

Becket Foursomes Dances

7/4/27

A "Becket foursomes dance" is a progressive dance which begins each change in Becket Reel formation and appears, at first glance, to be much like a contra using that formation. However, the dance pattern uses one or more figures for four couples, which does not happen in true contras. The figures for four couples suggest a similarity to progressive four-face-four dances, such as First Bloom, having lines of four across the hall. There is a similarity, but a greater variety of figures can be used to achieve the progression in the Becket foursomes dances.

Some vocabulary and some features for these dances:

- A "Becket foursomes dance" is one which begins each change in Becket ~~four~~ foursomes formation and uses some figures for four couples.
- Becket foursomes formation: a set of dancers in Becket Reel formation with an even number of couples and with adjacent pairs of couples, going around the entire set, identified as foursomes. One of these foursomes, sometimes referred to as a "Becket foursome", includes the same people throughout a dance.
- At the beginning of any change, each foursome is opposite another, and during a change each will progress to the next opposite foursome. The order of the foursomes around the set will be unchanged, but there may be some exchanges within a foursome: couple with couple, man with man, or woman with woman.
- End effects usually are simple. That's because the number of couples in the entire set is even.
- The progression is achieved in a relatively small portion of the dance sequence. The shortest is a shift ~~to~~ two places around the set in just four counts, while some nice

progressions take 16 counts. The rest of the dance 2 pattern can consist of any ingenious combination of figures for two or four couples which fit together nicely.

□ Almost any short double-progression ^{sequence} found in a contra using Becket formation can serve as a starting point for a Becket foursomes dance. That's because a double progression of ~~of~~ individual dancers provides a single progression for their Becket foursome.

□ In your own formation you have a partner of the opposite sex, a comrade of the same sex, and your comrade's partner, who is also your partner's comrade or your second partner. Your neighbor is of the opposite sex, comes from the opposite foursome, and is ^{the first} such person to ^{interact with you.} ~~to~~ ^{interact with you.} The other one is your other (second) neighbor. There also are a man from the opposite foursome and the other (second) man from the opposite foursome. In some dances the men trade places in their foursomes ^{during a change} ~~and~~ they also trade partners for the next change. The corresponding ~~partner~~ partner exchange is ~~not~~ made when the women trade places, but not when couples trade places.

Becket foursomes dances are likely to be unknown in many dance communities, and they may be of interest to callers and dancers for that very reason. The dances presented here are composed using nothing but familiar figures and calls, so both caller and dancer should be comfortable with them, except for the "unusual" way figures are combined.

When a caller uses a Becket foursomes dance, he may find that it takes less time to get the dancers into sets and ready for a walkthru than it does when ^{he} uses a dance like First Bloom with

lines of four across the hall. A caller might use these steps to organize the dancers.

1. Form sets in Becket formation.
2. Verify that there will be enough space up and down the hall: Have the dancers take hands four and spread out to make the circles comfortably large and round. If the circles remain squashed into ovals, there will not be enough room to dance four-couple figures nicely. In that case, I recommend abandoning this dance and using a Becket formation contra; there would be almost no time wasted.
3. Decree that there ~~two~~ must be an even number of couples in the set. Any extra couple at the bottom of the set when the dancers have taken hands four must either drop out or find another couple to dance with.
4. Identify the foursomes: With the dancers back in their long lines, have them take hands in groups of four going around the entire set, starting at the top.

That would leave the dancers in formation, ready for the walkthru, and with enough spacing up and down the hall.

The first of the dances presented here was What's This?, and the title suggests some confusion about the formation it uses. It's not a contra dance, and it's not a square dance. What kind of dance is it?

This collection of fifteen Becket foursomes dances is intended to demonstrate a variety of progressions which can be used in such

dances. With so many dances presented in one batch, choosing just one to study, or perhaps to call, may be a bit of a chore.

The following observations may help to make that chore easier:

□ A dance pattern may have only a partner swing, or it may have swings with two, three, or four people. The dances with only a partner swing may be the most useful, because they usually have a simple story line, a small number of pieces, or both. Dances with only a partner swing are #1, #2, #3, #4, #7, #8, #11.

□ Some dance fragments appear in several dances, either because they are particularly satisfying for four couples or because they are useful for sticking other pieces of a dance together. Comparing different dances sharing the same dance fragment may be helpful. Some dance fragments:

○ [Almd L corner; R hand to pt for four hands of grand R&L (16)]; [bal & sw pt (16)] Used in #3 and #8. #11 uses only the first phrase.

○ [Turn away from pt and give R hand to corner for seven hands of grand R&L (16)]; [bal & sw pt (16)] Used in #1, #7, #10.

○ [Almd L corner; pass "pt" by R shoulder; sw the next (16)]; [repeat with new corner, "pt", and next (16)] Used in #12 and #13.

○ [Ladies grand chain and return (16)] Used in #4, #7, #9.

○ After two pairs of dancers, M with W, stop swinging, either the two men almd L 1 1/2 or the women almd R 1 1/2 to go to the other person for another swing. Used in

What's This? , #6, #9, #14.

○ Men star L 1/2 to go to new women or women star R 1/2 to go to new men. Used in #5, #6, #10, #12, #13, #14.

○ The ~~progression~~ progression in ph 1&2 of #2, #3, and #7 Alt. is one which might not be satisfying. Alternates for that ph 1&2 are given at #2 (#3 is on the same page) and a primary #7.

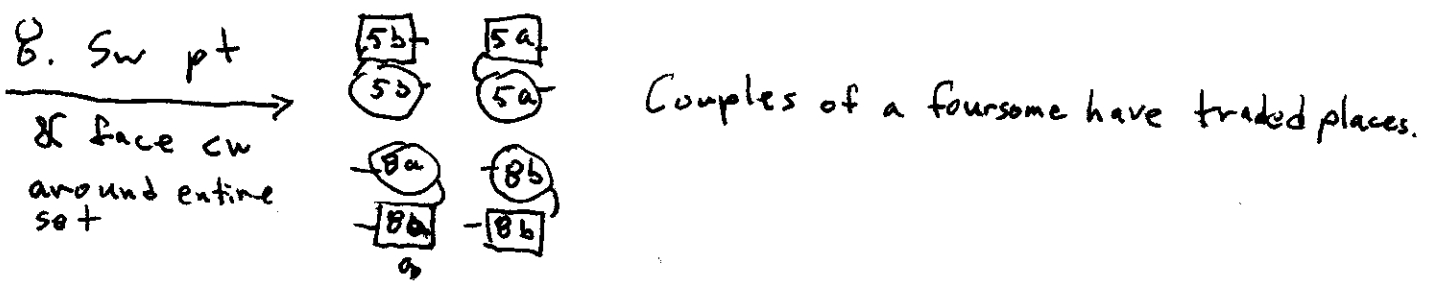
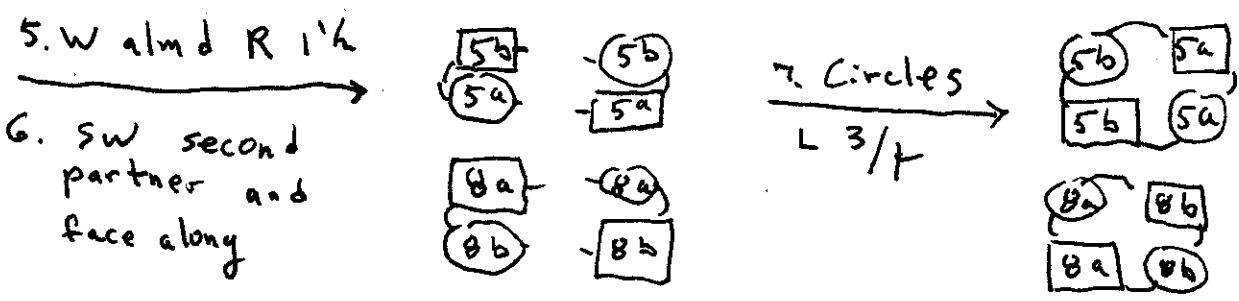
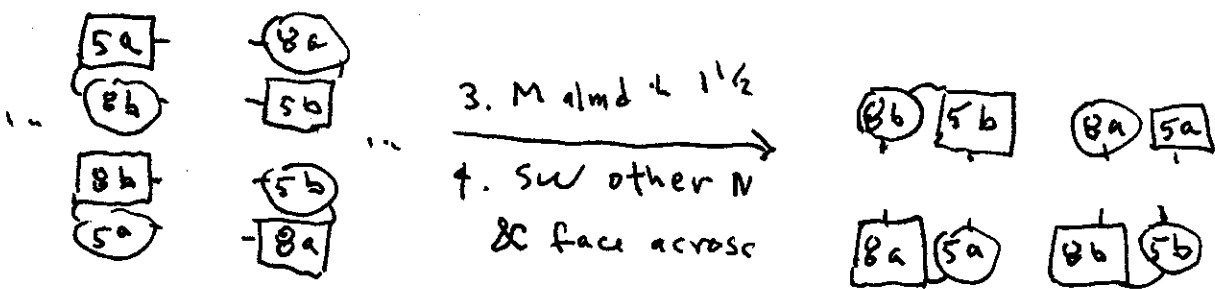
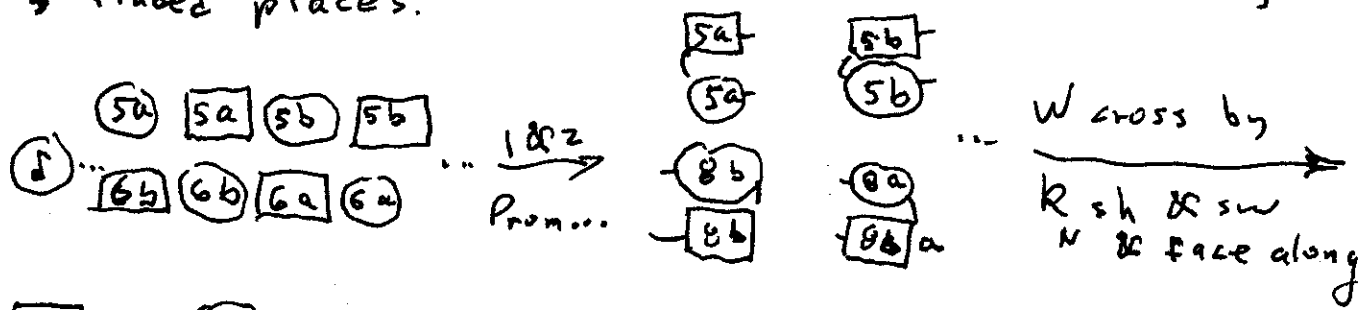
The dances follow.

Al Olson (7/9/97)

What's This? by Al Olson (6/23/97)

A Bucket foursomes dance

1. Partners promenade cw around entire set to a new opposite foursome (4); opposite women cross by R shoulder & swing neighbor, ending facing up or down the hall (in four couple minor set); 2. M (comrades) alnd L 1 1/2 4. SW other N & face across 5. W alnd R 1 1/2 6. SW second pt & face up or down 7. Circles four L 3/4 8. SW orig pt & face cw around entire set, couples in a foursome having traded places.



Becket Foursomes #1 by Al Olson (6/24/97)

A Becket Foursomes dance

1. W ch across 2. Ret 3. Those who can: $\frac{1}{2}$ R&L on L diagonal

4. $\frac{1}{2}$ R&L across 5&6. In the minor set formed by opposite foursomes: turn away from partner, give R hand to corner, & grand right & left seven hands around, till partners meet the second time (men go cw) 7 & 8. Bal & sw pt & face across

Ph 5&6: This requires greater speed than usual: seven hands instead of six.

Alt (easier): 5&6. Circle eight to the left once around.

The dancers make use of their assignments to foursomes only in ph 5&6, where opposite foursomes make up the minor set. In the primary dance, the major challenges for the dancers are to identify their minor set quickly and to keep their grand right and left confined to it.

Except for ph 5&6 and the balance in ph 7, this dance sequence is identical to Becket Reel and has the familiar end effects of that dance. strictly speaking, that applies to couples in this dance, but not to foursomes. In Becket Reel with an even number of couples, ~~or~~ there never is an extra couple at the end of the set, but in a Becket foursomes dance there can be an extra foursome at the end of the set (but not an extra couple).

Becket Foursomes #2 by Al Olson (revised 7/4/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1&2. Prom pt cw around entire set to new opposite foursome; op w alnd R & give L hd to pt for a courtesy turn with one or two extra revolutions (to fill the phrase) 3&4. Opposite foursomes: circle eight to left once around 5&6. W star R; W go back to place while men go in front of pt to form a left hand star; M star L to pt 7&8. Bal & sw pt & face cw around entire set

For a more familiar progression, use this:

Alt: 7&8 Bal & sw pt and face cpl on L diag 1. 1/2 R&L on L diag 2. 1/2 R&L across

Becket Foursomes #3 by Al Olson (7/4/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1&2. Prom pt cw around entire set to new opposite foursome; Op w alnd R & give L hand to pt for a courtesy turn with one or two extra revolutions (to fill the phrase) and face center of the minor set 3. Opposite foursomes: cir eight L 1/2 4. Into the center and out 5&6. Alnd L corner; R hd to pt & g^t R & L four hands, till partners meet 7&8 Bal & sw pt & face cw around entire set

The half dance consisting of ph 5-8 is also found in Becket Foursomes #8. There, it is in ph 3-6.

Becket Foursomes #4 by Al Olson (6/25/97)

7

A Becket foursomes dance

1&2. Shift L around the entire set to new opposite foursome; circle eight L $3/4$ 3. W gd ch 4. Ret 5. W star L $3/4$ and take the position at pt's L 6. M star L $3/4$ to pt 7&8. Bal & sw pt & face across

Alternate: 5. M star L $3/4$ to corner 6. Those two: alnd R $1\frac{1}{2}$, till w ^{is} in center 7. W star L $3/4$ 8. sw pt & face across

Becket Foursomes #5 by Al Olson (7/3/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Cir four ^L $3/4$ 2. Pass thru two along; bal in wave with couple #3, W joining L hds in cntr 3. W prom single file ccw once around an inner circle of four, getting equal spacing as they do so, while M prom single file cw halfway around the outside of that circle 4. Alnd R with what you meet (second pt) about $1/2$, till M face center; M star L $1/2$ 5&6. Bal & sw N 7&8. W star R $1/2$; sw second pt & face across

The women exchange positions within a foursome during a change, and they exchange partners for the next change.

Becket Foursomes #6 by Al Olson (6/25/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Cir four L $3/4$ 2. Pass thru two along; bal in wave with #3, w joining L hds in cntr 3. In each wave: $1/2$ hey, st with Ns passing by Rsh f. sw N & face up or down in the minor set 5. W (comrades) alnd R $1\frac{1}{2}$ 6. sw other N & face center 7&8. M star L $1/2$; sw pt & face across ~~with~~ with, couples having traded positions in a foursome.

Becket Foursomes #7 by Al Olson (6/25/97)

✓ A Becket foursomes dance

1. Couples on the right diagonal: $\frac{1}{2}$ R & L 2. Opposite foursomes: cir eight $\frac{1}{2}$, making the circles as large and round as practical 3. Wgd ch 4. Ret 5 & 6. Turn away from partner for seven hands of grand right and left, starting with R hand to corner, ending when partners meet the second time 7 & 8. Bal & sw pt & face ~~ex~~ couple on the right diagonal, with couples in a four-some having traded places

Ph 5 & 6: This is faster than usual, seven hands instead of six.

The dance is somewhat easier if left diagonals are used in ph 1 and ph 8. instead of right.

Alt: 7 & 8. Bal & sw pt & face cw around the entire set 1 & 2. Prom pt cw around entire set to new opposite foursome; op w almd R ~~almd R~~ & give L hand to pt for a courtesy turn with one or two extra revolutions (to fill the phrase), ending with couples facing the center of the minor set

✓ Becket Foursomes #8 by Al Olson (6/25/97)

A Becket foursomes dance [Compare with BFs #3]

1. $\frac{1}{2}$ R & L on R diag 2. Opposite foursomes: circle right $\frac{1}{2}$, making the circles as large and round as practical 3 & 4. Almd L your corner & R hand to pt; grand right & L four hands around 5 & 6. When you meet your partner: balance and swing. 7. With your honey, promenade home (all couples on original side of the set) & Long lines go fwd & bk The couples of a foursome trade places during a change. pt

Alt: 5: with your pt: do-si-do 6. Promenade home & w twirl under joined hands to face pt 7 & 8. Bal & sw pt & face ~~ex~~ pl on R diagonal

The primary dance has a nicely placed balance, while the alternate has a nicely placed swing.

Becket Foursomes # 9 by Al Olson (6/26/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Op W almd R $\frac{1}{2}$; bal in wave, L hd to N 2. Ns almd L $\frac{3}{4}$, till W face in; #2 Ns almd R $\frac{1}{2}$, till W face out; #3 Ns almd L about $\frac{1}{2}$, till W face the center of the minor set formed by opposite foursomes 3. W gd ch 4. Ret 5. Cir eight L $\frac{1}{2}$ 6. Sw current "partner" (a neighbor) & face across the set 7. Op M almd L $1\frac{1}{2}$ 8. Sw pt & face across, with couples having traded places in a foursome

Becket Foursomes # 10 by Al Olson (7/5/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Prom pt ccw around entire set to a new foursome; M star L $\frac{1}{2}$
2. Sw N & face center of minor set 3. Circle eight L $\frac{1}{2}$ 4. $\frac{1}{2}$ W grand chain (to pt) 5 & 6. Turn away from pt for seven hands of grand R & L, starting R hand to corner and continuing till partners meet the second time 7 & 8. Bal & sw pt & face ccw around entire set

Ph 5 & 6 is faster than usual, seven hands instead of six

Becket Foursomes # 11 by Al Olson (7/6/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Prom pt ccw around entire set to new foursome; op M almd L 2. Pts almd R about $1\frac{3}{4}$, till M face center of the minor set 3 & 4. Almd L corner; R hand to pt for four hands of grand right & left, till pts meet again 5. Pts do-side 6. Pts prom home (all couples are in their original lines) & W twirl under joined hands to face pt 7 & 8. Pts bal & sw and face ccw around the entire set

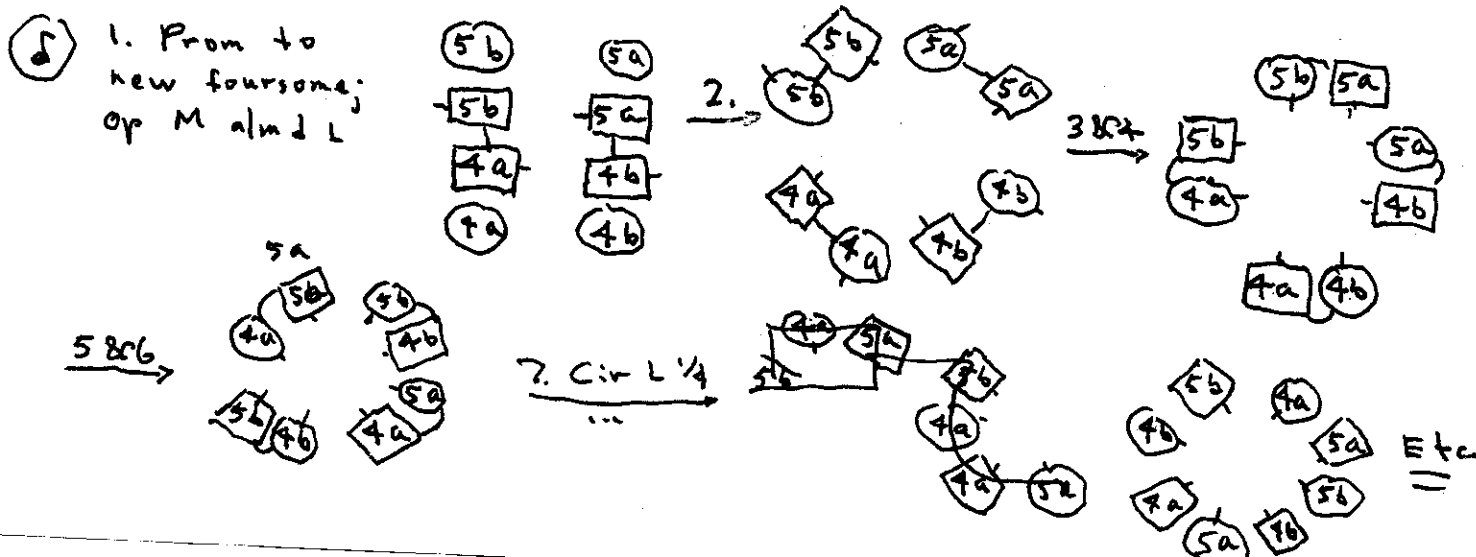
This dance differs from BFS #8, Alt only in ph 1 & 2 and the direction dancers face after the swing.

Becket Foursomes #12 by Al Olson (7/5/97)

A Becket foursomes dance

1. Prom pt c/w around entire set to a new opposite foursome (note, within each foursome, the leading couple and the trailing couple); opposite M abnd L 2. Alnd R pt about $1\frac{3}{4}$, till M face into center of set 3&4. Alnd L corner; pass pt by R shoulder; swing to next 5&6. Repeat ^{Ph} 3&4 with new corner, "pt", & next (everyone swings a neighbor)
7. Circle eight. L $\frac{1}{4}(+)$; W star R $\frac{1}{2}$ 8. Sw pt & face c/w around the entire set, with couples of a foursome in their original order

Ph 3&4: The leading man swings the trailing woman of the opposite foursome, while the trailing man swings his second partner. This ^{is} a relatively boring arrangement for the trailing man and his second partner (his leading lady), and they might like a change of roles between leading couple and following couple. That could be arranged this way: During the initial four counts, the trailing couple goes at higher speed than usual to the normal destination of the leading couple, while the leading couples make way for the trailing couple by dancing ~~mir~~ tiny mirror circles, the man to his left and the woman to her right, to arrive at the trailing couple's usual destination.



Becket Foursomes #13 by Al Olson (7/6/97)

A Becket Foursomes dance

1. Prom pt ccw around entire set to new opposite foursome; continue the promenade ccw 1/4 of the way around the minor set (the two couples of a foursome are opposite each other) 2. M star L 1/2 to N; those two alnd R about 3/4, till M can lead into next figure 3. Cir eight L a comfortable amount 4. Cir eight R the same amount 5 & 6. Alnd L corner; pass "pt" by the R shoulder; sw the next & face in 7 & 8. Rep ph 5 & 6 with new corner, "pt", and next (original pt) but end the sw facing ccw around the entire set

Ph 5 & 6. The leading man of a foursome always swings a neighbor, while the following man always swings a neighbor. If they want to trade these experiences, ^{couples} they can trade places during ph 1, perhaps as described for BFs #12 his second pt

Becket Foursomes #14 by Al Olson (7/7/97)

A Becket Foursomes dance

1. ~~Ph~~ Prom pt cw around entire set to new opposite foursome; W star R 1/2 2. Sw N & face up or down in the minor set 3. Facing M (comrades) alnd L 1 1/2 4. Sw second N & face center 5. Cir eight L 1/2 6. second Ns alnd R till M face in; M star L to second pt 7 & 8. Bal & sw second pt & face cw around entire set

The men trade places during this change and trade partners for the next.

Alternate A: Ph 4. Facing W (comrades) alnd R 1 1/2. The only other change is that the women trade places, instead of the men, and swap partners for the next change.

Alternate B: 5. Cir eight L 1/2 to long lines 6. Long lines: forward & bk 7. Opposite M: alnd L 1 1/2 8. Sw pt & face cw around entire set, with Foursomes unchanged

