

Chapter 3 - Bampton figures

The common figures for the Bampton tradition are foot up and down, half gip, whole gip and rounds. White Rose have decided, for reasons only known to the terminally bewildered, that half of the dance should be single step and half should be double step. Our memory jogger is that figures in a straight line are single step and those with curves are double step.

The foot up and down is danced pretty well on the spot. Turn in on bars three and four before dancing down. Bars seven and eight which bring you back to the start of the distinctive figure for each dance should be danced backwards in a quarter turn out of the set before turning on the last beat to face up or front as required. This is the first of the figures that uses single step.

The half gip should not involve too much travel. It is enough if you reach the line where the other side of the set was before they set off to take your place. Pass left shoulders first time and make the movement as straight as possible. It should be at right angles to the centre line of the set. Yes, I know that that means you will collide with the person coming the other way. Be sensible and move a little to your left as you set off. The important point is that you should come straight back and on the last beat of bar four jump to your right ready to pass right shoulders on the second half of the move. The path of the complete move should resemble a square with one missing side. Single step is used

The whole gip is the first double step common figures. In the first half of the movement you go in a circle clockwise round your partner as they do the same. This means that you are turning right shoulder back and you tighten up that turn until, at the end of bar two you are on the centre line of the set, left shoulder to left shoulder with your partner, before bars three and four take you back to place with hop backs. The track of the movement resembles an ear. I hope that has made it as clear as mud. The second half of the movement is an anti clockwise circle but this time you simply keep dancing forward all the way round.

The rounds are a similar movement to the whole gip and again use double step. This time the circle is for all six dancers. The first half, which sets off clockwise, has the turn in it like the whole gip. This time you turn left shoulder back at the beginning of bar three but continue travelling round the ring in the same direction. It is effectively a hand brake turn for morris dancers. You return anti clockwise and again keep travelling forward the whole way back. The more astute of you will be asking "It is all fine and well travelling a complete circle round my partner in four bars of music but how can I get right round a circle of six in that time?" The answer is you can't and shouldn't try to for fear of doing yourself a mischief. The circle only goes round as far as is comfortable for everyone. The important point is to keep the shape and spacing.

The half hey only appears in distinctive figures and so is not a common figure in Bampton but it appears so often that I will describe it here. Those at the ends of the set turn out (in other words away from everyone else) and then set off to the far end of the set. The middles follow the track of the top couple. If you see two people coming towards you, go between them. This will end up with a figure of eight on each side of the set. For the second half hey the middles follow the same people even though they are now at the bottom of the set.