

Hutton's Unconformity

A 32 bar strathspey for four couples in a longwise set. The dance starts with two chords. On the second chord 3rd woman and 4th man change places so that 1st and 2nd couples are facing their partner while 3rd and 4th couples are beside their partner.

This dance commemorates James Hutton (1726-1797) one of Scotland's foremost scientists who is considered the founder of modern geology. He was one of the first to realise that weathering of rock formations showed the Earth was far older than was assumed at the time. Most famously he found several "unconformities" where strata of sedimentary rocks clearly overlaid older strata at a very different angle indicating that the older rocks must have been raised up from the sea bed, turned over so the strata were vertical, then sunk again and later covered with new sedimentary layers and raised up a second time.

The cross, cast off and dance down figures indicate build up of the sedimentary layers. These are compressed when 1st and 2nd couples end closer together by bar 16 than at bar 9. The rock layers are turned in bars 17-24. The last figure has a hint of more sedimentation but is mainly oriented across at the top and up/down at the bottom like a typical unconformity.

Bars Description

- 1-4 1st couple cross over giving right hands then cast off as 2nd couple step up.
- 5-8 1st couple dance down between 3rd and 4th men as they step up, then cast off as 3rd and 4th women step up.
Meanwhile 2nd couple cross over giving right hands then cast off as 3rd and 4th men step up again.
- 9-16 1st couple followed by 2nd couple dance down for four bars. 3rd and 4th women step up to 2nd place on bars 11-12. Then 2nd couple followed by 1st couple dance up, ending in 3rd and 4th places respectively.
- 17-20 3rd and 4th couples, also 2nd and 1st couples, each circle four hands round half way to the left for two bars. All then turn their partner once round with both hands ending back in the same circles.
- 21-24 3rd and 4th couples, also 2nd with 1st couples, each circle four hands round three quarters to the right. All retain hands with their neighbour and end facing their partner. 4th and 3rd couples at the top face across. 1st and 2nd men, in the centre in 3rd place, face down to their partners who face up in 4th place.
- 25-28 4th couple cross passing right shoulder, cast off and take nearer hands facing up.
Meanwhile 3rd couple advance for one and retire for one then cross up, passing left shoulder, and curve towards each other to face down nearer hands joined.
Meanwhile 1st and 2nd couples advance for one and retire for one up and down, then half turn their partner with both hands and retain nearer hands facing in.
- 29-32 3rd and 4th couples set and link across the dance ending back on their own sides.
Meanwhile 1st and 2nd couples set and link on the sides (with small setting steps).
The final order is 3,4,2,1. 2nd and 1st couples are beside their partner on the men's and women's sides respectively, with the men above the women.

Music

- Suggested tune: Strong Tea (Angus Fitchet).
- Suitable recording: Silverdale Strathspey (Neil Barron and his SDB: The Third Sheaf Collection).

Diagrams (music at the bottom)

Bars 1-4	Bars 5-8	Bar 9	Unconformity at Jedburgh (Wikipedia)	