

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter March 2017

Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)

Recognised as an RSCDS Teachers' Association

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

Chairman: Jimmie Hill 0131 343 6447

Secretary: Jane Meikle 01387-252544

Treasurer: Judith Borup 01738-842789

Committee: Helen Bain, Janet Johnstone, Maureen McCrudden

Newsletter Editor: Mary McFarlane marymcf@googlemail.com

From the Chairman

Dear fellow teachers

Having given up being editor of the TAS newsletter I now find myself, along with Jean Martin, editing Scottish Country Dancer at the moment! A very time-consuming task!

As Scottish teachers of Scottish country dancing, our perspective is different. I expect that most of you, like me, joined a Society whose main aim was to preserve and practise the traditional country dances of Scotland – something we were all proud of. It seems that over the years the agenda has changed slowly, quietly, without AGM motions, but deliberate, and now very clear. Scots domiciled in Scotland on the Management Board and Committees are now very few and far between. The Society has been internationalised and at times it feels as if Scotland and our concerns have been marginalised. Some of us made an attempt to correct this some years ago with the Scottish Branches Conference and initiatives like Dance Scottish Week. Some of our good ideas were taken on board, but our insistence that Scotland was different was rejected. It has been stated quite openly that the future lies abroad, not here. Is this an issue that we collectively should address?

On a more positive note, I was asked a few weeks ago to attend, from the point of view of TAS, a meeting at HQ of a group working on getting dancing into Scottish schools. The group consisted of Gillian Wilson, Anne McArthur (TAS and Youth Convenor), Jayne Riddett (TAS) and Elizabeth Harry. I hope I managed to persuade them to concentrate on primary schools and deal with the secondary sector when more is understood about what is possible there. You cannot impose a primary approach in secondary schools. I was surprised by a lack of awareness at HQ of the massive amount of work being done in all parts of the country in schools and at Festivals from the North East to the South West by individual Scottish teachers and branches. You will find in this newsletter a link to a short questionnaire asking for information about what is happening in your area. Please do send the information to Anne McArthur.

We look forward to the next workshop in May down in Dumfries and I hope that as many of you as can make it, will come. It is always great to be taught by Johan and Maureen! The other teacher might be a bit dodgy! And I am sure Luke Brady will excel.

We are already planning the August workshop and details will be in the next newsletter. Remember to let us know if you have any ideas for future workshops.

Jimmie Hill

From the Editor

In this edition of the Newsletter you will find information about the TAS Spring workshop. Members are also invited to attend the Edinburgh Scottish Dancers' one day conference in Edinburgh (see page 9). An excellent cast of teachers and musicians has been arranged for both these events.

Helen Bain's comments on the decline in the number of young people dancing and the need for action here in Scotland reminded me that I was once one of those children, dressed in party frocks and kilts, who participated in the Junior Dance in the Victoria Hall in Helensburgh. It was so much more exciting than any school dance I ever attended *and* there was a live Band! Is an experience like this available to young people where you dance? Please respond to the questionnaire via the link on p7.

More memories from Marjorie MacRae, Hon President of West Lothian Branch, on Summer School in St Andrews: an experience that is highly recommended.

I hope you enjoy Jimmie's piece about Niel Gow. I can't quite envisage our current musicians 'hooching' while we dance, but they play a vital part in our classes. They are very responsive to our needs and enhance everyone's enjoyment of the dance.

My thanks to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter. Don't forget to send me your news and views for the next edition which will appear before the AGM and August workshop.

I look forward to seeing you in Dumfries.

TAS Dates for your diary

Spring Workshop in Dumfries on Saturday 13 May (full details on page 8)

AGM and Autumn Workshop Canon Hoban Hall, Broxburn EH52 5RJ on Saturday 26 August

The programme for the Autumn Workshop has not yet been finalised but there will be a session covering the dances from RSCDS *Book 51*. Further details will appear in the next Newsletter.

TAS contact list

An updated contact list of TAS members will be distributed to members soon. This will include the member's name, branch or town and e-mail address or telephone number. Please let Judith know by 31 March if you don't want your details to be included in the list. j.borup@btinternet.com

Excess Funds Proposal

(As discussed at the AGM in August 2016.)

Prospective teachers (living in Scotland) can apply to TAS at any time for a teacher training related grant (e.g. This could be help with the fee for Summer School or travelling expenses for a course elsewhere).

TAS funds will be reviewed each year and a maximum set per year for the amount available to be spent.

Applications for funding should be made to the Treasurer.

Motion from TAS AGM

In the November newsletter, Jimmie Hill reported his disappointment with the outcome of his discussion with Gillian Wilson, the Secretary of RSCDS, about the TAS proposal that a sixth strategic aim might be included in the Strategic Plan.

6. To re-invigorate the roots of Scottish Country Dancing in Scotland by working to promote it within the Scottish Education System at primary, secondary and teacher training level.

TAS members were invited to send us their views on the idea that Scottish branches and members benefit disproportionately more than members in other countries. Here's what one member said:

Apparently, complaints have been received from overseas branches that Scottish branches get benefits which they do not, and no one country within the Society can receive special treatment.

Can I say how deeply saddened I am by this? As a long serving primary school teacher, who taught SCD in schools for over forty years, I am aware of the decline in numbers of young people dancing in Scotland. In my local branch – Helensburgh & District – we used to run an evening dance for the children of the area, with over 200 children dancing a programme of 18 dances, just the way the adults did. Not so nowadays.

I did my Preliminary certificate at Teacher Training College, simply because it was offered as an extra. (Being examined by Miss Milligan herself was a scary experience!!) That facility is no longer available in teacher training establishments, therefore new teachers no longer have the knowledge to pass on to their pupils and it is this problem that we wish to address.

Ninety-four years ago, Miss Milligan and Mrs Stewart saw a similar problem and addressed it by founding the RSCDS. If they had not taken these steps then, there would be no SCD here, or anywhere else in the world today. In Scotland we are reaching a similar state of affairs which needs to be addressed now. This is where it all began and where we need to take action.

I firmly believe that RSCDS is a Scottish society, promoting Scottish culture, with a worldwide membership. It is not an international organisation.

Helen Bain

Neglected Dances report

Oluf Olufson's report on Neglected Dances was shared with members who attended the RSCDS Teachers' Conference in November. Helen Russell, RSCDS Chairman, thanked TAS members, and Oluf in particular, for their work on this project. She said she liked the report and she would be using it when planning lessons this season.

The report has been circulated to TAS members by TAS Secretary. If anyone has not yet seen the report and would like a copy please contact Jane (janemeikle@btinternet.com).

Eggheads

There was some interest in the proposal but not enough prospective members came forward to form a team. Thanks to those who replied.

Summer School Fifty years on...

Last summer it was 50 years since TAS member Marjorie MacRae attended her first RSCDS Summer School. I asked her how it had changed over the years.

When I first went to Summer School it was two two-week courses. Nowadays it is four one-week courses.

In the 'old days' Summer School in St Andrews was 'the' destination for Scottish Country Dancers – people attended from all over the world as there was no alternative. It was very popular – if you hadn't booked your place by the first of March you would not be able to attend.

Members from overseas who wanted a teaching qualification had to go to Summer School – now there are examiners who travel and other countries have their own examiners eg TAC.

Numbers attending Summer School have reduced as Branches around the world now organise their own schools and dancing weekends. There is a greater element of choice, though many members still regard St Andrews as their Mecca. The number of overseas members attending is also affected by currency fluctuations – it is more attractive to come here when Sterling is low.

In the old days you had to take your own towel; now holiday lettings and summer schools are a business opportunity for the University and consequently the 'offer' is more sophisticated. Services have changed and people have different expectations but this is reflected in the cost.

Meal times in the early years were an opportunity for everyone to sit down together: everyone dressed for dinner and the meals were served at the table. I enjoyed the feeling of being part of a special 'family'. Now it is much more informal. Meals are self-service so people come and go at different times and they don't feel the need to dress for dinner as they used to do. It's a reflection of change in society as a whole.

Ed: Has dancing changed?

Standards have changed, as has the dress code. All the men used to wear kilts; women would never have worn trousers in classes or at a dance. Softer techniques have evolved that are less stressful for older dancers.

Ed: As well as being a member of a class you have fulfilled the roles of tutor, depute director and director – how do they compare?

While I enjoyed teaching and being involved in the organisation of events, it is nice to come back to where I started as a student and to enjoy the dancing and the social side of Summer School. The Seniors' class is very social and relaxed but we still learn.

Ed: What took you there year after year?

I originally went because I wanted to improve my own standard of dancing. My first teacher at Summer School was Florence Adams. Over the years I have been fortunate to have many excellent teachers, including Johan MacLean, Duncan McLeod, Bill Ireland and Miss Milligan.

I enjoyed making new friends and renewing acquaintances. There was a great feeling of comradeship and a shared interest in Scottish Country Dancing. May Dick and I were great companions over many years.

I first met Anne McArthur in the early 1970's and we still keep in touch. She is currently doing a great job as Convenor of Youth Services. The Junior Summer School which was piloted in 2016 proved to be very popular and will feature again in the programme for 2017.

Ed: What would Miss Milligan think about how Summer School has evolved?

Miss Milligan was a pioneer. She was very far-sighted. I think she would embrace the changes as 'society' has changed. I'm sure things changed even in her day.

Ed: What is your favourite dance?

John of Bon Accord

Ed: What is your favourite dance to teach?

For intermediates *Miss Mary Douglas* because of the different reels and formations involved;

For very advanced dancers, I like *The Maid of the Mill* and *The Glens of Angus* because there is so much in them: basic formations, different types of turn and changes of pace throughout the dance.

Ed: Would you recommend Summer School to members of TAS?

Yes, it's a great experience and I'd recommend it to anyone who teaches as a way of brushing up their own technique.

Branch Anniversary

Congratulations to West Lothian Branch which celebrated its eightieth birthday in October 2016. Moira Stephen wrote a poem to mark the event.

EIGHTY YEARS AND COUNTING

Oor West Lothian Branch juist turned echty,
Aul'er than maist o' us here,
An' naebody minds, noo, fit wye it began
On that day in her very first year.

A meeting was held in the Masonic Hall,
That's in 'Lithgae, did ye no ken?
Whaur 20 or so willing dancers
Decided the 'whit' and the 'when'.

Ower the years, dozens mair came alang
Tae jine in wi' a jig an' a reel.
Bairns classes were sterted; we'd festivals too,
Annual dances, demonstrations as weel!

Some folk passed awa', an' ithers - they left,
But the stalwarts kept chavin' on
An' we'd mair than twa hunner members
Fun oor lassie reached twenty one!

A gran' Ball was held for her 25th,
In the Assembly Rooms, nae less,
An' some VIPs frae the Society
Turned up in their poshest dress.

As the 40th came roon', (a decline for the branch)
For the dancin' nae one had time!
But a few keen folk encouraged some mair,
An' oor lassie wis noo in her Prime.

Her Golden year brought huge celebrations,
A reunion, day trip and weekend,
(Oor Marjorie taught at the Summer School!)
An' we'd a Burgh Halls dance at the end.

The 60th and 70th went by in a flash
An' twa new dance books got written,
Mair reunions; badges were made -
A Chairman's Regalia seemed fittin'!

The years are gaun by an' we're a' gettin' on,
An' there's nae mony young folk about,
But we'll cairry on jiggin' as lang as we can
An' enjoyin' oorsels - there's nae doot!

So here's tae oor grand auld lady
Wha brings us freens thegither
For she'll still be here in anither 10 year -
West Lothian Branch for ever!

For those who don't understand the Doric:
"Fit wye" = how "Chavin' on" = working hard

More noise from the pianists, please!

I was recently reading a biography of the famous 18th century fiddler, Niel Gow. Apparently, he was in the habit of making a 'sudden shout' while playing for dancing. This shout or hooch 'frequently accompanied his playing in the quick times, and which seemed instantly to electrify the dancers and rousing the spirits of the most inanimate.' I can just imagine a pianist in the Younger Hall suddenly hooching in the middle of a tune. Interesting that even in those days some dancers were described as 'inanimate'.

Jimmie Hill

Scottish Country Dance teaching to school aged children in Scotland – what are you doing and do you or your Branch or Affiliated Group want to get more involved?

There are some very active individuals and groups around Scotland who are and have been volunteering to promote and support the teaching of Scottish country dance in schools and/or at festivals. Some schools are very supportive of this and others do not take up offers of help or CPD for teachers.

The RSCDS is planning to set up a Scotland-wide project to support both those already doing sterling work in schools and festivals, and also those who would like to help school teachers to include SCD more regularly in all schools in Scotland, starting with a focus on primary schools in particular.

To help us plan for this project, we are doing a survey of SCD Teachers, Branches and Affiliated Groups as well as of individuals with an interest in working together, to find out more about what is already happening and gathering information on how a Scotland-wide project could be developed.

We look forward to hearing from you and getting your feedback by 31 March. Please provide your answers here <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KJV8DK9>
Thank you!

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Anne McArthur, Convenor of Youth Services on info@rscds.org

Anne McArthur

TAS

Teachers ' Association Scotland

TAS Spring Workshop - Saturday 13 May, 2017 - Dumfries

Venue: Locharbriggs Community Centre, Auchencrieff Road,
Dumfries DG1 1UX

Teachers: Johan Maclean (Glasgow Branch)
Maureen McCrudden (Glasgow Branch)
Jimmie Hill (Edinburgh Branch)

Musician: Luke Brady (St. Andrews Branch)

Cost: £4 for TAS members £6 for non-members of TAS

- Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS) invites all Scottish Country Dance teachers to a workshop for teachers – no teaching qualifications required
- Dancing sessions mixed with opportunities for discussion – see below for details

Workshop Programme:

10.30	Coffee / Tea and Registration
11.00	Back to the Fundamentals - Johan Maclean
13.00	Lunch – bring a packed lunch. Tea / Coffee provided
13.45	My Favourite Dances for a Successful Class - Maureen McCrudden
14.45	Short Break
15.00	Useful Unpublished Dances - Jimmie Hill
16.00	Finish

If you would like to attend, please email the Treasurer, Judith Borup,
j.borup@btinternet.com or phone 01738-842789 - ideally before April 30th
2017

Forthcoming events:

Helensburgh and District Branch will be holding their 39th Scottish Country Dance Weekend between 31 March and 2 April 2017. Anne Robertson will be the guest Teacher. For more information please visit the Branch Website: www.rscds-helensburgh.org.uk

Edinburgh Scottish Dancers One Day Teaching Conference,
3 June 2017, 10.00am-5.00pm

TAS members may be interested in this event which will take place at the Edinburgh Tabernacle in Ferry Road. The Conference will include three workshops, with music provided by Luke Brady, Moira Reekie and Robert Mackay.

1) Warm ups and Cool downs - Mervyn Short, SERTA
Mervyn's practical class will provide some fresh ideas and suitable examples of warm ups and cool downs to encourage engaging and fun starts and ends to your classes.

2) "Wheels and Reels" - Malcolm Brown
Malcolm brings his experience of wheelchair dancing to give an informative session on how to adapt and modify dances to accommodate all dancers and allow a more inclusive approach to teaching SCD.

3) "Merry Medleys" - Andrew Nolan
Whether using medleys as a recruitment tool, introducing SCD to the public or adding challenge to a class, this class aims to provide some inspiration whatever your goal.

The cost, including refreshments and lunch, is £20. Further details and application form from ESD website:

http://www.edinburghscottishdancers.co.uk/uploads/5/3/3/9/53395821/2017.06.03_teaching_conference_app_a5.pdf