

LHEIM Y BRADDAN

(The Salmon Leap)

This dance has been pieced together from descriptions of the various parts of it given by a number of people, with some demonstrations. The most complete outline was given by Captain Thomas Craine of the 'Sarah Blanche', formerly skipper of a Peel fishing boat and a sailor on the Packet Company's ships, and he said it was generally thought of as a fisherman's dance, but parts of it have been described and demonstrated by Northside crofters like William Caine of Jurby Curragh, and the Leap itself was shown to me in the 1920's by a man in Patrick known as Kelly the Blackguard. Kelly the fisherman of Baldrine, Lonan also described parts of it, including the costumes worn, and said it had once been part of the Mollag Band's dance, for which the men also wore white long sleeveless coats. I have not seen any special steps used in the bits demonstrated, but would suggest the Flitterdaunsey step for the main parts, a rather slow Manx Reel step for the hey, and about 2 bars of the jig step and air for the honour before each Guilley. At the end of this part the Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr will need to take their stand quite a bit away from the top of the dance, as the Braddan should lie facing them and kneel immediately after he lands from the Leap.

Names for the dancers are: Yn Cummaltaght, Yn Eiyreydeyr, Yn Braddan and Ny Guillyn (10 men).

Lead in: Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr together, Guillyn in pairs, and Braddan last. Costumes: All except Braddan wear long white tunics and headcloths. Cummaltaght carries a short sword and Eiyreydeyr a wide criss. Braddan is bare-headed and wears only a shirt and kilt or trews. Each Guilley carries an osier rod held upright in his right hand.

Guillyn form two lines, facing, and Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr stand at top, facing down the dance. Guillyn dance across and back and then a hey, Braddan capering about between them, and during the hey Cummaltaght and Eiyreydeyr cross each other and dance round outside, crossing back when they reach the top. At end of hey Guillyn form a circle and Braddan dances jig steps in front of each Guilley, starting at the top and moving clockwise around the dancers, honouring before passing to the next. As he honours, the Guilley strikes him with his rod then holds it towards his left-hand neighbour, who grasps it in his right hand, forming a circle of rods as Braddan progresses. Braddan gradually slows down his steps as he reaches the last Guilley, and as he receives the final stroke of the rod he lies down flat on his back, facing Cummaltaght, within the circle (like the fiddler in Mylecharane's March). The Guillyn dance slowly round him, clockwise and then counter-clockwise, and he leaps out over the rods and kneels before Cummaltaght. Guillyn raise and flourish their rods and shout, and Cummaltaght gives Braddan the sword and raises him to face down the dance, while Eiyreydeyr places the criss round his waist. He then springs and they lift him on their shoulders and they carry him off, holding the sword upright before him, the Guillyn following with their rods held high.

Captain Craine used to say that 'In old history they were calling this dance a Hero-feat.' Probably because very few men could perform the Leap.

The above, collected by Mona Douglas, is the most complete notation of this dance.