

A Hands on Approach to Teaching Hands and Handing

A hands on approach to teaching hands and handing was the theme of a lively class led by Oluf Olufsen, examining different strategies for effective teaching of hands in relation to a general class in the context of pleasing social dancing. Dances were chosen for particular points with a view to the importance of giving good hands and for their use as a basis for developing teaching strategies in relation to specific formations where sound handing added to the ease, pleasure and sociability of the execution of the dance.

Dances selected by Oluf and the “hand” teaching points highlighted included:

The Mason’s Apron (Border Book) – right hands only/cross and cast

Todlen Hame (RSCDS Book 16) – “social” use of hands in Grand chain and Rights and Lefts

The Cashmere Shawl (Strathspey Album Boyd) – deployment of “tension” in the arm

The Saltire Society Reel (RSCDS Leaflet) – the position and “connection” of hands in four hands across

The Frisky (RSCDS Book 26) – appropriate presentation and accommodation of hands in six hands round and back

Neidpath Castle (RSCDS Book 22) – palms up, palms down

The College Hornpipe (RSCDS Book 20) – the “after you” gesture

The Cullins of Skye (RSCDS 4/1978) – “lightness” of touch in Allemande/Knot

The Duran Ranger (RSCDS Book 13) – underarm/ overarm?

It has to be recorded that so pro-active and contributory were the class members that time did not allow for all of the dances to be covered.

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