

Dances with unusual tempi and formations

John Wilkinson ran two very enjoyable sessions at the September workshop. The morning session was 'Dances with unusual tempi and formations'. He taught *The Gentle Shepherd*, *Tweedside*, *Strip the Willow* in 9/8 time, *The Axum Reel*, as well as the formation 'en rond' from *St Andrews Gardens*. Even for teachers some of these are a challenge!

He reminded us that *Tweedside* is in 6-bar phrases, with three steps to each movement. Going "step step close" does not come easily to some of us, more used to *step close step!* It was interesting to see the problems we had doing *Strip the Willow* in 9/8 time with 3 running steps to the bar. John pointed out that the dancing couple turn only on the first 4 bars but continue to complete their final turn on the first two bars of the next turn of the dance.

For *The Axum* he reminded us that there are only 3 simple rules: men always dance to their partner's place; ladies always dance to the place of the man in front; and you always pass by the LEFT shoulder. Simple when you know how! It was fun doing dances which we might avoid with our weekly classes and being reminded that there is more to life than *step close step!*

John's afternoon class was dances he had devised himself. He taught *Dance Willie Dance*, *The Cambuslang Octogenarian*, *Greenmantle*, and *Jacquie's Fankle*. The day was a good balance of old challenges and interesting new dances, taught by a clear and well-prepared teacher – setting us all an example of good practice.

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