

TAS

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Teachers' Association Scotland

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

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The Scottish Country Dance Teacher NEWSLETTER – June 2026

From the Chair

The Summer Dancing season is imminent, and if the rain that I experienced recently continues I'll be glad to go dancing. Enjoy your Summer season.

Thanks to everyone who attended our most recent workshop in Bearsden. It was an action-packed day with a great atmosphere. The report from the day along with our usual mix of articles follows in the Newsletter. Thank you also Mary for pulling all those articles together.

Preparations continue for our 20th Anniversary week-end and AGM in September. Our sub-committee of Anne, Sue and Jane Meikle have plans to make the event very special. I'd like to encourage members not coming to the week-end to join us in Dundee for the AGM and catch up with our TAS friends. As previously noted, a new Chair and two Committee members are required. Please help us fill these positions.

We have also reviewed our Constitution and the committee has some motions for the membership to consider. You will receive our draft proposals towards the end of June giving you all the opportunity to review them, and submit any amendments, prior to the meeting.

Following the success of the Unit 2 and 3 course in 2025 we are considering running a Unit 2,3 and 5 Certificate class in 2027. Please ask anyone you know who may be interested in starting or continuing the Teachers' certificate journey to contact either Anne or myself.

Thanks to the committee for all their work on behalf of TAS and to you, the members, for all your support.

Happy dancing!

Janet

From the Secretary

I hope those who attended the April workshop in Bearsden found the day enjoyable and useful. There is a report elsewhere in the newsletter. Bookings have come in nicely for the 20th Anniversary Weekend in September in Invercarse Hotel in Dundee, and final payments were due at the end of May. The sub-committee has the running-order in the "final tweaks" stage, and the dance programmes have been compiled.

As I mentioned in the March newsletter, anyone not attending the Weekend is, however, cordially invited, indeed encouraged, to attend the AGM on the Saturday afternoon, when we hope to finalise some adjustments to the Constitution, of which more in due course, but generally concerning succession planning for the committee. This information will come to you separately for your consideration before the meeting. Again, as mentioned previously, we are looking to have expressions of interest and nominations from the membership for vacant committee posts in advance of the meeting, to ensure the continued operation of your Association. The vacancies will be: Chair, and two committee members. Committee meetings are all held via Zoom, so there is no travelling involved – we have previously had a non-UK resident on the committee, so distance is no impediment. Any matters arising between meetings are discussed by email. As long as we have your agreement in writing in advance of the AGM if you cannot attend in person, you are eligible to stand for the committee. The current committee is very clear that membership has been worthwhile, providing some interesting challenges, but definitely not "life-threatening". Please consider standing.

Anne

From the Editor

June already and another Newsletter is underway - where does the time go? My inbox has been filling up with contributions for this issue: thank you all for taking the time to put pen to paper and sending in your articles. There has been a lot happening, so I hope you enjoy reading the reports below.

A reminder that your subscription is now due (form on p13) - new rate £10.

TAS Workshop – Glasgow - Saturday 18 April 2026

For some TAS members, our Workshop started on the Friday evening when twenty-something members attended the Glasgow Branch dance in Milngavie Town Hall. An excellent evening with 100 plus dancers including a fair number of youngsters (from this geriatric's point of view) from the University Club. Great to have them with us and to dance with them.



TAS members at the Glasgow Branch Dance

After a night's rest in a local hostelry, it was off to M&S for a packed lunch then round the corner to New Kilpatrick Church Hall for the Workshop. Parking was in short supply in the adjoining car park with discussion going on as to whether they really meant "3 hours only" or could we park all day? I think most of us chickened out and repositioned our cars at lunchtime.

The Committee had everything prepared for our arrival – tea and coffee, biscuits, Angela Young our teacher for the morning session and David Oswald our musician for the day. After some refreshment and a welcome from Janet Johnson our Chair, it was down to work. It was great to see some younger folk among the 40ish attending. The first session was based on the new Society Warm-up Booklet. Angela started off with some Warm-Up exercises, as expected. Some walking, heel first, toe, on tiptoe, long stride short stride. Then into *The Big Three* ceilidh dance. Lack of balance was discussed and perhaps the need, depending on your Class, to bring in some balance exercises – walking one foot in line with the other and possibly some seated exercise to help balance. Of course, warm-up can use any suitable music – not just SCD. We had the pleasure of David Oswald sitting there playing a great mixture of tunes to complement Angela's teaching, with tunes like *The Bare Necessities*. So much to discuss – Warm Up, Cool Down – go online to the RSCDS website and order a copy of the new Booklet.



After a short break Angela was on the go again, looking at differing ways to teach formations. With everyone in a large circle, men with partner on right, we can have everyone involved in practising formations like Set + Rotate as in *A Capital Jig*. Also in a large circle, and again with men with partner on right, we can practise moving alternately three places anticlockwise then casting one clockwise. It's that dance / reel where so many dancers have an automatic "I cannot do that" – *Schiehallion*. We also looked at alternative ways to teach Set and Link, Tourbillon and Tournee. Our thanks to Angela for work which is difficult to put into writing – SO much better to be in in the Hall and be involved – book early for our next Workshop.

After lunch, and a car reposition, we had an interesting session on "Coping with an incident" by Stewart Paton supported by Sandra McAllister from Glasgow Branch. Stewart is a First Responder and has been involved as First Aider at Murrayfield and Motor Sport events – so a lot of experience. (And he's a country dancer.) We looked at what we should have in a Class First Aid kit. Anne Thorn also shared information about the paperwork involved for our Branch / Class – Risk Assessment for each of our premises, Emergency Information – location of defibrillators, contact details of next of kin of class members. First Aid kit for every Class / event. Do you have a Safeguarding Officer in your Branch? etc... So much to think about, so much legislation to comply with – if we wish to dance, we have to comply. Check the Society website for more info.

To finish the day, we had three dances from Glasgow Anniversary Books taught by TAS Committee members. Muriel Bone started the session with a dance close to her heart from the *85th Anniversary Book* – the Reel – *Mrs Muriel More*, for Muriel's mother, devised by John Johnston, music by Muriel More, herself a talented musician, and arranged by Robert H Mackay.

Janet Johnston then taught the strathspey, *Salute to Glasgow*, a very nice 8 x 32 Strathspey from the *Glasgow 75th Anniversary Book*. The dance was devised by John Johnston with music by his mother Margaret. Sue Porter finished off the final session teaching the appropriately named *Bearsden Jig*, an 8 x 32 jig devised by James McMillan also from the *85th Anniversary Book*.



An excellent Workshop with the added advantage of the Friday night dance. Thanks to Janet and the committee for all their work, to Angela for the morning session, to Stewart for the "Safety" briefing and David for providing excellent music all day.

Roy Bain

The Oslo Scottish Country Dance Weekend

As February turned into March, about 60 dancers gathered in Oslo for a weekend of dancing. The organisers were happy to see a fair number of international dancers making their way to Norway's capital. We had visitors from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, France, Scotland, England and the US. The city was showing off its best side with some sunny, and not too cold weather. The spring in Oslo could have been very different.

The weekend comprised a welcome dance, classes both on the Saturday and Sunday, as well as a social dance on Saturday evening. In a beautiful hall situated in the middle of the city centre, the dancers were enjoying the wonderful music of Kev Lees (Denmark), Susie Petrov (US) and James Gray (Norway). The combination was a great success as judged both by the comments from the participants and the energy of the dancing for the entire weekend.

The class was given by Deb Lees (UK). With a selection of interesting dances, some with a technical challenge, and some just fun to dance, she made the participants work hard, but they all emerged from the hall with big smiles. The dances taught over the weekend were:

- *Flirtez! (Simply Dancing)*
- *Perth and Perthshire Centenary Jig (Allana Creighton)*
- *Moment of Truth (Bk 37)*
- *The Bridgwater Geordie (The Queen Collection)*
- *Dundee Centenary Strathspey (Sue James)*
- *Dr Balfour's Reel (Martin Watson)*
- *The Bus Pass (Tony Meadley)*
- *The Craven Twelvesome (Derek Haynes)*

The Oslo group is very lucky to have a fair number of beginners and intermediates. They had the option of a special class where the goal was to learn dances from the evening programmes. The dance group felt it was important to make everyone feel confident, especially since this would be their first international event. It is a real treat to watch beginners enjoying themselves on the dance floor.

On the Sunday morning, Deb taught *Crom Allt (Third Graded Bk)* and *Seann Triubhas Willichan (Bk 27)* to the group of beginners and intermediates, while Kristian Vestli from the Oslo group taught the advanced class. With the excellent tunes from Kev, the class worked hard to dance *Push About the Jorum (Bk 14)*, *Within a Mile of Edinburgh Toon (Bk 21)* and *The Argyll Square (Bk 43)*.

The hard-working committee of the Oslo group, together with the all the helpers needed for an event like this, can look back at a successful weekend event as judged by the feedback from the participants. We are hoping to invite dancers back again to Oslo soon!

Kristian Vestli

(Editor's Note: Kristian has been dancing for almost ten years, qualified as an RSCDS teacher two years ago and is one of the principal teachers in Oslo. He has already had the chance to teach in Edinburgh and in France. He is looking forward to teaching in Lyon in November this year and in Rome in April 2027.)



The members of Oslo Scottish Country Dance Group attending the weekend.

The Glasgow Music Festival 2026

On Saturday 14 March, the Dance Section of the 114th Glasgow Music Festival was held in the Renfield Church Centre, Bath Street. The enthusiastic audience of parents and supporters were treated to fabulous dance performances throughout the morning. Ian (Chair) and Elspeth Johnson represented Glasgow Branch, and my thanks go to Ian for his thoughtful opening and closing remarks, which were very much appreciated by everyone.

It was my pleasure to welcome back pupils from St Ninian's Primary, Comely Park Primary, St Andrew's Primary and Blairdardie Primary School. Young dancers from Dunfermline Branch attended for the first time and I'm hoping all these children plan to return next year!! The commitment from dancers and their teachers was obvious throughout each display. Some had only been dancing for a few months, whilst others had more experience. The children danced to the lovely music provided by Susan MacFadyen and for some this was their first opportunity to dance to live music, which added to their overall experience of the festival environment. Positive, supportive adjudication was provided by Angela Young with a short practical session included. Thank you to Maureen Daniel who had to scribe all her remarks, quickly and accurately.

The Marion B Hamilton Certificate was awarded to Comely Park Primary School, scoring 87%, for their dance *Hedwig's Reel*. They were presented with this certificate by Robert MacDonald, the current Hon. President of The Glasgow Music Festival, who is also the nephew of Marion Hamilton. The young dancers section finished with the social dance *A Reel for Jeannie*, allowing everyone the opportunity to dance together just for fun!

The Adult teams competed for the Glasgow Branch Quaich Award. I was delighted to welcome Glasgow Scottish Country Dancers, Edinburgh University New Scotland Dance Society and Dundee University Scottish Country Dance Society back to the festival. The audience really appreciated the high level of skill and precision demonstrated by all.

The Quaich was awarded to Glasgow Scottish Country Dancers for their performance of *The Golden Years* and *Ye're Welcome, Charly Stuart*, achieving a score of 91%.

The adult section was completed by everyone joining in *Mairi's Wedding*, with plenty of birls and smiles!

My huge thanks go to ALL Entrants, the Adjudicator, Scribe, Musician, RSCDS Guests, Dance Teachers and the encouraging audience. My sincere thanks go to all the RSCDS volunteer stewards who worked behind the scenes to support the dancers and myself, facilitating the smooth running of the festival.

Please encourage local school groups, youth groups and adult dancers to enter the 2027 festival, which is to be held on SATURDAY 13 MARCH. The Syllabus will be available on-line in the Autumn at www.glasgowmusicfestival.org. The closing date for entry forms will be 30 November 2026

If you would like any further information, please contact me at susan@glasgowmusicfestival.org

*Susan Ewington
Glasgow Music Festival Dance Administrator*

Note: Susan has prepared a checklist/table with her thoughts on organising a festival, what makes it successful, potential pitfalls, etc. This document is available on the TAS website, in the Resources section.

More news from Selkirk children's Class

Margaret has kindly sent me some pictures from the Awards night held in Selkirk, on 1 April 2026. It looks as if it was an enjoyable evening. Congratulations to the winners and well done to the organisers and participants.



Smiles all round from Award winners and participants alike



Joining in with the fun!

Behind the Programme: Teaching at Kuckucksnest

I often wonder what other teachers find most challenging when preparing for a class or a weekend school. For me, it is deciding what material to focus on, whether that is RSCDS dances, branch new books, a theme, or a mix of these. Part of this is, of course, getting the balance of reels, jigs and strathspeys right. Once that has fallen into place, I can plan my approach, building up to the dances with steps, exercises, formations, technique and teaching points relevant to the level I am teaching, the preferences of the class, and considerations such as whether English will be everyone's first language.

I recently taught at Kuckucksnest, a residential course in Germany, working with the advanced class alongside musician Anselm Lingnau on piano. He loves receiving a new tune or delving into his archives if he already has it. For more information, see central Germany's events page.: <https://www.scd-germany.de/en/events/overview/>.

I decided to pay homage to my teacher and musician influences over several decades, while also mixing in some RSCDS dances suitable for advanced level and choosing some dances from books that were new to me. I had five classes to teach over three days, so I decided that on the final day I would focus on Glasgow book dances, as Glasgow is my home branch and has published books across a number of decades.



Class participants with Heather and musician, Anselm Lingnau

I taught *Mrs Lilian Meiklejohn* (R) from the *Inverness Diamond Jubilee Collection*, with the tune *Meiklejohn Reel* by Drummond Cook; *Welcome to Dufftown* (J) by *Jessie Stuart*; *Broadford Bay* (R) by *Anne Grant* from an RSCDS leaflet; and *Neil M Grant* (J, *Book 49*) by *Christine Grant*, together with *The Lass from Stonehaven* (R), devised by *Neil Grant* for *Christine*. I also added *Jennifer's Jig* to the evening programme. These choices recognised the teachers and musicians who influenced me when I first started dancing in Forres, often to Drummond Cook's band or in class to Jennifer Wilson, as well as my trips to dances in Dufftown and the dancing "aunties" from Inverness. The tune *Christine Grant's Reel* was written by *Ewan Galloway*, who played alongside *Shona MacFadyen* when I taught in Budapest last year. I also considered *One for Dorothy* (S) and *Miss Ross's Delight* (J) to honour my first dance teachers, but I was not able to use them, as the Kuckucksnest crowd love a challenging dance or something with a twist. I remain very grateful for their contribution to my SCD development and journey.

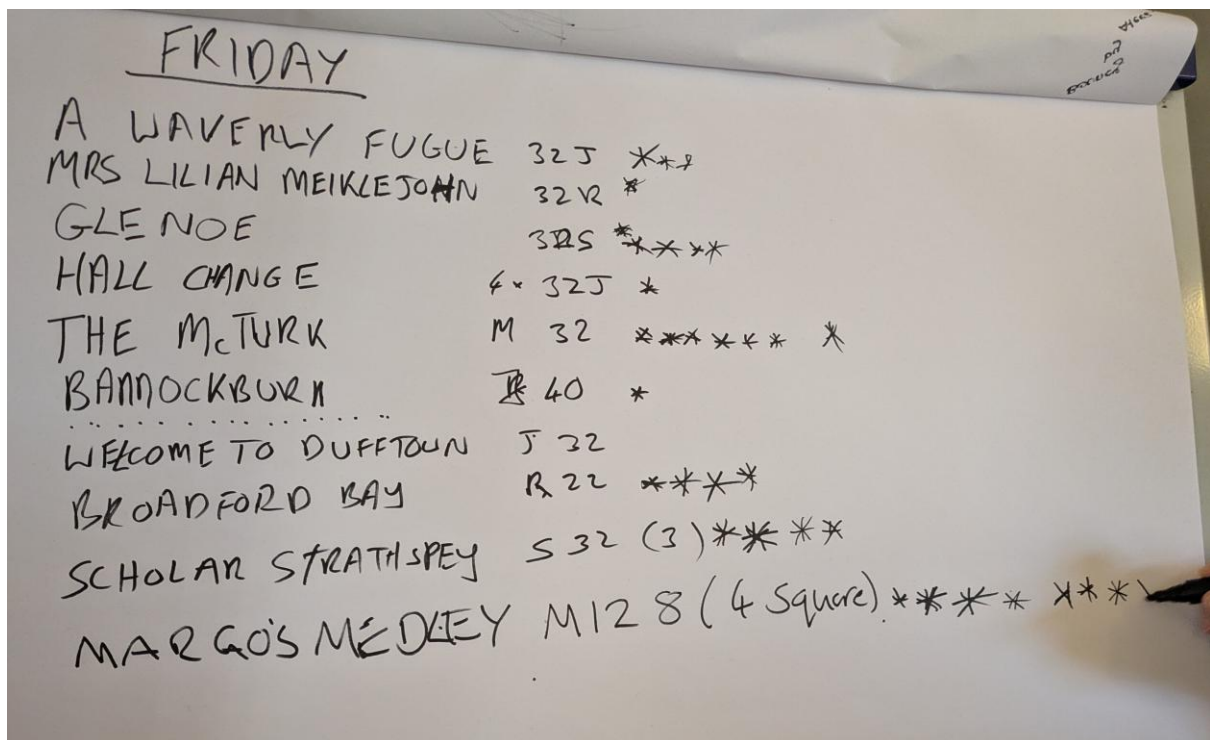
Margo Priestley was my first demonstration teacher at Edinburgh University, and *Elma McCausland* my first teacher at Summer School, so onto the list went *Margo's Medley* by *Alison Austin*. That also allowed me to honour the musician *Bill Ewan*, *Margo's* cousin, as the tune is his *Ellisland Avenue*, written for *Margo*. *Elma's* dance is *Glenoe* (S) by *Daphne Jones*, from *2017 Dances to Honour Elma McCausland MBE*. I admire both these ladies greatly.

For the Glasgow dances, I managed to cover dances from the 60th right up to the 100th anniversary, representing a number of different local dance devisers and musicians. This included a warm-up based on *Highland Man's Umbrella*; by *Anna C Holden* from the *Diamond Jubilee*; *Kelvinside* (R) by *Maureen McCrudden* from the *Glasgow 75th Anniversary Book*; and dances from the 85th Anniversary book, which has long been popular in my repertoire, including *Compliments to the Lawsons* and *Salute to Glasgow*, both strathspeys by *John Johnstone*, as well as *Bearsden Jig* by *James (Jimmy) McMillan*, with the tune *Bearsden Jig* by *John*

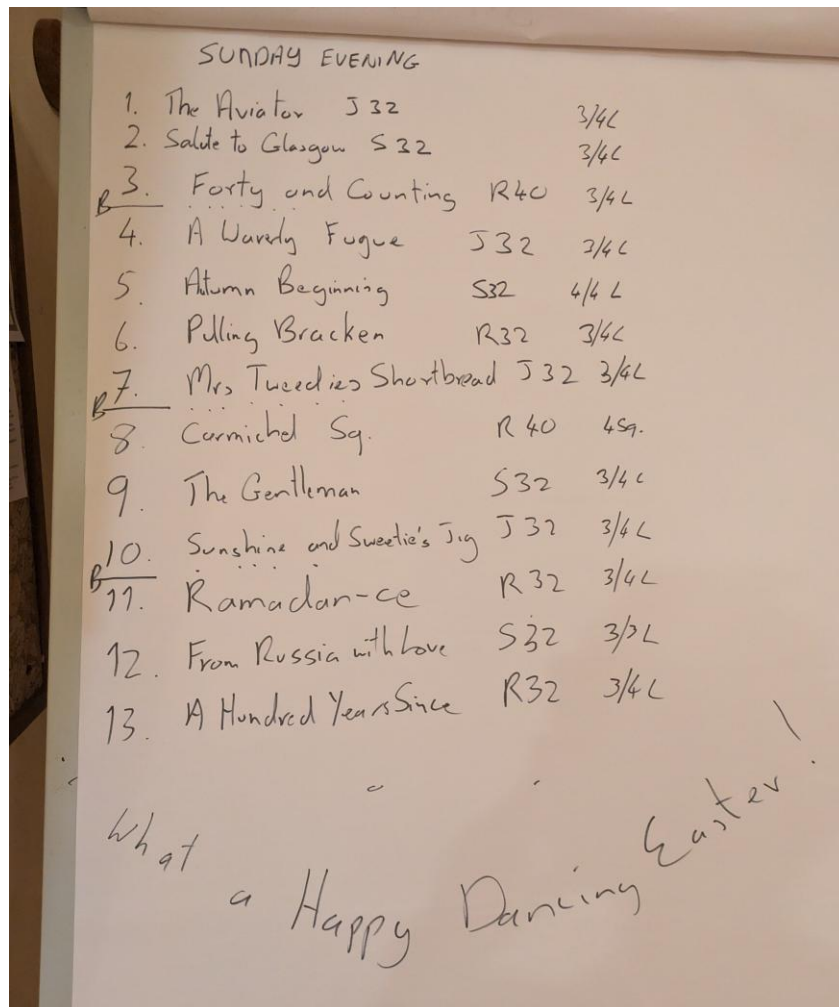
Renton. From the 90th Anniversary Book I covered *Autumn Beginnings* by Alasdair Brown (four-couple set and link), and my own dance *Fingask Castle* appeared on an evening programme with the tune *Heather's Jig*, a gift to me from David Ross, who was the musician for the first classes I taught during Unit 4 and after I qualified for Unit 5. We also covered two dances from the 100th Anniversary Book: *Jordanhill* by Alasdair Brown, as it features *La Girandole*, and *A Hundred Years Since* by Peter Knapman, which also appears in *Book 54*.

I also drew on a range of publications from across the UK, teaching dances from the following books: *Reels and Rainbows*, the Gay Gordons 20th Anniversary Celebration Book; *Centenary of RSCDS Edinburgh Branch*; *Dunfermline 90th Anniversary*; *The Diack Dances*; *Manchester 90th*; and *Stirling at 90*. My full list is available in the Kuckucksnest CGB Easter 2026 dance list:

<https://my.strathspey.org/dd/list/70115/>



From the class response, it was clear that they enjoyed the selection and that it had been pitched at the right level. They marked the dances they would like to repeat on the evening programme. The picture above shows the Friday dances, including *Margo's Medley*, which was a big hit (the most starred). Below is the final Sunday programme, featuring many of the Glasgow dances I taught alongside favourite choices from class members.



Heather Cowan
Glasgow Branch

Forthcoming events

TAS 20th Anniversary Weekend: Invercarse Hotel, Dundee
(Incorporating TAS Autumn workshop and AGM)
Fri 4 Sept – Sun 6 Sept 2026.

NOTE: Members not attending the weekend will be welcome to join us for the AGM

TAS AGM: Invercarse Hotel, Dundee
Saturday 5 September at 13.30 hours

Teachers' Association Scotland
Membership Application / Renewal **£10**
June 2026-May 2027

NB: This form can be downloaded, completed and attached to an e-mail, or printed and sent by mail. Please return to the Treasurer, address below.

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