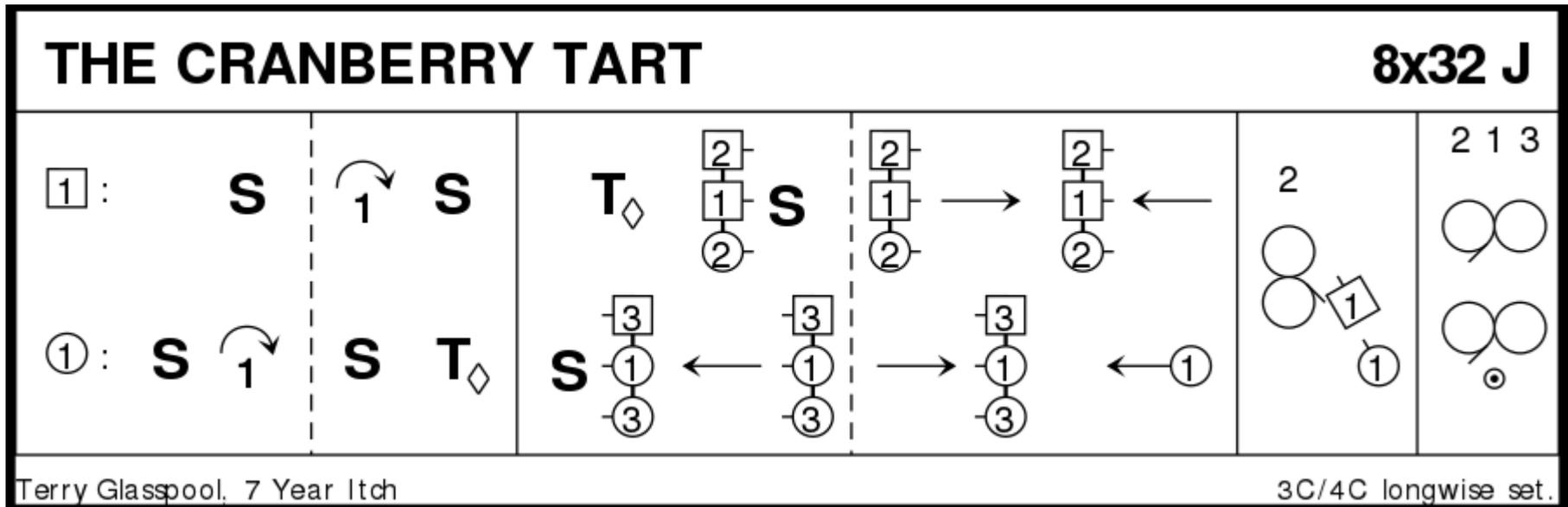


De-Mystifying Scottish Country Dance Diagrams

Lara Friedman-Shedlov
RSCDS Twin Cities Branch

Adapted from material developed by Kjell Mathiesen
Oslo Scottish Country Dance Group

“Pillings” aka Scottish Country Dance Diagrams



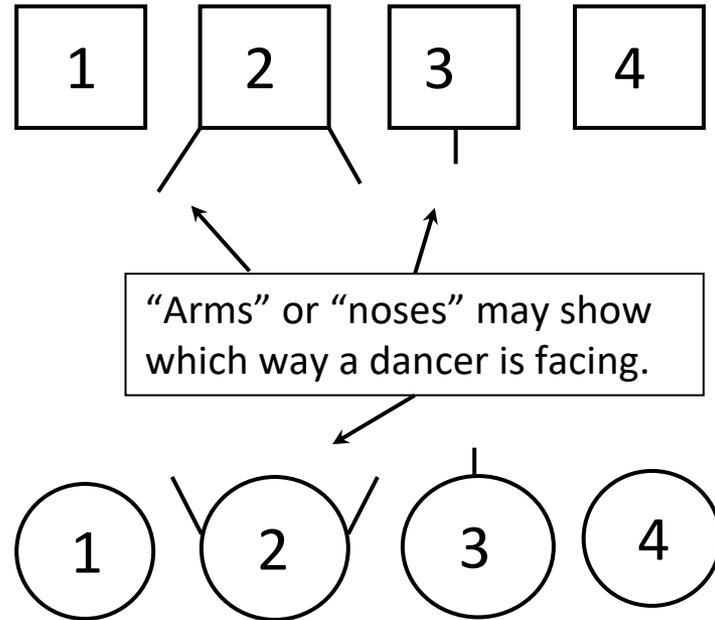
Key to Most Common Dance Diagram Symbols

KEY TO THE SYMBOLS				
○	Man	□	Woman	 Cast off one place
A	Allemande		 Cast up one place	
B	Balance in line		 Lead or dance down one place	
D	Pass back to back		 Lead or dance up one place	
DT	Double triangles		 Six hands round and back	
P	Poussette		 Round to the left only	
R	Repeat previous		 Round to the right only	
RA	Right hands across		 Form arch	
LA	Left hands across		 Pass under arch	
RL	Rights and lefts		 Ladies' chain	
S	Set		 Men's chain	
T	Turn		 First corner position	
X	Cross		 Second corner position	
∞	Reel of three		 Third corner position (Partner's 1st corner)	
∞∞	Reel of four		 Fourth corner position (Partner's 2nd corner)	
✱	Clap		 Set to corners	

	Advance ↑ and retire ↓		Set and turn corners
	Retire and advance		Turn corner, partner, corner, partner
	Lead or dance down and back	HS	Highland Schottische Setting
	Petronella movement for eight bars	PROM	Promenade
	Petronella turn (2 bars)	CHAIN	Grand Chain
	Petronella in tandem (2 bars travelling)	HSP	Highland Schottische Poussette
	Slip steps with both hands joined	Other formations are indicated by their usual names	
Suffixes to Symbols			
R	with Right hand		Leading Man's Reel
L	with Left hand		Advancing
B	with Both hands		Retiring
◇	Petronella		Rotating
Notes			
Spaces between full vertical lines represent eight bars unless otherwise stated.		Broken vertical line halves space into four bar sections	
	Bracketed movements are danced at the same time		Dance movement with hands joined
1 2 RL	Number above symbols indicate couples dancing	RL	Horizontal line halves a figure
			Dancers follow route shown (full line for men, broken line for women)

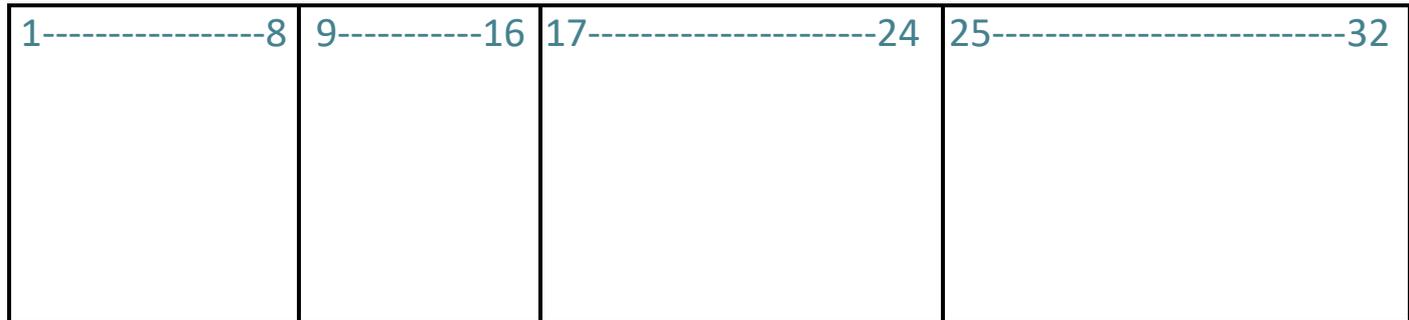
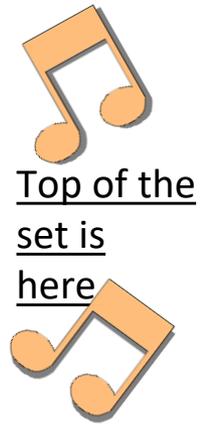
Women are represented by a square

Men are represented by a circle

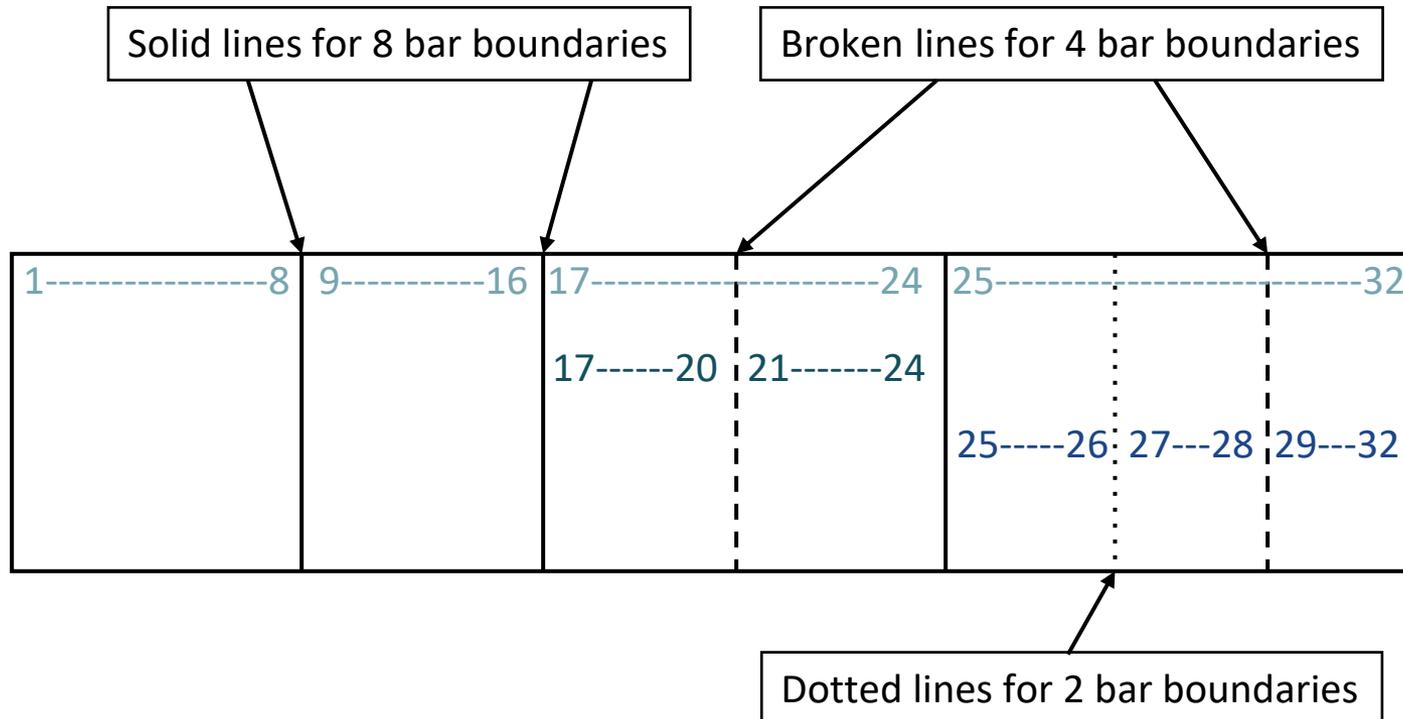


The number denotes which couple in the set the dancer is part of.

A diagram is divided into 8 bar chunks



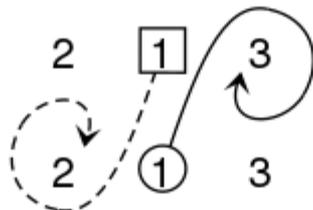
An 8 bar chunk may be subdivided into 4 and/or 2 bar parts



LINNEA'S STRATHSPEY

8x32 S

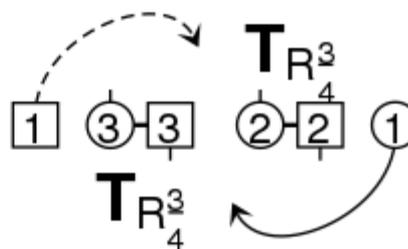
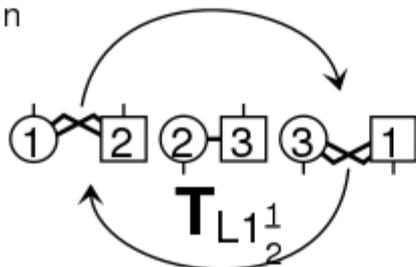
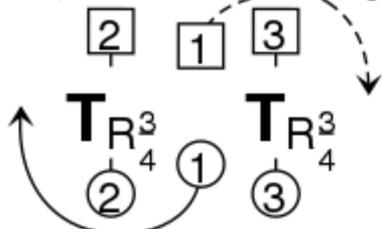
S 



S  **S**



Chaperoned Chain Progression



3 1 2

A

to 2 1 3

Tim Wilson, 2001, Dunsmuir Dances, RSCDS Book 47.2

3C/4C longwise set.

2 bar boundaries either side of a 4 bar formation.

DAVY NICK NACK

8x32 R

1 2 3	1 _x 2 _x 3 _x				
X_R S	X_R S	T_R1¹/₂	1	T_L	T_R1¹/₂ S T_R1¹/₂ T_L
					R
Robert M Campbell, 1965, Glasgow Assembly					3C/4C longwise set.

Phrasing is 4 bars for the right-hand turn, 2 bars for the cast, 2 bars for the left-hand turn

However, it is always an issue how much or how little information one should put into the diagrams.

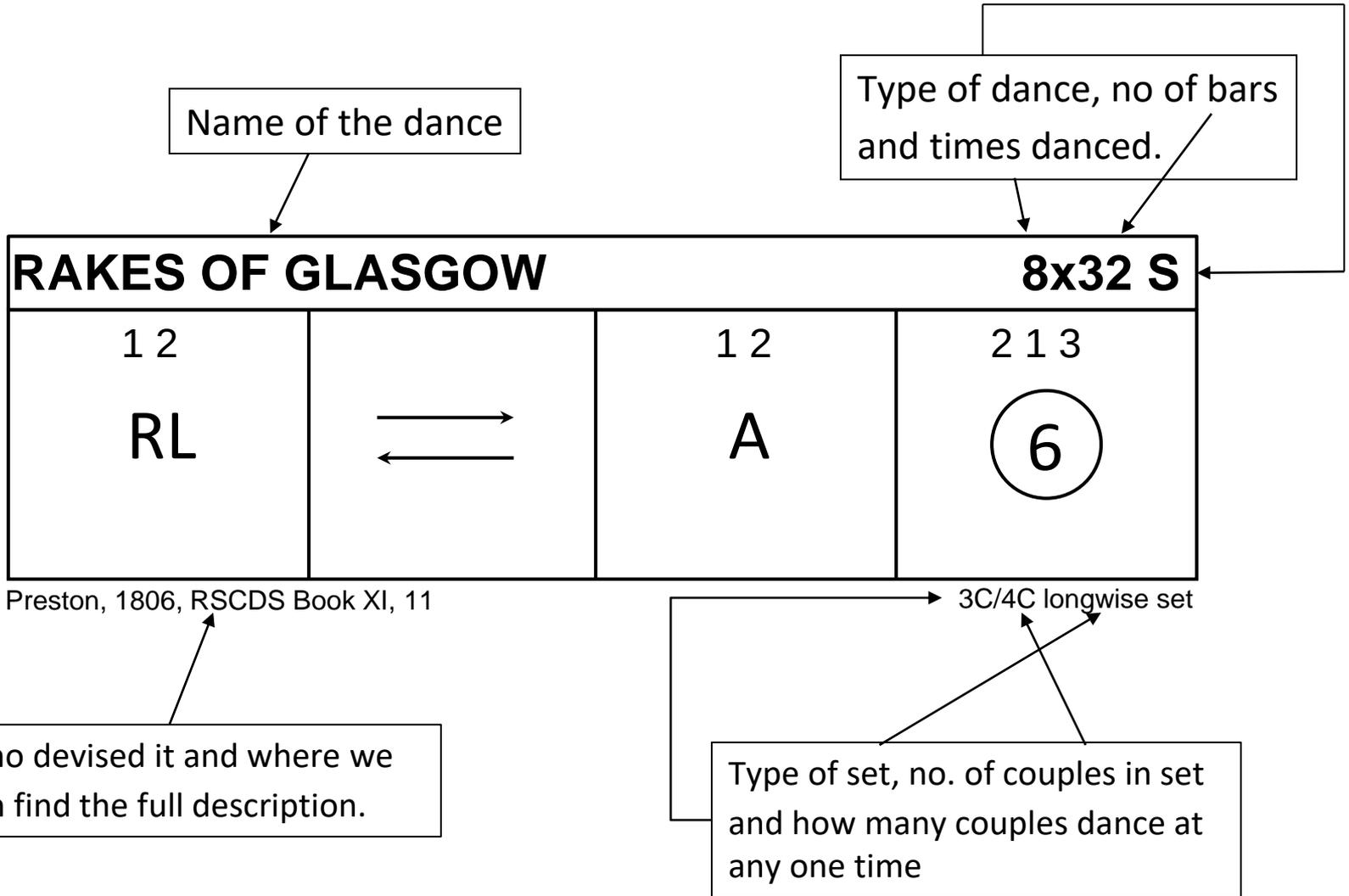
You should never rely on diagrams for learning a dance. They never give the full picture.

The diagrams are only meant as an aide mémoire.

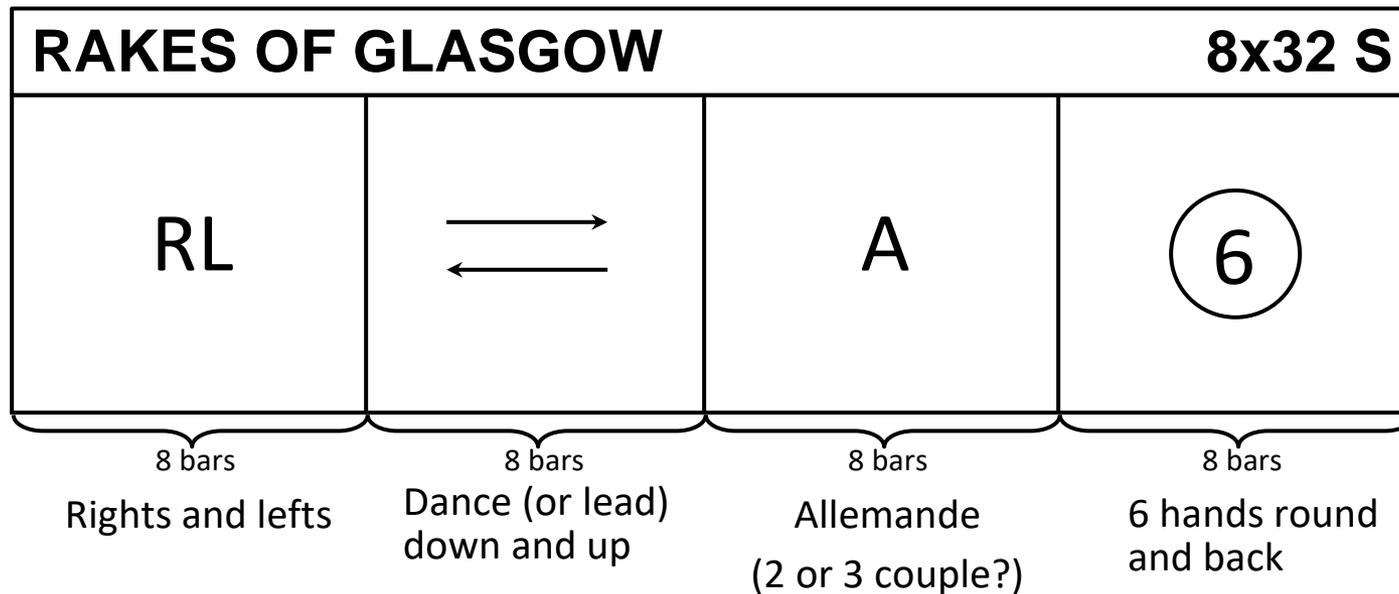
A quick glance, and we know how the dance starts!

So, how do we interpret them?

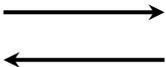
General Information



Interpreting Diagrams: Formation Symbols



But, there are no ladies, no men! Who is dancing?
And what about that Allemande?

RAKES OF GLASGOW			8x32 S
RL		A	

Bars 9-16: Dancing (or leading?) down and up, 1st couple, obviously. Is it 'dance' or 'lead'? The diagram does not tell; we have to know. Since this formation is followed by an Allemande it is most likely a 'lead down and up'.

Bars 17-24: Allemande. Is it a two or three couple Allemande? It is a two couple Allemande. If it were a three couple Allemande it would be indicated.

Bars 25-32: Six hands circle round and back. In order to get the required number of hands we need to involve the next couple down the set, 3rd couple.

Couples involved may be indicated by numbers above the symbol

RAKES OF GLASGOW		8x32 S	
1 2 RL	R	1 2 A	2 1 3 6

"R" suffix indicates lead down with right hands joined

Interpreting Diagrams: Symbols Plus Words

THE CARL CAM' OWER THE CROFT			8x32 R
1 2 3 	1 2 3 PROM	1 2 P	DT

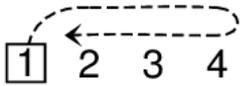
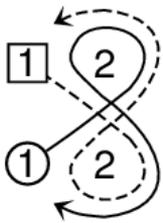
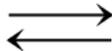
Bars 1-8: Should be obvious

Bars 9-16: PROM = Promenade. One of a number of formations that are described with a word or short phrase (e.g. PROM, RONDEL, DOUBLE FIG. 8)

Bars 17-24: P = poussette

Bars 25-32: DT = Double triangles (not to be confused with D = back-to-back and T=Turn!)

Sometimes words are not enough...

CORN RIGS			8x32 R
			1 2 P

RSCDS Book 4.12

2C/4C longwise set.

Sometimes we must show exactly where a dancer is going by drawing the actual path a dancer is taking. We do this by using lines: a solid line (————) for men and a broken line (- - - - -) for women.

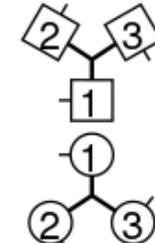
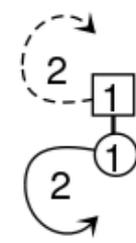
Bars 1-8: 1W and 1M cast behind their own lines down to 4th place, turn inwards and dance up to place. (A single line can say all this!)

Bars 9-16: 1C dance figure of 8 around 2C.

Bars 17-24: Obvious? Not quite! Reel time poussette on next phrase, starting in the middle with both hands joined, could indicate 'dance' but the description says 'lead'!

Bars 25-32: Poussette

More symbols...

ALLT AN DUIN				8x32 R		
 X_R	 X_L	  	 N	 S	 RA LA	
Roy Goldring, Graded and Social Dances 1				3C/4C longwise set.		



= Reel of three



= tail indicates direction of dancer that end, i.e. a left-shoulder reel



= Indicates the leading man's reel (often used when there is more than one reel going on at the same time)

N

= Use nearer hands

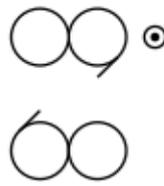
RA

= right hands across

LA

= left hands across

And more symbols...

MRS MACLEOD				8x32 R
1 2 RA	1 2 LA			 X_R
The Ballroom, 1827, RSCDS Book 6.11				3C/4C longwise set.

Bars 1-8: Right hands across and left hands across back to places

Bars 9-16: 1C down the middle and up (lead or dance?)

Bars 17-24: The angles represent 2nd and 1st corner positions, as if you were looking into the corners (1st diagonally to the right and 2nd diagonally to the left). 'S = Set' and 'T = Turn'. The subscript "B" = use both hands, but is optional here because the formation is done with both hands by default.

Bars 25-32: 6-bar reels of three with corners, 1st couple passing 1st corners left shoulder to begin. 1C cross right hands.

More fun with symbols!

THE COLLEGE HORNPIPE			8x32 R
1 2 3 ⑥	1 2 3 PROM	X_R ↻ ₁ X_L ↻ ₁ ↻ ₁	S ⌈ S ⌈ S ⌈ T ⋈ ◇
Boag, 1797, RSCDS Book 20.12			3C/4C longwise set.

Bars 1-8: Should be obvious

Bars 9-16: PROM = Promenade. One of a number of formations that are described with a word or short phrase (e.g. PROM, RONDEL, DOUBLE FIG. 8)

Bars 17-24: Subscript R and L indicate hands for crossing. Arrow symbols for casting off and leading/dancing up can be confusing! Number here indicates how many places, not the couple who does it.

More fun with symbols!

THE COLLEGE HORNPIPE			8x32 R
1 2 3 ⑥	1 2 3 PROM	X_R ↻ ₁ X_L ↻ ₁ ↻ ₁	S ⌈ S ⌈ S ⌈ T ⋈ ◇
Boag, 1797, RSCDS Book 20.12			3C/4C longwise set.

Bars 25-32:

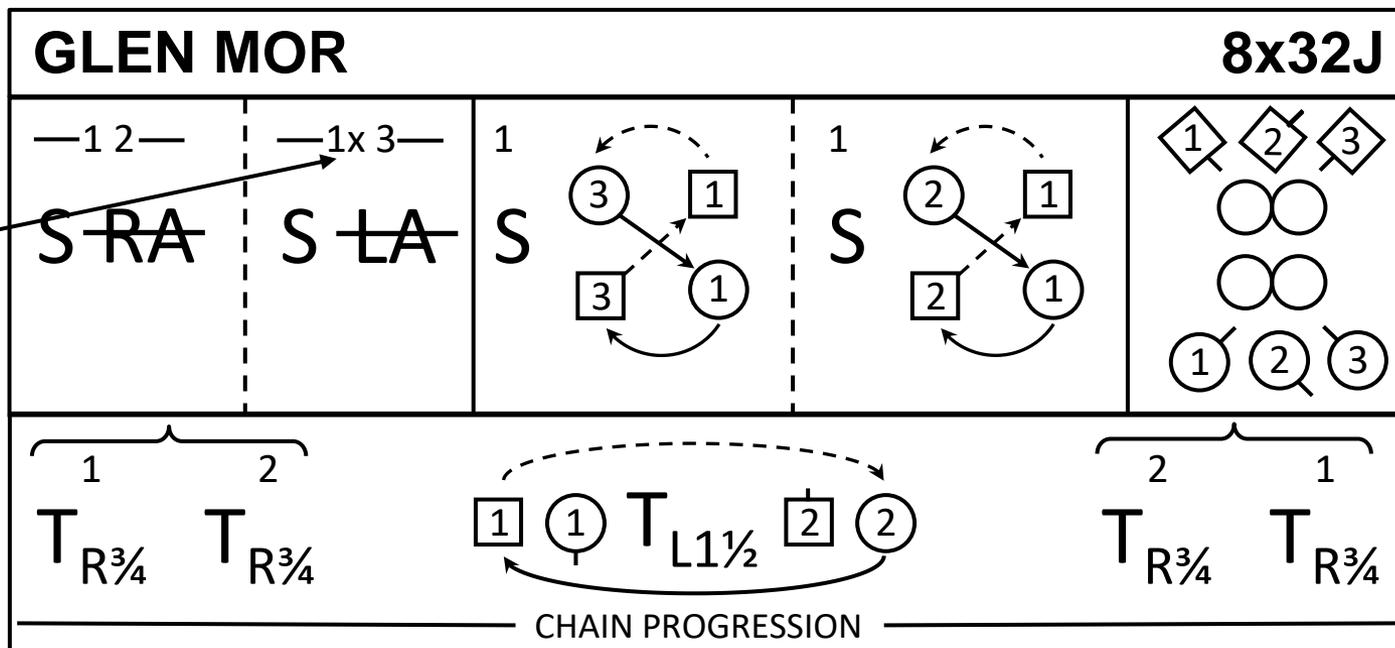
\overline{S} | **S** | \overline{S} | **T** ⋈
◇

These are all well known symbols by now, but put together like this, what do they mean?

(Hint: An S without 'adornment' means 'Set to partner'.)

Answer: Hello-goodbye setting (with a petronella turn and a clap)!

Hmm, getting trickier? Not really.



The 'x' means that this couple are on the opposite sides (crossed over).

Eric Forbes, Birmingham 1973

3C/4C longwise set

Bars 1-8: ~~RA~~ = 'Right hands across' but the horizontal line through RA means that you do half the formation. ~~LA~~ is half 'Left hands across'.

THIS GOES FOR ALL FORMATIONS. **Other examples:**

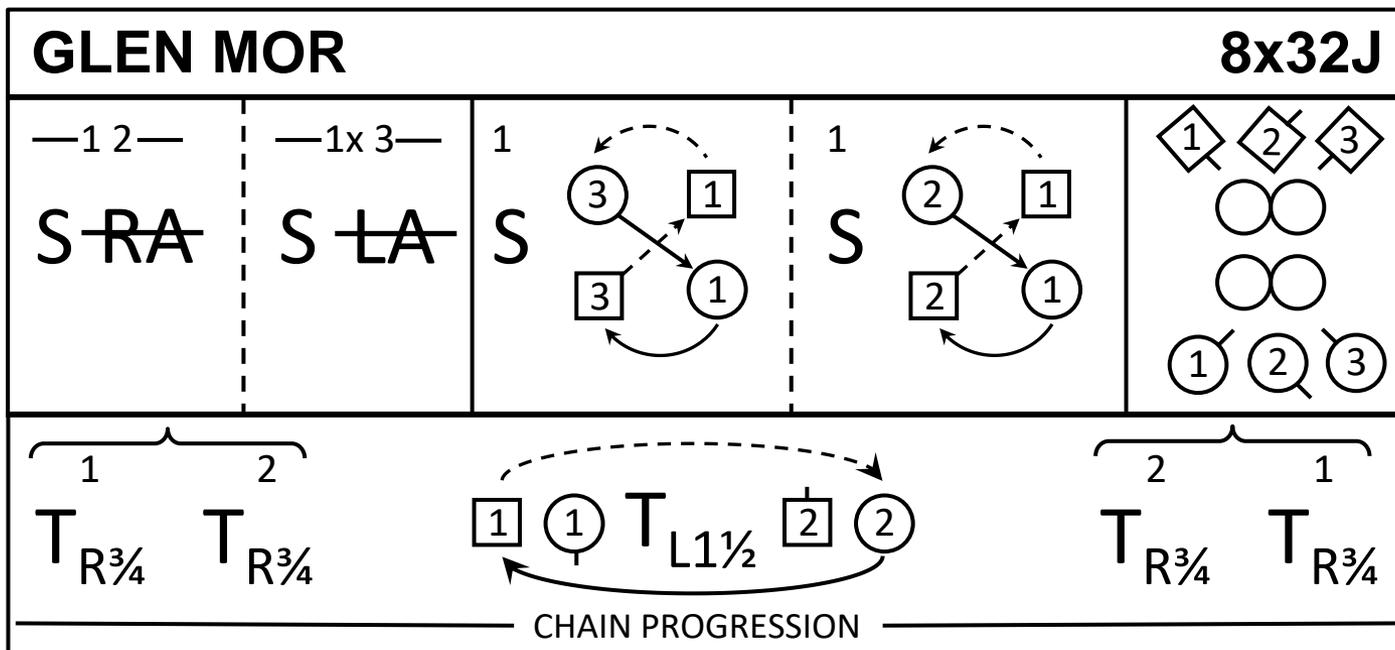
half reel of three

~~CHASE~~ half chase

~~RL~~ half rights and lefts

~~CHAIN~~ half grand chain

Bars 9-16: 1C set and then cast up while 3C cross down. And then the same again with 2C.



Bars 17-24: Here we have two reels on the sides and it is shown explicitly who goes where. (Mirror reels where 3C are the head of the reel and dancing in and up.)

Bars 25-32: The friendly person who has diagrammed this dance could have just written 'CHAIN PROGRESSION'. However, they have gone to the trouble to explain how the formation goes.

T = Turn, and the additional subscript $R\frac{3}{4}$ means 'Right hands three quarter round'. Then we are shown the actual progression, with the 1W & 2M dancing a half chase while 1M & 2W turn left hand one and a half time.

The horizontal brackets show formations which are danced at the same time.

To sum up...

- The diagram is split into 8-bar parts by solid vertical lines.
- An 8-bar part may be subdivided into two 4-bar parts using a broken line and sometimes (but very rarely) into 2-bar parts using a dotted line.
- The top of the set is always at the left end of the diagram.
- The name and type of dance are always stated above the diagram, the deviser, where to find the full description and type of set below the diagram.
- A woman is represented by a square; a man by a circle.
- They may have a 'nose' or 'arms' to indicate which way they are facing or if/how they are holding hands.
- The formations of the dance are shown using a series of symbols in the order they are danced.
- Unless obvious, the dancers involved in a formation are shown by numbers inside the symbols in the formation or above the code for the formation.
- Some symbols, like T and S, can have a subscript suffix like T_B or S_2 which gives further information about how to execute the formation.

Suffixes

Added in subscript to the right of a symbol

R = 'right hand'. Usually used with T (turn): T_R and X (cross): X_R

L = 'left hand'. Usually used with T (turn): T_L and X (cross): X_L

N = 'nearer' hand. Used to indicate dancing down/up as opposed to leading.

B = 'both hands'. Usually used with T (turn): T_B

◇ = 'Petronella'. Used with T (turn): T_\diamond

⊙ = 'leading man's reel'. Used with reels

↑ = 'advancing'. Used with S (set): S_\uparrow

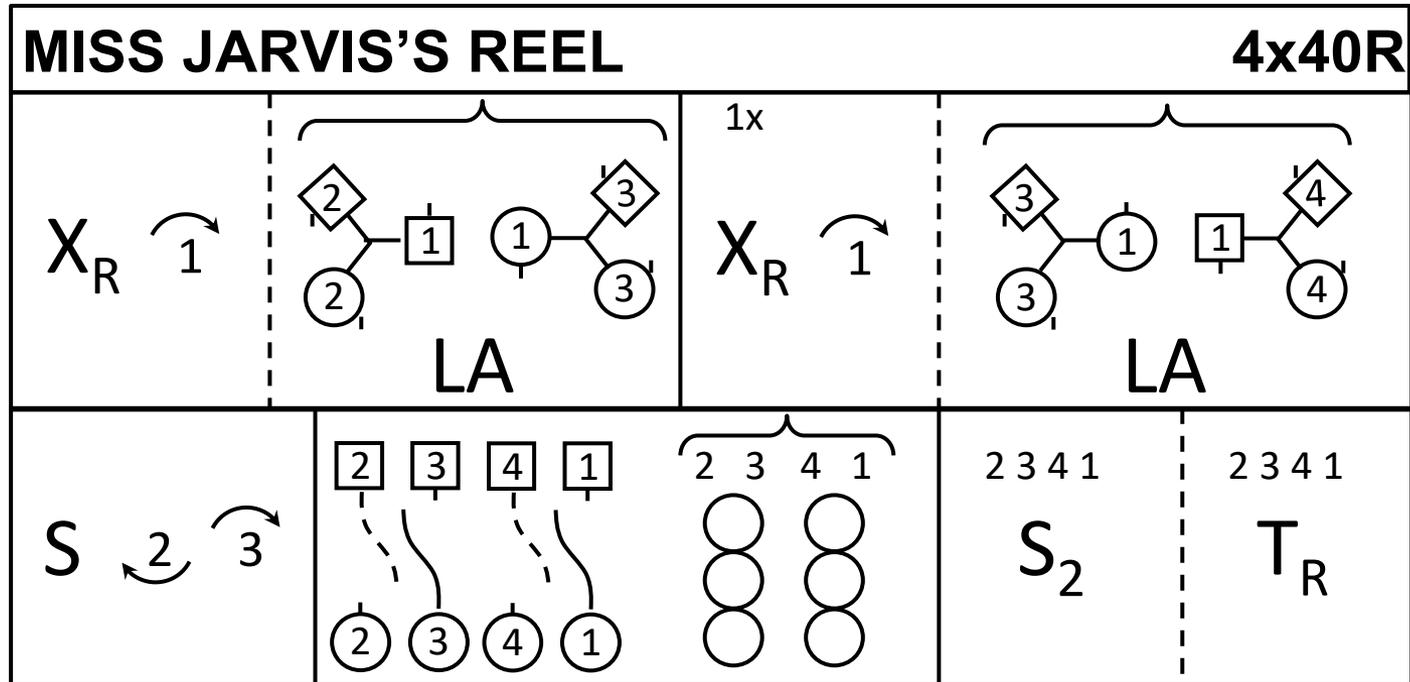
↓ = 'retiring'. Used with S (set): S_\downarrow

↻ = 'rotating/pivoting'. Used with S (set): S_\curvearrowright

Note: The formation 'Advance and retire' has its own symbol: \updownarrow and 'Retire and advance' is denoted: $\downarrow\uparrow$

Sometimes we will see a subscript **number** as a suffix, e.g. $T_{R\frac{3}{4}}$ or $T_{B1\frac{1}{2}}$ or S_2 . This tells us how many times to perform the action, like 'turn right hand three quarter', 'turn both hands one and a half' or 'set twice'.

A couple of new symbols here:



Stirlingshire Branch

4C/4C longwise set

Bars 1-8: **Cross right hand**, cast off one place (four bars) and two simultaneous 'three left hands across' (four bars) where the dancers are specified.

Bars 9-16: Spot the differences from bars 1-8... (Who is dancing where?)

Bars 17-24: 1C set, **dance (or lead) up two places** and cast off three places.

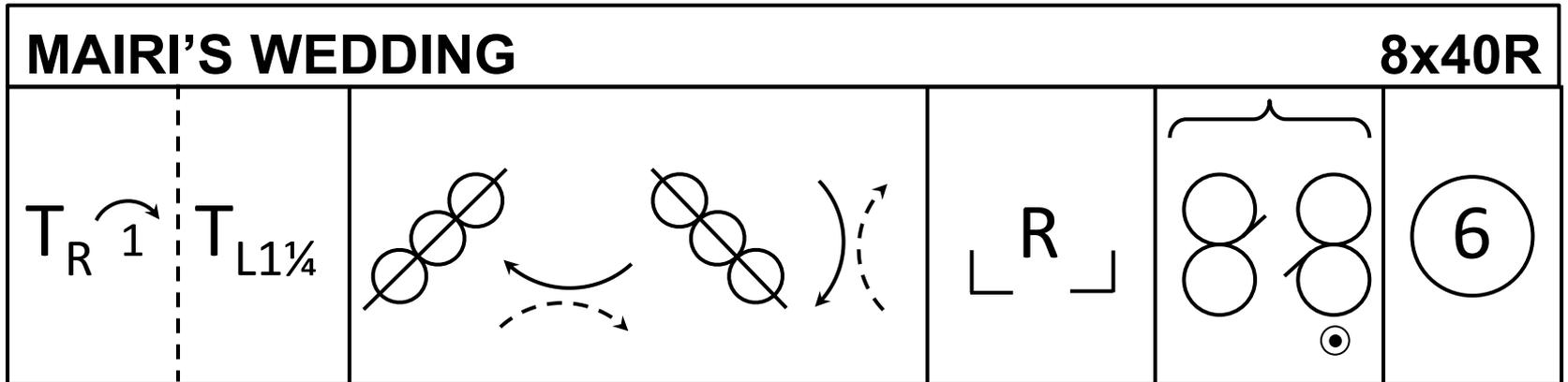
Bars 25-32: Two **reels of four** across (dancers specified). As the start of this reel is a bit unusual special instructions have been inserted.

Bars 33-40: All couples **set twice** and turn right hand.

What is the diagram NOT telling you?

- What kind of step to use: travelling or setting step
- (Often) dancing with nearer hands vs. leading
- Stepping up or down when a couple is casting down or up
- How to transition between formations
- Whether and how the dancing couple should drop to bottom when they finish their turn as dancing couple.

A dance we all know and love...



James Cosh, 1959, 22 SCD & 1 other

3C/4C longwise set

Anything new in here?

Diagonal half reels. R = Repeat. Third and fourth corners.

As we can see there are some explanatory symbols (arrows) with the half reels, and they are telling us that when the dancing couple meet in the middle between and after the reels they should pass without crossing paths (pass left shoulder).

Test your understanding of diagrams

Here are written crib notes for *The Duke of Perth*. Create a Diagram for the dance.

1- 8 1s turn RH, cast to 2nd place, turn LH to face 1st corners

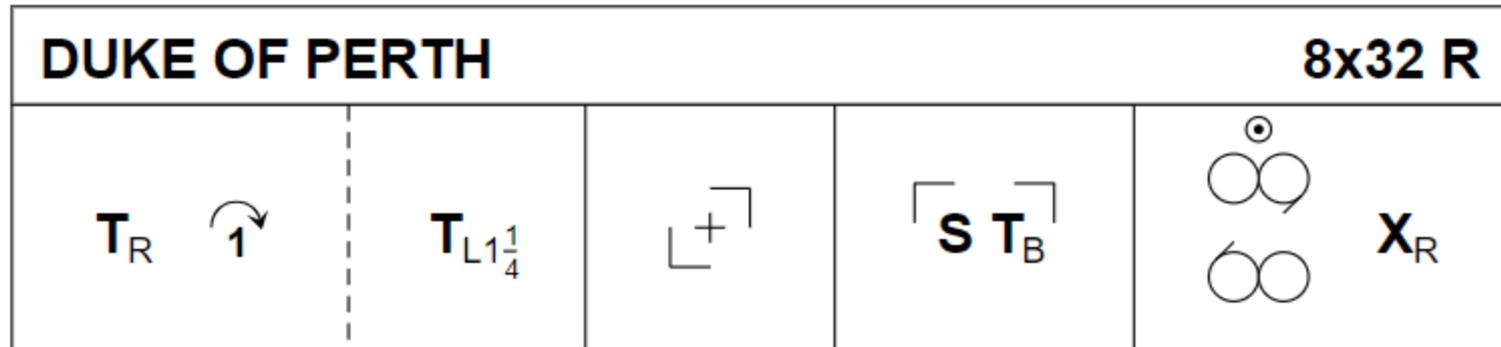
9-16 1s turn 1st corner, partner, 2nd corner, & partner to face 1st corners

17-24 1s set to & turn 1st corner 2H, set to & turn 2nd corner

25-32 1s dance Reel of 3 on opposite sides giving LSh to 1st corner & cross
back to own sides

The diagram will include one symbol we have not explained but you will find it on the “Key to the symbols”

Keith Rose's diagram

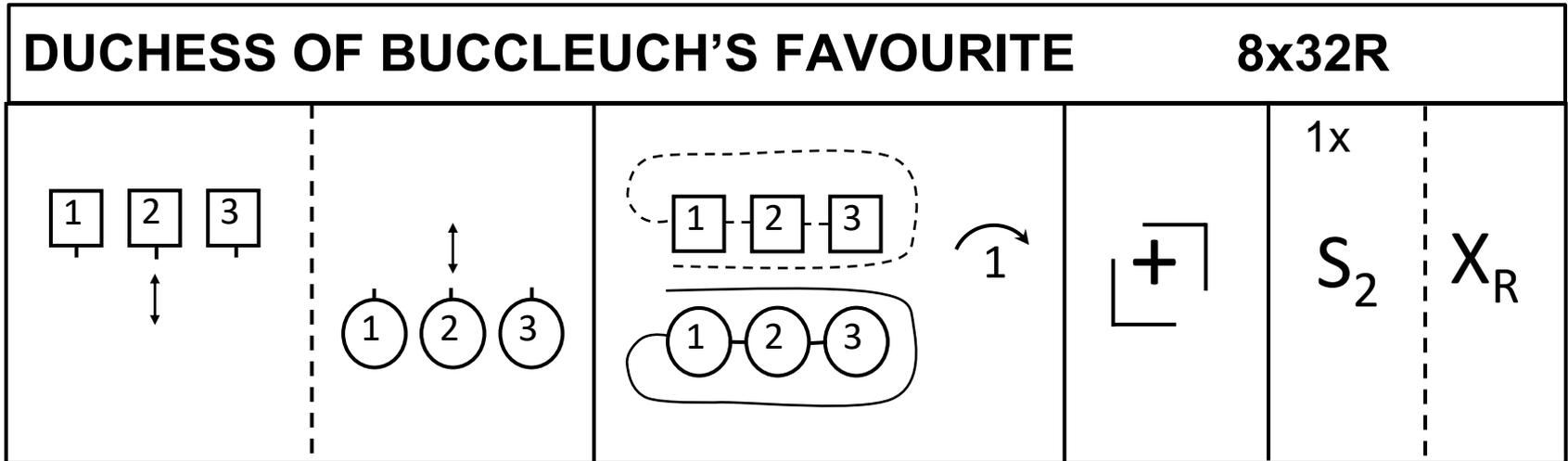


The Ballroom, 1827, RSCDS Book 1.8

3C/4C longwise set.

How does it compare with yours?

And now – a practical test



Border Dance Book

3C/4C longwise set

SUNSHINE AND SWEETIE'S JIG

8x32 J

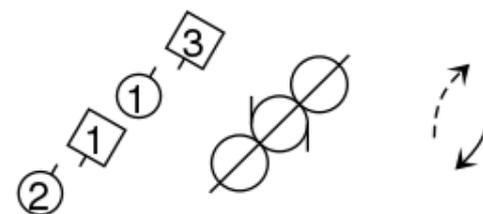
1 2

S RA

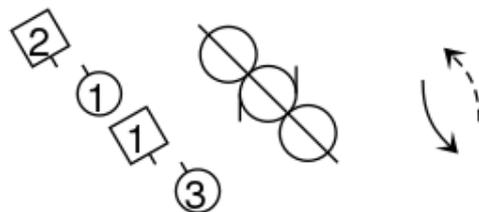
2x 1x

S X_R

T_R



T_L



3x 1 2x



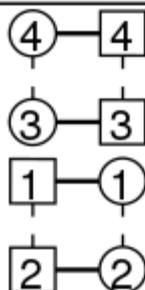
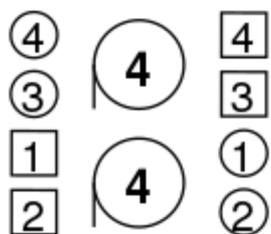
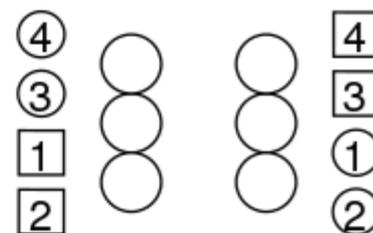
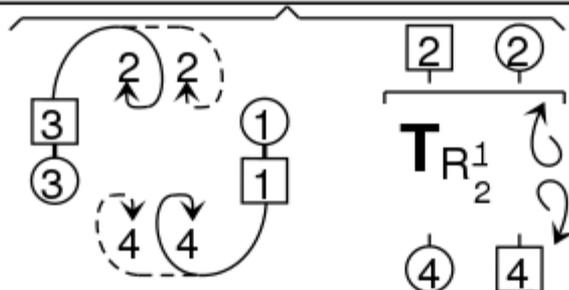
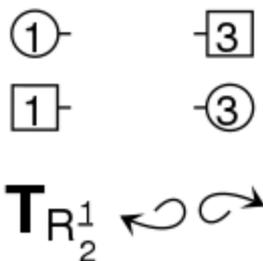
Chase

1x

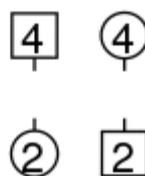
S X_R

CULLA BAY

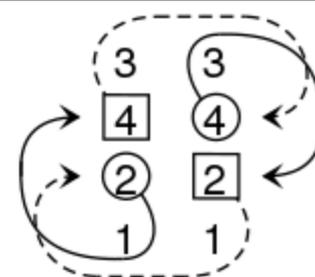
4x32 S



S RA



LA



Where to find SCD diagrams

Scottish Country Dance Database

<http://my.strathspey.org/dd/index/>

- Search for a dance
- Look in the “Cribs/Diagrams” tab

Scottish Country Dancing Dictionary

<https://www.scottish-country-dancing-dictionary.com/>

- Select “Crib Diagrams” from the list on the left