

Fieldtown Jigs

Jigs in general

There is a common pattern to all Morris jigs. You have a short introduction to the tune just to check you and the musician are both thinking of the same dance, then the jig starts with a warm-up of ordinary stepping in whatever tradition it is, followed by a repeated structure of Distinctive Figures interleaved with caper sequences. There are usually two kinds of capers, Fore Capers and Upright Capers. Fore Capers (there are no Aft Capers for some reason) seem to have confused the old dancers so they were given nicknames such as Forries (i.e. ForE capers) and tradition-specific descriptions such as beetle crushers (in Fieldtown dances). The caper sequences are the main focus of the dance. Never attempt a jig under a low ceiling as you will bash your head during the capers. Depending on the tradition, either Fore or Upright capers may be called Right (or Left) Toe Behind capers (RTBs/LTBs).

The Distinctive Figure is usually a sidestep sequence which might include half capers or plain capers (but these do not count as 'proper' Capers 'cos they are too easy). Jigs generally finish on a sidestep sequence, modified in the last few bars, usually with plain capers.

Always face the musician except in Bampton where they take all kinds of liberty. After almost 400 years they got bored of doing it properly.

You and your musician

The musician will support you, rescue you and hide your mistakes from at least some of the audience. By the end of the 90-100 seconds the dance takes (it feels a bit longer) you will be extraordinarily grateful so you will acknowledge this with a wave, handshake etc. A Morris musician has a similar skill to that of an orchestral player following the conductor. The dancer sets a comfortable speed and the musician follows although the audience might think it's you keeping in time. This is particularly helpful when you learn to leap in the capers and everyone has to wait for gravity to bring you down again.

In a set dance you might think the musician is setting the speed but a Morris musician follows the lead dancer throughout. This is the dancer in #1 position except in corner dances where the musician chooses which of the corner pair to follow, usually the one who will remain airborne longer.

Just as in other Morris dances, the A music is usually 4 bars repeated, sometimes with a very slight variation in the last bar. Familiarise yourself with the tune so you can hum or sing it before you try to learn the dance. The B music is often a 4 bar variation followed by the second half of the A, again this is familiar from set dances. The C music is a stretched version of the A, allowing gravity plenty of time for your powerful capers.

Notation

Most jigs have the same sequence:

1. Once to Yourself (OY) [short A music]
2. Foot Up (FU) [8 bars A music]
3. Sidestep sequence (SSS) [8 bars B music]
4. Fore Caper (FC) seq. [8 bars C music]
5. Sidestep seq. (SSS) [8 bars B music]
6. Upright Caper (UC) seq. [8 bars C music]
7. Sidestep seq. (SSS) [8 bars B music]

In short: OY, FU, SSS, FC, SSC. UC, SSS

You only need 4 bars of A for the OY as the speed is only a guideline; your footfalls will set the actual speed when you start.

The Fieldtown jigs

There are a number of these, described in the Black Book and elsewhere. Before looking at three in more detail, a few general points about Fieldtown jigs.

First, all Fieldtown jigs should be danced on the spot. It takes a bit of practice to dance a jig within “a foot of ground” as an old Fieldtown dancer said. Rising off the ground is more important but practice until you can also keep the acreage tight then you will get the respect.

Don't forget the Fieldtown feint step. Many figures end in ftj so on landing you do a little Ryanair bounce and land on the left foot, ready for the right foot lead into the next figure. There is an extra note for that bounce. In all Western music (pre-Stockhausen) the first beat of a bar is accentuated but Fieldtown tunes have an extra note, very short, at the end of each bar so instead of counting beats 1-2-3-4 we have a-1-2-3-4. This can be called a feint note, a grace note or non-integer signature.

Fieldtown, Ladies' Pleasure¹

Few dancers know this jig so it has a certain cachet. It's actually easier than the Nutting Girl jig. Here's a video which shows the dance, done mostly accurately but rather too 'delicately', by a man from Greensleeves MM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5NAa1k08hU>

In the beetle crusher capers he lowers himself onto the forward foot instead of standing upright in a more manly posture and tapping the ball of the free foot. And his hand movements in Fieldtown capers are 'parachute' hand movements rather than proper

¹ In Cecil Sharp's manuscript the tune was named Ladies of Pleasure but the version published in The EDS Journal had been bowdlerised slightly.

straight up and down. However his upright capers are excellent, tucking the free foot tightly round the load-bearing foot.

Details of the dance

The OY is two Fieldtown backsteps (bs), feet together jump (ftj), as usual for Fieldtown.

FU is 2 bars double step (4s) on the spot with right foot lead, bs, ftj; repeat. Arms down and up (du) on the 4s swinging out to low balance position on the bs and up on the jump - as per normal Fieldtown.

Sidestep Sequence (SSS) in Ladies' Pleasure is: 1 bar closed sidestep right and 1 bar closed sidestep left, followed by 4 hocklebacks (hr, hl, hr, hl). These are backsteps but swinging the bent free leg behind). Look at the video to see what's involved. Then 2 bars 4s, followed by Galley right, all the way round (360 degree turn) and ftj.

Or to show this another way, starting after the feint step with weight on the ball of your left foot, the stepping is:

r l r r | l r l l | r r l l | r r l l | r l r r | l r l l | R r r | B b
ssr | ssl | hr hl | hr hl | 4s | 4s | G | ftj

The leading hand flicks up from a vertical arm on the last beat of the previous bar, i.e. the feint step, so the hanky is drifting down on beat 1 of each sidestep, then low balance on the backsteps, both flick just before each double step, low balance on the galley and up then down on the ftj as usual.

The Forecapers (FC) sequence (danced to the slow C music) is 2 FC (Beetlecrushers), 4 plain capers (PC), repeat. You'll see that when you do the PC, the hands are doing waves, not going down and up as is more usual when doing PC in Fieldtown. Waves are at waist height, hands to sides in front of body, handkerchiefs circling in vertical plane, inwards and round.

Thus starting with weight on the left foot, we have feet and arms as:

l_{r toe fwd} R l r | r_{l toe fwd} L r l | R L | R L :||
bal Up d b | bal Up d b | waves | waves :|| repeat the whole lot

Similarly **Upright capers (UC)**, on slow C music, is 2 UC , 4 PC, repeat.

Thus starting with weight on the left foot, we have feet and arms as:

l_{r x behind} ftj r_{l swing fwd} | r_{l x behind} ftj l_{r swing fwd} | R L | R L :||
bal Up d bal | bal Up d bal | waves | waves :|| repeat all

In the final SSS the ftj is replaced by two plain capers, with 'normal' hand movements, ie the hands falling on the first and rising on the second so you end balanced on the left foot, the right leg straight and forward, arms high, straight and about 30 degrees to the vertical for balance. If your balance feels insecure, put the right heel down.

Fieldtown, Nutting Girl

This is a popular jig so most musicians know the tune. Also there is a well-known song to the same tune so you could probably learn the song from the internet.

The music has a strange provenance. There is also a Nutting Girl jig in the Bampton tradition, for which two or three slightly different tunes were collected. As you know, Bampton has a slightly different rhythm to Fieldtown. The version of the Nutting Girl tune that was collected from Billy Wells in Bampton fits the Fieldtown dance better than the tune Kenworthy Schofield collected in Fieldtown and vice versa. There is a suggestion that the two were mixed up on the editor's desk at the EDS Journal. Now everyone uses the preferred tune for each tradition.

Here is a video of a young Matt Simons moving outside the foot of ground more than he would now, and showing 'parachute' hands in the slows (he knows better now). But – good energy throughout.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgnE1LNOQCo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1e9WPDzTM> offers instruction as well as the dance itself. Unfortunately the dancer's sidesteps are horribly loose and he performs the capers turning 90 degrees each which is OK for audience all round but not traditional. Good height (he's young), but parachute hands in FtJ and capers, and some rather floppy galley. Keep that thigh horizontal!

Details of the dance

The OY is two Fieldtown backsteps (bs), feet together jump (ftj), as usual for Fieldtown.

FU is 4 bars 4s on the spot with right foot lead, then 1 bar closed sidestep right (ss_cr), 1 bar ss_cl, 1 bar bs, ftj. Normal Fieldtown arm movements.

Sidestep Sequence (SSS) in Nutting Girl is: 2 bars long, closed sidestep right², that is r l, r l, r l, r hop. Then 2 bars long, closed sidestep left, followed by a short closed sidestep right, a short sidestep left and 4 hocklebacks. You then repeat all this, but instead of the hocklebacks do a 360° galley followed by ftj

Thus, starting after the feint step with weight on the ball of your left foot, the stepping is:

r l r l | r l r r | l r l r | l r l l | r l r r | l r l l | r r l l | r r l l |

long ssr | long ssl | ssr | ssl | hr hl | hr hl |

then r l r l | r l r r | l r l r | l r l l | r l r r | l r l l | **R r r | B b**

long ssr | long ssl | ssr | ssl | G | ftj

The leading hand flicks up from a vertical arm on the last beat of the previous bar, i.e. the feint step, so the hanky is drifting down on beat 1 of each sidestep. On beat 4 of the long ss, flick both hands (OK the hands are doing a double step but the feet really are not). Low balance on the galley and up then down on the ftj as usual.

² Some people call this a sidestep followed by a double step but there is no hop on beat 4 of the ss.

The FC sequence on slow C music is 4 FC (Beetlecrushers), then normal time ssr, ssl, bs, ftj as in the FU.

Thus starting with weight on the left foot, we have (repeat the moves between the * *):

Move: * FC | FC * | ssr | ssl | bs | ftj

Feet: *l_{r toe fwd} R l r | r_{l toe fwd} L r l * | r l r r | l r l l | r r l l | B b

Arms: *bal Up d b | bal Up d b * | r_{high} | l_{high} | bal | Up bal

Similarly UC sequence on C music is 4 UC, ssr, ssl, bs, ftj

Thus starting with weight on the left foot, we have (repeat the moves between the * *):

Move: * UC | UC * | ssr | ssl | bs | ftj

Feet: *l_{r x behind} ftj r_{l swing fwd} | r_{l x behind} ftj l_{r swing fwd} * | r l r r | l r l l | r r l l | B b

Arms: * bal Up d bal | bal Up d bal * | r_{high} | l_{high} | bal | Up bal

In the final SSS the ftj is replaced by two plain capers, the hands falling on the first and rising on the second so you end balanced on the left foot, the right leg straight and forward, arms high, straight and about 30 degrees to the vertical for balance. If your balance feels insecure, put the right heel down.

Fieldtown, Molly Oxford

The pattern of the dance is: OY, FU, SSS, FC, SSS, UC, SSS

In terms of length and complexity, Old Molly Oxford is half-way between Nutting Girl and Ladies' Pleasure, but quite a different tune of course.

The **OY** is two Fieldtown backsteps (bs), feet together jump (ftj).

FU is 4 bars 4s on the spot with right foot lead, then 1 bar closed sidestep right (ss_cr), 1 bar ss_cl, 1 bar bs, ftj. Normal Fieldtown arm movements.

The sidestep sequence (**SSS**) is based on the same long sidestep as in Nutting Girl, but you only do it once, then galley 360 degrees. So you do:

r l r l | r l r r | l r l r | l r l l | r l r r | l r l l | R r r | B b

long ssr | long ssl | ssr | ssl | G | ftj

The forey and upright caper sequences (**FC, UC**) are exactly the same as in Nutting Girl: four capers, then sidestep right, sidestep left, ending with back-steps.

Fieldtown, Lumps of Plum Pudding

Apart from the tune, the dance is the same. Of the two Lumps is perhaps a better combination of music and dance (at least in our experience)