

DORSET FOUR HAND REEL (England)

Learned in the mid-1970's from Mary Judson, English dance specialist to Westwind International Folk Ensemble.

Formation: Two couples in a line starting as follows: The two women stand back to back, and each man stands about 6 -8 feet in front of his partner, facing her. If more than one set is to dance, they line up beside each other, rather than end to end or randomly.

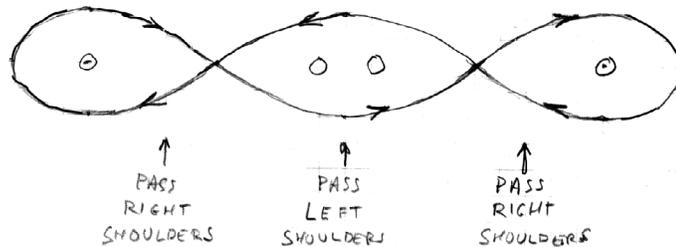
Structure: Beginning in the position described above, all dancers simultaneously progress around a path resembling a figure eight but with three segments instead of two, ending up on the outside if they started in the center and vice versa. (This "four-hand reel" gives the dance its name.) They then dance a "rant" step in place. This entire process repeats four times with minor variations, after which partners swing.

Styling: The most important stylistic element is a "dance walk" characteristic of English Country Dance. It is a light, erect walk with the weight carried slightly forward, and is NOT haughty or affected. The "rant" step is done with a comfortable amount of energy, and should not appear flashy or strained.

The Reel:

All dancers simultaneously walk the reel pattern as shown below, using the following "rules of the road":

- 1 When you meet another person in the CENTER of the set, pass LEFT shoulders (and, if giving hands, give LEFT hands).
- 2 When you meet another person near EITHER END of the set, pass RIGHT shoulders (and, if giving hands, give RIGHT hands).
- 3 When you get to either END of the set, walk a curve around to the RIGHT and back into the set, passing RIGHT shoulders with the first person you meet (as per rule No. 2).



Walk at a relaxed pace – 2 steps per four-beat measure of music. It takes about 4 four-beat measures of music to get half way around the figure; thus after eight measures (32 beats) each dancer will more or less have returned to his/her starting place.

The Reel is given 16 measures of music (64 beats), which would allow the dancers to complete two full circuits, but they do not do this. Instead the dancers do not quite complete the second

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circuit, causing the two couples to switch sides of the set and also causing the men and women to switch so that whichever ones (men or women) began in the center of the set end up on the outside and vice versa. (EXAMPLE: At the beginning of the dance the women are in the center. At the end of the first reel, woman No 1 will be on the outside where man No 2 started, and man No 2 will be in the middle where woman No. 1 started. Likewise woman No 2 will be outside where man No 1 started, and he will be in her original inside position.) This position shift is accomplished by moving a little more slowly the second time around the figure, and perhaps by marking time if you get there too soon.

The Rant Step:

This dancing-in-place step uses all four beats of the measure, unlike the walking reel.

- 1 Jump onto both feet, right foot in front, slightly more weight on rear (left) foot.
- 2 Hop on rear (left) foot, transferring all weight to this foot
- 3 Transfer weight to front (right) foot, with a small leap in place.
- 4 Remain on supporting (right), and bring rear (left) foot around ready to use it as front foot for next measure.

Next Measure: Same as this one but with opposite footwork (i.e. left is front foot).

Subsequent measures alternate between these two. After each reel, the rant step is done in place, and it can also be used in the rapid traveling portions of the dance (3rd and 4th occurrences of the reel.).

Sequence:

- 1 First reel: Walk reel starting with women in center, 16 measures, ending men in center, without giving hands (Melody A)
- 2 Men rant facing each other 8 measure, as women stand in place (Melody B)
- 3 Men turn toward partner and both rant 8 measures (Melody B)
- 4 Second reel: Same as 1 except men start in center, women end in center. Also, give hands to dancers you meet in the reel.
- 5 Same as 2 but women rant
- 6 Same as 3 but women turn to face men
- 7 Third reel: Same as 1 except travel with skipping step or traveling rant step. Do not give hands. Melody A)
- 8 Same as 2
- 9 Same as 3
- 10 Fourth reel: Same as 4 except travel with skipping step or traveling rant step. Give hands to dancers you meet in the reel.
- 11 Same as 2 but women rant
- 12 Same as 3 but women turn to face men
- 13 Swing partners until end of music.

Presented by Richard Julian
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