

The Benign Presence

A 32 bar strathspey for three couples in a longwise set. This is for Rachel Wilton who has benignly presided over London Branch for many years. She was told that all she needed to do as honorary president was go around smiling and talking to people. So in this dance 1st couple have a variety of interactions with their corners.

Bars Description

- 1-4 1st and 2nd couples set advancing and take nearer hands facing up. Then 1st couple cast off to 2nd place as 2nd couple dance up to 1st place facing out. 3rd couple turn to face up.
- 5-8 All dance half a mirror reel of three on the sides. 1st couple start down and in. 3rd and 2nd couples end with extra loops.
- 9-16 1st couple turn giving right hands about three quarters to face their 1st corner position. They then turn their 1st corner left hand, partner right hand and 2nd corner left hand to end back to back on the diagonal, facing their 3rd corner position.
- 17-24 1st couple dance corner pass and turn with 3rd corners who turn each other with both hands in the centre. 1st couple pass right shoulder to repeat with 4th corners and shorten their steps to end on their own sides with 1st man just above 2nd man (in 3rd place) and 1st woman just below 3rd woman (in 1st place).
- 25-32 All dance "accompanied rights and lefts". 1st man and 1st woman accompany 2nd man and 3rd woman respectively in alternate half right and half left hands across progressing around each corner anticlockwise while 3rd man and 2nd woman progress clockwise. 1st man is either above or towards the woman's side of his companion while 1st woman is either below or towards the man's side of hers. Initially 1st couple dance ahead of their companions.
- 25-26: 1st woman with 3rd couple (at the top) also 1st man with 2nd couple (at the bottom) dance half right hands across. 1st and 3rd women end side by side in 1st man's place facing down while 1st and 2nd men end side by side in 3rd woman's place facing up. 1st couple are on the outside.
 - 27-28: 1st and 3rd women with 2nd woman also 1st and 2nd men with 3rd man dance half left hands across. 1st and 3rd women end side by side in 3rd man's place while 1st and 2nd men end side by side in 1st woman's place.
 - 29-32: All repeat bars 25-28 from new places, 1st couple now following their companions. On bars 31-32 1st couple shorten their steps to end in 2nd place briefly retaining hands with 3rd man and 2nd woman who make polite turns. All finish back on their own sides in the order 3,1,2.

Music

- Tune: The Pride of Loch Norman (Luke Brady).
- Suitable recording: Chasing the Eclipse (Luke Brady: Take Your Partners For... Vol 5).

| Bar 25 | Bar 27 | Bar 29 | Bar 31 | End |
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- I saw the figure of bars 25-32 being done spontaneously for fun by energetic young German dancers in a quicktime dance which officially ended with the standard rights and lefts for two couples. I thought it would be good to try it more sedately in a strathspey.
- At the time I was not consciously aware of the Wheelie Chain figure by John Drewry which appears in Drummond Castle (and others). The figure here is slightly different in that 1st couple dance round anticlockwise and are ahead of their corner for the first 4 bars whereas in the Wheelie Chain 1st couple dance round clockwise and always follow their corner.