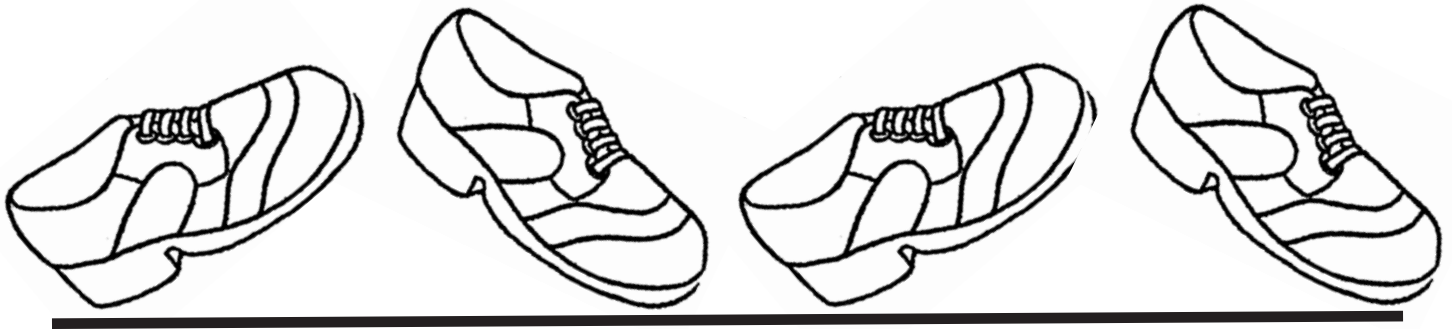


The Pat-a-Cake Polka

Stand in two equal lines facing each other:

The person facing you is your partner. The top of the room is where the music is, and the couple nearest the music are the **TOP COUPLE**

A PART (count 1-4) Hold hands with your partner (across the set) and, pointing your foot towards the music, dance heel and toe, heel and toe then gallop sideways towards the music. The steps are like this:



and the rhythm is - (heel and toe) (heel-and toe) galop, galop galop, galop
(1 & 2) (3 & 4) (5 & 6) (7 & 8)

Then turn towards the bottom of the room and do the same.:
Heel & Toe, Heel & Toe, Galop, Galop, Galop, Galop.

B PART

Let go hands but still facing partner clap hands with each other in time to the music. It goes like this:

RIGHT, RIGHT, RIGHT
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT
BOTH HANDS (Three Times)
YOUR OWN KNEES (Three Times)

Then the **TOP COUPLE** take hands in a **CROSS-HAND HOLD** and swing quickly but gently to the bottom of the set (between the lines).

They stay at the bottom so there is now a new **TOP COUPLE** to lead the dance.

The picture shows you how to do a **CROSS HAND HOLD**.



Folk Instruments

You can play folk music on any instrument. Many folk musicians were often poor and couldn't always afford expensive instruments.

This is a violin - though folk players call it a Fiddle (in Welsh Ffidil).

John Clare played fiddle and took it with him wherever he went so that he could learn tunes from people he met.

One of the cheapest instruments is a Tin Whistle.

It used to be called a Penny Whistle - but they cost more than that today - though you should be able to buy a good quality one for around £5.



Jenny Lind

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Jenny Lind
Johanna Maria Lind (6 October 1820 - 2 November 1887), better known as Jenny Lind, was a famous Swedish opera singer, often known as the "Swedish Nightingale". She was one of the first truly international superstars.



Two More (Fairly Easy) Polkas

Polka (or Polca in Welsh) is the name of a dance from Eastern Europe which is danced with a hop on the fourth beat. One-two-three hop, and then you start again on your other foot.

The name Polka is often given to a tune which fits the dance. These are two fairly simple Polkas.

Pwt ar y Bys

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Musical score for 'Pwt ar y Bys' in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Above the staves, the following chords are indicated: D, G, D, A7, D, G, D, A7, D, G, D, A7, D, G, D, A7, D. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of the first and third staves.

Maggie in the Wood

Montgomery
School Project

16 bar adapted version - see TASC website for full version

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Musical score for 'Maggie in the Wood' in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Above the staves, the following chords are indicated: G, Em, G, D, G, Em, G, D, G, C, D, G, D, G, Em, G, D, G. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of the first and third staves.

Even Easier

These versions are simpler, as they miss out some of the 'twiddles' or ornaments. You can put those back in when you are confident - or even make up your own!

Pwt ar y Bys

Montgomery
School Project
easier version

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Musical score for 'Pwt ar y Bys' in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. Chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, D, A7. The second staff ends with a double bar line. The third staff begins with a repeat sign. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line. The chords for the second and fourth staves are D, G, D, A7, D.

Maggie in the Wood

Montgomery
School Project
easier version

16 bar adapted version - see TASC website for full version

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Musical score for 'Maggie in the Wood' in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes: G, Em, G, D on the first staff; G, Em, G, D, G on the second staff; C, D, G, D on the third staff; and G, Em, G, D, G on the fourth staff. The score ends with a double bar line.

Making a Song and Dance About It

Sometimes songs are written to dance tunes. Or perhaps people dance to song tunes. This song was first published in the late seventeenth century, but there was an even earlier version. The notes to the song said it should be sung to a tune called Lavender's Green!

There are said to be over 30 verses to the song - but it's more usual to just sing the ones below.

Lavender's Blue

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English traditional

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*Lavender's blue, dilly, dilly, lavender's green
When I am king, dilly, dilly, You shall be queen
Who told you so, dilly, dilly, who told you so?
'Twas my own heart, dilly, dilly, that told me so*

*Call up your men, dilly, dilly, set them to work
Some to the plough, dilly, dilly, some to the fork
Some to make hay, dilly, dilly, some to cut corn
While you and I, dilly, dilly, keep ourselves warm*

*Lavender's green, dilly, dilly, Lavender's blue
If you love me, dilly, dilly, I will love you
Let the birds sing, dilly, dilly, And the lambs play
We shall be safe, dilly, dilly, out of harm's way*

*I love to dance, dilly, dilly, I love to sing
When I am queen, dilly, dilly, You'll be my king
Who told me so, dilly, dilly, Who told me so?
I told myself, dilly, dilly, I told me so .*



Waltzing

This is a tune you can waltz to. Waltzes were originally invented by the peasants of Austria and Bavaria.

Dancing masters used to go from place to place teaching people how to dance. They didn't like the waltz because they thought it was too easy to learn!

You can do a very simple waltz like this. Hold your partner in a ballroom hold as in the picture. Then step onto your left foot, your right foot and then your left foot again, counting three. Your partner starts on their right foot.

Then you dance the next bit starting on your right foot - right foot left foot, right foot. Your partner now starts on their left.

Then it's back to the left foot, right foot left foot. And just keep slowly turning while you dance.



New Songs for Old

Not all folk songs are old. New ones are still being written to the old tunes. One of the best known in the last fifty years is this song written by Sydney Carter in 1967. The tune is an American Shaker song *Gift to be Simple*. Shakers were well known for their love of beauty, making both beautiful but simple furniture and songs, and believed in *Hands to Work, Heart to God*.



Lord of the Dance

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*I danced in the morning when the world was begun
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem I had my birth*

*Chorus: Dance, then, wherever you may be
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he*

*I danced for the scribe and the pharisee
But they would not dance, and they wouldn't follow me
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John
They came with me and the dance went on*

*I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame
The holy people said it was a shame
They whipped and they stripped, and they hung me
on high
And they left me there on a cross to die*

*I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back
They buried my body, and they thought I'd gone
But I am the dance, and I still go on*

*They cut me down and I leapt up high
I am the life that'll never, never die
I'll live in you if you'll live in me
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he*

Another Dance to Try

This dance comes from a booklet produced by the English Folk Dance & Song Society as part of a project called *The Full English*. It has a movement in it called *Threading the Needle* which is fun to do.

Witches Reel

Stand in two equal lines facing each other, as we did before (this is called a LONGWAYS SET). The exact number doesn't matter but 4 or 5 in each line is about right.

The person facing you is your partner. The top of the room is where the music is, and the couple nearest the music are the TOP COUPLE

A1 Top couple gallop down the room for 8 steps and then gallop back.

A2 Top couple then cast out (as we did for JACY DO) and all follow. TOP COUPLE makes an arch at the bottom and everyone else dances up through the arch.

B1 Join hands along lines and the TOP COUPLE (now at bottom) also join hands across the set to make a horseshoe shape. The Top Two on the left (looking towards the music) lift their arms to make an arch, and the top person on the right leads EVERYONE through (don't loose hands). The last person will have to make a twizzle under his or her own arm at the finish.

B2 Then the Top Two on the right make an arch and the top person on the left leads everyone through.

The dance starts again with a new top couple.

The whole dance should be completed while the music is played through once.

A good tune to dance this to is THREE AROUND THREE but any tune of the same length and rhythm will do. Two other reels that would work are shown opposite, arranged by Rob Harbron. Experiment with dancing to different tunes and see which you like best.

NOTE: Going under the arch and bringing all the other dancers with you is the *Thread the Needle* part of the dance.



Witches

We don't hear much about witches until about 400 years ago. Most people who were accused of being witches were probably just different from the people around them.

This was at a time when women were becoming more outspoken generally, and everyone was arguing about religion, and accusing each other of making friends with the devil.

King James I, who lived at the same time as Shakespeare, wrote a book about witchcraft and witches, but later in life seemed to change his mind and doubted whether they existed.

Three Around Three

Chords: G, D7, G, C, G D7, G

Chords: G, D7, G, C, G D7, G

Chords: G, G, C, G, D7

Chords: G, G, C, D7, G

Dance tune set - Reels from The Full English digital archive

TWIN SISTERS

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron

Chords: G, D, G, C, G, C, G, D, G, D

Chords: G, C, G, Am, Em, D, G, G, D, C, G

Chords: C, G, D, G, D, C, G

Chords: Am, Em, D, G, D, Change...

THE MORPETH RANT

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron

Chords: D, G, A, D, G, A, D

Chords: G, A, D, G, A, D, D

Chords: G, Em, A, D, D

Chords: Em, G, A, D, Change...

Going Round in Circles

The dances so far have all been danced in two lines. This one is danced in a big circle. We don't know why it is called a Circassian Circle, but we think it's meant to sound like it comes from somewhere mysterious and foreign. Circassia is between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and used to be within the Russian Empire, which few people from Britain would have visited.

The dance was made up in England in the early 19th century, but there *are* fairly similar circle dances in Circassia.

This one is popular because it gets people to dance with different partners, though you can dance it with the same partner each time.

Circassian Circle

Any number of couples can dance this. The bigger the circle the more fun it is.

Whoever is dancing first (TWOS) start on the right of those dancing second (ONES). It might help to make sure everyone knows whether they are a 1 or a 2 (sometimes bibs or sashes can help).

A PART

Start by EVERYONE holding hands round the circle. All go into the centre together (count 1&2&3&4) Then back out again, still holding hands.

Do it all again.

Loose hands.

Then all the TWOS go into the middle and clap hands (1&2&3&4 - clap on the 4) then back out.

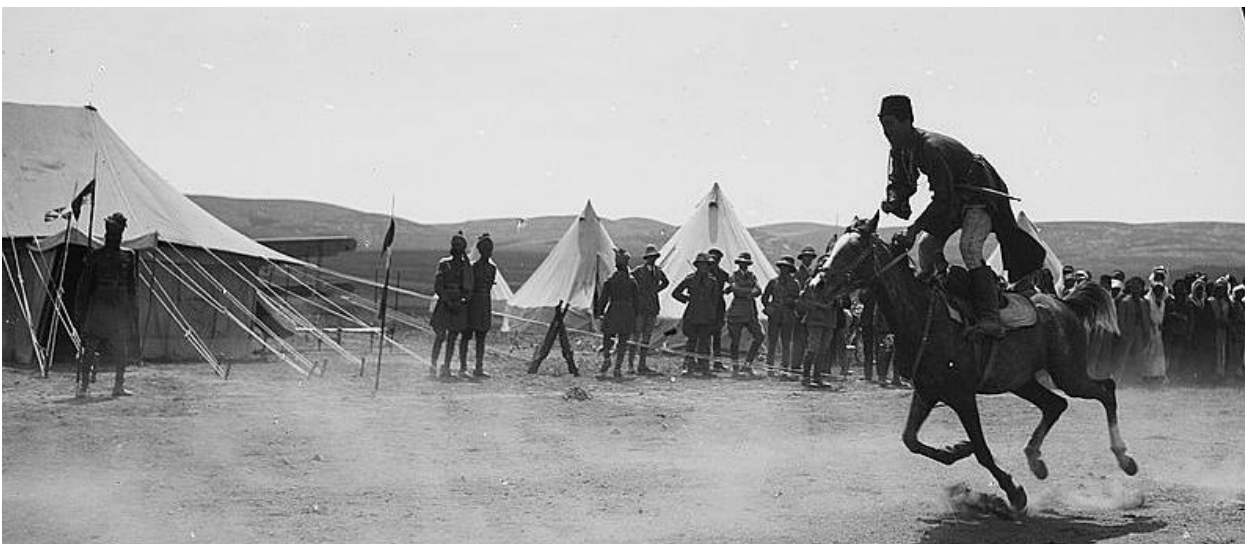
Then all the ONES do the same but they then turn and take a cross-hand hold with whoever had been standing on their left (so best to look before you set off!)

B PART

Swing your partner (keep hold and swing round in a circle but NOT too fast - this is dancing not wrestling)

Stop swinging, but keep hold of your partner and walk side by side (we call it PROMENADE) in a circle following the couple in front. The TWOS should be on the INSIDE.

The two parts should be danced to the A part and B part of the tune.



Rakes of Kildare

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traditional Irish Jig

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Schools Project



County Kildare in Ireland has been associated with horse-racing for hundreds of years. The Curragh in Kildare is Ireland's most famous racecourse and is where the Irish Derby is run.

A rake was a young man who would gamble and drink and generally behave wildly. Imagine the sounds of the horses' hooves when you hear this jig, galloping over the ground to loud shouting and cheering!



We've left Lazy Robin till last!

Because tunes and dancing teachers travelled from place to place we don't always know whether they're English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh. But this one is definitely Welsh.

It is danced in a formation called Sicilian Circle (see picture). We don't think this from Sicily, and is probably called a foreign name just because it was different (like **Circassian Circle**) from the more usual dancing in lines.

The **Sicilian Circle** is couple facing another couple and so on round the room. You will have your back to one couple and be facing another. This is best with at least eight couples but you could try it with four if that's all you have. Couples going clockwise round the room are **NUMBER ONE COUPLES** those facing the other way are **NUMBER TWO COUPLES**.



Robin Ddiog

A RIGHT HAND STAR then LEFT HAND STAR (see picture opposite)

B ONES make an arch and dance forward taking the arch over TWOs heads. Don't Turn Around . TWOs make arch and dance backwards over ONES heads. (You should be back to where you started.) Then ONES make an arch over TWOs again but this time dance forward to meet a new couple.

For variety you can circle left and circle right instead of making stars. People often dance one and then the other. The dance starts slowly and gets faster and faster!

Robin Ddiog *Lazy Robin*

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Chord progression for *Robin Ddiog* (Lazy Robin):

Gm F Gm F Gm Dm Gm

Bb Gm F Gm

Cm Gm F Gm

Quick Reference Guide



*Right Hand
Star*



*Cross Hand
Hold*



*Casting
(peeling the
banana)*

*Threading
the Needle*



credits & sources

This project was devised by TASC in partnership with Monty Folk, a community celidh band based in Montgomery. The project was carried out by Claire Weston, Jenny Brignell, Yvonne Mason, Lydia Bassett, Pete Damsell and Philip Freeman.

More information about TASC, as well as tunes and a few instructional videos can be found on our website
www.tradartsupport.org.uk

There are many videos on the internet that show different folk dances of the kind we have been teaching. They are sometimes called Country Dances or Ceilidh Dances to distinguish them from the Morris dances which are danced by a particular team of dancers - a morris 'side' as it is known - usually on special occasions such as May Day.

There is a very useful booklet for teaching young children to dance, published by the English Folk Dance & Song Society and available on-line at:-
<http://efdss.org/efdss-education/resource-bank/resources-and-teaching-tools/creative-folk-dance-for-primary-schools>

There are many other resources for folk song, music and dance at:
<http://www.efdss.org/efdss-education/resource-bank>

TASC has group membership of the English Folk Dance & Song Society which, despite the name, has collected material from throughout the British Isles as well as supporting a full programme of teaching. There hasn't been any comparable work of this scale and depth carried out in Wales, though there is a wealth of material at the Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagan's near Cardiff which has published some very interesting and useful material.

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/stfagans/>

There is also material at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and also at the British Library in London. These include video footage and sound recordings, some over a 100 years old, as well as written material.



These archives are all continually being updated and digitised, so there is always something new to explore.

