

## Notes on Abnels – a stick dance in the Lichfield tradition

As taught to members of the 151<sup>st</sup> TM, Sussex 2025,

The dance does not appear in the 'Black Book' but is shown danced by Lichfield Morris men in 1983 (Morris Ring Archive No 39 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MClbjr2ZTM0>) starting at 25.10 minutes.

The dance is in the general style of Lichfield dances such as Vandalls, as regards common figures, but includes the 'galley over' (GO) in the distinctive figure, and in Swagger round, Heading up and Heading down.

When not striking the stick is held at a relaxed slope, tip pointing down. Stepping is double-step.

### The Galley over

In practice is more akin to a turn involving 4 capers than a galley a la Fieldtown.

1. Start: you should have one foot in the air.
2. Then plant that free foot on the ground about halfway round the angle you are turning through. In 'GO right' this is the right foot.
3. Spring off the planted foot, and swinging the other leg round, with your thigh parallel to the ground, turn in the air (having the effect of leaping over the planted foot leg) to land on your left foot, all or most of the way round to face across the set. As you do this the other heel kicks up behind you
4. Then 2 ordinary capers, completing the turn as necessary, to end facing across.
5. End with one-handed clash across to partner

### Distinctive figure

Strike partner's stick, tip to tip, forehand, twice – takes 2 beats, on the spot. Then stride across, passing right shoulders, two steps to opposite position, use GO to turn 180 degrees to face. As you cross let the stick drop through your hands so that both hands hold it above the stick middle, and clash forehand with stick butts (at thigh level) as you pass. Stick striking needs to be quick and crisp, using (for DDMM) the hickory rather than rustic sticks. Then repeat (crossing right shoulders again).

Both sides start right foot (as per video) to stride across, so both GO right. The same for the second half. The overall effect both times is for one side to GO up the set, the other side to GO down.

### Common figures

**Swagger round:** striding round, with manly bearing. Usual Lichfield pattern. Start outside foot so that all men GO in the down-the-set direction at the end of the figure to face across. The swagger needs to be brisk enough for all men to arrive back at place before the GO.

**Heading up and heading down:** As Vandalls (though there is more music), return to place on 4 swing backs, still facing up / down, then GO to face partner. Start outside foot, so all GO in the down-the-set direction when heading up, and up-the-set when heading down.

**Back-to-back** As Vandalls, with 4 swing backs halfway through, then 2 swing back and 2 capers at the end. No GO. All start right foot

**Hey** As Vandalls, requires some concentration to ensure that all men follow the 'cross, cross, pause' pattern. No GO at the end, just a caper to face. All start right foot

**Dance ends after final DF, which ends with 4 capers to face up rather than GO. Sticks clash high across the set. Then walk down the middle.**