

“Calling the Tune and Leading a Merry Dance” Part 8 - Flings, Jigs and Reels and more Country Dances including ‘The Downfall of Paris’

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Mention is frequently made of ‘Flings, Jigs and Reels’, but these are more likely solo dances and competitions for the mainly male population in the early days and continuing in country districts in the pioneering years when the Blue Mountains were first crossed. (But even in the goldrush of the 1850s men frequently partnered each other in quadrilles and couples dances due to the lack of female partners) and 'buck sets' for the quadrilles – a tradition of buck sets of Lancers in particular lasted well into the twentieth century. Refer to the 1880s illustration of the NZ Shearers' Dance Buck set of the Scotch Foursome Reel Trad & Now May 2011 p 62

Despite the main core of dances being the quadrilles and couple dances such as Waltz, Polka, Schottische, Polka Mazurka, Varsoviana and Galop, there is one reference 'Banana' from *The Brisbane Courier*, April 21st 1877 p 6 that highlights jigs and

reels were still favoured for at least school events with children and the writer obviously prefers these over the fashionable dances:-

“I have heard it said that Banana is a dull, unmusical place; but could they have heard all the children sing-to say nothing of the harmonium, concertina, and flageolet; and could they have seen the dancing, mind you, of the sensible sort, not mere stiff sets of quadrilles, but hornpipes, jigs and flings, &c., requiring knowledge as well as agility-their impression might be modified.”

The online newspaper compilation provided by the National Library of Australia has been a great resource providing some mention of country dances or their tunes. The next reference details 'Speed the Plough', 'The Golden Fleece' or 'The Merino Breed' and a dance led off to the tune of “Rivers, I am beyond your reach”:-

To the Printer of the Sydney Gazette. 5/4/1822

“SIR,

You talk of the prevailing Sydney gaiety, but allow me to give you a description of our grand doings here, and at Richmond. On Monday evening, the 11th inst. WILLIAM BELL, Esq. of Belmont, entertained a large party of Ladies and Gentlemen; the Windsor band attended; and the dance was led off to the tune of “Rivers, I am beyond your reach.” On Wednesday following, WILLIAM COX, Esq., of Clarendon, invited a large party of his friends to celebrate the christening of his son, and closed the evening with a lively dance, to the tune of “The Golden Fleece” or “The Merino Breed is pure” On the Friday following, Windsor was a scene of barouches and four, crowded with Ladies,

single-horse chaises, and horses with out-riders, until a late hour of the day, passing to Clifton Cottage, the residence of Captain BRABYN, where a sumptuous dinner was prepared ; and in the evening a sprightly dance commenced, led off by Miss BRABYN, to the tune of " Speed the Plough," which was played by the Windsor band with animated glee. This entertainment was honored with the company of several Officers of His Majesty's ship Dauntless. The party did not break up until the splendid luminary of this lower world bade the husbandman repair to that labour which affords all the comforts of a friendly welcome and a country life. The visitors left Richmond and its neighbourhood with one general wish, that that part of the country might be blessed with continued plenty, and its inhabitants ever be rendered happy. Yours, &c, RECIFPOLAVAK"

Other newspaper articles are used as fill-ins and this one seems a political play on Hannibal McArthur's influence and manoeuvres. Nevertheless dance or tune references in the satire would surely at least indicate they were known, even although I could not find anything on the latter two dances referenced. John McArthur of course introduced Merino Sheep to Australia and had not been short on tussles with the various Governors of the day. Heather Clarke points out Hannibal Macarthur was a relation of the famous John and prominent in his own right. He lived in a grand residence called the Vineyards near Parramatta in Sydney. One of his daughter's kept a very informative diary in which she described dancing, music and balls. Mostly she writes about reels.

This account mentions 'The Downfall of Paris' and 'Off She Goes', also I wonder if the Carthaginian's Finale is really the Carthaginian's Fandango ('Guaracha Waltz') profiled in the last chapter, part 7:-

The Sydney Gazette 3/10/1825

"Let the Law have its course," says the magnanimous Australian. This is a sentiment that might be expected from a paid Editor, and re-tained Lawyer, and is decidedly characteristic of the personage who would fain make the Public believe that he is still the Organ of Independence. We admit that he may correctly enough be designated an organ, as we understand it is seldom that such an instrument plays only one tune, and we are aware that some of these instruments have many barrels, each of which contains airs, waltzes, country dances, marches, &c. &c. more or less-just so it is with the Australian, since this organ does not possess the tone of independence, and the only time which it now keeps up, with any degree of faithfulness and skill, is that of a new Australian country-dance, not inaptly termed, "The Carthaginian's Finale," independent of which universally admired dance, there has been lately got up, by the aid of combined talent, every solemn piece of music, that is set to the "dead march in Saul," but to this our contemporary has not yet affixed a title, since there seems to be a dispute whether the said dirge should be designated, "The Retreat unavoidable," or, "The Downfall of P----" It is rather lamentable that parties should be in such sad spirits, for, were we consulted, we would have advised them to get up some new brilliant piece forthwith, and call it "Off she goes." But, to be a little serious, we are not much surprised to find men grumbling at the bread being taken out of their mouth-the sovereigns from their pocket-and the fleecy animals from their newly formed flocks ; and we have no doubt it would be more congenial with the views of these legal Gents, if their opinion had been consulted in many instances by the Legislative Council, previously to the passing of Acts which strike at the root of all their aspirations after wealth and its attendants. We also heard of the intention of the Governor in Council to pass an Act of Indemnity, but our information could not have been so early as that whence the Australian elicited his, since our contemporary has not a source open to him through which he will be able to arrive at particular facts on which it would be presumptuous in us to descant, until the same came before the Public in an official shape; and the petition of Mr. Hannibal McArthur has considerably enlightened our mind on this singular subject.

Newer European Dances

The following advertisement shows a rising demand for European dances and in the following year Mazurkas are included in the advertisements. Bear in mind it is aimed at a select and wealthy clientele.

Sydney Gazette 14th March 1833 'DANCING ACADEMY'

MR. CAVENDISH de CASTELL,

“Member of the Royal Academy and Conservatoire, Paris, respectfully announces that his “Salle de Danse”, will open for the season, at his residence, Macquarie Place, on Tuesday 26th instant, and continue on the Tuesdays and Fridays following for every species of fashionable dancing; Minuets, Gavottes, Quadrilles, Swedish, Spanish and Polish dances, Bolero's, Muscovian and Circassian Circles, Galopades, the Grand Polonaise and Gymnastic exercises. Morning Academy at 12 for Ladies, evening at 7 for Gentlemen. The monthly balls will be under the direction of the Gentlemen Subscribers, who will act as Stewards in succession. Terms, including the Soirées, two guineas per quarter. Parties desiring it may form private classes at their more suitable convenience.

The Quadrille, Waltz, Gallopades (Galop) and Spanish Waltzes (Guaracha) were well established by this time in Australia and the old Country Dances were on the way to being extinguished by the rising popularity of more quadrilles and couples dances from Europe. 'Quadrille parties' were frequently advertised in the 1820s and lasted throughout the nineteenth century. If there was a possibility of the lingering-on of the English Country Dance and (associate French Contredanse, Cotillon and Écossaise) after the mid 1830s, they received the final nail in the coffin with the arrival of the Polka and 'polka-mania' in 1844. Also the Lancers Quadrille (presumed English as the first known description is from Dublin in 1817) had not received much attention until suddenly becoming extremely popular mid-nineteenth century and lasting through the next 100 years. It is still known in some country districts. Whilst England appeared to have discarded much of their country dances until collection and a revival over 80 years later by Cecil Sharp, Scotland and Ireland in comparison held onto more of the older traditions of the Country Dance, Jig and Reel. It is likely Australia followed suit at informal house and community gatherings in areas settled by the Scots and Irish. Campbell Town in Tasmania was a Scottish settled area and Gaelic speaking in those early days.

The following online newspaper reference from the National Library of New Zealand gives an excellent account of a ball in Scotland where Queen Victoria's daughter Louisa is the guest and the excitement created when she participates in a country dance of length of 100 couples and everybody in turn touches her fingertips as the figure progressives down the set.

Daily Southern Cross (New Zealand) 27 December 1871

'Princess Louisa Among The Scots'

The Inverary correspondent of the London Daily Telegraph, speaking of the ball, says:

“There was no mauvaise honte about the tenantry, and no condescension about the landowners; for at last all were on a footing of perfect equality. As if to give the very note to the evening's music, the Princess danced the first set of quadrilles with the Provost; while Lord Lorne handed Mrs. McArthur to the floor. Later the Princess descended still lower in the social scale, and with even happier effect, for in a reel she took the hand of an old man – a small farmer and the oldest tenant on the estate. With him she turned and twisted, and jerked and trotted and hopped, and went through the wonderful eccentricities of activity that make up this frenzied Highland dance. It was right pleasant to watch her genial manner, and very amusing to see how the tenant, who throughout the dance had been as self-possessed as Lord Chesterfield could have desired, made at his conclusion his salaam and pulled an imaginary lock from his bald brow.

The Princess's next partner was the Duke's agent or steward, who was taken up to the Prince by her husband. The damsels whom Lord Lorne danced with need not be particularised, for I do not know that a man deserves much special credit for flirting with a

number of pretty girls, and the young bridegroom certainly did not throw his handkerchief to the ugliest. The greatest delight to the people was when the Princess joined in a country dance, for then everybody in the room had an opportunity of holding for a moment the tips of her fingers; and what country dances they were! At least a hundred couples stood close packed in a single line of the run from top to bottom. It would have knocked all the life out of a London exquisite to have seen the Highlanders revelling in activity; and when the mere exercise of their legs was insufficient to express their delight, they shouted with all the power of their healthy lungs. The tramping, shrieking couples made the flooring rebound again; and when the quick step began in the 'Reel of Tulloch', the rafters rang again with the echoes of weighty foot-steps and emphatic shouts. At this moment the aspect of the ball-room, if by no means so splendidly dazzling as last week, was even more characteristic. Kilts there were enough. Besides those of the Inverary Volunteers, whose brilliant martial appearance I have several times alluded to, there was a good many military uniforms; and at the last moment the Duke sent invitations to the crews of the 'Columbia' and 'Northumbria'.

There is one ball programme I found in the Argus (Melbourne) of Monday 24th September 1855 in which several Scottish connected Country Dances and Reels are listed and this I would have thought not as typical for the era (except in more rustic situations). However it seems to be a special occasion dedicated to the French Emperor Napoleon III. Over that period (March 1854–March 1856) Napoleon III's challenge to Russia's claims to influence in the Ottoman Empire led to France's successful participation in the Crimean War. A French alliance with Britain was established, which continued after the war's close. The defeat of Russia and the alliance with Britain and presumably some connection with the Scottish regiments gave France increased authority in Europe. I can only guess it is something like this that caused a ball in Melbourne to have the dedication and Scottish dances included as well as perhaps indicating they were still 'known dances'. At any rate, the usual Quadrille, Caledonians, Lancers, Waltz, Polka, Galop and Schottische held place, but alongside and between each one was the Scotch Reel to *Green Grow the Rushes O*, Country Dance to *Flowers of Edinburgh*, Scotch Dance to *Charlie is my Darling*, *Blue Bonnets* Country Dance and the ball concluding with another Scotch Reel. The Highland Fling was also listed to the Tullochgorum tune; presumably this was an item perhaps symbolic of a victory in the Crimea. The other possibility is that it may have been the new *Highland Fling Schottische*; it certainly seems programmed as a dance rather than an item.

Whilst the Country Dance had become rather tedious and boring at the end of its life with the long periods of standing out, it has seen a rebirth of interest following the revival of modern 'bush dances' as well as healthy patronage of Playford Dancing, American Contra Dancing, Scottish and Irish dancing and Jane Austen's series that have profiled English dances of the Regency Period. The 'modern traditional' style programmes offer variety between time signatures, formations and countries of origin and generally less standing out time than existed in the turn of the 18th -19th century.

This contrasts sharply with original country dances which occasionally had up to 25 couples or more. If performed correctly all the way to the bottom and back to the top following the lead couple, it could take up to an hour or so to the one tune. Generally however in many of the standard venues 10 to 12 couples would be more the norm. Following the ordeals of the Napoleonic wars the young soldiers returning home wanted nothing of the tradition of the old guard and were ready to break out with the new. 'Quadrille-mania' and the 'indecorous' German waltz were upon merry old England whose dancing instructors were now free to glean information about the latest from France.

In this next reference the fact the quadrilles are well and truly the dominant fashion is highlighted, but also that a special country dance is featured to honour the visit to England of the young Queen of Portugal. The dance is referred to as 'The Brazilian', but it is likely the music is the special theme and that the figures selected would be very well known; nobody in society in such a

prestigious event would want to be caught putting a foot wrong or being led on too much of a 'mysterious merry dance'.

Colonial Times (Hobart, Tas.: 1828-1857) Friday 17th July 1829

"The young Queen arrived at 7 o'clock, with her Suite in two carriages and four ; her Majesty was attended by the Spanish Marquises and Marchionesses: the Queen was received on alighting from her carriage by the Duke and Duchess of Clarence who conducted her Majesty to the Ball-room; the Band played a regimental march (Sergio in Handel).

The Quadrille Band commenced playing; sets of Quadrilles which were arranged by Mr. Kendon, the young Queen's dancing master. Her Majesty danced with the sons of Foreign Ambassadors in the order in which they took in the English Court; first set Prince Liemen, next set Prince Poingnac, and the third set with Count Cilenzo, the son of the Marquis De Parmeela. Some of the visitors brought as many as seven children; the band played the celebrated march composed for Bonaparte's Coronation, in very superior style. Quadrilles were danced until just previous to the company proceeding to supper, when a country dance was called for (the "Brazilian," in honor of the Queen), which was led off by the young Queen and Master Arthur Wood, son of Colonel Wood. The young Queen seemed to enjoy the change and dances remarkably well; at half past ten the dancing ceased and the Company were led into the old dining room, where a very elegant supper was laid out for them. The young Queen departed at 11 o'clock, her Majesty was conducted to the carriage by the Duke of Clarence:"

One could imagine society in Hobart clambering for details of the 'Brazilian'.

The mention of Downfall of Paris in the earlier newspaper report was a bonus. It meant I could reference it as a country dance most likely known out here as surely readers would be up with the 'play' in the satirical account. Downfall of Paris is a tremendous tune in which details of origin are extremely interesting. It developed from a French revolutionary song *Ça Ira* with words vehemently aimed at the aristocracy. These words have been forwarded by Chris J Brady in England with other information variously given to him by Paul Roberts and Frances .

*"Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine aristocrats to the lamp-post
Ah! It'll be fine, It'll be fine, It'll be fine the aristocrats, we'll hang them!
And when we'll have hung them all, We'll stuff a spade up their arse"*

*According to Winstock "Songs & Music of the Redcoats" the tune entered British military tradition when bandsmen of the 14th (Bedfordshire) Regiment played the French "their own damned tune" at the battle of Famars in 1793. I have seen several references to this being the West Yorks Regiment but Winstock is clear it is the 14th and cites good sources for the story. So the British Army is almost certainly the origin of the "Downfall" title and very likely of the extended variation setting of the tune known to traditional musicians in the British Isles and north America - and indeed of the basic theme tune of that setting, which is significantly different to *Ça Ira*. This came from a talk and the information from a musician in the Napoleonic Association.*

*Thus the tune was renamed and played by one of the British Regiments as an informal battle honour. Their Colonel was reputed to have ordered his band to play the tune during the final charge to victory, with a statement along the lines of "We'll beat the Froggies with their own damned tune". "After Waterloo, ... every band of music in the Austrian, Prussian and Russian armies, while they marched past the group of kings, played the tune called "The Downfall of Paris" the tune serenading the most autocratic monarchs in Europe was, by its other name, the savage "*Ça Ira*" song of the first and bloodiest French Revolutionaries..."*

Certainly Wilson has both the tune and dance description(s) for the Downfall of Paris and Ça Ira in his 'The companion to the Ball Room' 1816. Another reference says The tune 'Downfall of Paris' appears to have been composed originally as a contredanse (Carillon Nationale) and subsequently used by Ladré and Le Fayette for Ça Ira.

The Country Dance is basically -
top couple swing with right hand round one couple, then swing with left, second couple do the same, down the middle, up again, allemande, and swing corners, lead outsides and turn you partner; set three across and three in your places, lead through bottom and top, hand four at bottom, and right and left at top. I would presume it to be a triple minor longways for as many as will.

The tune quickly moved into Irish aural circulation by or soon after Waterloo and an Irish set dance (routine of steps) is reputed to be the first set ever dance in the Irish step dance tradition. It's a hornpipe in the Irish step dance tradition, called a 'set dance' - that is a set routine of steps choreographed to the tune and is not connected in anyway to the Country Dance by Wilson.

The Dubliners play a fine rendition of the Downfall of Paris and in New Zealand in the 1970s 'The Ginger Minge Bush Band' put out a cassette which included a brilliant version.

The tune can also be found on You Tube played by Eugene O'Donnell, one of the best fiddlers of Irish dance music. The link is:- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1aF1ttdXg>

The Downfall of Paris
(From Thomas Wilson's 'The companion to the Ball Room' London 1816)

D A D A7
9 D A D G D/A A7 D
17 A7 D
25 A D G D G D/A A7 D
33 D A D A D A7
41 A7 D A7 D