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The Bushwackers Band
Sydney
www.thebushwackers.com.au
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‘Bush’ dancing is uniquely Australian. Most of the dances derived from popular country dances from Europe – most notably England, Scotland and Ireland and were transported here with the first white settlers, soldiers and convicts.

As had been the case in Europe, the dances became the focal point of social occasions and events. However, there were differences. The ‘free’ classes – squatters, merchants, soldiers, administrators etc, tended to adopt the more ‘genteel’ versions with an emphasis on the correct technique and steps. Serving and ex-convicts on the other hand, placed the emphasis on fun and entertainment with less regard to rigid steps and technique.

It was the latter version that attracted the Bushwackers in the 80s when they devised a plan to re-introduce the fun and interaction that typified the (mainly) rural bush dances to towns and cities and schools across Australia.

The success of two books - ‘The Bushwackers Dance Book’ and ‘Down There For Dancing’ and the recordings that accompanied them inspired a resurgence in bush dancing across the nation. Some of these were major events organized by the band, with 2,000 attending regular dances at Centennary Hall at Melbourne Showgrounds, Sydney Town Hall and Birkenhead Point.

One of the most exciting development however, was the use of the books and recordings by bush/folk bands and communities across the nation to organise their own events. At the same time the version of the dances with an instructional call became a staple for every primary teacher. (It’s impossible for the Bushwackers to do a show anywhere in Australia without encountering generations who know how to Heel and Toe Polka from there school days.

As well as the dances, there was the music – the lively jigs, reels and polkas and stately waltzes. One track ‘The Flying Pieman’ achieved a notable 1st by making it to No.14 on Melbourne’s leading ‘Rock’ chart of the time (3XY), and delivered the band’s first Golden Guitar for ‘Best Instrumental’ at the Tamworth festival in 1981.

In the years since, the recordings – especially that with the instructional call, have become increasingly difficult to obtain. Our website receives a constant flow of enquiries seeking the recording and instructions. So we thought what better way to celebrate our 40th anniversary, than re-recording and re-issuing that classic dance music and the instructions.

They’re lively, they’re fun, they’re for old and young. They’re not for the ‘expert’ – they’re for everyone!

Enjoy!
The Bushwackers, 2011
The Official Bushwackers Dance Book is a revised edition of the 1980 ‘Dance Book’ and designed as a compendium to the current re-release of 2011 The Bushwackers ‘The Official Dance Album’

It is designed as a practical manual, however is not inclusive of all the dances originally published in the 1980 version.

**Line Dances**
When the dance calls for partners in lines facing each other, there’s often a tendency for the lines to get further and further apart. This can make it difficult to complete the steps/movements in time, resulting in dancers falling behind the ‘call’. Try to maintain a distance of 3-4 metres between the lines.

**Gender**
For ease of instruction, dancers are identified as ‘men’ and ‘women’. Of course in their original rural setting and in many schools, the dances were often done by same-sex couples. You just need to sort out who – for the purposes of performing the steps, will be designated as 'men' and 'women'.
This is the ideal first dance of the night - it’s simple and you get to dance with everyone else.
FORMATION
HEEL AND TOE POLKA

Couples form two circles around the dance floor, one inside the other. Men form the inside circle facing out, women the outside circle facing in. They embrace in the waltz hold and face in an anti-clockwise direction.

Note: As you face forward around the circle, women look at the man in front you now, he will be you next partner. Men your next partner will be the woman behind you now.

THE DANCE

Step 1. Hop on the inside leg. At the same time, the outside leg shoots forward to land on the heel. Hop again, and the extended leg is brought back to rest on the toe. Both feet are now back together. Repeat the heel and toe movement. Still in the waltz hold, skip four steps forward.
(The count is – heel and toe, heel and toe, forward two, three four)
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 2. Turn around – still in the waltz hold and repeat the heel and toe sequence, beginning on the ‘new’ inside leg.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Partners drop the waltz hold and face each other. Raise your right hands to shoulder level and clap your partner’s hand three times. Clap left hands three times. Clap both hands with your partner three times, and clap your own knees three times.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 4. Change Partners
Partners extend their right arms towards one another, link arms at the elbow and BEGIN to turn.
HALFWAY around (when men and women have changed places), they release their old partner, extend their left arm to ‘catch’ their new partner by linking left arms with them and completing a half turn. Everyone’s now back in their lines and ready to go.
(4 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
The Queensland Backstep is fun and easy and danced in lines.
Formation

The Queensland Backstep

Longways sets of 10 couples. Men in one line facing woman/partner in another. About 3 - 4 metres between the lines.

Note: There can be fewer couples in a set, but if there are more than 10 it may be hard for the top couple to finish with the music each time. If space is limited, make sure that all dancers move towards the top of the set each time a top couple goes to the bottom.

The Dance

Step 1. Partners take three steps into the middle and bow to one another, and three steps back to place (In, two, three and bow, and back, two, three, four).
Partners change places. Men hold hands with each other in their line and raise their arms in the air. The lines change places with the women going underneath the joined arms of the men. (Done to an eight count) (8 Bars of Music)

Step 2. In and bow to partner again and back to place. The lines change places again, but this time the women hold the raised arms and the men go underneath. (8 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Lines move in to the middle and partners take both hands. They spin ‘round and ‘round to the count of eight, and fall back into their lines. (8 Bars of Music)

Step 4. The ‘top’ couple (you decide which is the top of the set), go in and hold both hands. The top couple spins around and around making their way to the bottom.

Note: If there are 10 couples or less in the set, they’ll have time to spin ‘round and ‘round. If there are more than 10 couples, they may have to skip sideways to fit with the music.

Begin again.
The Drongo is a fun, dance version of musical chairs.
THE DANCE

**Step 1.** Starting with No.1, each couple in turn (4 bars of music – the count of 8) embraces in the waltz hold and gallops around the drongo and back to their place. (16 Bars of Music)

**Step 2.** All couples hold hands and stand side-by-side in a circle around the drongo. They skip to the left for 8 steps, and then back to the right for 8 steps. (8 Bars of Music)

**Step 3.** The four who are the OPPOSITE sex to the drongo move in and hold hands forming a small circle around the drongo. They skip to the left for 8 steps, and back to the right for 8. (8 Bars of Music)

**Step 4.** Those who are the SAME sex as the drongo move in and form a circle WITH the drongo, all holding hands. When the music stops, each of the five potential drongos in the middle tries to grab one of the four partners on the outside. The one left without a partner is the new drongo, and the dance starts again. (Until the music stops)

**Note:**
The drongo is a species of bird common to Australia, Africa and Asia. It’s use to identify a slow-witted person in Australian slang possibly derives from a South Australian racehorse of the 1920s which never won a race but finished second some 20 times.

FORMATION

**THE DRONGO**

Four couples stand side by side forming the four sides of a square. The couples face each other, with 3-4 metres between them. The woman is on the man’s right hand side.

In the middle of the square is a single person – of either sex – the drongo.

Couple No.1 has their back to the music (band, CD player – whatever!).

Couple No.2 is facing the music.

Couple No.3 has their back to one wall.

Couple No.4 backs to the other wall.
Strip The Willow
is one of the great
favourites, and
loads of fun!
FORMATION

STRIP THE WILLOW

Longways sets of 7 couples, men in one line facing women in the other line. Couples should be about 3 metres apart.
(In order for the dance to work there needs to be exactly 7).

Note: The dance has three distinct sections, done to a reel, a jig and a march. It is essential to wait until the music changes to progress to the next section.

The Dance

Step 1. Partners take three small steps in towards one another, and bow on the fourth beat. They return to place.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 2. Partners move into the middle and hold out both hands to one another. They turn around once and return to place.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Partners Do-Si-Do by the right and then by the left.
(8 Bars of Music)

*Do-Si-Do*

Partners move towards one another with their arms folded. They pass each other by the right shoulder, move sideways back-to-back and return to their place backwards passing by the left shoulder. To Do-Si-Do ‘by the left’, pass by the left shoulder first.

(i) They link right arms at the elbow and turn one and a half times until the man is facing the line of women, and the woman is facing the line of men.

(ii) They let go of their partner’s right and extend their left to the person they are facing in the line. They link left arms and turn around once with that person.

(iii) When they have completed the turn, they meet their partner in the middle, turn once on the right and then turn the second person in the line on the left. Back to the centre with partner on the right then to the third person in the line on the left, and so on to the bottom of the set.

The rule is – partner on the right, side person on the left.
(16 Bars of Music)

Step 4. Top couple holds both hands and skips sideways down to the bottom of the set (to a count of 8), and back to the top of the set.
(8 Bars of Music)

Step 5. Strip The Willow (music changes from a reel to a jig – it’s quite noticeable). The top couple – using a skipping step, move towards one another with extended right arms.

Cont over...
**Step 6.** When the top couple have finished ‘stripping the willow’, they spin back to the top of the set.

**Step 7.** Here the music changes to a march. The lines turn to the top of the set and the top couple – followed by the other couples ‘cast off’. They turn outwards and march outside the line of dancers to the bottom of the set. When they reach the bottom, the top couple face each other and hold both hands in a raised arch. The other couples go beyond the top couple, go under the arch and march back to the top. As they meet to go under the arch they hold inside hands.

Wait until all couples are back in place, and when the music changes from the march to a reel –

Begin again.
A very simple dance which is often used as the first of the evening and, because it’s progressive, as an ‘ice-breaker’ for people to meet and greet one-another.
FORMATION

THE BARN DANCE

Couples form a large circle around the dance floor, standing side-by-side and facing in an anti-clockwise direction. Men are on the inside and women on the outside. Couples take the barn dance hold.

Note: At this stage women should look at the man ahead of them around the circle. He will be their next partner. Men will dance next with the woman currently behind them in the circle.

THE DANCE

Step 1. Beginning on the outside foot, take three steps forward and, with the inside foot make a slow kick forward on the fourth. Repeat the steps going backwards. (4 Bars of music)

Step 2. Let go left hands and raise right hands. The man stands still while the woman twirls twice clockwise as she moves forwards around the circle to the next partner. Woman lets go of old partner’s hand after the first twirl. (4 Bars of Music)

Step 3. The new partners embrace in the waltz hold and – man beginning with left, woman with right, they two slide steps forward around the circle. They then take two slide steps back in the other direction. (The slide step – lifting the foot only just clear of the floor, take a long, smooth pace to the side and bring the other foot up next to it. Take the weight on this other foot and repeat the step with the original foot). (4 Bars of Music)

Step 4. To the count of eight, partners then gallop around (clockwise) in a small circle and resume their place in the large circle. They assume the barn dance hold and get ready to start again. (4 Bars of Music)

Begin again.

BARN DANCE HOLD

Woman raises both hands to shoulder level with palms outwards. The hands are close to the body. The man reaches his right hand across the back of the woman’s shoulders to take her right hand. He crosses his left arm in front of his body to hold the woman’s left hand.
It is easy see those big rollers crashing in on Bondi Beach when the ‘Waves’ is done properly.
**FORMATION**

**THE WAVES OF BONDI**

Longways sets of seven couples.
Men in one line facing women in the other.
About 3-4 metres between the lines.

There must be an odd number of couples for the dance to work!

---

**THE DANCE**

**Step 1.** Dance take three steps in and bow to partner on the fourth beat. They then take four backward steps to return to their places.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 2.** Partners change places by skipping across to the other side to the count of 8. The lines have now changed places.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 3.** Three steps in and a bow on the fourth, and back to place.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 4.** Change places with partner to the count of 8.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 5.** Partners move towards each other meeting and holding both hands in the centre of the set. Partners spin ‘round and ‘round to a 16 count. Then back into line.
(8 Bars of Music)

**Step 6.** Dancers turn to the top of the set and ‘cast off/follow the leader’.
The lines turn to the top of the set and the top couple – followed by the other couples turn outwards and march or skip down the outside of the line of dancers to the bottom of the set.
When they reach the bottom, the top couple face each other and hold up both hands to form an arch.
The other couples go beyond the top couple, turn and go under and through the arch and back to the top of the set. As they meet to go under the arch they hold inside hands.

When the original No.2 couple reach they top of the set, they turn around to face the other dancers and hold inside hands.
When the other couples have finished going under the arch, they face to the top of the set, also holding inside hands.

(8 Bars of Music)

*Cont over...*
Step 7. Now the dancers make the ‘waves’.

(i) The top couple (originally No. 2) holding hands, bob down and pass UNDER the joined raised arms of the first couple they face. They then stand up, raise their arms and go over and around the second couple. Then under the third, over the fourth and so on, all the way to the bottom. As each couple come to the top of the set, they turn and begin the waves - Always going under first.

(ii) When the top couple reach the bottom, they turn to face the top of the set and begin the waves again by going under the first couple, over the second, under the third etc. When you reach the position in the set that you originally started from, wait in your lines for the others to finish the waves. Then you’re ready to go.

(16 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
This dance is all about spinning in circles, laughing and shouting!
THE DANCE

Step 1. Everyone holds hands and skips to the left for 8 steps. Then back to the right for 8 steps. (8 Bars of Music)

Step 2. Still holding hands, everyone skips four steps into the middle – raising held hands in the air on the fourth step), and back to place. Repeat the steps. (8 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Let go hands. Women take each others hand skip four steps into the middle – raising hands on the fourth step, and back to place. Men clap in time. Now the men repeat while the women clap. (8 Bars of Music)

Step 4. Women turn to the man on your right and spin him in the waltz hold (16 beats). When you finish spinning the man ends up on your left. Next time you spin, it’ll be with a new partner. (8 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
A little of the Russian influence!
Inspired by the Troika.

UNDER THE BRIDGE
FORMATION
UNDER THE BRIDGE

Trios holding hands facing clockwise in a large circle around the dance floor.

THE DANCE

**Step 1.** Swinging arms, take seven step forward and on seventh shout ‘Hoi!’
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 2.** Seven steps back and on seventh ‘Hoi!’
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 3.** Without letting go hands at any stage, dancers ‘Thread the needle’
(i) The inside couple raise their hands in an arch
(ii) The outside dancer passes in front of them and through the arch, returning to their original position.
In order to do this the middle dancer needs to pivot around on the spot.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 4.** The dancer on the inside repeats the movement through the arched arms of the outside couple.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 5.** The three dancers join hands in a circle and march (or skip) left for fourteen steps. At the end of these steps they stamp loudly – left, right, left.
(8 Bars of Music)

**Step 6.** Repeat the 14 steps marching to the right. Stamp loudly right, left, right
(8 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
A very stately ‘old world’ dance. Not so popular now, but still fun to do.

PRIDE OF ERIN
FORMATION
THE PRIDE OF ERIN

It can be done as a solo couple dance or in large circles around the floor.

*Barn Dance Hold*

Woman raises both hands to shoulder level with palms outwards. The hands are close to the body. The man reaches his right hand across the back of the woman’s shoulders to take her right hand. He crosses his left arm in front of his body to hold the woman’s left hand.

THE DANCE

Couples form a large circle around the dance floor, standing side-by-side and facing in an anti-clockwise direction. Men are on the inside and women on the outside. Couples take the barn dance hold.

**Step 1.** Beginning on the outside foot, take three steps forward and, with the inside foot make a slow kick forward on the fourth. Repeat the steps going backwards. HOWEVER, instead of kicking on the fourth step, turn inwards to face your partner. (4 Bars of music)

**Step 2.** Partners perform the cross-over steps. This is like walking ‘on the spot’. Partners hold both their partner’s hands straight out in front of them. Man raises right foot, woman the left. They swing this foot across the front of their other leg and place it on the outside of that foot. They take the weight on that foot and repeat the cross over with the other foot leading – man left, woman right.. It is a continuous movement. Repeat the cross-over steps. (4 Bars of Music)

**Step 3.** Man raises right arm in air, holding the woman’s left hand. Woman twirls twice under the raised arms. (Note: If the dance is being done progressively, the woman would twirl on to new partner – forwards around the circle as in the barn dance.) (4 Bars of Music)

**Step 4.** Partners perform the Balance & Swap and Turn. Partners face each other and hold both hands. They step forward toward each on the right foot raising their joined hands as they do so. They swing the left foot through and past their partner in a slow kick. They then change places. The man raises his right hand and holds the woman’s left hand. She turns under the raised arm, changing places with her partner as she does so. They repeat these steps, returning to their original place. (4 Bars of Music)

**Step 5.** Partners face each other and embrace in the waltz hold. They take two slide steps forwards around the dance floor/circle, and two back the other way. (4 Bars of Music)

**Step 6.** They then complete 4 waltz steps in a small circle moving around the dance floor/circle. (4 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
BONUS TRACKS
1. The Oxo Reel
2. Ned Kelly’s Farewell
3. Soldier’s Joy
THE OXO REEL

This dance takes it’s name from the OXO company, a British manufacturer of gravy and stock. From above – when the dancers are doing the ‘circle and star’ steps, they appear to be forming these letters.

FORMATION
A longways set of 6 couples. Men in one line facing women in another. About 3 metres between the lines.

THE DANCE

Step 1. Couples take three small steps towards each other and partners bow. They then return to their place.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 2. The ‘top’ couple (you can decide which end of the set is the top), go in and join both hands. They then skip sideways for 8 steps down to the bottom of the set where they remain.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Repeat the in and bow sequence.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 4. The ‘top’ couple (originally the second couple), now skip sideways for 8 steps to the bottom of the set where they remain.
(4 Bars of Music)

Step 5. The ‘OXO’
Couples 1 & 2 and 5 & 6 go in and hold hands in a small circle. They skip sideways to the left for 8 steps, and back to the right for 8 steps.
Couples 3 & 4 go into the middle raise and join their right arms to form a ‘star’
They walk around to the left for 8 steps. Drop hands, form a left hand star and walk around to the right for 8 steps.
(8 Bars of Music)

Step 6. The top couple ‘cast off’ to the bottom. Top couple turn to their right and left to face the top of the set. They then turn outwards and skip down and around the other line of dancers (8 beats) to the bottom where they stop. We now have a new top couple.
(8 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
NED KELLY’S FAREWELL

A simple progressive circle dance which is an ideal ‘ice-breaker’.

FORMATION
Couples form a large circle around the dance floor, standing side-by-side and facing in an anti-clockwise direction.
Men are on the inside and women on the outside. Couples take the barn dance hold.

Note: At this stage woman should look at the man ahead of them around the circle. He will be the next partner. Men will dance next with the woman currently behind them in the circle.

BARN DANCE HOLD
Woman raises both hands to shoulder level with palms outwards. The hands are close to the body. The man reaches his right hand across the back of the woman’s shoulders to take her right hand. He crosses his left arm in front of his body to hold the woman’s left hand.

Step 1. Beginning on the outside foot, take three steps forward and on the fourth – without letting go, swivel or pivot and face the opposite way. Now take four more steps backwards.
Repeat the steps.
(The count is – forward, two, three pivot, back two, three, four)
(8 Bars of Music)

Step 2. Couples embrace in the waltz hold and gallop around in a small circle for a count of 16.
(8 Bars of Music)

Step 3. Man raises his right arm in the air still holding the woman’s left. She twirls on twice to the next man around the circle, while the man stands still.
(8 Bars of Music)

They repeat the steps beginning on the right foot. They will arrive back at the ‘new’ partner they had before the slide steps began.
(8 Bars of Music)

Begin again.

Step 4. Men and women are now facing a new partner. But they’ll leave them temporarily.
Each beginning on the left foot, men and women take three slide steps to the left and on the fourth beat bow to their opposite. (The lines of men and women will be moving in opposite directions).

THE DANCE

(8 Bars of music)
THE DANCE

**Step 1.** Couples holding inside hands, take three steps in and bow to the opposite couple. They then step backwards to return to their place.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 2.** Men move to their opposite woman and, taking her in the waltz hold turn her once in a clockwise direction. They both return to their place.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 3.** Men Do-Si-Do by the right and return to their partners, taking them in the waltz hold and turning them once in an anti-clockwise direction.
(4 Bars of Music)

Do-Si-Do

**Men move towards one another with their arms folded. They pass each other by the right shoulder, move sideways back-to-back and return to their place backwards passing by the left shoulder. Do-Si-Do 'by the left', would be passing left shoulders first.**

**Step 4.** Women Chain. Women move diagonally towards and past each other, touching right hands as they pass. They then offer their left hand to their opposite man. The man takes the woman’s left hand in his left and turns her completely around to stand on his other side. He places his right hand around her waist as he turns her, or they hold right hands behind the woman’s back. Your choice.

The women repeat this move to return to their original place and partner.
(8 Bars of Music)

**Step 5.** Couples holding inside hands, move in three steps bow to their opposites and three steps backwards to place.
(4 Bars of Music)

**Step 6.** Couple No.2 raise their joined arms in the air. Couple No.1 hold hands and move under and through No. 2’s raised arms to meet a new couple.
(4 Bars of Music)

Begin again.
‘The Australian Band’ Rolling Stone Magazine

The Bushwackers formed in Melbourne back in 1971. The Bushwackers quickly gained a following in the 70’s with gigs at pubs and clubs and community based Bush dances. All through the 80’s from Sydney Town Hall, The Melbourne Showgrounds, Paddington Town Hall, The Birkenhead Point Barn, and at Woolsheds, Festivals and Town Halls across the country, the rafters rang to the sounds of the Heel and Toe Polka, Strip the Willow, The Barn Dance and the Queensland Backstep.

The Bushwackers have the rare privilege of having their 1981 Dance Album in pride of place in many schools for the mandatory Bush Dances in primary school. A generation of Australians have grown up enjoying the music of the Bushwackers and loving bush dances.

In 2011 The Bushwackers re-recorded ‘The Official Dance Album’ as a double CD set which captures all the excitement and energy of Bush dancing.

Disc one has all their most popular dance tunes with two songs ‘The Night Of The Bush Dance’ and ‘I Am Australian’ co-written by lead singer Dobe Newton.

Disc 2 has all the tunes but with Dobe Newton calling out the dance instructions as you go along making it simple for anyone to organise a bush dance.

As today’s technology makes us progressively lose connection with one another, the organic ‘hands on’ activity of Bush dancing is a wonderful way to regain that connection with our families, our kids and our community.

For more information about The Bushwackers visit: www.thebushwackers.com.au