



The Evolution of 'Bush Dance' part 2

By Peter Ellis

Shirley Andrews didn't formally use the term bush dance until the bicentennial year in 1988. But in a way she was earlier accredited with its use because of her original articles and folk dance descriptions in the Victorian Folk Music

Club (VFMC) monthly journal "The Tradition". This then led to her publication of 'Take Your Partners' in 1974, which formalised folk dance in Australia with descriptions and tune references in print. These had generally been made available via the earlier snippets in issues of 'The Tradition' (Vic).



The late Shirley Andrews in good form

Similarly there were details of some dances and tunes from time to time in the Bush Music Club's (NSW) Singabout by their dancing fraternity. Shirley assembled her descriptions, information and music in the one publication in this subsequent edition of Take Your Partners (later in hard back). Frank Pitt of the VFMC provided most of the tunes Shirley used as these were trialed and in the repertoire of the Port Phillip Band that Frank was by then a key organiser. Some would have gone back to the early Vic. Singabout days from 1955 that Frank Nickels and Joy Durst organised. They arranged tune sheets for Singabout and for their new band simply referred to as the 'bush band' (or perhaps the Melbourne Bushwhackers) which they had put together for the return of Reedy River to Melbourne. It was based on the Sydney Bushwhackers after Frank and Joy had visited John Meredith in Sydney and then adopted the official name 'Billabong' in 1956. When the Victorian Bush Music Club formed in 1959, later changing its name to the Victorian Folk Music Club, Billabong had automatically become the club band.



Victorian Bush Music Club's Billabong band, circa 1959. Frank Nickels & Joy Durst front row.

Reproduced from cover illustration of Singabout Vol.3 No. 4 (Bush Music Club NSW)

It's likely these tunes provided the basis of the music for the 'bush bands' of the day that then expanded the repertoire adding their own support tunes.

The dances listed by Shirley Andrews were Armatree Brown Jug Polka, Four Sisters' Barn Dance, Berlin Polka, Circassian Circle, Dashing White Sergeant, Flying Pieman, Galopede, Gay Gordons, Haymakers Jig, Old Bush Barn Quadrille, Polka Mazurka, Princess Polka, Soldier's Joy, The Stockyards, The Tempest, Varsoviana, Walls of Limerick, Waltz Country Dance, Waves of Tory. She also included one Waltz and the tune was Starry Night for a Ramble. Thady You Gander is also there, but the music is cross referenced to that for the Flying Pieman. The Berlin Polka, Princess Polka and Polka Mazurka would all have been sourced from early contacts with the Nariel dancers and musicians.

The second paperback edition in 1976 included the additions of the Colonials Quadrille, First Set, Highland Schottische, Jacaranda Dance, Lancers, La Russe, Manchester Galop, Ninepins Quadrille, Polka Quadrille, Scotch Reel, Virginia Reel, Waltz Cotillion and Waltz Country Dance.

Nearly fifty percent of the dances chosen by Shirley were Celtic or British folk dance based and several had been danced out here in the Colonial period (as ball-room dances), but not the Tempest, Walls of Limerick, and Waves of Tory. The latter two Irish dances did not exist in Ireland at the time of mass immigration to Australia from the 1840s to the end of the century. Many of these now popular dances were invented around the turn of the 19th/20thC by commission of the Gaelic League in an endeavour to create an 'Irish Ireland'. Even the **Siege of Ennis** had been created by the League engaging teachers in London who dressed up the old ballroom La Tempête (Country Dance) by adding Irish stepping with long sevens and short threes. The League's aim was to cast aside the European and British based ballroom dances that at this time were the dominant dances in Ireland and actually very much loved by the Irish public.

Shirley most likely chose to include these newer Celtic dances owing to the interest and bias within the Bush Music Clubs and the Siege of Ennis was added to her later hardback copy edition. She would also have used the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) publications as reference for many of the folk dances. **The Tempest** (English folk dance) would be one and although also derived from the ballroom La Tempête (which was certainly known out here), it is quite different in character. The latter is very formal, even staid, whilst the Tempest in contrast is very lively and 'folkie style'. It's a good dance that isn't programmed often enough. The ballroom crinolines of the 1860s supported by huge caged frames restricted the female society dancer to the demure La Tempête and the lively Tempest probably developed over the decades via the Village Green.

We now know that **Thady You Gander** is a dance in later 19th C style and again probably from EFDSS sources and is not the 'Irish Trot' of the Regency Period mentioned in the Sydney Gazette of 1803. The tune Thady You Gander (see next page) is certainly in use in a figure of the 'The Royal Hibernian Quadrilles' devised by Charles T Sykes 'In honour of His Majesty's visit to Ireland' dated 1821. First mention of a dance of the name, Thady You Gander, - so far as we know - and matching the contemporary folk dance appears in *Howe's New American Dancing Master*, Chicago, 1882, p94.

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The Marchioness of Donegal.

Thady you Gander.

N^o. 4.

Ped Ped Ped Ped

Ped Ped D.C.

Fig 4 of the Royal Hibernian Quadrille 1821- tune Thady You Gander, courtesy Ellis Rogers of the London Quadrille Club

The ‘*bush dance*’ **Galopede**, known out here, is again from EFDSS sources and a Cecil Sharp collected folk dance, but the ballroom form that might have originally been known here and certainly still within living memory in the 1950s in the UK was the *Galopade Country Dance* or ‘La Galopade’. The usual English tune for either form of the dance appears to be the Persian Dance (collected as the Yarmouth Reel), but James Scott Skinner says in “The People’s Ballroom Guide” (c 1907 Aberdeen) the tune for the Galopade Country Dance is taken from the last figure of La Pasha Quadrille and had words which the dancers sang while progressing down the set - ‘*Come, dance along with me, I will fill your hearts with glee.*’ I have located ‘The Pacha Quadrilles’ by Charles d’Albert in the National Library and it is a different tune to the Persian Dance.

THE PERSIAN DANCE.

Moderato.

The image shows a musical score for 'The Persian Dance' in 2/4 time, marked Moderato. The score is written for piano and consists of four systems of music. The first system includes a piano (p) dynamic marking and a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The second system includes a forte (f) dynamic marking. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

This tune can also be found in Boosey’s Musical Cabinet No. 65 of 1886 ‘100 Reels, Country Dances, Jigs, Highland Flings, Strathspeys, &c. It is likely the collected Yarmouth Reel is simply developed by aural transmission from the town dance band to the village folk musician.

The Australian Galopede tune used is quite different and I have seen a reference by John Meredith that a 'set tune' (i.e. a tune used for a figure of the First Set, Lancers or Alberts) was selected from one collected from Herb Gimbert and this is confirmed in David Johnson's book 'Bush Dance' of 1984. At any rate this is the tune in Singabout Vol. 5, No. 2, p 18 October 1964 and referenced in Shirley's Take Your Partners. Note this is an early 60s reference to a 'bush style dance'.

Australian Galopede

A First Set Tune collected from Herb Gimbert of Surrey Hills NSW and adapted for the Galopede by John Meredith

Musical notation for the Australian Galopede. The piece is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1 through 8, and the second staff contains measures 9 through 16. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: C, F, G7, C, F, G7, C in the first staff; and C, G7, C, F, C, G7, C, G7, C, F, G7, C in the second staff. The melody features a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

Shirley Andrews would also have used the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) publications as references for many of the folk dances as well as Joan Lawson's authoritative work on European folk dances.

The Flying Pieman dance was a revamped version of a Scottish Country Dance, The Flying Scotsman. Noreen Grunseit of the Bush Music Club arranged this dance and its name was altered to Flying Pieman at John Meredith's suggestion to give it an Australian flavour. It was after an eccentric character from early Sydney. The tune originally of Irish origin was a collected set tune for a figure of the First Set of Quadrilles and again from the playing of Herb Gimbert. There is another interesting version of this tune from Queensland collected by Mark Schuster (page 6).

The Flying Pieman

(First Set tune collected by John Meredith from Herb Gimbert of Sydney NSW.

Later becoming the tune used for the dance Flying Pieman)

Musical notation for The Flying Pieman. The piece is in 6/8 time and consists of two staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1 through 8, and the second staff contains measures 9 through 16. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: C, G7, C, G7, C in the first staff; and C, Dm, C, G7, C, Dm, G7, C in the second staff. The melody features a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

'What Would You Do If The Billy Boiled Over? No.1

Collected from Alf Radunz, Coolabunia, Qld, by Mark Shuster & Maria Zann as

'Go down to the creek and fill it again'

(This tune of Irish origin is a variant of Herb Gimbert's Set Tune, selected by John Meredith for the Flying Pieman Dance)

The musical score is written in 6/8 time and consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains measures 1-4 with chords C, G7, F, and C. The second staff starts at measure 5 and contains measures 5-8 with chords C, G7, F, C, C7, and a first/second ending with chords F and C. The third staff starts at measure 10 and contains measures 10-13 with chords C, Dm, G7, C, and G7. The fourth staff starts at measure 15 and contains measures 15-18 with chords C, Dm, G7, C, G7, and C.

Inadvertently Shirley Andrews had provided a focus on the Celtic style 'folkie dances' which she later came to regret, exclaiming to me '*what monster have I created?*' Although some of these Celtic related ballroom dances were popular they never occupied as much as 50% of a programme in the real Australian tradition. There might be one or two, but the major proportion of dances were of mainly European origin consisting of numerous Waltzes and multi-figure Quadrilles alternated with the Galop, Polka Mazurka, Varsoviana, Schottische and the ever popular Polka of the 1840s. Shirley had later come to realise almost all of our dances came directly to Australia as the latest fashionable ball-room dances of the day, not as folk dances.

Many of the European and British dances of the ball-room had been adopted from earlier folk dances from the various component countries, but were dressed up for the ball-room by the dancing masters and travelled the world like wildfire. Later as these percolated back from society to the lower classes a type of folk process then gradually transformed these ball-room dances into dances of the people.

In Australia these eventually became our folk dances, and likewise with the music often moving from formal score to the simple relaxed bush fiddler and squeezebox player. Don't forget the ear-playing pianist in this equation. Pianos were everywhere, Mechanic's Institutes, Pubs and their assemblies, bush schools and even bush huts. They were the television of their era.

The **Circassian Circle** known out here was the ballroom form based on a progressive Sicilian circle of generally the first figure of either the First Set (The Quadrille) or the Caledonians Quadrille. This became known in English folk dance circles as ‘part 1’, because they had a part 2 in the ‘big circle’ that followed and probably a Cecil Sharp collection. The Big Circle was not danced out here as a Circassian Circle part 2, but was known under another formal name as ‘Flirtation’ because of the sequential change of partners. Country folk knew this as the **Stockyards** or *Bullring* and it did not follow Circassian Circle, it was the last figure of the First Set (The Quadrille) to which the Flirtation figure name was attached. Sometimes the band on its conclusion converted to waltz time for a ‘waltz the hall’. Any Circassian Circle on an old Australian dance programme (19th to early 20th C) is that now known as part one.

Shirley makes the comment in *Take Your Partners* that the **Soldier’s Joy** dance and tune (page 8) was extremely popular all over Great Britain and Europe coinciding with the period of first white settlement in Australia. Most likely the Napoleonic wars provided much interchange from the ball-room to folk versions and the spread throughout England, Scotland & Ireland by returning soldiers. Shirley pondered over which description to use as there is a Scottish four couple longways country-dance and there was a collected one from Northumberland. Because the Soldier’s Joy is mentioned in the words of the *Drover’s Dream*, probably 1890s, this would have made the Scottish version the contender in that era, but what of the very early period? The Northumberland version was likely a collected folk dance and too recent and specific to an English district or village. There are some figure compilations stated in old dancing master manuals of the Regency period held in the British Museum, but they vary considerably and it’s impossible to equate any standard or common form.

While Shirley deliberated, Frank Pitt introduced the American version, which is in a progressive Sicilian formation. Because dances of this type were not common in the bush music clubs’ circuits and as it was interesting and very different it became popular straight away. Of course it was not really of any relevance to the Australian tradition as with a number of the ‘bush dances’, but dancers dance what they like rather than adhere to historical accuracy, much as musicians play what they like. But the factor most folkies don’t understand is the strict controlling role of the MC in those days. I believe the American version has come about by adapting an early figure of the longways *Soldier’s Joy* into the Circassian Circle format.

Soldier's Joy

$\text{♩} = 116$ D

10 D A7 D

18 A7 D A7

26 D A7 D A7 D

An interesting version of the tune as played by Bill McGlashan and Harry McQueen of Castlemaine. Some traditional dance musicians (Elma Ross, Wedderburn, Jean Murphy, Mitta Mitta) played it in the well-known or standard timing.

Apart from the common first figure form of the First Set or the Caledonians there were other figures that could be taken from other quadrille or country dance figures. The Waltz Country Dance for example is simply a figure from the old longways Spanish Waltz in Circassian Circle formation and progression. There's a number of Circassian Circle figures listed in the Australian MC's Ithaca manual by R. Lovenberry, Instructor at the Academy of Dancing Brisbane 1884. One of the versions incorporates the lively Galop. The British folk dance 'Cottages' can be seen as a derivative of figure 4 Lancers in progressive Sicilian arrangement.

The Polka dance and several simple sequence derivatives such as Heel & Toe, Princess and Kreuz or Berlin polkas enjoyed a major revival during or after the 1880s and lasted well into the 20th C - more so in 'the bush'.

The **Princess Polka** is a toned down version from the 'Scotch Polka', without the pas de basques; these being replaced by a simple heel and toe step. It was known as the Heel & Toe Polka in Portland in far Western Victoria and across the border into South Australia e.g. Mt Gambier. Note this is distinct from the other Heel & Toe or Brown Jug Polka.

Jim Harrison's Princess Polka (collected from Jim Harrison of Khancoban by Peter Ellis)

Collected Princess Polka tunes have the traditional polka rhythm, de dah dah da de (see bars 8 – 15) but open with a strong two-beat per bar emphasis in the bars, 1st & 3rd, 5th & 7th, to match the heel & toe step as well as true polka beat in the remaining bars for the polka step crossovers. There is full 3-hop Polka emphasis in part B for the forward Polka travelling steps of the dance. Note the 3 quaver polka beat in both the melody and bass of the tune. This is essential in Polka dances to match the '3 hop polka step'.

The traditional aural bush musicians knew and replicated this style perfectly by ear for the polka dances, but it was something the revival city bush bands of the 70s did not know. Whilst they played Little Brown Jug in that style they added support tunes such as Davy Knick Knack, 42 Pound Float, Denis Murphy and other so called Irish polkas which did match the dance footsteps or the hand claps in the case of the Brown Jug Polka. Nevertheless, the change of timing and upbeat of these bush bands obviously appealed to their youthful followers who blissfully bounded about in wild abandon.

This **Heel and Toe** or '**Brown Jug Polka**' was well enough known in some rural areas, it did actually utilise a 3 hop emphasis polka step during the right and left arm turn at the end of sequence (in fact Joan Martin knew a 3 part form (page 12 below) in which a choice of circular Polka or forward Princess Polka travelling step (part B of that dance) was added. However when the standard Brown Jug Polka was introduced into the folkie 'bush dance' scene the polka step was lost by being inadvertently replaced with a skip step which is probably all these city slickers could handle. But there is also another reason. When John Meredith at a Boxing Night dance at Armatree in 1955 collected the dance and tune the band was playing *Little Brown Jug* in 6-8 rather than the typical 2-4 three hop polka version as exemplified in the song and words. There's nothing actually unusual about that as aural musicians - Harry McQueen another example - were quite adept at converting a tune to different time signatures for variety if they so

desired. (There is the yarn that one musician only knew Home Sweet Home and played this in every time signature and style for every dance on the programme) However in the case of the Brown Jug Polka, the rhythm in 6-8 with the ‘dum de dum de’ emphasis meant a true polka step was not possible as well as the hand clap emphasis changing from polka rhythm of ‘dum dum dumm’, to ‘dumm de dum’. If you check Shirley’s Take Your Partners you’ll find a transcription of Little Brown Jug under the name ‘Armatree Brown Jug Polka’. Rather unscientifically the tune was transcribed in 2-4 because it was meant by name to be a polka, but the timing was of course in 6-8. I finally twigged this might be the case and asked John Meredith who confirmed, ‘yes you could say the band played the tune in 6-8!). Tell any ear playing musician to convert from polka to 6-8 and it’s easily done, but not as easy by the written note.

Little Brown Jug song tune

in typical polka time and following the metre of the words of the song

ARMATREE BROWN JUG POLKA

Reprinted from Singabout, Vol. 1 ,no. 2, p. 16

Notice the change in timing of the notes, difficult to read, but easy by ear if you know it’s really 6-8.

Little Brown Jug played in 6-8
 this is how it was played at Armatree

The musical score is written in 6/8 time and consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 8, and the second staff contains measures 9 through 16. Chord markings are placed above the notes in each measure: C, F, G7, C, F, G7, C in the first staff; and F, G7, C, F, G7, C in the second staff. The melody features a consistent three-hop rhythm throughout.

In the version on page 12, below, which Joan Martin collected from NSW and Qld, the three-part form in which a choice of circular polka or forward Princess Polka style step section was added. This version also was associated with a parody of the song known by Joan's grandfather as the 'Sly Grog Polka'. Take note of the full three-hop style throughout the tune.

Joan Martin's Little Brown Jug (3 part)

Part A

C F G⁷ C

There was a man lived all a-lone In an old bush hut he called his home...

6 G⁷ C

He was fond of home made grog And so was his old blue catt - le dog

10 C **Part B** F G⁷ C

Ha ha haa He he hee Grog... will be the death of me

14 C F G⁷ C

Ha ha haa He he hee Grog... will be the death of me

18 C **Part C** F G⁷ C

It's grog that makes me wear old clothes And worn out boots with turned up toes

22 F G⁷ C

Grog gives me a thump-in' head But without me grog I'd rather be dead

(The Sly Grog Polka)