

The Charlestown Set

This set was written by Julia Smith of the Newcastle Irish Set Dancers who dance in the Charlestown suburb of Newcastle in NSW, Australia and is dedicated to these dancers. While this set is composed mainly of traditional elements, newer elements reflect some of the diversity of dancing enjoyed in Australia in the 21st century. First side couple is on the left of first top couple. Swings are in waltz hold. Some sections suit battering steps.

FIGURE 1: REEL (192 BARS)

- (a) All couples lead around holding crossed hands in front and the Lady turns clockwise under both hands. (8 bars)
- (b) All swing. (8 bars)
- (c) First top couple house inside. (8 bars)
- (d) "Greet your opposite": Top couples advance and retire twice, nearly into a line across the set; firstly approach right shoulder to right with opposites (Ladies in the centre) and then left shoulder to left (Gents in the centre). [Note: Just dance forward so that eye contact may still be maintained with opposite :-)] (8 bars)
- (e) Top couples pass through to opposite sides, passing opposites by right shoulder (2 bars), face partner and dance back-to-back passing forward by left shoulders and acknowledging corner, then reversing passing by right shoulder (4 bars). Gents then turn partner under by right hand, changing places (Ladies turn anticlockwise and Gents move clockwise behind them) (2 bars). [Tops are now in opposite positions and partners face each other with right hands joined.] (8 bars)
Meanwhile, in the last 2 bars, side couples take right hands and set facing partners.
- (f) "Fast Quarter Chain": All pull past partner by right hand (Ladies clockwise, Gents anti-clockwise), pass next by left hand and turn next by right arm (using cup hand to elbow hold, with thumb alongside index finger) to face back (4 bars); pass next by left hand and Gents turn partner under by right hand to place (4 bars). (8 bars)
- (g) All house at home. (8 bars)
- (h) Side couples dance (c) to (g) with first side couple leading. (40 bars)
- (i) Top couples dance (c) to (g) with second top couple leading, returning to original places. (40 bars)
- (j) Side couples dance (c) to (g) with second side couple leading, returning to original places. (40 bars)
- (k) All couples house around the set. (8 bars)

FIGURE 2: JIG ("Up" style, using the skip step throughout) (192 BARS)

- (a) All couples lead around holding crossed hands in front and the Lady turns clockwise under both hands. (8 bars)
- (b) All swing. (8 bars)
- (c) First top couple house inside. (8 bars)
- (d) Top couples "diamond left" in open waltz hold, passing the other couple back-to-back, first dancing to the left to face side couple, reversing to opposite places, dancing left and reversing to places (4x2 bars). (8 bars)
- (e) Top couples in waltz hold dance sevens to the centre and back (4 bars) and half house to opposite places (4 bars). (8 bars)
- (f) Top Ladies chain with right hands in the centre, left hands with the opposite Gent, passing under his arm turning clockwise while he stays facing in, dance around behind him anticlockwise, take right hands in the centre and return to partner. (8 bars)
- (g) Top couples swing. (8 bars)
- (h) Side couples dance (c) to (g) with first side couple leading. (40 bars)
- (i) Top couples dance (c) to (g) with second top couple leading, returning to original places. (40 bars)

- (j) Side couples dance (c) to (f) with second side couple leading, returning to original places. (32 bars)
- (k) All swing. (8 bars)
- (l) All couples house around the set. (8 bars)

FIGURE 3: POLKA (160 BARS)

- (a) All advance and retire twice in a circle. (8 bars)
- (b) All swing. (8 bars)
- (c) Top couples dance back-to-back with opposite. Each person dances forward past opposite, right shoulder to right (2 bars), dances one turn anticlockwise (2 bars), dances backwards passing opposite left shoulder to left (2 bars) and dances another turn anticlockwise to face opposite in the centre in front of original places (2 bars). (8 bars)
- (d) Top couples take hands in a small circle. Dance one step in (in 23) and one step out (out 23), then drop hands and all dance 2 steps turning clockwise 3/4 (individually) to the next position on the right (4 bars). Take hands and repeat, so that tops are now in front of opposite places (4 bars). [Note: The circle should contract then expand, with tension in the arms on the back step, providing momentum for twirling right. This whole movement should be performed with some vigour.] (8 bars)
- (e) Top Ladies chain with Ladies starting from these positions and Gents moving diagonally backwards to the right for the first two bars (while still facing in). Ladies take right hands in the centre, left hands with the opposite Gent, passing under his arm turning clockwise while he stays facing in, dance around behind him anticlockwise, take right hands in the centre and return to partner. (8 bars)
- (f) Top couples swing. (8 bars)
- (g) Side couples dance (c) to (f). (32 bars)
- (h) Top couples dance (c) to (f) returning to original places. (32 bars)
- (i) Side couples dance (c) to (e) returning to original places. (24 bars)
- (j) All swing. (8 bars)
- (k) Swing in eight (Big Christmas) (6 bars). In the last two bars, retaining arm positions, jump and cross the feet (left over right, right over left and repeat). (8 bars)

FIGURE 4: HORNPIPE (176 BARS) Progressive

- (a) All advance and retire twice in a circle. (8 bars)
- (b) All house at home. (8 bars)
- (c) All dance the hornpipe body in waltz hold as in the North Kerry Set (hop 123 in, stamp 123 back; Gents hop and stamp on their right foot and Ladies on their left), turning on clockwise to the next position to the right (2x hop 123). Repeat three times to home. (16 bars)
- (d) All house around the set. (8 bars)
- (e) Ladies right hand star 3/4 around clockwise and dance out to face the Gent previously on their right (4 bars). [At this point the Ladies are in the position of the Lady previously on their right and the new partners face each other.] Dance back-to-back with this new partner, starting by passing right shoulders and finishing in waltz hold (4 bars). (8 bars)
- (f) All dance (c) to (e) three times, returning to original partner. (96 bars)
- (g) All dance the hornpipe body. (16 bars)
- (h) All house around the set doubling the last two bars. (8 bars)

Teaching Notes

1. Figures 1-3 are danced tops, sides, tops, sides with the top couples finishing their sequence in opposite places, followed by the sides and then all return to "home" places the following times.
2. There is a different version of the back-to-back element in each figure.
3. The speed of the chain in Fig 1 is intentionally fast as often danced in Australian Bush dancing and sometimes other genres. This will require suitable travelling reel steps and ideally 1 bar to each hand change, 2 bars for a fast turn and 2 bars to turn the Lady under.
4. The two anticlockwise turns in the back-to-back in Fig 3 (c) can be replaced by dance right (2 bars) and dance left (2 bars) respectively, or danced with battering steps; dancers have plenty of time but do not return right back to their original places.
5. In Fig 3 (d) there are fast twirls to the right after the back steps have been completed and hands dropped; do not turn early. This element should be done with vigour, but safely!
6. The set is not designed with a particular area of Ireland in mind and can be danced with various styles.

Enjoy!