

# The Turtles of Tarragona

A challenging palindromic 32 bar strathspey for four couples in a longwise set.  
2nd and 4th couples start on the opposite side.

The title comes from visiting Tarragona for the 2025 Iberian weekend. Apart from all the dancing I had expected to enjoy visiting various Roman ruins: the amphitheatre, theatre, forum, circus, praetorium and city walls. The cathedral is also impressive with its own archaeology display and a lovely cloister. The unexpected feature was a small pond in the cloister containing a handful of turtles. However there is no link between those turtles and the palindromic choreography I was thinking about at the time.

## *Bars Description*

- 1-4 1st and 2nd couples chase one place anticlockwise around the top half of the set; then change places on the sides giving left hand to their partner.  
Meanwhile 3rd and 4th couples dance half a Ladies Chain.  
1st and 3rd couples end on the men's side with the men nearer the top.  
2nd and 4th couples end on the women's side with the women nearer the top.
- 5-8 1st woman with 1st and 3rd men dances half a reel of three in the top three places on the men's side. Meanwhile 4th woman with 4th and 2nd men dances half a reel of three in the bottom three places on the women's side. 1st and 4th women each start left shoulder to their partner and end facing their partner on the sides.
- 9-12 1st and 4th couples each turn three quarters with the right hand so the men are now back to back in the centre. Then 1st couple set to each other while 4th couple, retaining hands, continue with another half right hand turn.  
Both couples end facing their partner, and their own side, in a line of four across.
- 13-20 1st and 4th couples dance a reel of four across the set.  
Meanwhile 3rd man with 2nd woman, and 2nd man with 3rd woman, each half turn with the right hand, chase half way round clockwise and again half turn with the right hand.
- 21-24 4th couple set to each other while 1st couple half turn with the right hand, so the women are back to back in the centre, and retain hands. Then 4th and 1st couples each turn three quarters with the right hand.  
Both couples end facing their partner on the sides.
- 25-28 1st man with 1st and 2nd women dances half a reel of three in the bottom three places on the men's side. Meanwhile 4th man with 4th and 3rd women dances half a reel of three in the top three places on the women's side. 4th and 1st men each start right shoulder to their partner. The women all end facing in. The men end facing up on the women's side and down on the men's side.
- 29-32 4th and 2nd couples chase one place anticlockwise around the top half of the set; then change places on the sides giving left hand to their neighbour.  
Meanwhile 1st and 3rd couples dance half a Ladies Chain.  
The final order is 2,4,1,3 with 4th and 3rd couples on opposite sides.

## **Music**

- Suggested tune: To be decided.
- Suitable recording: possibly Culloden Links (Colin Dewar and his SDB: Inverness Diamond Jubilee).

**Diagrams (music at the bottom)**

Bar 1	Bars 5-8	Bars 9-10	Bars 11-12	Bar 13
Bars 21-22	Bars 23-24	Bars 25-28	Bar 29	End

*The turtles in their pond...*



*...and its context in the Tarragona cathedral cloister*

