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Teachers' Association Scotland

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The Scottish Country Dance Teacher NEWSLETTER – June 2025

From the Chair

Here we are rapidly moving towards Summer and our social dances, and our last meeting in Aberdeen is now a memory. Please find that report elsewhere in the newsletter but suffice to say here that it was another great dance and informative workshop with the palpable friendly atmosphere apparent throughout the weekend.

We're moving rapidly towards our next meeting weekend and AGM in Bridge of Allan on 29 and 30 August. We will appreciate Michael Taylor more fully as his Swilcan Band will play for us on Friday evening. Teachers to take us through the dances from the eagerly anticipated *Book 54* are Ian Brockbank and Heather Cowan. Our musician for the day will be Neil Galloway.

I'm delighted to confirm that Pam McNicol, an archivist with Stirling Council, will give a presentation on the preservation of documents. This is a subject that's been on our to-do list for some time so I'm pleased we can bring Pam to our next meeting.

Another important consideration is filling vacant positions on the TAS committee. We will require a Treasurer and two committee members to serve for three years as per our constitution. Please, if you are interested or if you think one of your friends could fill one of those positions let us know and we'll supply a bit more information. The Committee meet via zoom every six weeks or so and distance is no object as Deirdre, based in Toronto, can confirm.

I can report a 100% pass rate for TAS's first Unit 2 and 3 course. Seven dancers passed their Unit 2 and five their Unit 3. One dancer pulled out for personal reasons but supported her fellow dancers during their Unit 3 exams. The course was longer than initially planned as dancers were not always available but on reflection it allowed us more time to improve personal dancing and have more practice at presenting the Unit 3 lessons which was obviously beneficial. All but one of our days was in the Dunblane Centre, Dunblane. It's a central venue for all the dancers who travelled from Bonnybridge, Dundee, Glasgow and Moffat, and with enough facilities to allow us to move to the bigger room when volunteers arrived to let us practice teaching a class. We used recorded music for our Unit 2 dances practice. Luke Brady, our main musician, played for that exam, and we're delighted to say that Agnes Leighton stepped in to complete the set of dancers. In Luke's absence during the Unit 3 classes Susan MacFadyen and David Oswald played for the class. This gave the class more experience in working with a live musician and getting another bit of feedback on their use of the music during their teaching.

Sincere thanks are due to Anne Robertson as she did all the liaison work with RSCDS HQ and the examiners, as well as being general gopher. Closer to the Unit 3 exam day, in Anne's absence, Jane Meikle stepped in to coordinate the volunteers. Unit 3 volunteers came from Anne's classes around the Glasgow/Lanarkshire area, from Dunfermline; thanks to Bill and Alison Austin for mobilising them, and from the Stirling/Dunblane/Falkirk areas. I also wish to sincerely thank everyone who supported the dancers and myself in any way during this period.

Here's some advance notice of our 2026 Spring workshop date. Our plan had been to move further west and as Glasgow Branch has organised their dance for Friday 17 April in Milngavie with the Matthew MacLennan duo, TAS will organise and run the workshop on Saturday 18 April.

Our 20th Anniversary week-end is taking shape. The Invercarse Hotel, Dundee is booked for Friday to Sunday 4-6 September 2026. This week-end will have two evening dances and will include our AGM, as well as a mix of workshops and dancing sessions. Further details on both events will follow in due course.

Many thanks to all who submitted items for the last newsletter; the variety makes for great reading. Thanks in anticipation of more interesting articles in this newsletter.

Best wishes to all for a good Summer and I'll see you in Bridge of Allan if not before.

Janet

From the Editor

My inbox has been overflowing with reports, news and pictures. Thank you all for your contributions. Janet Johnston reports on the Spring Workshop and dance in Aberdeen. Irene MacLeod, who was a candidate for the Units 2 & 3 course, has written an excellent piece on the class as it unfolded and Kathy Murphy wrote enthusiastically about her first experience of a Day School. Following the theme of the previous Newsletter there's more information about classes involving children.

Helen Bain has sent a report of the sell-out afternoon dance in Cove and Kilcreggan: next year book early or miss out...

There are reports from TAS office bearers, and details of the forthcoming AGM, Autumn Workshop and Dance in Bridge of Allan, notice of our Spring workshop in 2026 in Glasgow and of the TAS 20th Anniversary Weekend in Dundee (see p15).

From the Secretary

Since the last dance and workshop, the committee has been planning the August event and AGM - Muriel and Morag have been busy again. Looking further to the future, plans are afoot, led by Jane and her sub-group, for our Residential Weekend in September 2026, celebrating our 20th year – mark the date in your diary! More on these events later in the newsletter. Calling papers for the AGM will be sent in due course.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find an item from the George, with the Committee's support, with a proposal for AGM attendees to decide on.

Anne Thorn continues to update the website; some photos have now been added from the April dance and workshop, and we have a new "News" tab, under which you can find an item and a couple of photos from the recent Unit 2-3 course led by Janet.

A reminder about annual subscriptions was circulated recently, and a good number have been received, thank you to all who have paid already.

I hope to see many of you in Bridge of Allan in August.

Anne

From the Treasurer

I'm not sure how many years now I have been a member of TAS, but in all that time the subscription has been set at £5.00. We are very fortunate in that we have few overheads. We do not have masses of equipment, rents, or all the other bills which an RSCDS Branch with weekly classes would have. However, we do still have our annual expenses. There is our insurance for example, our Website and Domain name, not to mention the newly implemented bank charges.

This last year TAS has returned to doing what TAS was intended for, to help and encourage aspiring teachers gain their certificates and to help qualified teachers maintain their standard of teaching and implement new teaching techniques. This year we have run a very successful course for Units 2 and 3. Janet Johnston taught the candidates and guided all of them towards gaining their certificates. For the dancing and teaching parts of this exercise we also had a musician and of course the rental of a suitable hall. TAS met approximately half the costs for the course. We also had a request for a grant to help cover the costs of the Unit 2-3 course at Summer School from one of our younger members who has encouraged many students to take up Scottish Country Dancing with great success. We agreed to cover one week of her course.

Despite these expenses, we still have a healthy bank balance, but we should ensure we remain able to assist others to gain their certificates. Four of the recent candidates are members of TAS. Their enthusiasm and ambition to develop their dancing skills benefits not only our Society but Scottish Country Dancing in general.

I appreciate that we recently raised the cost of our Workshops from £5 to £10 and that helped to cover the training costs. We are not looking to make huge profits, but we do need to ensure we can cover any eventuality. A poor turn-out for a dance could cost us dearly. It's a sad fact, but the more we do, the greater the risks. Do we reach out and encourage participation or remain a secret society? With all that in mind, I think it would be prudent to consider an increase in our annual subscription. It will be up to you, the TAS Membership, to decide on this matter at our next AGM. Should there be an increase and, if so, how much? My own preference would be £2, bringing the subscription to £7 a year. Any increase would not come into effect until season 2026/27. I think it is preferable to have a modest increase now so that we can continue with our good work, rather than wait until it becomes a necessity.

George

Report of the April get-together in Aberdeen

I was delighted to see a good attendance of local dancers and visiting TAS members during the weekend in Aberdeen.

Our Friday dance on 11 April was well attended with about 90 dancers present. Moving to the bigger Ashdale Hall was the right thing to do, with the floor well filled throughout the evening. Colin Dewar, Alasdair Macleod and Gus Miller played the usual great sets of tunes and created a real buzz. The lesser-known dances were well received and may appear on a programme near you soon.



Saturday morning found us in the Great Western Community Centre and again a good number of members attended.

Our first session was led by Aberdeen's own Martha Harris. Although unknown to some of the dancers her presentation of less familiar John Drewry dances kept us all enthralled. Her first, *Gibson's Gallop* was a great little warm-up - once we'd figured out who our partner was! Martha progressed to *The Rare Bird*. It's a non-stop four couple strathspey from *Bankhead Book 5*. After the second chord we were beside our partner as per *Glasgow Highlanders*. The unusual bit was for the two couples who are back-to-back. During the set and link progression the right-hand dancer casts to the space behind whilst the left-hand dancer links as normal. We then continued with a practice of *la baratte*, a formation devised by John Drewry and required in the triangular set for *Ethel Mary's Jig*. One of the basic teaching points that Martha reiterated several times was that where the hand goes the head follows; in other words, look at the person you're joining hands with.



Michael Taylor is a young musician from Fife, also unknown to some of the dancers present, but a rare talent. His music was sympathetic and thoughtfully prepared for each dance and Michael was prepared to supply the dancers with information about his choices.

A rest from dancing followed with a presentation by Julie Turner from the charity Age Scotland. Her subject was dementia, and some startling figures were presented. There are around 100 types of dementia with 60% being Alzheimer's disease. Signs and symptoms vary with the area of the brain affected, from short term memory loss to spatial awareness (where there's difficulty parking the car), from mood changes to loss of appetite. Two in 100 are under 70 years of age and for those over 90 it is one in three.

We then discussed how to help our dancers. We considered how we get to the venue for the class/dance, how long the programme of dances is, are the dances too complicated. We were asked to think about parking, where are the toilets? What sort of dance space do you have? Is it well-lit and warm enough? Teachers were asked to consider the language they use when teaching; keep it simple and perhaps demonstrate more. It was a sobering session.

NB - Gail Inglis is working to produce a Dementia Awareness Package for the Education and Training Committee. The document will be sent to SCD teachers and ultimately published on the website. The intention is to provide useful hints and tips for dance teachers to help include and support dancers primarily with dementia.

Marjorie MacRae opened the session after lunch with the *Eva Three Step* as our warmup. She asked the class to chant the words as they danced - another bit of brain training. She continued into *Seton's Ceilidh Band* and demonstrated how it may be adapted for the less mobile without changing the dance for the others in the set. She started with 1st couple crossing and casting off three places without weaving in and out during the first 32 bars. After the balance in line with corners dance up to the top without dancing round 3rd couple and the 1st couple are then in the correct place to start the final 16 bars. Marjorie's point to take home was to use big hand and arm movements with your instructions and don't overload the class with an extensive recap. Give the information as they dance. She moved into strathspey and the half turn and cast movement; her suggestion there was to either take a big cast away from partner or retire. It's always useful to show the class where they finish a phrase then go back to the start of the phrase. The dance she used was *Argyll Strathspey* from *Book 35*. It's also useful as any less able dancer is in contact with someone throughout, thus allowing the class to keep moving. Marjorie finished by saying that it's important to ensure the class enjoy themselves; give them something to laugh about and keep them moving. You'll find that the class walks more, and you coach more to do this.

Oluf Olufson then asked us to think about 24-bar dances, those dances that repeat figures, and those where you dance with your partner most of the time. We looked at the *Edinburgh Volunteers* from *Book 6* and *Lamb Skinnnet* from *Book 14*. He quoted Anna Holden when he said, "You can talk in this class but only with your eyes and hands." He demonstrated that principle by asking half the class to leave then instructed their partners on the dance before those outside the room returned to dance with their knowledgeable partner. They danced *The Bob of Fettercairn* from *Book 6*. The class practised its circle with hands palm to palm. It's a good exercise to keep elbows down and hands up in the dance. He revised our allemande hold, or cherish hold, as it was described in the 1760's. Oluf finished this section with the *Badge of Scotland*, a dance for five dancers to the tune *The Thistle of Scotland*.



Musician Michael Taylor and Oluf Olufson

Our final dancing session was lesser-known dances devised by members of Aberdeen Branch led by Morag Barclay and dances from Ayrshire from Oluf. Morag gave us *Askival* from John Drewry, Oluf then taught the medley *George Fleming's Tribute to the Timor* with tunes composed by George Fleming and Janie Barr, the band's pianist. Morag then taught us *Morag's Stravaig*, a dance devised for her by Brian Anderson. A good fun dance to finish the day with.

Details of the dances taught:

Martha -

Gibson's Gallop, *Greenburn Book Vol. 2*; 32R, round-the-room; no specified tune
The Rare Bird, *Bankhead Book Part 2*; 4x32S; Original tune: The Singing Bird
Ethel Mary's Jig - Leaflet dance; 3x(16+16+32)J; no specified tune; note from Martha - the musician composed his own music because nothing could be found to match the specific barring but unfortunately there wasn't enough time to put the dance together so there was no opportunity to hear the music played in full.

Oluf (a.m.) -

The Bob of Fettercairn, 8x24R; *RSCDS Book 6*
The Edinburgh Volunteers, 8x24S; *RSCDS Book 6*
Lamb Skinnnet, 8x32J; *RSCDS Book 14*
The Luckenbooth Brooch, 8x32J; *RSCDS Book 53*

Marjorie -

Eva Three-Step, 16R
Seton's Ceilidh Band, 4x64J; *RSCDS Book 53*
Argyll Strathspey, 8x32S; *RSCDS Book 35*

Oluf (p.m.) -

The Badge of Scotland, 64R, set dance

George Fleming's Tribute to the Timor, Medley 1x32S+1x32R; original tunes: Strathspey - Cessnock Gardens by Janie Barr, Reel - Pretty Maiden by George Fleming

Old Aberdeen, 8x32J; suggested tune, The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, played in Jig tempo

Note from Oluf - Of these, I devised the first and third dances (published in "*The Lowland Scots Ballroom Compendium*" currently awaiting reprinting) and the second dance was devised by John Moore and Eric Finley and published in leaflet form.

Morag -

Askival, 8x32J; Drewry, *Greenburn Book*; recommended music Kinloch of Kinloch

Morag's Stravaig, 5x32R; no recommended music

Janet

Reflections on Units 2 & 3 Teaching Certificate Course.

I started dancing when I retired 10 years ago. A friend who went to Amisfield Scottish Country Dance Club suggested I go along with her as she thought I would like it! How right she was, and I have danced and had so much pleasure and fun and have loved every moment of it since.

I joined Dumfries Branch 2 years later, attended my first Summer School and AGM 2 years after that, Winter School the following year, became secretary of the Branch later this year and if there were a workshop or a dance within travelling distance, I was there, yes, I was well and truly hooked!

When I first read the email announcing the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS) was in the early stages of planning a non-residential course for dancers interested in studying for their Units 2 & 3 of the Teachers' Certificate, I felt very excited indeed. Janet Johnston was to be the tutor for the course, and it would involve assessing our personal dancing and teaching us to teach steps and a 16-bar phrase. This was something I was definitely interested in and while I had made enquiries about it the previous year, for one reason or another and much to my regret, it had been put on the 'back burner' but here it was rearing its head again. I felt I was being given a second chance, this was meant to be, and I couldn't let the opportunity pass me by this time!

Initially there was a lot of toing and froing with emails trying to find out everyone's availability in order to organise dates; who would have thought it would be so difficult to get a group of people together. I'm sure Janet must have been tearing her hair out and we hadn't even started!

Our first 'meet up' day was in January at Peebles Hydro. For me, this was a straightforward journey as I live in Moffat, I know the road well and it was a relatively short journey compared to the girls who had to travel cross country from Dundee. Unfortunately, Ilona couldn't make this day but the rest of us were there, and it was great to be able to put a face to an email address and equally so to hear everyone's dancing journey and how we all hoped to progress from here.

I was very excited and so looking forward to the day ahead but at the same time, I felt quite apprehensive, as I'm sure were the others, but Janet's easy welcoming approach and her natural way of putting people at ease helped to alleviate this. After warming up and some step practice, we were straight into our Unit 2 dances, starting with *Mrs Stewart's Jig*, *Alltshellach* was next as we were all keen to practise our tournees. I particularly remember Janet telling us to 'power into the 2-handed turn' and 'slow on the last 2 bars of the poussette,' two things I will always remember; not sure I'll always get

the tournee right but here's hoping!! We made notes and discussed points of importance following each dance, Janet helping and guiding us while encouraging us to think of how we could improve on things. The day came to an end at 4.30pm, I had had a wonderful day and was already looking forward to our next session.

That and subsequent sessions were held at The Dunblane Centre on the outskirts of Dunblane. Again, this was a straightforward journey for me, motorway all the way which was no problem apart from the Saturday following storm Eowyn, when 13 miles from Dunblane I was diverted off the motorway and my resultant detour took me 2 hours to get to the Dunblane Centre! Not everyone could make this session either, but we were very pleased to have Heather Cowan, who was shadowing Janet join us for this session and a few other sessions leading up to our Unit 2 exam. Anne Robertson, TAS secretary, was present for most of our sessions and we are grateful to both Anne and Heather for their valuable constructive feedback and for dancing with us, which made the numbers so much easier to work with when someone could not attend. Many, many thanks too, for the chocolates and sweets which we all thoroughly enjoyed!

Everyone was able to make our 3rd session, we had a 'full house' which was great! It felt so much better having the whole team in attendance. Dates were discussed again, revised and finalised as it was imperative that we should all accrue the recommended number of hours required to be able to sit each of the Units. Our Unit 2 exam was set for Sunday 23 February and Unit 3 was to take place on Sunday 4 May. Three of us, myself included, were due to sit our Unit 1 exam on Saturday 1 March and for myself and Sheila this was to take place in Rosyth. Jo would sit hers in Dundee. (Normally one would sit Unit 1 before Unit 2 but we were given dispensation due to the timing of things.) A huge thank you to Lesley Ross and Agnes Leighton for giving up their time to be our invigilators, it is and was very much appreciated.

Our Unit 2 exam and our sessions up until the week prior to our Unit 3 exam were held upstairs in the dance studio. This room has a mirror the full length of one wall which we all found beneficial in being able to see our steps and look at our posture. Apart from us, the next most challenging thing in this room was the sound-proofing as we had to contend with children's parties, discos, football and other such noisy activities, however it was not in vain as it was a useful exercise in helping us to project our voices.

At each class we practised our steps in a group and individually, the aim of this being not only to improve our steps but to practise and get used to using our observational skills by critiquing each other. Recorded music was used until a couple of sessions prior to our Unit 2 exam when we were fortunate and delighted to dance to live music played by Luke Brady. This was a huge relief to me when it came to *The Duke of Perth*. I was 4th couple and YES, my reel for the exam was *The Duke of Perth*, my least favourite choice from the reels and the one I really did not want to get!! Anyway, such is life, and I was only too pleased it was Luke playing and not the CD we had danced to previously as it was VERY fast indeed! My other exam dances were *Mrs Stewart's Jig* and *Village Reel*. I was supposed to be partnered with Zoe but unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances Zoe was unable to attend and Agnes, who I mentioned earlier, stepped into the breach at the last minute. What a lifesaver Agnes was and boy, had she done her homework! She knew all the dances and could recap them without any problem, and I extend a massive thank you to Agnes from all of us. Our examiners on the day were Andrew McConnell and Jim Stott and while it was all quite formal and a bit daunting, it was over in no time at all. I couldn't believe how quickly we got through the 12 dances, they were over in a flash, and I'm pleased to say we didn't have to wait too long for our results either and the relief was great to find out we had all passed.

Although I remained excited and looked forward very much to our training sessions and meeting up with everyone, the part we were now about to enter was well outside my comfort zone and I felt quite unsure and apprehensive once again. Having touched

briefly on Unit 3 during the previous weeks we now started this in earnest; we still had a lot of work to do and a limited amount of time in which to do it. Fortunately for us we had live music, which, as you know, makes life simpler and it was particularly good for us to get the opportunity to practise our ... "With the music" ... and our "Ready.....And". When Luke was not able to play, we were privileged to have David Oswald and Susan MacFadyen play for us, how lucky we were!

Janet allocated us homework for each session which included writing a lesson plan for what we had to teach. I still cringe and can feel my face going red when I think of my first teaching session – I kid you not, it was not good! I felt uncomfortable and awkward, and I found the whole situation quite difficult. During it I remember looking at the floor and thinking "why on earth am I doing this to myself, what are you doing" and halfway through it I asked Janet if I could stop. I was hugely relieved when she just looked at me, in the way that she does, non-committal, non-judgemental and said, "have you had enough?" to which I burst out laughing and said "yes, OMG its awful!"

I take my hat off to and compliment all the Teachers who stand up week after week and make it look and seem so easy, I commend you all. Yes, I'm sure there will be some who are genuinely not phased by having to stand up in front of others and are able to give clear verbal instruction while accurately demonstrating a step, but when you're not used to doing this and you are not a hundred percent sure of what you are doing or talking about in the first place and you know full well that the majority of the people you are trying to teach know ten times more than you do, it's really not an easy thing to do.

We are now in April and well into Unit 3. Slowly we are all gaining confidence and feeling more comfortable in the situation and with each other, but we still have a fair way to go in our preparations to sit our Unit 3 exam. Janet's patience and support were unfailing and I'm sure there were many times when she was despairing of us, as I know I was of myself, but she remained positive and supportive throughout, she made the sessions fun and equally important she made us feel worthwhile and that we could do this.

After each of our teaching sessions Janet gave us the opportunity to say how we felt things had gone prior to her giving us our critique verbally. We were all in this together and we agreed that individual feedback would be given to the individual but openly within the group. This I found hugely beneficial; there is so much to be gleaned by using this method as we could all learn from each other's feedback and from each other. This feedback was emailed to us as a group during the week and we all found it tremendously helpful in reinforcing the points that had been highlighted and discussed.

Time was marching on, and we were fast approaching our penultimate practice sessions which were to take place in a hall on the ground floor, as it was larger and more suitable for teaching purposes. Volunteers were recruited by Janet, and we were all at the ready with our teaching plans! A big thank you to all the volunteers, we are extremely grateful to them for affording us the opportunity to have such practice sessions and equally so, for their attendance and contribution on the day of our exam.

Following our first volunteer session, I did feel a little more confident about things, however there was still some anxiety lurking in the background. At this stage we didn't know what our exam assignment was going to be and I hoped and prayed mine would not be 'set to and turn corners' in reel time. You are now all thinking I have something against 'set to and turn corners'... first *The Duke of Perth* and now this! Well, I do and I don't. I like *The Duke of Perth* as a dance, but I feel the 'set to and turn corners' in it is one of the most difficult things to do and to do well. I'm not saying it's never done well but I feel a lot of the time it is not.

On our final practice session things seemed to click into place for everyone and there were definitely more positive vibes going around. This was perhaps due to the pressure

of knowing our exam was the next day but for whatever reason the timing was right. Our examiners were going to be Jim Stott and Pat Houghton, we had drawn numbers a few weeks previously and so I knew that I would be last to go and believe it or not, I did get 'set to and turn corners but it was in strathspey time and not reel time - phew!

Thank you to Jane Meikle, TAS committee member, who facilitated the practicalities/proceedings on the day; making sure the examiners were fed and watered, that there was the correct number of volunteers for each of our teaching sessions and efficiently giving us our 'cue' when it was our time to go in.

Like the Unit 2 exam, the Unit 3 exam was over in a flash. Jane had given me my 'cue' and it was now my turn to go in. In I go trying to appear confident and look as if I know what I'm doing, the floor is mine, it's up to me to do my best, so here we go, everyone on the floor, step practice ably assisted by Luke discreetly playing the rhythm of the step on the piano, moving on as time is of the essence, things don't go according to plan, I need to move on, time is running out, ... and it's over, just like that, it's over!



The feeling of relief when it was over was immense, we chatted, some of us being a little more chatty than others, emotions varied but one thing we had in common was we were all very relieved to have it behind us. My journey home was joyous, I felt quite high, and I guess this was the result of an 'adrenalin rush'. At the time I wasn't quite sure how I had done but all in all I felt I had done OK and had done enough to pass,

however, by bedtime my thought process had changed dramatically and all I could think about was all the things I had omitted to do or say and all the things I felt I had done wrong and now I was convinced I had failed. OMG I'd failed! What a night I put in and for the next 2 days I couldn't concentrate on anything other than thinking I had failed.

On Wednesday I gave myself a talking to as I needed to get my act together ... it's dancing for goodness' sake, it's not the end of the world, if I've failed, I've failed, it is what it is and what will be will be, but one thing I was sure about, I would not be doing this again! By Thursday night I was more on track, and I was now thinking I could resit it at Summer School, mmm... things were looking better! Friday morning came and at 11.42 the email with the results arrived. Having received the results of Units 1 and 2 by email, I knew at a glance exactly where to look and I could see it immediately Many Congratulations I was absolutely over the moon, you would think I had won the lottery, I was so delighted.

We all passed and that is in no small way thanks to our tutor Janet and I'm sure I speak for everyone in the group when I say this. Janet has a way of making you feel comfortable, she doesn't fuss, things never seem a problem to her, she takes everything in her stride and is respectful of everyone, she makes you think, she makes things fun,

and she has been hugely supportive and encouraging to us all. Her knowledge and understanding of Scottish Country dancing is vast and I do believe she has eyes on the back of her head as she misses nothing! What an honour and a privilege it has been for us to have had her as our tutor, we could not have asked for anyone better and we are indebted to her and cannot thank her enough for all that she has done for us.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this course, and I would highly recommend it to anyone considering becoming a SCD teacher. We have learned, we have laughed, we have felt down, we have felt up, we have gained in knowledge and confidence and we have shared and grown together and I wouldn't have missed any of it for the world ... although I could have done without the 'post exam blues', the end result certainly added balm to this. What a great experience it has been, and I look forward very much to continuing my dancing journey as I work through Unit 4 and hopefully, I will be successful in completing Unit 5 and qualify as a RSCDS Scottish Country Dance Teacher.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to the Teachers Association Scotland for organising and running this course and for their financial generosity in subsidising it; something else we have all benefitted from, thank you very much indeed.

Lastly, I would like to thank the committee, teachers and members of my own Branch for the help and tremendous support they have given me throughout this process, a huge thank you to you all.

Irene MacLeod, Dumfries

Impressions of a Day School First-Timer

Why haven't I done this before?

I've been dancing for more years than I care to admit, yet I had never attended a day school! It simply never crossed my mind. But as I neared the end of the CTI course, I had a bit of a lightbulb moment: *If I'm going to teach others, I need to make sure my own dancing skills are up to date.*

So off I went on Saturday, full of trepidation and not quite sure what to expect. I needn't have worried—it was absolutely fantastic.

I now know how to dance a 3-couple bourrel, a 3-couple espagnole, and a slipknot! I've danced skip change of step and strathspey travelling step until my legs nearly gave out, and I finally understand where my elbows should be when dancing in a circle.

The whole experience was so friendly, welcoming, and incredibly helpful. I came away feeling inspired and encouraged—and I would wholeheartedly recommend a day school to anyone considering it.

Huge thanks to Kate Gentles and Barbara Manning for such a brilliant day!

Kathy Murphy, Colchester

RSCDS Dunfermline Children's Dancing class

The Children's class has been in the Parkgate Centre, Rosyth for many years. It was originally under the auspices of the COOP before being taken over by RSCDS Dunfermline. It is taught by Agnes Leighton with assistance from Christine Duffy and myself.

There was a concerted effort to increase class numbers during 2023-24 when the Branch contacted local schools offering to help teachers to prepare for St Andrews night parties. Two schools replied but the class gained nothing from that venture.

Facebook was then considered and both Dunfermline Branch's and my own are used with positive responses. I was encouraged to continue by those responses and now advertise all events. I've included the local village's Facebook page too. Colourful posters in different formats that catch the eye were prepared, and the Society's mention was kept to a minimum as most people will not have heard of it. Flyers advertising both adult and childrens' class were also passed around and generated new adult members.

The latest venture was to have Jimmie Hill teach Fife school teachers in response to a request from Fife Council. Jimmie had been successful with his presentation in Greenock so the signs were good.

January 2025 saw ten new children and accompanying adults arrive at the Parkgate Centre. Three weeks in and enquiries about shoes were on the agenda. The class is now preparing for its Medal tests on Saturday 14th June.

Agnes has decided to retire after about 30 years of involvement and Katie Haugh will take over from the start of the new term.

Trish Paton, Secretary, RSCDS Dunfermline.

More news from Selkirk

Last year we took a group of dancers over to Plattling our twin town in Bavaria – it was wonderful!



This year the young folk from Plattling visited Selkirk and Maureen Buckley and I (youth coordinator of the Branch) organised a night for the youth group.

We also danced at the farmer's market to raise money for the RSCDS Families & Friends weekend in Moffat in September. We raised £900 over two days.

Margaret Pritchard, Roxburgh Selkirk & Peebles Branch

Cove & Kilcreggan Afternoon Dance

This year our Nice & Easy Afternoon Dance was held on Friday, 6 June. As always, it was a wonderful, fun afternoon. As it is so popular, we have to take advance booking, as the maximum comfortable capacity is 11 sets. One hour after opening booking, 80 places were booked. We're definitely up there with Paris, Vienna and Budapest!

I think part of the fun is the fact that it is a good day out in the country, with a fair few coming across from Gourock on the ferry. Some, like our friends from Millport and the Dunoon area, come on 2 different ferries.

The attendance list sounds a bit like The Song of the Clyde, as we had dancers from Hamilton, Glasgow, Greenock and Gourock, Helensburgh of course and the Dunoon area including Blairmore, Largs, Millport and North Ayrshire.

The afternoon tea is what the dancers really come for: a wonderful spread produced by The Dream Team as the class modestly like to call themselves.

We were delighted to be able give £250 each to our local Food Bank and to Cove Burgh Hall, where our dancing is held and which is a community owned charity.

We have a really easy programme to encourage newer dancers, and the dances are all walked through first. A moment of success was when one of our new members said – "That was wonderful. I've made so many new friends!" It says it all, really, doesn't it?

Helen Bain

Forthcoming events

TAS AGM, Autumn Workshop and Dance

All events in Chalmers Hall, Bridge of Allan Parish Church

Friday 29 August: Dance – 7.30pm -10.30pm

Saturday 30 August: AGM & Workshop – 10.15am – 3.45pm

Further information on page 14 and on TAS website

[Teachers' Association Scotland | Affiliated to the RSCDS](#)

Advance notice: TAS Spring Workshop 2026

Friday & Saturday 17 & 18 April in Glasgow area

TAS 20th Anniversary weekend

Invercarse Hotel, Dundee

Friday-Sunday: 4-6 September 2026

Branch events

RSCDS Dumfries Branch – Half Day School and Dance

Saturday 27th September 2025

Teacher – Rachel Shankland

Musician – Nicky McMichan

Band - Nicky McMichan and his SCD Band

Details and Application Form on Dumfries Branch Website www.dumfries-rscds.org

TAS August Events 2025

Bridge of Allan

TAS Dance Friday 29 August

TAS Workshop Saturday 30 August

Our next Workshop is on Saturday 30 August in Bridge of Allan. Many of you will have previously danced in Chalmers Hall at Bridge of Allan Parish Church, Keir St, FK9 9NW.

As before, there will be a dance the previous evening, also in the Chalmers Hall, on Friday 29 August – so two dates for your diary!

After the usual coffee and chat on Saturday morning, we will have the TAS AGM - it's that time of year again! Please note that there are vacancies on the committee. No pressure – but volunteers *are* needed to keep TAS running smoothly.

The Workshop includes two classes on dances from the “new book” – Book 54. Ian Brockbank and Heather Cowan will take us through an interesting selection. Heather is teaching at Summer School this year, so she'll be very familiar with this recent publication. We are also fortunate to have Neil Galloway playing his accordion for these sessions.

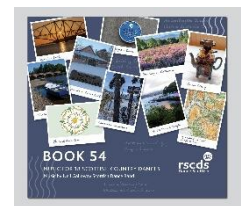
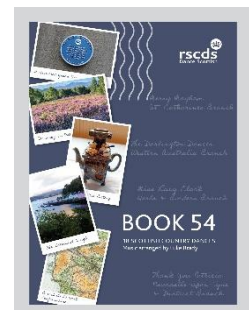
Neil and his band have recently recorded the CD for Book 54. You can find out more about Neil in the latest Dance Scottish at Home “Blether” where Gary and William chat with him.

So do come along and let TAS keep you right up-to-date!

Please remember to bring your lunch, a mug and, of course, your dancing shoes!

Muriel

Muriel Bone
TAS Workshop Organiser



Sat 30 August 10.15 – 15.45 Bridge of Allan
AND
Dance the evening before
to Michael Taylor & the Swilcan Band

TAS 20th Anniversary Weekend

**A residential weekend for SCD teachers
in the Invercarse Hotel, Dundee**

Friday 04 - Sunday 06 September 2026

Friday evening – Welcome drink, dinner, dance

Saturday – Workshops, AGM, dinner, dance

Sunday morning – Workshops

more details soon



Dancers at the Spring workshop in Great Western Community Centre, Aberdeen



Janet & Luke display dance-related merchandise



Young dancers from Selkirk



Cove & Kilcreggan Afternoon Dance



TAS Spring workshop, Aberdeen