

Commander Keal's Birthday

A 32 bar strathspey for four couples in a longwise set. 3rd and 4th couples start on opposite sides.

This dance is for Charles Keal who celebrated his 70th birthday in April 2023. He was in the Royal Navy, but when he resigned because of homophobic attitudes in the Armed Forces at the time he was forbidden to use his naval rank. However, some of his friends still call him Commander Keal, particularly when his attitude to time-keeping or planning exhibits a naval precision.

Bars Description

- 1-4 1st with 2nd also 3rd with 4th couples dance the first 4 bars of the Espagnole. Irrespective of which side they are on, the women start by leading across and crossing right hands as the men dance across solo with 2nd and 3rd men passing right shoulder. Then the men lead across and cross over right hands as the women dance across solo with 1st and 4th women passing right shoulder. The order is now 2,1,4,3 with 4th and 3rd couples on opposite sides.
- 5-8 1st and 4th couples turn giving left hands and end in promenade hold facing up and down respectively.
- 9-16 1st and 4th couples, in promenade, hold dance complete reels of three across the dance with 2nd and 3rd couples respectively, starting by giving right shoulders to 2nd and 3rd women. 1st couple end the reel by crossing up left hand to 1st place facing out as 4th couple cross down left hand to 4th place facing out while 2nd and 3rd couples cast inwards one place. All are back in the original order but now with 1st and 3rd couples on opposite sides.
- 17-20 2nd and 3rd couples take promenade hold with each other on the sides and dance half a reel of three on the sidelines starting by giving right shoulders to 1st and 4th men. The order is now 4,2,3,1 with 3rd and 1st couples on opposite sides.
- 21-24 2nd and 3rd couples dance left hands across and end facing the corners.
- 25-28 4th and 2nd also 3rd and 1st couples turn one and a half times with both hands to change places.
- 29-32 4th and 1st couples dance left hands across ending in the order 2,4,1,3 with 1st and 3rd couples on opposite sides.

Music

- Tune: John Stephen of Chance Inn (Angus Fitchet).
- Recording: 4x32 Strathspeys (The Macadians: The Macadians Dancing Master).

Notes

- The first version of this dance was written and revised several years previously but it languished untested until I realised it could be wrapped up as a birthday present.