

## The art and science of the Fieldtown galley

While 'galleys' are not a movement exclusive to Fieldtown, they are a distinctive part of that large and graceful body of Cotswold Morris dances. They also take a while to get right, and are one of the first things to suffer as age or /and inattention creep in.

### What does a galley consist of?

Like many dance movements, a galley is a 'dynamic' movement, which starts from the movement before and leads into a movement afterwards: galleys don't happen in isolation. The movement before will have left you with either your right or your left foot in the air ready to galley (you can't do a galley starting with both feet on the ground), and at the end of the galley you will launch off into some other movement, usually a feet-together jump (FtJ), but it could be a bar of double step or even another galley.

Let's assume the music is 4 beats to the bar (you can count 1,2,3,4; 1,2,3,4; 1... etc along with music). Those 4 beats might be 4 equal length notes, 2 equal notes of 2 beats each, a note of two beats followed by two notes of one beat each etc etc. Any of those combinations can fit nicely into a 4 beat pattern.

### The galley is about to start

You've probably just done a bar of 1,2,3 hop so you've now got a foot in the air. Let's say it's the right foot. The galley you are about to do will occupy the next bar of 4 beats, but the bar of music this time will consist of a long note plus two 'normal length' notes (or the equivalent thereof). You should be able to count *one, and, three, four* to this music, making the "*one, and*" last as long as the *three* plus the *four*). Even if the pre-galley movement is something else, like a sidestep, it should still leave you with one foot in the air.

**The long note on beats 1 and 2. (or equivalent)** Place your right foot firmly on the ground under your body, and move your left leg sideways and up, with your heel describing a fairly slow clockwise (from your perspective looking down at it) circle as it comes up.

- your thigh ends up horizontal and you shin vertical – your leg is now bent at a right angle
- your leg is angled outwards roughly 45 degrees from the plane of your body (not so far as to hurt, but far enough to give your heel room to swing without kicking yourself)
- your foot is horizontal or (preferably) pointing slightly up (ie less than ninety degrees to your shin) and definitely not pointing down. Don't overdo this, but keep your ankle fairly relaxed
- the foot on the ground points straight forward (unless you are using the galley to turn – see later)
- Your hands move outwards into a 'balance' position, at the side of your body, about waist height, while you keep your body as upright as you can (resist leaning to the right or / and forwards). Keep your head up, eyes front – don't look down to check what your limbs are doing down there. And this helps you balance we hope.

By the time you have done all this you are ready for...

**The two normal length notes on beats 3 and 4. (or equivalent)** During which you hop, twice, while your right heel describes two circles. Inevitably you do these two circles quite quickly (twice the speed of the circle it does during Beats 1 and 2 above). Make sure the swinging foot describes circles, not just waving back and forth. If the heel of the swinging foot can brush the shin (or even the knee!) of the standing leg (risking a dirt mark) so much then better. Try to keep balance while you do this, and try to keep the hops on the spot (imagine you are dancing on a barrel-head).

### **Then what?**

The galley itself is now complete but you can't just stand there with your left leg in the air. You will move on to the next movement, occupying another bar of music. The commonest 'next thing' is a feet together jump (FtJ) in which you bring the left leg down alongside the right one, so both feet are on the floor, bend your knees and jump.

As you do so you bring your hands in towards your body from the balance position they were in for the galley, and as you spring up, bring them upwards in front of your body as high as you can. Timed well this will help you jump higher, and will certainly give the illusion of doing so.

### **'Galley left'**

The details above explain how to **galley right** because they involve starting with your right foot – it's the one which you plant on the ground as you start. You also need to be able to **galley left**. This is exactly the same, except that you plant your left foot down, and lift and circle with your right leg.

To **galley left** the movement before the galley must leave you with your left foot in the air, ready to place down as the galley begins. Ideally you've thought ahead and are on the correct foot. If your pre-galley movement is a couple of bars of double step, you need to start the double step on the same foot you will galley on. If you find yourself about to galley right but with the left foot in the air, do a fast left-right 'fudge step'.

Then proceed as per the galley right instructions, but with your right leg in the air, two hops on your left etc. Most people are happier with galleying right than left, or the other way round, but you will need to be able to at least attempt both!

### **Turning on the galley**

Most galleys not only involve the leg waving and hops, but also a change of direction. By the end of the galley your body has turned to pointing in a direction different to the one it faced when you began. The turn might be only 90°, but 180° or even 360° may be required.

To do this, divide the turn into two equal halves. Use the very first move in the galley (the placing on the 'right' foot) to turn your body halfway through the required rotation (ie place it round by 90° if you have to turn 180°), so as you complete the moves of Note 1 you are facing 90° from where you were before the galley started. Then use the two hops of Notes 2 & 3 to complete the turn. **You must do these two quarter turns in mid hop, while your 'right' foot is off the ground. Otherwise you will hurt yourself.**

In general while galleying try to keep in one place – the 'on a barrel-head' principle, even if while doing so you are trying to turn through 360°. Don't creep forwards, sideways, backwards. If you have been travelling (eg executing a half gyp) before the galley, or will be travelling immediately after it, there is a risk that during the galley itself you will move off the spot where you began it, especially when you do the two hops. The other potential problem is that you've not quite got to the right place to galley by the end of the half-gyp etc, and try to use the galley to get into position. **If you do this you will look ungainly and may hurt yourself!** Do your very best to be in the right place **before** you start the galley.

### **Galley out, and galley in**

These moves instruct you to do a galley with turn which will take you in a direction facing out of, or into the set. This instruction is commonest in 'short' Fieldtown dances (most of them) when using a galley to turn from 'foot up' to 'foot down', and after the end of foot down. In that case, 'foot up' involves 2 bars double step (starting on the 'outside' foot) then 'galley out', turning 270° to face your partner, ending in FtJ. You then turn to face down and do 'foot down' for another two bars of double step, starting outside foot, then 'galley out' 270° again to face your partner again with a FtJ.

Note that If you are on the left side of the set (dancing at position 1,3,or 5) facing up the set (as per foot up) the 'galley out' involves a left foot galley, but when you are facing down the set (as in foot down) the 'galley out' involves a right foot galley. The same differences apply if you are on the right hand side (positions 2,4,6): the first galley out requires a right foot galley, the second a left foot galley.

### **Slow galleys**

Occur specifically in Fieldtown Dearest Dicky. The music is a lot slower, so you must do the galley slowly, as though in treacle. The pattern is exactly the same, which means the first part, with knee up, feels very slow. But you must wait so that the 2 hops which fill the second half of the galley do not start too early. The slowness makes it easy to lose your balance during the slow galley – stay balanced! Finally when the slow galley ends, put your foot down slowly and do a FtJ.