



Barley Hop : Ceilidh ?

The word is Gaelic and, in Scotland and Ireland (Irish form – ceili), refers to an informal gathering for poetry, song, dance and storytelling. In Scotland today the term might also be applied to a gathering for Scottish country dancing. In England, there are several terms that might be applied to an evening of traditional social dancing and, confusingly, definitions vary for each. Often local community events are called barn dances but of late, this term has acquired some association with traditional American dancing. The style of English traditional dancing is often referred to as “country dancing” but there might be confusion again as the term “English Country Dance” is applied to the historic dances of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Gaelic term “ceilidh” is also used in England but it differs from the Scottish or Irish usage by being mainly an occasion of dance only. What we do is usually called “English Ceilidh” (some times shortened to eCeilidh) which generally aims to revive and promote the spirit and style of the rich and varied English folk dancing tradition. Characteristically, the music is steady with relatively simple tunes and with the emphasis firmly on the rhythm to encourage the dancers to step rather than walk the dances. There are many dances and only a few are common enough for regular ceilidh goers to know – so, a caller is required to first teach the dance and to call out the figures as it is danced to the music. Apart from the characteristic rhythmic approach there are no rules to English ceilidh; the intention being for the event to be informal, friendly and fun. Many of our dances are traditional, coming from the English countryside, but some are modern, created in the traditional dance idiom. We also throw in the occasional Scottish, Irish and American dance for variety; all given the English ceilidh treatment. All our dances are simple, lively and fun to do and we can cater for all abilities from the “first ceilidh complete novice” to the regular ceilidh avid. Our caller will select the dances to suit the occasion and the audience, and will provide a full and varied evening’s entertainment for all.

If you are contemplating a ceilidh for a proposed event or occasion and would like some guidance please see our Information for Organisers sheets (access from our home page) or drop us an email at contact@barleyhop.co.uk or phone for a chat on 01900 813229.