

The Cotton Reel

Dance for 4 couples in a 4 couple longwise set 4x40 bar Reel

- 1-4 1st couple cross down one place (2s step up) and cast off (3s step up).
 5-8 1st couple cross down one place (4s step up) and set **while**
 2nd couple cross down one place (3s step up) and cast off (4s step up).
 9-12 1st couple cast up one place and cross up **while**
 2nd couple cross down one place (3s step up) and set **while**
 3rd couple cross down one place (4s step up) and cast off.
 13-16 1st couple cast up one place and turn half way giving right hands,
 finishing in the middle of the set facing down **while**
 2nd couple cast up one place and cross up **while**
 3rd couple cross down one place and set **while**
 4th couple cross down one place and cast off.
 17-20 1st couple dance down the middle **while**
 2nd couple cast up one place and turn half way giving right hands,
 finishing in the middle of the set facing down **while**
 3rd couple cast up one place and cross up **while**
 4th couple cross down one place and set.
 21-24 1st couple dance up the middle to 3rd place (dancing under an arch
 made by 2nd couple) **while**
 2nd couple dance down the middle, making an arch to let 1st couple
 through **while**
 3rd couple cast up one place and turn half way giving right hands,
 finishing in the middle of the set facing down **while**
 4th couple cast up one place and cross up.
 25-28 1st couple cast up and turn half way giving right hands, moving up to
 1st position (ie cross up) **while**
 2nd couple dance up the middle to 3rd place (dancing under an arch
 made by 3rd couple) **while**
 3rd couple dance down the middle, making an arch to let 2nd couple
 through **while**
 4th couple cast up one place and turn half way giving right hands,
 finishing in the middle of the set facing down.
 29-32 1st couple set and dance right hands across half way with 2nd couple
while
 2nd couple cast up and dance right hands across half way with 1st
 couple **while**
 3rd couple dance up the middle to 3rd place (dancing under an arch
 made by 4th couple) **while**
 4th couple dance down the middle, making an arch to let 3rd couple
 through.
 33-36 1st couple cross down and cast off into 4th place **while**

2nd couple set and dance right hands across half way with 3rd couple
while

3rd couple cast up and dance right hands across half way with 2nd
 couple **while**

4th couple dance up the middle to 3rd place.

- 37-40 4th couple turns once right hands while 1st couple turn 1 1/2 right
 hands while 3rd and 2nd couples dance right hands across half way and
 turn right hands (2nd couple once, 3rd couple half way).

Finish in the order 2,3,4,1, ready to start again.

The dance's origins go back to the American civil war and the blockades against British ships who wanted to trade with the southern cotton growers. Sailors waiting for cargoes started to amuse themselves by dancing hornpipes and other dances, one of which was called a Cotton Reel in honour of the crop which they waited for.

Well, actually that's a load of codswallop (generously provided by a friend of Shiobhan O'Donnell). Shortly after I wrote this dance, one of the members of the highland-dance mailing list was persuaded by her boyfriend to ask the list about "The Cotton Reel". From the responses received on the list, she realised she had been had, so to turn the tables on him, it was suggested that a "Cotton Reel" be written. Given I hadn't yet come up with a name for this dance, I offered its services in this regard.

As you will see, this is yet another experiment with repetition. This time I decided to try having the repetition within each turn, so have 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th couples repeating the same set of movements starting 4 bars apart (with a bit of a fudge to collect them all again in the right places on bars 37-40). Although I originally called this a canon as well, Anselm Lingnau suggested a fugue would be more consistent with other devisors' terminology (particularly Hugh Foss's collection of fugues on Waverley, of which Fugal Fergus is probably the best known). So I concur. This is not a canon, it's a fugue.

Tune: Pick a Bale o' Cotton

(Traditional)

(cc) Ian Brockbank, June 1998