

The Armagh Lancers

(Ireland)

- Source:** County Armagh, Mick O'Callaghan, Catholic, 87 years old when I first met him in 1979, and George McCombe, Protestant.
- Music:** Jigs, 32 bars. Fig 2 can be done in 2/4 time, reel or polka; Fig 5 can be a skip rhythm in 4/4 time, hornpipe.
- Cassette:** Cosa Gan Bhróga #111
- Formation:** Square of 4 couples but can be danced as a half set, double on the sides, or doubled all around. Cpl 1 faces cpl 2; cpl 3 to R of cpl 1; cpl 4 faces cpl 3.
- Steps:** Basically a skip-change: hop (ct &), step (ct 1); step (ct &); step (ct 2).
- Openings and Endings:** These can be 8 bar additions to the basic figure, a standard opening being "lead around" or promenade, sometimes ending in a swing. Such improvisation may have come from musicians being unaccustomed with introductions, such as an extra A part (8 bars). Endings, often exact duplicates of the opening, came in to fill-in when the musicians chose to carry the music to a later end than the basic figure. Why waste the beat?

Meas

Pattern

FIGURE 1

- 1-8 1st top M swings 2nd W (opposite), then returns home.
- 1-4 Top cpls pass through passing R shldr with opp to opp pos, then exchange places with ptr, M outside, W inside.
- 5-8 Tops pass back and around to original pos.
- 1-8 Everyone swing your corner.
- 1-8 Everyone swing partners.
- 96 meas Repeats: 2nd M with 1st W, tops cross; 3rd M with 4th W, sides cross; 4th M with 3rd W, sides cross.

FIGURE 2

- 1-4 1st top cpl advance ("lead up the center") and retire, the W turning under (or bow).
- 5-8 1st cpl swing (or "dance about").
- 1-8 Tops pass thru and back (sides separate to form two lines of four facing four).
- 1-8 Lines advance and retire twice.
- 1-8 Ptrs swing.

Repeats: 2nd cpl, form lines at tops; 3rd cpl, form lines at sides; 4th cpl, form lines at sides.

The Armagh Lancers—continued

FIGURE 3. “All Hands In”/“The Big Swing of 8”

1-4 (or 1-8) Big Swing of 8 CW.

5-8 (or 1-8) Big Swing of 8 CCW.

Note: “This was not often done as many could not do it...”

1-2 Tops meet in the ctr (and bow)

3-4 Tops turn to the R to greet R-hand cpl (and bow).

5-8 Tops back into opp pos and continue turning CW to greet the L-hand cpl (and bow).

1-4 With that cpl, R-hand star (M join hands over, W under).

5-8 L-hand star.

1-8 Basket swing for 4 (Hold: M hold hands behind the W’s backs, while W’s arms are over and under and grasped across); end by opening up, top M releasing his hold on the L, and join all around—”all hands in”—starting the next repeat from opp pos...

Repeats: Tops; Sides; Sides.

FIGURE 4

1-8 All four W Advance and Retire twice.

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1-8 W to the ctr for a R-hand star, L-hand star back. M dance around CCW, turning individually CW.

1-8 Meet ptr (or corner*) at home and swing.

Repeats: Four more times, *swinging corner, to dance with the others of the opp sex, finishing back with orig ptrs.

FIGURE 5

1-8 Grand Chain all the way around to home.

1-2 R-hands round ptr to end with *1st cpl facing up and the other cpls lining up behind them (1st cpl, followed by 3rd cpl, 4th cpl, and 2nd cpl).

3-8 Cast around, W to the L in front and CCW, M to the R and CW; meet at the bottom and lead up in two lines.

1-8 Four M facing four W, two lines Advance and Retire twice.

1-8 Advance to home and swing your own ...

Repeats: Three more times: *2nd cpl; 3rd cpl; 4th cpl.

Note: From this last figure, the Irish dance Commission created the “official” ceili dance, “The 8-Hand Jig.”

Presented by Danny and Joan Hathaway