

# Jameko.

From the 1670 fourth edition of *The Dancing Master*, published by John Playford

Description by Richard Powers

**Jameko.** *Longways for as many as will,* ○○○○  
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The first man take his Wo. by the right hand, then with his left, and so holding hands, change places, then do the same to the 2. Wo. the first Wo. and the 2. man do the same. Then fall back from your own, the first couple being in the second place, go the Figure of 8. Do this to the last.

The first man take hands with the second Wo. and turn her round, the first Wo. and the 2. man do as much. Then the two men take hands and two Wo. take hands and turn once and a half, and then turn your own. Do this to the last.

This dance is good example of alternate interpretations of a description. Here are several different reconstructions of Jameko (also spelled **Jamaica** in the twelve later editions after 1686).

**1** This is the more common version danced today, where the music is interpreted as ABAB. Today, English country dances are typically danced with walking steps, disregarding 17<sup>th</sup> century descriptions of the actual steps danced at the time.

Longways Country Dance, duple proper

bars

- A 4 First couple take R hands, then L hands (crossed hands), then turn half-way to change places.
  - 4 All neighbors along the line do the same. All end progressed and improper.
  - B 4 Taking hands along lines, all back up, then advance.
  - 4 First couple half figure 8 up thru 2s (with the lady passing through first), ending proper and progressed.
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- A 4 First gent and second lady two-hand full turn on the diagonal (gent facing diagonally up the set).
  - 4 The second diagonal corners two-hand turn.
  - B 4 Those same neighbors along the line turn a full turn.\*
  - 4 Partners full two-hand turn.

Repeat the dance from progressed position.

\* Yes, the description clearly says to turn once and a half, but that would undo the progression, so this reconstruction changed it to a full turn.

**2** This reconstruction notices that the music is a 4-bar strain, repeated, followed by an 8-bar strain, repeated, which makes it ABB instead of ABAB. Then to avoid the problem of undoing the progression with that turn-and-a-half,\* most of the turns in the second half of the dance are interpreted as half-turns instead of full turns, retaining the turn and a half.

bars

A 4 First couple take R hands, then L hands (crossed hands), then turn half-way to change places.

4 All neighbors along the line do the same. All end progressed and improper.

B 4 Taking hands along lines, all back up, then advance.

4 First couple half figure 8 up thru 2s (with the lady passing through first), ending proper and progressed.

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B 2 First gent and second lady two-hand half turn on the diagonal (gent facing diagonally up the set).

2 The second diagonal corners two-hand half turn.

2 Those same neighbors along the line turn a turn once and a half. This is more easily possible if it's a right elbow turn, or hands held low and firm.

2 Partners two-hand half turn.

Repeat the dance from progressed position.

**3** The B part above can also be done in 4-bar sections, taking twice the time to do the turns, to ABAB music. This makes the turn-and-a-half easier, but the half-turns feel slow, especially using the 17<sup>th</sup> century steps.

**4** That same B part above can replace the half-turns with turns-and-a-half. It most likely was not danced that way in 1670 (or it would have specified the turns and a half), but it's possible with today's walking steps.

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**The crossed-hand turn:** The simplest interpretation is to change places with hands crossed, turning clockwise. Today, a common choice is for the lady to turn under the gent's raised arms, backing through.



**The original steps:** The French dance master André Lorin was sent to England to observe and record country dances in 1685. He reported that the footwork was mostly traveling doubles (pas de bourées), sometimes concluding with two steps then a small jump (petit saut: jeté or assemblé), with many other steps described. Lorin also complained that the English danced with an informal variety of individual footwork, and that each dancer had their own balancé steps, which countered the French court preference for precise uniformity.



This choreography, with the same music, appeared in France 32 years later, re-named **La Bonne Amitié**, in Raoul Fueillet's *RECŪEIL DE CONTREDANCES MISES EN CHORÉGRAPHIE*, 1702. La Bonne Amitié is the first half of Playford's Jameko. The only difference from this half of Jameko is in part B, with lines going forward and back in La Bonne Amitié, instead of Jameko's back then forward. Otherwise it is identical.