

Colin Rogers – American Square & Round Dancing

For over 30 years, together with my wife Gill, I have enjoyed American Square and Round dancing. Since retiring in 2000, we have gone into this in a big way.



Square dancing consists of sessions danced by four couples that start and finish in an inward facing square. The choreography is determined by a caller, who issues standard calls that the dancers have learnt. This results in the dancers interacting with other square members and coalescing into a new formation. It is essential for the dancers to listen carefully because they do not know what is coming, and must then operate as a team.

There are few defined steps in square dancing. It is all about being at the right place, at the right time, facing the correct direction and interacting with the right dancer.



The activity is enjoyed in many countries but the calling is always in English. The calls are organised into a series of programmes of increasing complexity and dance events are advertised as being at a particular level.

We dance A2, the second part of the Advanced Programme, and are expected to know around 200 calls. At this level, many of the calls are conditional, and there is different choreography according to the location of an individual within the

formation, at that instant. This calls for quick thinking, and the brain receives a good workout due to the high intellectual content. Despite that, square dancing is very much a fun activity.

Round dancing is a spin-off in which dancing is done by couples. It has been described as 'choreographed ballroom dancing'.

A Cuer calls out the names of dance figures and all the couples perform the same moves simultaneously. The dancers don't have to devise the choreography; they can just do as they are told and enjoy performing the dance.



The dances are in many different rhythms; each with its own rules for interpretation. We dance waltz, quickstep, two-step, foxtrot, jive, rumba, cha-cha, tango, slow two-step, bolero, samba, mambo, and paso doble.

There is a lot to learn and remember, and a rapid change of mindset is required when the rhythm switches within a dance. Dance figures have definite footwork, and because the emphasis is on good style, it is all-body dancing.

There are many video clips on YouTube which show the actual dance movement, the music, the calls, and the light hearted atmosphere. There is also a wealth of information on the British Association of American Square Dancing Clubs' website



<http://www.uksquaredancing.com>

If anyone is interested in learning American Square or Round dancing, please contact me and I will put you in touch with a dance group near to where you live.

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****WARNING: this activity can be highly addictive!****