

“Calling the Tune and Leading a Merry Dance” Part 5 Country Dance references by the ‘heaps!’

Peter Ellis



In the previous chapter I concluded with the statement that I had found a couple of other translations of Rose de Freycinet's diary with slightly different interpretation. I also discovered an earlier voyage account (1818) when the de Freycinets docked at Mauritius, a recent English colonial acquisition. This is from 'Realms & Islands' by Marnie Bassett – 'The World Voyage of Rose de Freycinet 1817-20, 'Mauritius'.

Page 66 *“The next day we had a very fine ball, where I enjoyed dancing more than at Mr. Smith's, for it was not so hot, there were fewer people, and the quadrilles were danced as in Paris, whereas generally in Mauritius they have such odd figures that I was disconnected when I danced them for the first time.”*

Page 67 *“Soon afterwards we went to take the air on the bridge, where the band played pretty contre-dances – The bridge was lit by torches, and everyone chose his partner and continued until midnight hopping about in the English style.”*

Then on pages 190-191, **Sydney 1819**, a slightly different translation to my quote in the 1st part of this series; Rose again met the strange activity of the English Country Dances that in Mauritius had so taken her aback:-

“Although I did not know how to dance English dances, they had to be danced; I acquitted myself badly enough, but what seemed to me frightful was the heat, which was really too great for dancing.”

From this you can see that the quadrilles were already well established in the English colonies of 1818 and danced as in Paris and that Rose did not know the English country dances which were still obviously very prevalent and that the steps were 'hopping'.

Despite a rise in things Scottish during the Regency Period and Governor Macquarie's upholding the Scotch Reel over the new Waltz and possibly the Quadrille, the newer dances gradually displaced the older. Towards the end of the 1830s and certainly by the 40s only a few Country Dances and Reels lingered. This newspaper account indicates not all musicians were au fait with the necessary Scottish music for the Scotch Reel.

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser Thursday 4th January 1838

The-Emigrants' Annual Ball

-The second Anniversary of the Emigrants' Annual Ball came off at the Pulteney Hotel on Monday evening last. The attendance, especially of the fair sex, was considerably larger than last year and the arrangements were in every respect superior. At nine o'clock the company began to arrive and at half-past nine the dancing commenced and continued almost without intermission until five in the morning. At twelve o'clock a portion of the company, such as could be

*accommodated with ease, partook of an excellent supper which did much credit to Mr. Levien, mine host of the Pulteney. The remainder of the company continued the dance, and in turn returned to the supper-room to the contents of which they did ample justice. After supper bumpers were emptied with due honours to two toasts proposed by the Chairman "The Emigrants' Annual Ball,"-and "The Australians who have honoured us with their presence." Mr. Cunningham, a youthful Australian in the name of himself and countrymen, returned thanks for the honour done them and expressed his high gratification at the arrangements of the evening. After supper the "Highland Fling" was danced in full costume by Mr. Clark, one of the stewards, and encored by the united plaudits of the whole assemblage. It was rather amusing to observe the effect the good things that supper had in rousing the spirits of the dancers, which before had seemed rather to flag. On the whole, we believe, no ball ever came off in the Colony, at which the arrangements were better, or at which there prevailed more joyous and unmingled hilarity. The musicians who were supplied by Mr. Turner of Kent Street, incurred considerable blame from the length of time they kept the company waiting for their arrival, but they did their best from that time till morning to gain the good graces of the company. **The quadrilles, contra dances, &c, they were perfect masters of, but the reel and strathspey tunes required for the Scots' reels, to which the Caledonian portion of the company were much attached, seemed to puzzle them considerably.** The Emigrants have fairly overcome now, every obstacle that ill-disposed men attempted to place in their way, both last year and this, and we may safely look forward now to the Emigrants' Annual Ball as one of the fixed, and certainly one of the most acceptable annual amusements that our Colonial capital affords.*

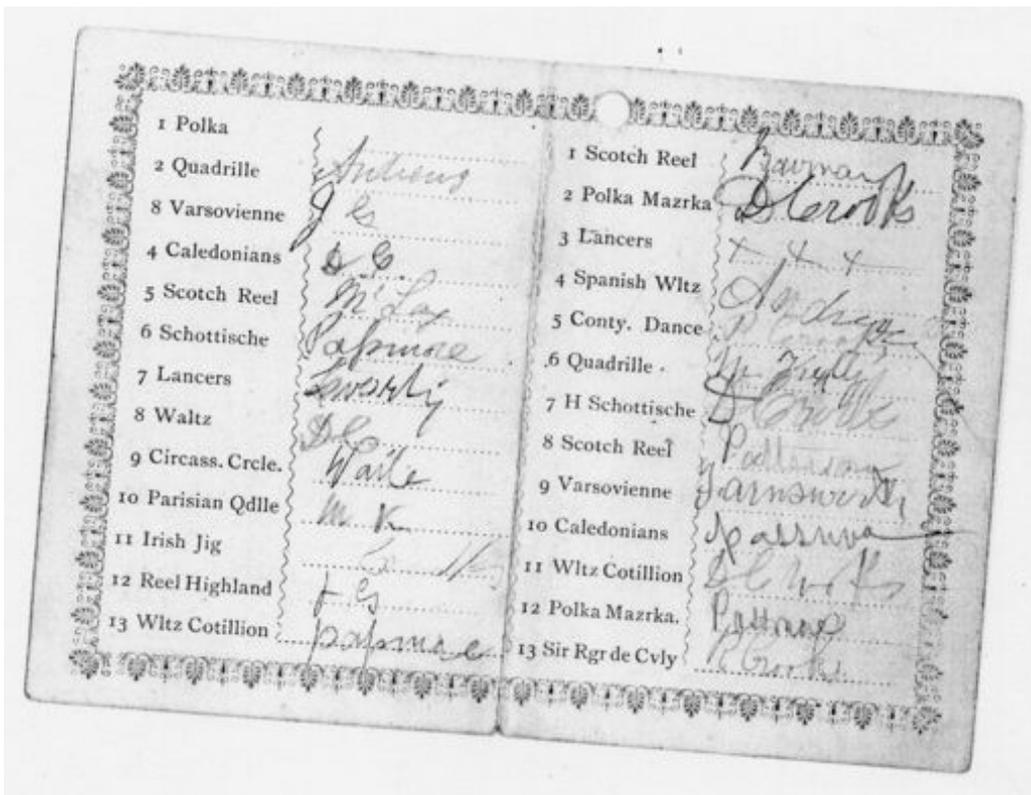
Needless to say I'm inclined to think anything listed in works such as Blantyre and by Wilson are representative of the repertoire at home and whilst varying between regions and across borders and as well as common folk simplicity, could be the basis of a least some repertoire in Regency Australia.

Rosemary Coupe also makes the following comment:-

"Certainly your idea that names applied primarily to tunes rather than dances is true of the culture of the 18th C assembly room where novelty was prized and dance/music collections had titles like "20 New and Fashionable Dances for the Year 17--." One should not over-generalise, however. I have looked at the 18th C Scottish sources, which consist of several manuscripts and arguably also the several volumes of Walsh's Caledonian Country Dances (while these were published by a London publisher and include many obviously English dances, there's considerable overlap between their content and that of the Scottish manuscripts). A number of dance titles occur in more than one of these sources. Quite often the dances carrying the same name were quite different, as with the examples you mention. But in a significant number of cases, the dances with the same name are either the same or resemble each other too closely for coincidence.

Anyway, by the early 19th C the social context for dancing in Scotland at least had changed and was now dominated by the "dancies" who taught in both towns and countryside. One manuscript from 1803 records the dances taught at a farm near Glasgow by one such teacher. Another records dances taught in the Aberdeenshire countryside in 1841. The fact they were taught and dutifully written down implies that they weren't intended to be danced one day and forgotten the next."

The Scotch or Foursome Reel certainly lasted well into the Nineteenth Century in some circles, it appears three times on the Carisbrook Farmers' Ball Programme near Maryborough Victoria in 1874 as well as the Highland Reel; presumably because this is coexistent on the same programme it is not the Scotch Reel (the earlier H. Reel was the same thing), but the newer (Dashing White Sergeant type) Highland Reel Country Dance that appeared mid century. In this two couples faced two, in a column of couples or in a circle round the room (progressive Sicilian). Maryborough of course had a high proportion of Scottish and Irish settlers and the Irish Jig was also included on that programme.



Carisbrook Farmers' Ball Programme July 1874 Courtesy Latrobe Picture Collection State Library of Victoria.

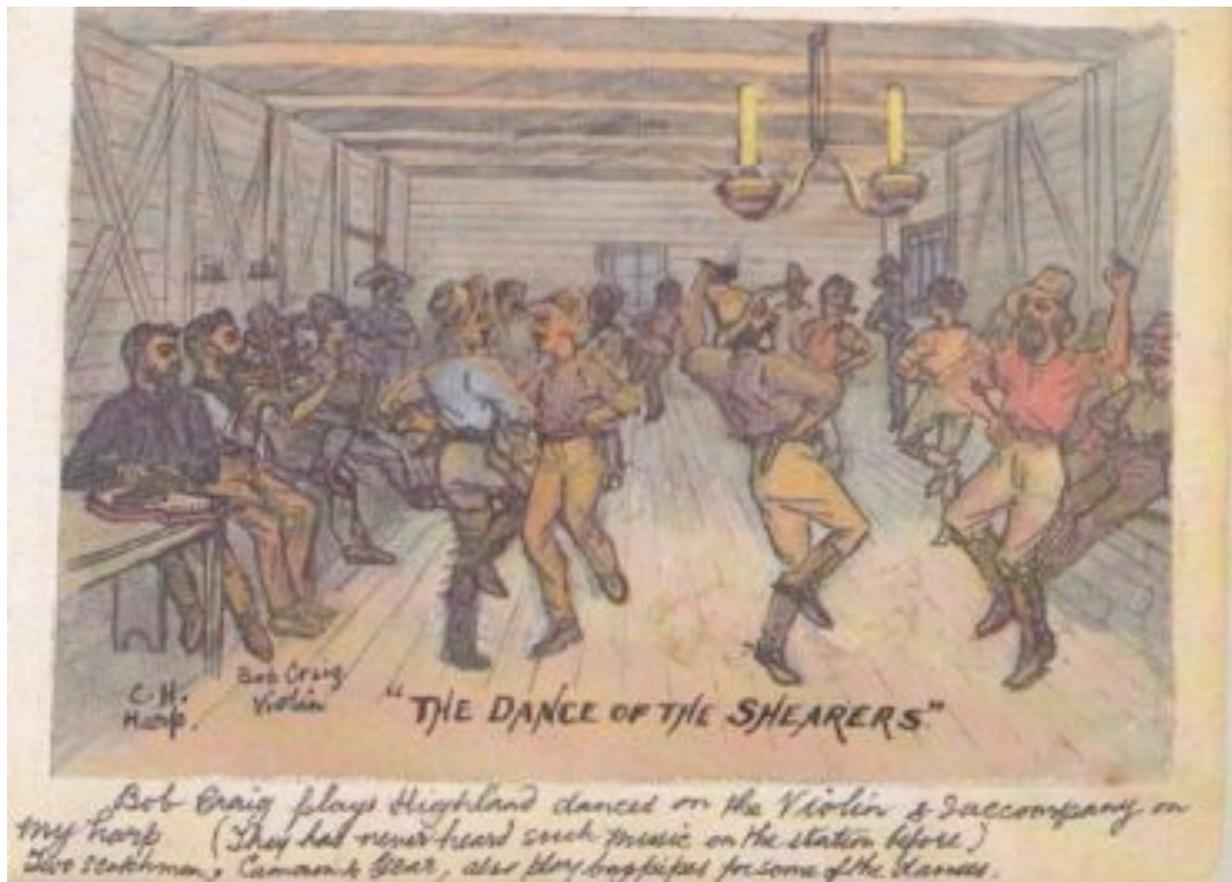
This Irish Jig as titled on this ball programme in which partners names are 'booked' and entered is unlikely to be the solo or impromptu couple's dance that was nevertheless very prevalent at informal gatherings in Australia and for 'items'. It would more likely be a set dance or reel. In Lovenberry's dance manual of 1884 (Ithaca Brisbane), 'The Australian MC or Dancers Enquire Within' is a brief description of an Irish Jig structured dance and is only 10 years after the Carisbrook Ball, so it's a real possibility this is in fact what was danced.

Ellis Rogers makes the following comments and provides one possible reconstruction of this Irish Jig:-

"I suspect that it was the local name for a favourite set dance in jig rhythm, and by 'set dance' I mean a square or longways. It may have been the one described by Lovenberry."

I would reconstruct Lovenberry's Irish Jig as follows:-

- 1/ Two couples, facing, Circle left and right. Finish in a line, the Ladies back-to- back in the centre, facing partners. 8b
- 2/ All set to partners with fancy jig steps 8b
- 3/ Reel of four, finish with Gents in centre, back to back. 8b
- 4/ All set as before. 8b
- 5/ Reel of four, Finish with Ladies back to back but facing other Gent .
- 6 All set 8b
- 7/ Reel of four 8b Continue alternately until twelve lots of setting have been performed (*Or until they die of exhaustion*)



This wonderful 1880s NZ illustration from Charlie Hammond's Sketch Book depicts an all male shearers' dance (buck sets) performing the Scotch Foursome Reel.

The Sautouse

At a Sydney Subscription Ball of 1810 the Sautouse is mentioned as a new arrival and danced twice on the night (Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid, J. Cumes p. 65). This was a type of 'leap waltz' to 2-4 or 6-8 music and probably a precursor to the introduction of the Waltz. Wilson provides a description and it appears the Sautouse co-existed with the real waltz at least till the 1830s:-

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser Thursday 30 May 1833

*"Quadrilles, waltzes, and the gay **Sautouse** were kept up with unabated animation until three o'clock, when the party retired cheerful and charmed with the amusements of the evening."*

Heather Clarke provides the following information on the Sautouse:-

"Here is the music for the Sautouse Waltz and the Jette, or Quick Sautouse Waltz from Mr Wilson's Correct Method of Waltzing pg 35. My source has been Nonsuch: Early Dance Vol. VIIa Ballroom Dances of the Late 18th; and 19th Century by Peggy Dixon, London 1993. Basically, the sautouse is danced on the balls of the feet with no rise or fall [rather like the modern Viennese Waltz]. The first step is a spring, followed by two regular waltz steps -thus: spring, step, step. It takes two of these sequences to complete a full turn. I notice Lovenberry describes it in his 1884 Manual:

THE HOP WALTZ - LA SATEUSE [sic]. The step is similar to that of the common waltz, with this exception - that the first be jumped, and slide the other two. In the light of Wilson's detailed explanation, this seems to be a reasonable description, though of course he means a spring onto one foot rather than a jump which would be onto two feet [a technicality of language].

Wilson gives masses of detail in his Correct Method of Waltzing, 1816. He describes it as French waltzing and indicates that it was danced as part of a sequence: March, French Waltz (slow

andante), Sauteuse Waltz (allegretto increasing to allegro), the Jette, or Quick Sauteuse (allegro increasing to presto). As I study the words, I see that there only 10 pages of step descriptions with the remainder of the manual supplying general instructions for deportment and so on; also details for the German waltz.

The whole sequence for French waltzing looks very attractive and would certainly appeal to many people.”

The Sauteuse Waltz

Both tunes by courtesy of Heather Clarke from Mr. Wilson's Correct Method of Waltzing.

The Jette, or Quick Sauteuse Waltz

Further Specific Australian Country Dance References.

The following entry in the **Sydney Gazette of 4th March 1824** is referring to Britain (Quadrilles stealing across the Channel) in which *Money Musk* is mentioned:-

“38. Stuck rather more to dinner-parties. Gave up country dancing. Moneymusk certainly more fatiguing than formerly. Fiddlers play it too quick. Quadrilles stealing hither over the Channel. Thought of adding to the number of grave gentlemen who learn to dance. Dick Dapper dubbed me one of the over-grows. Very impertinent, and untrue.

59. Quadrilles rising. Wondered sober mistresses of families would allow their carpets to be beat

after that fashion.”

More dances are mentioned in the **Sydney Gazette of Thursday 9th July 1829:-**

“Very well here we find out selves alive and kicking, forty couples footing it on the green, and choosing according to our tastes, reels, jigs, minuets, or bumpkins. 'Spose then that I have landed you down at the bottom of a five and twenty couple country-dance, to the tune of Sir Roger de Coverley, Morgiana in Ireland, Petronella or the Triumph ; mind, notwithstanding our having sucked a couple of oranges a piece, we are both covered in a broth of perspiration. Very good-so says I to you, making a genteel bow”

This is one of the best references I've seen where the dances are mentioned; the Sydney Gazette reference is actually an extract from the chapter 'The Shaving Shop' from Blackwood's Magazine. However the description is also in the "Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction (London) Saturday November 8th 1828, confirming it is an English reference of at least the previous year.

The 'bumpkins' possibly mean Country Dances but likely including the Country Bumpkin or Ninesome Reel. There is also a different Country Bumpkin which is the one mentioned at the wedding at the Rocks in 1803 (because it states the lady leads down the Country Bumpkin) and in which Shirley Andrews made an interpretation from Thomas Wilson's Ballroom Companion of 1816. Although it was a triple minor longways, Shirley modified it to a simpler 4 couple longways 'bush dance' style which really was not typical of that very early period.

The Ninesome Reel also known as the Country Bumpkin was a long forgotten dance by the 1840s except for one mention in this context:-

“The bagpipes were frequently played at Lake Innes and, on 20 June 1843.....

Macleay showed the party 'an old country dance' called 'The Country Bumpkin' which amused us very much..... It is danced by six ladies and six gentlemen, the gentleman in the centre of the circle wearing a hat which he puts on one of the others who then takes his place, and so on.”
(Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid, James Cumes pg 241).