

# Notes on a Rare Dance Book

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The following plates come from an 18th century country-dance book which turned up in an Oxford antique shop window in 1980. Several pages including the title-page were missing, and all the dealer knew about the book was that it had long been in the family of a recently deceased local man. My attempts to identify the book initiated a large pile of correspondence from institutions and individuals, some of which<sup>1</sup> has proved very helpful in the compilation of these notes.

After a lead from Tom Cook, the book was duly identified by Roger Duce. It is "Caledonian Country Dances Book the Fourth Being a Collection of all the Celebrated Scotch Country Dances now in Vogue, with the Proper Directions to each Dance, as they are perform'd at Court, and Publick Entertainments. for the Harpsicord, Violin, Hoboy, or German Flute. London. Printed for I. Walsh Price 2s. 6d. ....2d. Edition." The date is c. 1745. Other surviving copies are in the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh) and the Mitchell Library (Glasgow.) No surviving copy of the first edition is known.

Books of "Caledonian country Dances" were published by John Walsh in London between 1733 and c. 1760. (A complete list appears in Smith and Humphries<sup>2</sup> and in the British Union-Catalogue<sup>3</sup>.) The descriptions 'Caledonian' and 'Scotch' can, perhaps, be taken with a pinch of salt; it would be hard to prove a Scottish origin for some of the dances. The titles and melodies of many of them, and some of the corresponding choreographies, also occur in contemporary English dance-collections published by Rutherford, Johnson, Thompson, and Walsh himself. The contents of the final edition of Caledonian Country Dances were described by Walsh as 'Scotch and English', and further dance-collections published by him were described as 'Caledonian' in his catalogues but not on the title-pages. Although styles of dancing may have differed regionally, both sides of the border shared a common repertoire of dances to some extent. These books may perhaps have reflected — or fostered — this situation. They were undoubtedly aimed at an English (and largely London) market, who are likely to have danced in an English (and largely London) style. Clearly, the question of the validity of the term 'Caledonian' is a thorny one, and it has been suggested that Walsh used it merely to cash in on the current vogue for things Scottish. He also published several collections of 'Scotch Tunes' for violin and for flute. Both Johnson and Wright brought out their own books of 'Caledonian' dances at about this time, and these, like Walsh's, have the tunes and basses printed together — an unusual practice in those days. (One of Wright's dances is reproduced in the 1980-81 edition of this Journal.)

Walsh's Book the Fourth originally contained 84 dances spread over a hundred pages; 76 dances (p. 5-92) have survived in the Oxford copy. It is this incomplete copy that I shall refer to hereafter. The book measures about 16 x 9½ cm. Walsh was in the habit of re-using plates from his previous publications to compile new ones, and this perhaps explains the slight changes in the music-engraving style or textual typography which occur every few pages. (In this respect, the two plates given here appear to have had a common origin). Many of the dances share common titles with dances in Johnson's "Choice Collection of 200 Favourite Country Dances" vols. 3 and 4, Rutherford's "Compleat Collection of 200 Country Dances" vol. 1, and the anonymous "Select Collection of Country Dances"<sup>4</sup>. Some titles also occur in Walsh's "Compleat Country Dancing Master" and in vol. 1. of the "Compleat

Collection of 200 Favourite Country dances" published by C. and S., and S., A. and P. Thompson. However, it should be borne in mind that, where two or more dances carry the same name, the choreographies aren't necessarily connected.

In Book the Fourth there are no indications as to the dance-formations, but they appear to be all longways sets, with two — or more often three — couples involved at once. In one or two dances, four couples are involved. The dances vary from the very simple and commonplace (e.g. Fausan's Maggot, lasting only eight bars: "Foot to the Man and Wo. Cross over two Cu. and lead up.") to those requiring five or six lines of small-print instructions and involving ten or more figures, e.g. The Braes of Balquhider (a genuine Scottish dance?). The degree of detail given in the instructions is variable. The most frequently occurring directions are: cast, set, foot (or foot it), turn, turn single, cross over, change sides, figure, half figure, figure in, hey, lead, right and left, and hands round. Less frequent are the directions: run, slip, gallop, dance round, clap, hands across, back to back, double figure, change places, foot it double, foot it out, turn it out, and turn the tune out. I have not yet discovered the meaning of some of these terms.

Fashions in country-dance figures are always on the move, and the obvious interpretation of a particular term isn't always the correct one. For instance, 'cross corners' would have told the middle man of a three-couple set to do a figure of 8 around the bottom and top couples, if he were dancing in about 1752; but if the year was about 1816, on the same instruction he would have looped around the top lady and 3rd man. Neither figure is what today's dancer would understand by 'corners cross' and both require more music. The nearest thing we have to a handbook on the period of Walsh's Caledonian Book the Fourth is Nicholas Dukes' "A Concise and Easy Method of Learning the Figuring Part of Country Dances, by way of Characters. To which is Prefixed the Figure of the Minuet."<sup>5</sup> This was published in 1752, and gives both verbal explanations and diagrams; but as Book the Fourth predates it by seven years, and some of the dances were probably reprints from earlier books, we can't be certain that the figures therein are all to be performed as in Dukes. Unfortunately, Walsh's use of repeat-signs ||: in his book is less than reliable; and his use of the section-markers — — — etc. to show which section of tune is needed, is so inconsistent that the marks must never be assumed to be correct. This makes it harder to interpret some of the dances — especially to work out how many bars a given figure requires.

'Footing' is required in most of the dances. The term occurs in Playford (e.g. 9th edition, part two, 1696: Mr. Eaglesfield's New Hornpipe). Wilson (1820) equates footing with setting, but Walsh sometimes uses both terms within the same dance. Dukes (1752) says "according to the present method of dancing they keep continually footing, as in casting of, crossing over, or any other part of Figuring, you may foot it forwards or backwards or sideways as the Case requires." In Book the Fourth the term is used to denote some form of stepping to another dancer, often for four bars, while remaining in the same position within the set. In one dance however the direction "foot it down one Cu", taken in context, implies footing while travelling, as described by Dukes.

There is a fair variety of musical styles in the book: vocal, instrumental, mundane, very attractive, Scottish, and "Vauxhall-Gardens-song" among them. At least two of

the tunes also occur, note for note and trill for trill, in Feuillet's "Recueil de Contredances" (1706). Most of the melodies are tuneful, though a minority have very poor basses. Two of the more elegant and attractive pieces of music, to my mind, are "Suckey's Fancy" with its syncopations and modulations, and "The Blithsome Round" which incorporates major and minor sections.

"*Anson's Delight*", along with the preceding dance in the book ("The merry Sailors of the Centurion") commemorates the return of Admiral George Anson from his world voyage in 1744. I haven't so far come across this dance in any other collection. The instructions are straightforward to follow. They also fit the tune easily: the dance starts in the first full bar  $\epsilon$ ; the repeat of the first section of music ends at the sign  $\underline{\underline{\epsilon}}$ ; the repeat of the second section (ambiguous in the notation but clearly needed) starts with the "fall back"; "foot it as before" implies a preceding "then meet". The final "cast off" refers to the first couple.

"Compleat Collection..." vol. 1, the same tune and title are used for a different dance. Walsh's 'Bob in the Bed', reproduced here, poses several problems, and various interpretations of the dance are possible. Some of the possibilities are given below — there are doubtless others — but I have not attempted to supply a definitive version. The formation is a longways set, with instructions being directed to the first of the top three couples. It is not obvious how many eight-bar phrases are needed for this dance, or how the repeats should be organised. It should be noted that, where Walsh gives  $\underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}}$ , Johnson gives  $\underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}} \underline{\underline{\epsilon}}$ ; both versions should be treated with caution, and both omit the final section-marker. Johnson's repeat-signs are the same as Walsh's.

I don't know of any other dance containing the mysterious instruction 'turn Bob', and I have been unable to trace the words of any song called 'Bob in the Bed' which might have thrown some light on the matter. My first thought was that 'Bob' was the next man, or else an extra man

84 Anson's Delight.

Lead up all, the 1st Man change Places with the 2d Man and lead out, then lead in, the 1st Wo, doing the same  $\underline{\underline{\epsilon}}$  The Men and Wo, fall back, then meet and foot it, the 2d Cu, being in the 1st Place, cast off, fall back, and foot it as before, and cast off.

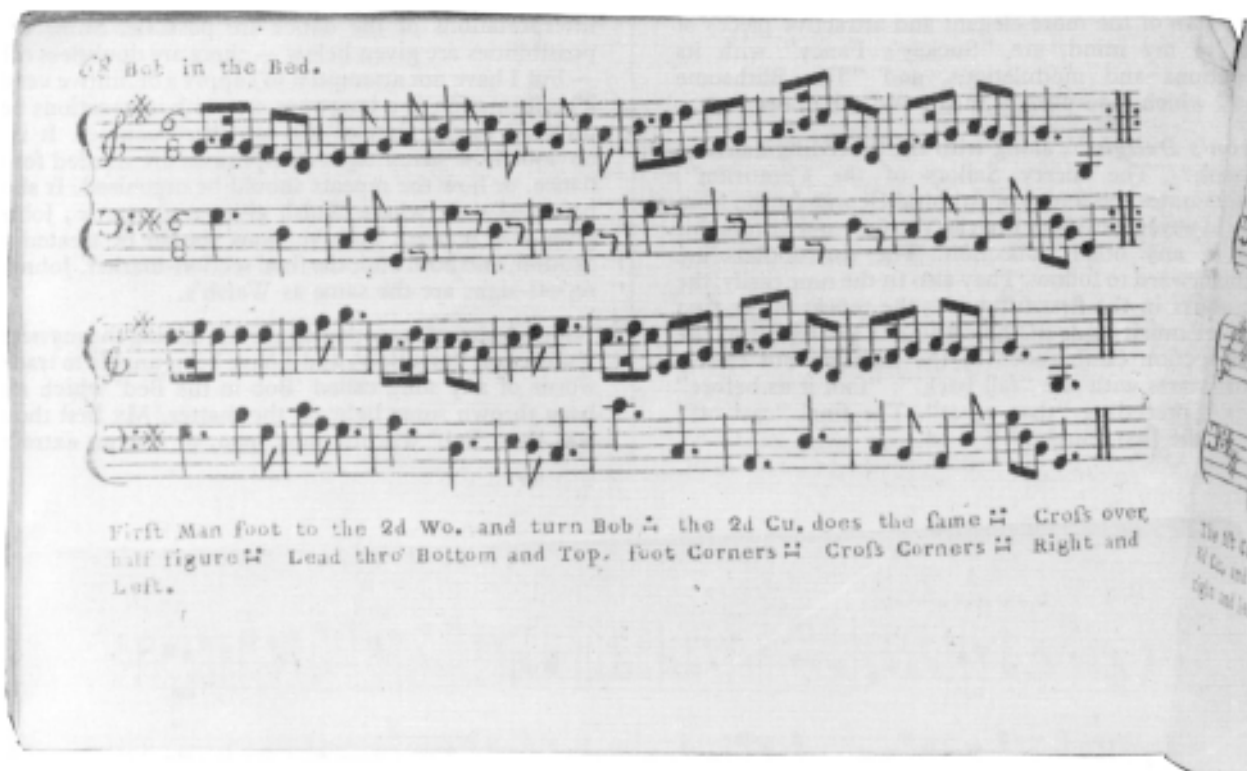
The 'Ansons Delight' tune — though not the setting — is in the baroque 'musette' vein, and its gavotte-like rhythms are far more typical of French than English or Scottish country-dances. In fact the tune was used much earlier, with a different choreography, for a dance called 'La Fanatique' in Feuillet's Recueil, and the first part of it may have derived from the gavotte-branle tune recorded by both Arbeau (1589) and Praetorius (1612)<sup>8</sup>.

By way of contrast, the musical style of '*Bob in the Bed*' is one that's very familiar to the English folk dance clubs today, and is also typical of many of the dances in the book. A rather similar tune known as 'The Belfast Almanac' is in the repertoire of some folk-dance musicians today. 'Bob in the Bed' occurs, with the same tune and choreography, in Johnson's "Choice Collection..." vol. 3. In Rutherford's

whose role in the dance — perhaps suggested by the song — was that of an intruder. But the word 'bob' can mean 'a deception or trick' or 'to cheat', and whereas Walsh prints 'turn Bob', Johnson has 'turn bob'. If a man foots to one lady but then without further ceremony turns a different one, clearly one of the ladies is being bobbed! Dukes gives just such a figure, which he calls 'baulking':

Set corners and baulk them, and turn yr Partner, that is the 2nd Man sets to the 3rd Wo and not turn her, but turn inwards from her, and turn right hands with your Partner, and the 2nd Woman does ye same with the top man.

Dukes's diagram shows that the setting is done advancing and that the right-hand turn is only half way round. His figure is not quite the same as the one in Walsh's dance,



but the bobbing element is there, and I think that the most likely interpretation of 'turn Bob' is 'turn your partner' — it has to be all the way round, to make sense of the second 'turn Bob'.

'First Man foot to the 2d. Wo' and 'turn Bob' probably takes four bars each. By 'the 2d Cu does the same' 1st Woman with 2nd man may well be intended; this phrase would take up the repeat of the 'A' music. 'Cross over' (in modern parlance, cross and cast into 2nd place improper) and 'half figure' (i.e. around the twos) between them need eight bars. 'Lead through Bottom and Top, foot Corners' could be two successive eight-bar figures; but it might be a shorthand term for a figure which occurs in the dance 'Twelfth Night', which is in effect an extended lead-through-bottom-top:

Lead thro' the bottom Cu, foot it a little and cast up, then lead thro' the top Cu. foot it a little and cast off.

If this is what is intended here, the instruction could be seen as one sixteen-bar figure, with each footing (to your partner at the corner of the set? or to the nearest dancer there?) taking two bars. 'Cross corners' is almost certainly the figure described in *Dukes*, which normally takes sixteen bars: 1st man (in 2nd man's place) facing diagonally down goes a large figure of 8 by passing outside 3rd woman, 3rd man, 2nd woman (in 1st woman's place) and 2nd man (in 1st man's place) and back to where he started. His partner, in 2nd woman's place facing diagonally up, simultaneously passes outside 2nd man (in 1st man's place), 2nd woman (in 1st woman's place), third man and third woman, and back to where she started, thus completing her large figure of 8. The phrase 'Right and left' is sometimes used in this book to mean what we would call half-right-and-left-through, the words 'quite round' often being added to denote a complete right-and-

left-through. However, the term is not used very consistently, and 'quite round' is sometimes merely implied. A complete right-and-left-through (with the 2nd, or 3rd couple?), taking eight bars, would be needed to ensure that the 1st couple end up in 2nd place on their own sides.

Compared with some other collections such as *The Dancing Master* or the so-called *Apted Book*, Walsh's *Caledonian Country Dances* are little known in historical dance, folk dance and musical circles. Perhaps they would repay further investigation, particularly as they have the advantage of ready-made accompaniments. The locations or surviving copies are listed in the two catalogues already mentioned<sup>2</sup> & <sup>3</sup>. Photographic copies of *Book the Fourth* are currently being prepared for Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society's Library and for the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House.

### Footnotes

1. In particular, information supplied by Robert Bruce of the Bodleian Library, Tom Cook of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Roger Duce of the National Library of Scotland, and Theresa Thom of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Especial thanks are due to Tom Cook and to Ken Sheffield for their practical help.
2. W. Smith and C. Humphries: 'A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by the Firm of John Walsh during the years 1721-1766'. (The Bibliographical Society, London 1968).
3. 'The British Union-Catalogue of Early Music.' (Butterworths Scientific Publications, London 1957.)

4. I refer to the manuscript book of this name in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
5. Copies in the British Library and at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
6. Dances whose tunes start at the half-bar often cause twentieth-century eyebrows to rise; suspicions that the barring is incorrect are usually unfounded. There are seven such dances in this book, and a study of the harmonic and rhythmic progressions in the bass parts convinces me that the initial half-bar in four of them (including Ansons Delight) has been treated as an up-beat by the musician who added the basses, and therefore — it is to be hoped — by the choreographer too. In the remaining three dances, there is less strong, but still plausible, evidence that the same may be true. It is painstakingly stated by Malpied (*Traite sur l'Art de la Danse*, 2nd edition, c 1780) that in tunes which start

with preliminary upbeats, one should not start to dance until the note following the first barline. His examples include the gavotte, which characteristically starts its tune half way through the bar.

7. Strictly speaking, the first two crotchets-worth of each music section belong to the end of the previous dance section.
8. In 'Terpsichore' Praetorius claims that the gavotte-branle music was composed 'some years ago' by a French musician called Caroubel.
9. Within the book, it frequently happens that the instructions for a given figure appear in concise detail in one dance, and in much abbreviated form in another. The dances were collected together not by a dancing-master but by a music-publisher (who frequently 'borrowed' material from rivals), and there is a distinct lack of unity in the presentation of the dances.

**Walsh's Caledonian Country Dances Book the Fourth**  
 (\*these pages not present in the incomplete Oxford copy)

Pages

- \*(1) Title page
- \*II-IV A Table of the Dances contained in this Book
- 5. Jollity
- 6. Scotch Collops
- 7. Four Drunken Maids
- 8. E.O.
- 9. Moll Ross
- 10. The Merry Parson
- 11. Quite Prodigious
- 12. John Barton
- 13. Miss Drax Delight
- 14. Narrow Bottom
- 16. The Merry Counsellors
- 17. City Ramble
- 18. Hey to Ruckholt
- 20. Yorkshire Trip
- 21. Hang him Jack
- 22. The Relishing Bit
- 23. French Warr
- 24. Suckey's Fancy
- 26. The Miser
- 27. Topsy Turvy
- 28. Trip to Scots Bridge
- 29. Bread and Cheese
- 30. The Flirt
- 31. Two Brewers
- 32. Foston Meads
- 33. Tea Room
- 34. The Medway
- 36. Kentish Cricketters
- 37. The Rakes of Mellow
- 38. The Trip to Scarborough
- 40. Barley Sugar
- 41. I wou'd but I dare not
- 42. Trip it
- 43. Paw Pau
- 44. Hertingfordbury Tambourine
- 45. The Pipers Maggot
- 46. The Braes of Balquhider
- 47. The Drunken Elders of Moffat
- 48. Perth Inch
- 49. Lassie with the yellow Coatie
- 50. The Colonel

- 51. Hawkie
- 52. De'il stick the Minister
- 53. Pursue the French, or Hungarian March
- 54. Better than Worse
- 56. Barbarini's Tambourine
- 58. Chettingham Wells
- 60. Fausan's Maggot
- 61. Pease Straw
- 62. The Bed Chamber
- 64. Morton's Maggot
- 65. The Humours of Dublin
- 66. Yorkshire Hornpipe
- 67. Parson of Feltham
- 68. Bob in the Bed
- 69. Auretti's Maggot
- 70. The Blithsome Round
- 71. The Blithsome Round 2d Part
- 72. King of Prussia's Maggot
- 74. Swedish Dance
- 76. Auretti's Dutch Skipper
- 77. The Swiss
- 78. Black Ey'd Sally's Fancy
- 79. Twelfth Night
- 80. Fair Maid of Wickham
- 81. A Trip to Brussels
- 82. The merry Sailors of the Centurion
- 84. Anson's Delight
- 85. Midnight Frolick
- 86. Mistake
- 87. Bucks Contention
- 88. So she Bid me tell you
- 89. Hob or Nob
- 90. Trip to Farleigh
- 91. Just a going
- 92. Mock Highland Man
- \* 93. She le Negari or Drunken Parson
- \* 94. We are all a Coming
- \* 95. Happy Meeting
- \* 96. Prince George
- \* 97. Bushy Park
- \* 98. Sodi's Tambounni ('Tambourine' in index)
- \* 99. Irish Jigg the new way
- \* 100. Guilford Races