

THE CONNEMARA REEL SET

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| First Figure - Ladies' Chain (Reels) | | 160 bars |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------|
| 1 | Lead around and back: with crossed hand hold, couples lead around anti-clockwise (6 bars). Dancers turn clockwise, the ladies under both raised arms (2 bars), and couples lead back to place (6 bars), face each other ('face up') and 'step it out' (2 bars). | 16 bars |
| 2 | Swing partners , with ceili hold (6 bars), finish facing centre and step it out (2 bars). | 8 bars |
| 3 | <i>Top couples:</i> Advance and retire twice , with crossed hand hold. | 8 bars |
| | House around with the same hold, the gent's R fist above his L, face up and step it out. | 8 bars |
| | Swing , face centre and step it out. | 8 bars |
| 4 | <i>Side couples</i> now dance 3. | 24 bars |
| 5 | <i>Top couples:</i> Ladies chain R hands in the centre and L to opposite gent who turns her clockwise underarm and dances anti-clockwise a ½ turn (4 bars). Ladies pass back R to R while gents dance ¾ turn clockwise to face their partners and step it out (4 bars). | 8 bars |
| | Swing , face centre and step it out. | 8 bars |
| 6 | <i>Side couples</i> chain and swing . | 16 bars |
| 7 | <i>Top couples</i> now repeat 3. | 24 bars |
| 8 | <i>Side couples</i> now repeat 3. and when sides house around, tops join in to face up and step it out, swing and step it out. | 24 bars |
| Second Figure - Back-to-Back (Reels) | | 192 bars |
| 1 | Lead around and back. | 16 bars |
| 2 | Swing , face centre and step it out. | 8 bars |
| 3 | <i>Top couples:</i> Back-to-back: 1 st gent and 2 nd lady dance past each other R to R (2 bars), pass each other back to back (2 bars), fall back to face each other (2 bars) and step it out (2 bars). | 8 bars |
| | The <i>dancing couple</i> swing , falling back to their own positions on the last 2 bars. | 8 bars |
| | <i>Dancing couples</i> , with crossed hand hold: Advance and retire twice. House around , face up and step it out. Swing , face centre and step it out. | 24 bars |
| 4 | <i>Side couples</i> now dance 3. with 1 st gent (R of 1 st tops) and 2 nd lady leading. | 40 bars |
| 5 | <i>Top couples</i> now repeat 3. with 2 nd gent and 1 st lady leading. | 40 bars |
| 6 | <i>Side couples</i> now repeat 3. with 2 nd gent and 1 st lady leading and when sides house around, tops join in to face up and step it out, swing and step it out. | 40 bars |

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| Third Figure - an Gairdin Beag (Reels) | | 184 bars |
|---|---|----------|
| 1 | Circle , advance and retire twice, dancers turning to face up and step it out as they retire for the second time. | 8 bars |
| 2 | Swing , face centre and step it out. | 8 bars |
| 3 | <i>1st top couple:</i> Advance and retire with waist hold (4 bars), drop hands and advance again each turning outwards 1 turn, face up and step it out (4 bars). | 8 bars |
| | Swing , face centre and step it out. On the last two bars 2 nd top couple dances in to join them in the centre. | 8 bars |
| | Swing four , falling back to place on the last 2 bars. | 8 bars |
| | Ladies chain. | 8 bars |
| | Swing , face centre and step it out. | 8 bars |
| 4 | <i>1st side couple</i> now leads to dance 3. with 2 nd side couple. | 40 bars |
| 5 | <i>2nd top couple</i> now leads to dance 3. with 1 st top couple. | 40 bars |
| 6 | <i>2nd side couple</i> now leads to dance 3. with 1 st side couple, and when sides house around, tops join in to face up and step it out, swing and step it out. | 40 bars |
| Fourth Figure - Maggie in the Woods (Polka) | | 96 bars |
| 1 | Circle. | 8 bars |
| 2 | Polka at home. | 8 bars |
| 3 | Circle , and on the last 2 bars the ladies dance on to the gent on their R and take waltz hold. | 8 bars |
| 4 | <i>New couples</i> polka round to the next place on the gents' R. * Circle and ladies move on. | 16 bars |
| 5 | Polka round to the next place on the gents' R. Circle and ladies move on. | 16 bars |
| 6 | Polka round to the next place on the gents' R. Circle and ladies dance on to their own partners. | 16 bars |
| 7 | Polka round to place. | 8 bars |
| 8 | Big Christmas to finish | 8 bars |
| | * When Mick Mulkerrin teaches this set he has couples accenting the 1 st and 5 th bars of the Polka round with a slight dip towards the centre of the set. | |

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REEL STEP

The step is characteristic of this set, and very different from that danced in the sets of Co.Clare. It is, in essence, a doubled reel step, with 2 beats being made by each foot in the same time taken to move the foot once in the Clare style.

& 1 2 3 & 2 2 3 & 3 2 3 &
Ladies hL RhR LhL RhR hR LhL RhR LhL hL RhR LhL RhR hR etc.

Gents hR LhL RhR LhL hL RhR LhL RhR hR LhL RhR LhL hL etc.

NOTE that hL means hop on the left foot while Lh means that the left heel strikes the floor and is immediately lifted - the underline shows which foot bears the weight on that beat.

Two BREAK STEPS which can be used to 'step it out' are:

& 7 2 3 & 8 2 3
Ladies L R L R L L R L
Gents R L R L R R L R
hop heelstep heelstep heelstep stamp step heelstep stamp (fwd)
(Connie Ryan)

and:

& 7 2 3 & 8 2 3
Ladies L R R L L R L R
Gents R L L R R L R L
hop back hop(fwd) back hop(fwd) back step step(fwd)
(Mick Mulkerrin)

SOURCES

Connie Ryan at Cecil Sharp House, London, 1992 was my first source. He told us that the first two figures were originally one and that when this was split the movements in the first part were rearranged to obtain the present symmetry. I believe he had a hand in this and also in starting the new second figure in the same way as the first.

My second source was Mick Mulkerrin some time later and from him I had the second break step. He preferred it to the first as it is a sean nos step of some antiquity. Mick also told me that the doubled reel step is also characterised by a definite knee-lift before the heel hits the floor at the beginning of each step. It is a safety measure as well as a matter of style as, properly executed, it prevents the rising heel from being thrown back and presenting a hazard to other dancers.