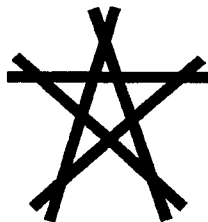


CDS Boston News



Winter 1993

Correction to Playford Ball dates:
*** Saturday 5 March 1994 ***
*** Editor Wanted for CDS News ***
Apply to, or send news items to:
Art Anger, MIT Box 227, Cambridge, MA 02139

➔ **Deadline for Spring Newsletter:**
January 30, 1994. Details, page 12.

Dance Away Your Cares!

In my decades of experience, an evening of dancing has usually left me feeling better than when I arrived.

When I might have spent a miserable evening at home still stuffed up with the remains of a head cold, or muscles complaining from over-use or under-use, the activity and sociability of a dance have diverted my attention from the discomfort—and my condition has been improved by the exercise.

Discomforts of the mind, too, can at least be avoided temporarily, and sometimes abated, by the same double dose of exercise and sociability. While my most frequent home remedy for a spell of indecision or disappointment is a nap, a timely dance opportunity also offers welcome relief. Concentrating on where to move next, how to get there on time, and (eventually) how to do it gracefully or entertainingly is a powerful distraction from other cares.

There is certainly substantial diversion for musically inclined people. We are fortunate to have inherited a wide variety of dance tunes to enliven our experience, and to have many musicians willing and able to play a large portion of them for us. Although they play some favorites often enough for us to greet them as old friends (by name), they also play lesser known tunes often enough to put a different feel in our step and keep us listening.

A few of us have the good fortune of being able to dance with good friends known in other areas of life. Some have had the good fortune of being able to expand dance acquaintanceships into friendships for other areas of life. We shouldn't discount, however, the benefits of those limited relationships which flourish, sometimes dramati-

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'93-'94 Winter Dance Calendar on pages 4-7.

Boston Centre CDS Officers listed on page 8.

News, notes & items of interest to the CDS community on pages 7-12. We invite your news (see page 12)!

English Country Dancing at the Boston Centre, 1963-1993

In September 1963 Helene Cornelius replaced Louise Chapin as the English Country Dance teacher at the CDS Boston Centre. For 13 years she was the only Boston Centre Country Dance teacher; for the next 3 years she split the teaching with George Fogg, and for the past 14 years she has served as the master teacher while sharing the teaching with 3-7 associates each year. During those 30 years Helene kept records of all the dances that were taught or done without teaching at the various classes, parties, workshops, Balls, and other Boston Centre happenings. Warning that she probably has occasionally missed writing down a dance, she loaned me those records, and I have entered them into a Macintosh computer. Restricting the data slightly [including only activities that occurred in the regular program year, mid-September through mid-June, and excluding those occasional gatherings at which dancing was secondary (e.g., annual meetings, Christmas parties)], I sorted and analyzed the information in a few simple ways to look at general patterns and numbers. The results offer some unique details on English Country Dancing and its teaching at the Boston Centre during this period. This note gives a short summary of those results.

Consider first the annual program. In that first year, '63-'64 [denoted F64, after the year in which it finished], the program consisted of 36 Wednesday classes, each 1.5 hours long, and all dances were taught. In the next 10 years the program showed only small changes—classes remained 1.5 hours long, with the number of classes varying between 36 and 39, but, starting with F66, time was made at the end of each class for a few dances done without teaching, and 1 or 2 Saturday night parties were included each year. In F75 the number of parties jumped to 6 (with several on Wednesdays), increasing to 8 in F76. Major changes occurred in F77, when the length of the Wednesday session was almost doubled and a second teacher was added. This longer session was retained in succeeding years, the length varying

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English Dancing in the Boston Centre, 1963–1993

continued from page 1

between 2.5 and 3.0 hours, with the number of classes ranging between 35 and 39; the Wednesday and Saturday parties continued for several years at approximately 6 per year. In F80 the single second teacher was replaced by 7 associates ("apprentice teachers") whose combined teaching load approximated that of the master teacher; that multiple-associate system has continued ever since, with the number of associates varying between 3 and 7. There have been 11 different associates to date. Several extra events were started in this general period: F80 saw the first Saturday afternoon workshops for more experienced dancers, which continued at 1 or 2 per year for 4 years; F81 had the first annual Playford Ball; and F82 introduced the "First Friday" dances for experienced dancers, which expanded from 4 that year up to 12 in F85 and F86 (including several Third Sundays) and continue now at 9 per year. A side effect of these extra events was the decrease in parties to approximately 4 per year, all on Wednesdays, beginning in F84. In this last year, F93, the program included 36 Wednesday classes (with

untaught request dances in the last 45 minutes), 3 parties, and 9 First Friday experienced dances, all 2.75 hours long, plus Playford Ball #13. Fig. 1a shows a gross measure of this activity, the total number of hours in the complete program for the various years.

Consider next a few general dance numbers. Fig. 1b shows the total number of dances done each year [a dance taught in class and then repeated in the request period counts as done twice] and, in dashed line, the number of different dances done each year. Note that in the first 13 years, with Helene the sole teacher, the total time increased 30% but the total dances done increased 85%. The 70-80% increase in class length from F77 onwards of course gave more dancing, and the dance total now seems to have levelled off at about 670 per year. The number of different dances done each year has grown similarly, a result of the wide interests of all the teachers, and now averages about 260 per year. Fig. 1c gives the number of dances new to our repertoire introduced each year ["new" meaning not done in any previous

Boston Centre program year from F64 on]. The variations partly reflect the fluctuations of new material [e.g., around F86, the interpretations of the Neal dances published by teachers Fogg and Jackson]; the average number now is about 25 new dances per year, roughly 10% of the number of different dances. The specific dance numbers for F93 are: 663 total dances, 265 different dances, and 23 new dances. The grand total for all 30 years: 15,275 dances.

The "Total Repertoire" for these 30 years (the sum of all the "new" dances") includes 883 dances. Most were taken from a multitude of published sources (100 dance books or collections, various issues of 4 journals or newsletters, liner notes for 3 records, and 2 single sheets; 128 come from Sharp's 5 books); approximately 10% are unpublished, and 5 dances can no longer be identified. [The use of a variety of sources has been the rule right from the start; in F64 the 81 "new" dances came from 15 published collections.] The diversity of sources indicates the variety of dances. These dances of course varied widely in overall acceptance. A

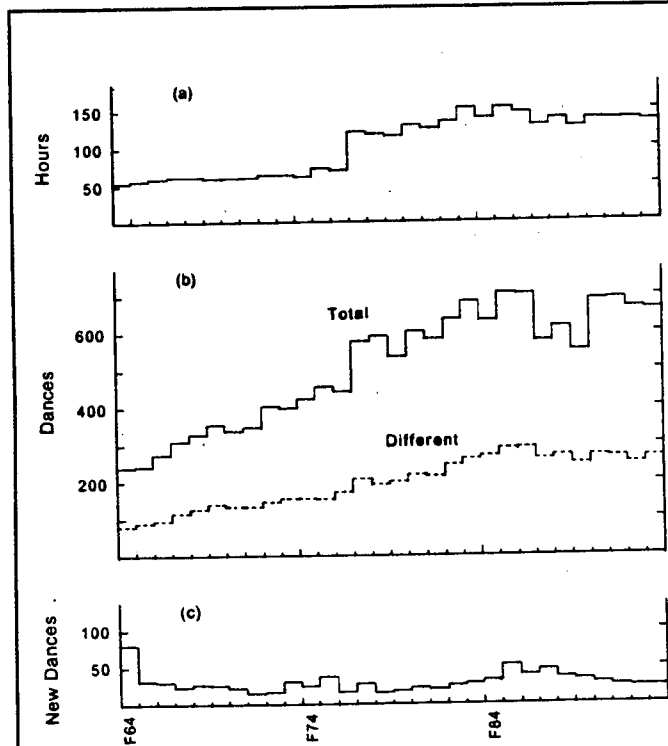


Figure 1

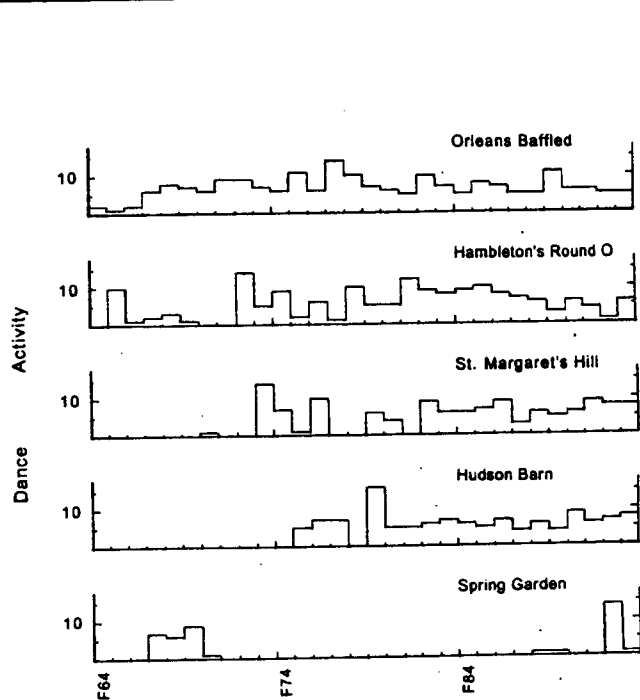


Figure 2

Table I: Perennials

F64	<i>Childgrove, Dressed Ship, Indian Queen, Lilli Burlero, Orleans Baffled, Prince William, Quaker's Wife, Sadler's Wells, Scotch Cap</i>
F66	<i>Up with Aily</i>
F67	<i>Fandango</i>
F69	<i>Jamaica</i>
F70	<i>John Tallis' Canon</i>
F72	<i>Jack's Health</i>
F75	<i>Bare Necessities, Long Live London</i>
F76	<i>Gigue for Genny, Helene's Night Out</i>
F78	<i>Kelsterne Gardens</i>

simple distribution analysis has yielded a table of the activity for each dance (that is, the number of times it was done in a year) for every year since its introduction. The first year, F64, included unusually strong selections: of the 81 dances introduced, 9 (11%) were done at least once in every year since then, and all were done in at least one other year. The next 14 years (F65-F78) show more typical results: out of the total of 352 "new" dances introduced in that period, only 10 (3%) were done in every subsequent year, while 71 of them (20%) were not done in any other year. [Data for the second 15 years were not used for such percentages because of shorter time spans.] The 19 dances from the first 15 years that were done in every succeeding year are listed in Table I.

Orleans Baffled was done a total of 202 times in this 30 year period, the most by far of any dance in the entire repertoire. Second highest was *Hambleton's Round O*, at 163; the rest, starting with *Up with Aily* (139), *Newcastle* (136), and *Nonesuch* (134), follow close together. These leaders were all introduced in the first few years of this period; some dances introduced later show comparable high activity over their shorter spans.

Plots of activity-vs-time for a given dance can show striking fluctuations; examples for a few popular dances are given in Fig. 2. Note particularly *Hambleton's Round O* — one of the dances done either most often or second most often in 10 separate years — was not done at all in F70 or F71.

These activity numbers reflect both teacher choices and dancer requests: a dance may be taught several times in a year if it is a more challenging or is used in a demonstration or as a Ball special; with such repetition the dancers are more likely to remember its name and how they liked it and thus request it more often. Of course, the recent Dance-of-the-Month tactic surely yields a significant activity spike. The more difficult dances are more dependent on teaching and thus are done more sporadically, for example, *Spring Garden*, shown as the last plot of Fig. 2.

Despite the lack of any accepted definition, I want to draw from these data a list of the "Favored Repertoire." One useful measure is an average of the activity of the dance over the years since its introduction, denoted $\langle N/Yr \rangle$. Another is the number of years in which the dance was one of those done either most often or second most often, denoted NTop. I arbitrarily define a dance to be in the "favored" repertoire if it was introduced at least 6 years ago (a minimum tenure) and either (a) it was done in every year since then, and it had $\langle N/Yr \rangle \geq 4.5$; or (b) it was among the dances done most often or second most often in at least one year (NTop ≥ 1), and it had $\langle N/Yr \rangle \geq 3.5$. With those criteria, the favored repertoire contains 32 dances, 4% of the total repertoire, as listed in Table II. [Note that 19 of these satisfy criteria (a), while 28 satisfy criteria (b).]

These dances include Longways, 3- and 4-couple Sets, and Sicilian Circle formations, with a wide variety of patterns and music; 6 were introduced in F64, the rest irregularly thereafter. They include both interpretations of 17th and 18th century dances and modern creations, in an almost 2:1 ratio. 8 are also "Perennials". While one could alter the criteria to exclude some dances and/or include others to suit a personal preference, the set of dances selected here forms

a reasonable sample of the dances favored at the Boston Centre over the past 30 years.

A copy of the full printouts—the table of yearly activity for all the dances, a list of dance sources, auxiliary data on the dance programs, and related analyses and compilations—and a set of the complete data (HyperCard stacks) and associated programs have been given to the CDS Boston Centre library.

The assistance of George Fogg and other Boston Centre teachers in identifying various dances and sources is gratefully acknowledged. Particular thanks are due to Helene Cornelius both for the use of her records and for her continued help on many program and dance questions.

Chris Walker

Table II: Favored Repertoire

Dance	Introduced	$\langle N/Yr \rangle$	NTop
<i>All Saints Day</i>	F85	5.2	1
<i>Apley House</i>	F64	3.7	1
<i>Bellamira</i>	F67	4.7	3
<i>Bonny Cuckoo</i>	F86	5.9	1
<i>Dublin Bay</i>	F65	3.9	1
<i>Easter Thursday</i>	F80	5.3	1
<i>Fair and Softly</i>	F85	4.9	1
<i>Gigue for Genny</i>	F76	6.0	3
<i>Hambleton's Round O</i>	F65	5.6	10
<i>Heidenröslein</i>	F87	3.9	1
<i>Hudson Barn</i>	F75	6.4	2
<i>Indian Queen</i>	F64	3.5	1
<i>Irish Lamentation</i>	F82	4.4	1
<i>Jack's Health</i>	F72	4.7	
<i>John Tallis' Canon</i>	F70	4.8	3
<i>Kelsterne Gardens</i>	F78	4.8	
<i>Knives and Forks</i>	F85	6.9	2
<i>Long Live London</i>	F75	5.2	1
<i>Mr. Beveridge's Maggot</i>	F64	3.6	2
<i>Newcastle</i>	F64	4.5	3
<i>News from Tripoly</i>	F80	4.7	
<i>Nonesuch</i>	F64	4.5	1
<i>Orleans Baffled</i>	F64	6.7	5
<i>Punch Bowl</i>	F87	5.3	1
<i>Round about Our Coal Fire</i>	F88	4.8	
<i>Slof Galliard</i>	F82	5.1	1
<i>Smithy Hill</i>	F88	6.3	2
<i>St. Andrew's Assembly</i>	F82	4.3	1
<i>St. Margaret's Hill</i>	F70	5.2	4
<i>St. Martin's Lane</i>	F88	4.7	1
<i>Sun Assembly</i>	F85	6.0	1
<i>Up with Aily</i>	F66	5.0	4