

# TAS

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## Teachers' Association Scotland

[www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk](http://www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk)

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## *The Scottish Country Dance Teacher NEWSLETTER – March 2026*

### From the Chair

Welcome to the latest newsletter, it seems like no time since the last one. I do hope your 2026 has started well.

We continue with the format of having our workshops attached to a Friday evening dance but in April we can relax and enjoy our dancing as RSCDS Glasgow will be in charge of that bit. I hope as many of you as possible will support them, and still have enough energy for our workshop on Saturday 18th. Plans are well advanced for our Anniversary week-end and I'm delighted to see that so many of you plan to attend. Please come to the AGM on Saturday though if you can't stay for the week-end. I wish to thank the team involved in this project: Anne, Sue and Jane Meikle.

On the subject of the AGM we require three new team members. Please consider who you would wish to be your new Chair and start the conversation with them. Two new members for the committee are also required. Please take your turn in running your Association.

Please find details of other events throughout the newsletter which, as usual, will be full of interesting articles. I'm looking forward to reading them all in due

course. Thank you to everyone for their submissions and to Mary for editing it for us.

See you in Glasgow if not before, and enjoy your dancing.

*Janet*

## From the Secretary

You will all have received the information about the Spring Workshop, and bookings are ticking along. Please remember to let the secretary know that you wish to book, [tas.secretary@mail.com](mailto:tas.secretary@mail.com), and the treasurer when you have paid by BACS or if you wish to pay by another method, [tas.treasurer@mail.com](mailto:tas.treasurer@mail.com). You are reminded that TAS is not organising a dance this time, but that Glasgow Branch's regular April dance is on the Friday, and tickets for that should be booked via the Branch website and paid for by BACS, if possible. Anne Thorn continues to keep our website updated, and we thank her for that. We also thank Mary McFarlane for her work producing your newsletter.

You will remember that last spring we ran a Unit 2/3 course, tutored by Janet, and gave financial support to the candidates, as well as to one further candidate who attended Summer School. We are also willing to support the development of promising musicians, since this can also be seen to align with our main aim, to foster the continuing development of SCD teachers. Those who have been fortunate enough to work as a team with a good musician know the help that they can be, and classes who have experienced both live and recorded music also appreciate the benefits of having a musician there. With this in mind, we have agreed, in partnership with Glasgow Branch, to support a young musician from that area. Orin Simpson, originally from Evanton, an accordionist and pianist, and student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, has been playing for some classes in the branch on an *ad hoc* basis. Having asked Orin to apply formally, and both committees having considered those applications, TAS and the Branch have decided to sponsor Orin's attendance at the Musicians' Course at Summer School in St Andrews in July this year. Three members of your committee, and other Glasgow Branch teachers, have worked with him and all feel he has great promise which will certainly develop during that intensive course. The course leader this year is Judi Nicolson, with input from RSCDS Music Director, Ian Muir.

There are still two rooms available for the Anniversary Weekend in Dundee. May I remind those who have booked that the final payment is due by 31 May, and that, should you wish to do so, you may spread the cost by making an interim payment at any time. Please contact the Treasurer, [tas.treasurer@mail.com](mailto:tas.treasurer@mail.com), if you make such a payment, and also the final one in due course.

Thinking ahead to the AGM, which will be held during the Anniversary Weekend, may I point out that any members not participating in the weekend are most welcome to attend the AGM on the Saturday afternoon in the hotel. I would like to bring to your attention that there will be some turnover in personnel on the committee at that point, and we will be hoping to have expressions of interest

and nominations from the membership in advance of the meeting to ensure the continued operation of your Association. The following posts will be vacant: Chair, Workshop Organiser and one committee member. Committee meetings involve no travelling, being held via Zoom, with any matters arising between meetings being resolved by email. If you cannot attend the AGM, but are willing to join the committee, this is possible as long as we have your agreement in writing in advance of the meeting.

I look forward to seeing many of you in April.

*Anne*

## From the Editor

Well, what started off as a slim edition has certainly grown over the last few days. As always, thanks to everyone who has contributed for sharing their news with members. What a variety of reading we have this time – I hope you enjoy it.

*Mary*

## Ten Months On from Units 2 and 3

I have only taught one class since completing my Units 2 and 3 which makes me feel guilty regarding all the time and effort put in by Janet Johnston, Anne Robertson and Heather Cowan, as well as the many weekends of hard work. Multiple reasons ranging from taking over as Branch Secretary for Dundee in September with a mostly very inexperienced committee to the largest changes in 30 years in the industry I work in. However, I have used it in some ways to help others at the classes I regularly go to, as well as getting a big thumbs up from Anne Robertson for helping a beginner at a Younger Hall dance at Summer School.

Having said that here is a little bit about this one class last October, namely the Dundee Intermediates, a class I regularly go along to as a helper. Fifteen dancers plus Don and Janet Abel turned up, so they hadn't fled because it was me and not bad for half term, plus Michael Taylor as musician. I started with a round the room dance *All Things Nice*, modifying the last 8 bars to something simpler as Lorna Valentine (the regular teacher) said they had struggled previously on that ... unfortunately the Ladies Chain fell apart in the walk through. But as that was the formation I planned to improve later we worked on it then group by group and we were back on a roll ... only slight issue was with the 8-bar modification and numbers of dancers they kept meeting the same couple - note to self with Round the Room dance try to calculate for this sort of issue especially with small numbers. Next we did *Joie de Vivre*, a familiar dance with no issues, then on to *Orpington Caledonians* which was relatively new to them .... did a bit more work on the Ladies Chain, although the left shoulder reel was causing some issues .... too used to doing everything right shoulder. Next was *The Swan and the Tay* ... a bit of revision on Corners Pass and Turn, and

mostly went fine. And finally, a quick go at *Maxwell's Rant* in 3 couple sets where they adapted really well at moving the 1's into 3rd place on Bar 28. Using Michael ... probably a bit erratic, and he was tolerant of my instructions - I did warn him I had done nothing since early May!

Other errors. I asked them whether they were happy to dance things - slap on the wrist from Janet J for that! Also, I said they could have a break rather than grab a drink and find a new partner - then I couldn't get them back up! (They did say they loved the opportunity to chat - the class is 1.5 hours with no interval so they only get to chat as they arrive or pack up). They were VERY noisy and that's from a Guide Leader!

Going forward .... I need to sort out a music system, Luke Brady offered to assist there. Mo Rutherford has kindly offered herself and Neil to practice using a musician, and Fiona Mackie offered help with Unit 4. Janet Johnston suggested writing a set of classes for Beginners. So, I have lots to think on .... just need to create the time to move things on!

*Sue James*

## Working with schools in the Scottish Borders

### *St Andrew's Ceilidhs 2026*

On becoming Youth Co-ordinator for the Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles Branch in 2009 I thought that it would be great to have all the schools in the area engaging in Scottish Country Dancing activity - and that's really how it started. I knew that for this to happen it would need the time, commitment and enthusiasm of many experienced dancers in the branch.

Hawick 2009 was the first event and from this beginning we have started each year after the October school holiday. Active Schools have been there from the beginning, and they are our significant partner organisation in making this happen.

I liaise with the Active Schools in Hawick, Galashiels & Kelso Primary Schools - to find out what classes would be interested in taking part in the yearly St Andrew's Day Ceilidh event. We then get in touch with the volunteer dancers who would be interested to go into the schools; the Hawick ladies for the Hawick schools and their country dance peers in Galashiels and Kelso area and school catchment.

We usually have a block of 6 weeks to outreach and go through the dances. Nowadays the other Youth Co-ordinator, Maureen Buckley, and I decide together what dances we think will be suitable for the children and young people. We then get in touch with the musician re. dates, venue etc. Active Schools take care of the initial communication and liaison with schools.



We keep in touch with all the volunteers throughout this time, and then after 3 weeks we book the transport for the schools. We either apply for funding or raise money ourselves. This year we ran a bingo night in the Conservative Club in Selkirk and had a raffle as well. This raised over £800, which, along with a donation of £500, meant we were able to cover the costs for both Ceilidhs.

Tesco give fantastic support to our yearly events.

We also decided to run a Ceilidh in Selkirk for Philiphaugh Primary School. We emailed the head teacher then had a meeting. The HT was delighted with what we proposed.



The Selkirk Co-op kindly donated snacks and juice for the children. We asked one of our musicians to come along and play for us. He was joined by a lady on the fiddle. This all worked a treat.

At the moment, Maureen and I have started to organise a Dance Festival for primary and secondary pupils in the Scottish Borders.

*Margaret Pritchard*

## *Toronto Association 60<sup>th</sup> Tartan Ball*

The Toronto Branch was formed in 1957 and will reach 70 years next year. Although there was an annual Ball, it was not until 1964 that it was named the Tartan Ball and moved to the Royal York hotel, in downtown Toronto, where it continued to be held until 2018. We moved elsewhere for a few years, until through a very generous donation by a Branch member, we were able to return to the Royal York for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ball. The Royal York is one of the prestigious Victorian Railway hotels, decorated accordingly, and beautifully upgraded.

The Ball, attended by 260 dancers, was held on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026 in the Concert Hall on the Hotel Convention level, with elegant chandeliers and convenient balcony where one can watch the dancers. Attendees came from as far away as San Diego in California (RSCDS Magazine Editor Marjorie McLaughlin) and the UK, including Aberdeen Branch Chair, Jim Stott.

Dancers poured into the hotel, regardless of the intense cold at minus 16°C and down to almost minus 30°C overnight. It's been many years since Toronto experienced such low temperatures, but that did not stop the dancers, many of whom stayed overnight at the Royal York.



*The opulent setting for the Tartan Ball*

We danced to the fabulous music of "Don Bartlett and the Scottish Heirs" (so called as two of Don's daughters play in the Band). The large number of dancers on the floor for the last dance being a tribute to the skill of the musicians. Don, who has played with Stan Hamilton, Bobby Frew and Bobby Brown over the years, was presented with a much-deserved Branch Award at the end of the evening by Toronto Association Chair, Arlene Koteff.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Tartan Ball programme was a combination of early traditional dances, e.g. *The Glasgow Highlanders*, and more recent additions, notably from RSCDS

*Book 54.* This included *Mark and Susie's Jig* by TAS member and recent Treasurer, George Watt. Mark Hagger wrote to Ball organiser Laurie McConchie sending "Best Wishes for the Ball and for that dance in particular and congratulations to devisor George Watt, who is now becoming World famous." The second offering from *Book 54* was the strathspey *Canadian Landscape*, whose devisors, Karen and Scott MacCrone, were present.

The evening finished with an "Afters Party" held in one of the hotel's function rooms and an opportunity to visit with the dancers and for those who still had the energy to do some more dancing!

*Deirdre MacCuish Bark*

### *Isle of Wight Weekend School*

The annual Isle of Wight Scottish Country Dancing Weekend School, held at the Shanklin Hotel on the clifftops in Shanklin from Friday 13th to Sunday 15th February 2026, was yet another capacity weekend, with 115 people coming from many different European countries. This very successful weekend was organised by Catherine Packwood-Bluett, Aileen Napper, Ian & Judith Muir with assistance from Frankie Bluett-Burgess and IOW Tours. The Shanklin Hotel provided a good value weekend with excellent service from good humoured friendly staff, and good food.

The teachers this year were the world renowned Raphaelle Orgeret from Lyon in France and Eric Finley from North Ayrshire in Scotland, who both emphasised the fun to be had doing Scottish Country Dancing, whilst teaching challenging and creative dances.

Fabulous music for the whole weekend was provided by a 4-piece Craigellachie Band from the south of England, Ian & Judith Muir (now IOW residents), John Browne and Ali McCan. There were dances on Friday & Saturday nights until late, with many dances being encored as the music was so lively, and Scottish Dance classes on Saturday and Sunday mornings, accompanied by Ian, Judith and Ali. One of the local teachers, Janette Baxter, offered a walk-through of the Saturday evening dances, but for those who wanted to venture out the weather was kind and the visitors had wall to wall sunshine in the afternoon of Valentine's Day to explore the island.

Many guests, including islanders, attended just for the social dances (or as non-dancers) in order to keep in touch with the friends they've made through Scottish Country Dancing over the years. The atmosphere was electric.

Next year the Isle of Wight Weekend School will again be at the Shanklin Hotel Friday 19th to Sunday 21st February 2027 with Eric Finley and Alice Stainer teaching, accompanied by Ian Muir and the Craigellachie Band. Don't miss it! Save the date!

*Judy Valvona*



Left to right: Eric Finley, Raphaëlle Orgeret, John Browne, Ali McCan, Catherine Packwood-Bluett, Ian Muir, Frankie Bluett-Burgess, Judith Muir and front Janette Baxter, Aileen Napper.  
Photo by Frankie Bluett-Burgess.

### *RSCDS Winter School 2026*

Winter School was held in Pitlochry in February. Although I don't have a report from the event, Deirdre MacCuish Bark has kindly sent a topical photograph which I can share with you. The dance is *Mark and Susie's Jig*, composed by our own George Watt. Mark and Susie are the dancers at the top of the set.

The setting may not be as grand as the Royal York Hotel, but I'm sure it was just as much fun!

*Editor*



*Mark and Susie leading the dancers in Mark and Susie's Jig*

### *They're fitba crazy!*

For the last two years we've held a stall at the SATPE conference in Larbert and have made some good contacts there. The interest in Scottish Dance has been increasing and teachers we have spoken to see more than just boys on one side, girls on the other side and a crackly CD player. Scottish Country Dancing ticks many of these all-important boxes as we all know. Team work, exercise, awareness, constructive thought and social integration. It also provides a backdrop to Scottish history, social history and often too, aspects pertaining to local studies. Now we have the golden opportunity, football!

Scotland through to the World Cup finals. School boys, and school girls, are excited by the prospects, and P.E. teachers and sports coaches see an opportunity to enthuse their pupils and bring some much needed fun into education. How to go about it? Easy; dancing!

The dance, '*The World Cup Wheech*' is a hoot. A masterpiece in catching the moment and creating a volcano of excitement. In dancing terms it was exhilarating. This is a very positive step forward for Scottish Dance and for education as well. I do not think it is over-estimating the importance of Scottish Dance to claim it is more than just an add on to the school curriculum, it is an essential element of it.

As the, 'significant other', I enjoyed an invitation to watch some school pupils dancing in Cupar, Fife. Lorna Valentine, in her capacity as Chair of the Scottish Schools Working Group, had been invited down for the launch of the World Cup Ceilidh Week. Tony Simpson was going to be playing for them and I could help carry his equipment. I think I had the heaviest piece. As we are all in Arbroath

we travelled down together. Watching the young people dance was enlightening. Dancing is an integral part of their schooling in Cupar, something we are seeing in Arbroath as well. They knew their dances, enjoyed their dancing and wanted to dance whole heartedly. No shrinking violets or huff pots here. I had the dubious pleasure of dancing with a rather attractive young teacher. The things I let myself in for.

This is something else we've seen in Larbert: the gym teachers are super role models. They have their designer trainers, designer tops, the latest hair fashions – both the young men and women – and they look great. They have that mm-mmm! When I was a young lad my dance teacher had mm-mmm. I didn't know what mm-mmm was, but I knew it gave her an air of excitement. It made me want to dance.

However, it is their interest in what we have to offer that is inspiring. Lorna's stall is the most heavily visited, and the one where these young gym teachers stay the longest. That 'Jig and Reels' is up on 'GLO' and readily available with dances music and videos is used by many. Interest in 'Start Dancing' being available on pdf was also looked on favourably. These young teachers see the opportunities that Scottish dance makes available to them. They see the bigger picture.

*George T Watt*

### *RSCDS West Lothian 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

West Lothian Branch kicked off the celebration of its anniversary year with a social gathering in Broxburn on 22 February. The event was attended by 70+ current and former members of the Branch, as well as friends from neighbouring Branches and TAS. After an interesting talk from William Williamson (past Chair of RSCDS) about the Past and Future of the RSCDS in Scotland, tea and refreshments were enjoyed by everyone. Many memories were sparked with the assistance of several albums of photographs which were displayed in the hall.

The Branch will be holding an Anniversary Dance on 9 May – for more information see the RSCDS West Lothian website.  
<https://rscdswestlothian.org.uk/events/>

### ***A Tribute to Joan Anderson of Crieff***

***The people of Crieff were saddened to hear of the death of Joan Anderson. Joan passed away peacefully in Sussex whilst visiting her family for Christmas on 21st January, 2026, aged 97 years. There will be a celebration of her life at Crieff Hydro on Monday 9th March, at 11am, to which all friends are invited.***

***Although from north Fife, Joan spent most of her adult life in Crieff working as a primary school teacher. I have met many people over the years who were her students. My impression is that she was strict but fair, and always with that twinkle in her eyes. She also was popular with local dogs, going to the park every day with a pocket full of treats right up until December.***

***She took over the reins of Crieff Scottish Country Dancers, I believe, in the early 1990s and she brought the same twinkly strictness to the classes. The Crieff dances were well-known for a fine spread, varied programme and excellent music. Although she never qualified as an RSCDS teacher, she led the group through many and varied dances over the years. She was well-known in the wider dance community. I had known her only since 2012 but went with her and other dancers to: Pitlochry, Bankfoot, Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus, Scone, Comrie, Dunblane, Stirling, Bridge of Allan and Alva. In earlier years she went even further afield. I heard tales of dances in Amulree where everyone got stovies to take home. Her ready smile and wry quips always kept the dances light.***



*Contributed by Kate Kinnear*

## ***Forthcoming events***

### **TAS Spring Workshop**

**in New Kilpatrick Church Hall, Bearsden**

**Saturday 18 April 2026: Workshop – 10.15am – 3.40pm** (*see page 14*)

### **TAS 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend**

**Fri 4 Sept – Sun 6 Sept 2026. Invercarse Hotel, Dundee**

## **Other events**

**Glasgow Branch Dance: Friday 17 April 2026 – 7.30pm -10.30pm**

**in New Kilpatrick Church Hall, Bearsden** (*see page 13*)

**RSCDS West Lothian Anniversary Dance**

**Saturday, 9 May 2026. Canon Hoban Hall, Broxburn**

**Kilcreggan and Cove SCD Class**

**Friday, 5th June in Cove Burgh Hall, G84 0LY, 2.00 - 5.00pm.**

**Tickets cost £10, which includes afternoon tea and 2 raffle tickets. As it seems to be a very popular event, **please book in advance**. Booking opens on Friday, 1st May at 12 noon.**



*Dancers outside Cove Burgh Hall*

**Glasgow Branch Dance and TAS Spring  
Workshop  
Friday 17 April and Saturday 18 April 2026  
Information Sheet**

**Friday Night Dance organised by RSCDS Glasgow**

**Venue:**

Milngavie Town Hall, 71 Station Road Milngavie G62 8BZ

## Dance

7:30pm-10:15p.m

Ticket £12

Interval tea/coffee and biscuit – bring a mug, please.

Dance programme and cribs will appear on RSCDS Glasgow website [RSCDS Glasgow Branch | Scottish Country Dances, held monthly in greater Glasgow, enjoyed by all ages](#)

For information contact Events Convenor: Margaret Sanders  
[events@rscdsglasgow.org](mailto:events@rscdsglasgow.org) or book via the website from the above page.

**Booking essential**, since this is a regular branch event, and **payment by BACS preferred**.

### **Parking**

There is some parking in front of and more behind the hall, which is opposite the station, where there is also parking. To access the parking behind the hall, drive along Station Road, up Buchanan St. and take first right.

Train information from [scotrail.co.uk](http://scotrail.co.uk) – trains leave from Glasgow Queen St Low Level

### **Accommodation**

Premier Inn Bearsden 279 Milngavie Road, Bearsden G61 3DQ

Premier Inn Milngavie 103 Main Street, Milngavie, G62 6JQ

Golden Jubilee Hotel Beardmore Street, Clydebank, G81 4SA

West Highland Way Hotel, Blanefield G63 9AW

Kirkhouse Inn, Glasgow Road, Milngavie G63 9AA

# TAS Spring Workshop

## Saturday 18 April 2026

### Venue

Sessions will take place in New Kilpatrick Church Hall, 28 Kirk Place, Bearsden G61 3RT.

### Workshop Programme

Ticket: £10

Teacher: Angela Young

Musician: David Oswald

- 10:15-10:45 Registration/Coffee (Please bring a cup, and lunch)
- 10:45-11:15 The new RSCDS Warm-Up Booklet – trying out the suggestions
- 11:15-12:30 Different ways of teaching formations
- 13:15-14:15 Coping with an incident - First Aid, Incident Reports etc
- 14:30-15:45 Glasgow Anniversary Dances - TAS committee

To book a place, please contact the Secretary: [tas.secretary@mail.com](mailto:tas.secretary@mail.com)

### Preferred payment method by bank transfer.

Please email the Treasurer **indicating whether paying by bank transfer or in cash on the day:**  
[tas.treasurer@mail.com](mailto:tas.treasurer@mail.com)

Payment information:

A/c name: Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)

Sort code: 80-05-40 A/c no: 06002469

Please use your **initial and surname** and the code **WS0426** as reference

### Parking

Car parking is available near the church hall.

To access the Glebe Car Park, turn off Drymen Road into Kirk Road.

There is also a car park on Roman Road beside St Andrews RC Church.

### Public Transport

Trains: Bearsden railway station is an 8-minute walk from the church hall. Trains leave Glasgow from Queen Street (Low Level) station. Approximately a 20-minute journey.

Buses: West Coast Motors operates a bus from Glasgow Central Station (Hope Street) to Bearsden (No 17) and from Queen Street Station, north exit (No 15), approximately a 40-minute journey.