

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter November 2016
Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)
Recognised as an RSCDS Teachers' Association

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

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From the Chairman

I would like to thank Marjorie MacRae for proposing me as Chairman and all the members present at the AGM who voted me in. I am very pleased with the way TAS has developed over the years. It seems only yesterday that we had our inaugural meeting! I am sure that our committee can continue to offer Scottish teachers workshops which will inspire them.

I qualified as a schoolteacher in 1974 and was lucky that here in Scotland at the time we had a national system of teacher training. I then worked extensively training English teachers abroad in countries such as Spain and Italy where they were expected to go into the classroom straight after a degree with little or no preparation. With no formal training teachers throughout Southern Europe set up teachers' associations for themselves to help each other and to bring teacher trainers from the UK to give them the training their own education systems did not. It was those vibrant self-help associations which taught me that as teachers we can all learn from each other.

The other lesson I learned from training teachers abroad was that teachers don't take trainers seriously unless they give them practical ideas they can use in class next Monday morning! I hope we can continue to support the less experienced teacher and inspire those among us who have been teaching for more years than we care to add up!

I hope as many of you as possible will be able to come to Dumfries in May to link in to the wealth of experience of Johan Maclean, who will be leading the morning session, while TAS member, Maureen McCrudden, and I will be sharing our experience in two shorter afternoon sessions. The musician will be Luke Brady, whose band has just recorded more of the Miscellany dances. See you in Dumfries!

Jimmie Hill

From the Editor

In this Autumn newsletter Roy Bain reports on the Spring workshop in Forres and the Autumn workshop in Broxburn. Members are reminded that notes and videos to accompany *Book 50* are available as a download on the RSCDS website.

As you know the AGM took place in Broxburn on 27 August and a resume of the main points from the meeting is included in this issue. The Minutes of the meeting will be published later.

Jane Meikle has provided an excellent report on the South East Region Teachers' Association 10th Anniversary Weekend - this sounded like hard work but good fun; and Jayne Riddet has contributed a thought-provoking article on promoting the Jigs and Reels Pack in schools in Dumfries and Galloway.

Jimmie Hill reported on the Teachers' Conference in Perth: what a pity the venue was so unsuitable for a practical dance session. He also sent an update on his discussion with the Secretary of the Society of the TAS proposal that the promotion of SCD at all levels in the Scottish education system be included in the Society's Business Plan. Not the response we wanted. Do RSCDS members in Scotland benefit disproportionately compared to those in other countries? Please let us have your thoughts.

My thanks to all contributors and also to Jimmie Hill for his helpful editorial advice. Copy deadline for the next edition of the Newsletter will be early February. Please send me any comments, reports or articles you'd like me to include.

TAS Dates for your diary: 13 May and 26 August 2017

It was agreed at the AGM that there will be a Spring Workshop in Dumfries on Saturday 13 May and that the AGM and Autumn Workshop will take place in Broxburn on Saturday 26 August.

Provisional arrangements for the Dumfries workshop are:

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

The musician for the day will be Luke Brady.

The teachers/sessions will be:

- Johan McLean - Back to the Fundamentals
- Maureen McCrudden - My favourite dances for a successful class
- Jimmie Hill - Useful unpublished dances

TAS Spring Workshop, Forres, Saturday 9 April 2016

We had a very pleasant drive north on the Friday, visiting the east side of Loch Ness on the way. On Saturday we were in Forres in time to visit Sueno's Stone before heading for the Town Hall.

Having registered I then realised that perhaps it was not such a good idea to come! Before I had time to collect my coffee, all nicely set out with biscuits etc, I was accosted by our delightful chairman, "Roy, can you?" "Yes, George!" No sooner had I collected my coffee than Jane arrived. "Since you are not dancing, Roy, can you take notes and write a report?" "Yes, Jane." Beginning to wonder why I came! I jest of course.

We had 50 members in attendance, 26 from Forres and the North East, 22 from the rest of Scotland (Borders, Ayrshire & Argyll) and two from England, Bath to be precise. Of course, only 40 were members when they arrived. Well done Judith for encouraging the other 10 to join TAS.

Angela Young and Oluf Olufsen were on hand to describe and teach the dances, all to the music of Frank Thomson, while Jim Stott was giving a talk on Dance Trad.

A few months earlier some folks reading this, as requested, sent in suggestions of dances that were no longer danced. A small working group reduced the list and on Saturday Oluf talked about and taught some of them. After a warm up we started with *Book 1* and *Fight about the Fireside*. Easy, basic figures and little memory work but 12 bars of pas de basque! The strathspey *Delvineside* followed from *Book 2* with Oluf emphasising the need to phrase the turn corner and the travel to 2nd corner. A change of partner and into the jig *Miss Mary Douglas* from *Book 10*. At 48 bars need we say more about it being neglected, and yet it has turned up in some west coast programmes recently. A rest from dancing as Oluf discussed the reel *Mr Wilson's Hornpipe* from *Book 16*. On with the dancing and the strathspey *Green Grow the Rashes* from *Book 12*. Oluf talked about using the setting on bars 9-10 to improve the flow of the turn to face down, and again looking at the phrasing of bars 17-20 and 21-24 for the 3 hands round. Time was moving on and we finished with a look at the jig *The Golden Pheasant* from *Book 16* which finishes with one couple setting for 16 bars.

Our thanks to the TAS Committee and local members for setting up the tables and providing tea, coffee and biscuits to go with our lunch.

After lunch it was on with the dance and Angela Young looked at other neglected dances. We started with a jig, that old favourite in some areas *Prince of Orange* from *Book 6*, then into *Book 1*, No. 1 the Reel *Petronella*, a dance which we should be doing regularly as we have so many dances with petronella turns, petronella in tandem etc. Angela feels we should be using *Book 1* more with dances like *Circassian Circle*, *Strip the Willow* and *Duke of Perth*. Then we had *The Glasgow Highlanders* from *Book 2* with its own setting step, which a few members had difficulty with. On then to *Book 7* and the reel *Red House* with its unusual reel of three. Other dances Angela mentioned were *The River Cree* and *Campbell's Frolic*. Then to *Book 15* and the 48-bar jig *Waverley* or *Fergus McIver* with slightly awkward turns. We then turned to *Book 9* and the 32-bar strathspey *Jimp Waist* with its unusual first 8 bars. Angela then finished off with a 64-bar square dance from the *Border Book*, *La Russe*.

Seats were quickly set out and Jim Stott then provided an insight into Dance Trad and our Schools Resource pack, with some question and answers.

As I have been drafting this I received an "urgent" email from HQ to say that The Scotsman had a very good positive article about Scottish country dance and that Helen Russell, Chair Elect, would be interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland at 11.50 about our Schools resource pack. It's such a pity that when we have the opportunity to be on radio it is always at such short notice and we cannot let the membership know in advance – such is life.

Following our thoughts and discussions on our Schools Resource pack Angela returned to the floor to end the day with some popular social dances, again to the music of Frank Thomson. The session started by Angela asking us to think of (and not discuss with anyone else) what popular 32-bar reel we would put as the last dance on a programme. She then said she had looked up a database compiled by someone in Aberdeen that lists all the dances on the programmes of dances he has attended recently and collates how often the same dances appear. I think there are a few of these lists around in different areas. It was discussed that some dances which are very popular in some areas are rarely, if ever, danced in other areas. We then danced *Father*

Connelly's Jig as it was one of the popular ones on the list. John Drewry wrote it as a 4 x 64 bar dance. Some dancers, however, avoid it as it is usually encored - plus it ends up that bands have to play 8 x 64 bars. She then discussed the idea that short strathspeys are popular and gave us the choice of *dancing Autumn in Appin*, *City of Belfast* or *The Dreamcatcher*. Keeping our eyes shut, we voted with a show of hands which one we would dance - *City of Belfast*.

The session finished with us making up 4-couple sets and discussing with our partner what dance we had each thought of at the start and what we would dance. No-one else in the set knew what each couple had chosen. Frank played 4 x 32 bars of reel music and each couple danced their chosen dance, with the rest of the set picking up the dance and joining in. It went very well and there was a mix of *De'il Amang the Tailors*, *Duke of Perth*, *Montgomeries' Rant*, *Maxwell's Rant*, *Scott Meikle* and others.

George Watt thanked all those involved in teaching and playing, and Margaret Ross and Kate McArdle for arranging the workshop in Forres.

Roy Bain

TAS Autumn Workshop, Broxburn, Saturday 27 August 2016

0730 hrs and we were in the car, heading for the TAS workshop and AGM in Broxburn. Short diversion into Drymen to collect David Smith (Taunton) who was attending TAS for the first time. The workshop from 10.30 till about 15.30, with time for lunch, was all about *Book 50*. Three young teachers put us through our paces, four dances from each of them and it was fairly hard work. *Book 50* is 12 dances by young people for youngish people and doing all 12 was hard going. Everyone, however, survived to tell the tale and went home with notes on where the tricky bits are and ideas on which dances would suit their particular class.

Emma Allsop (Aberdeen) started the day with the first four dances in the book. Carol-Ann Knox (Glasgow) followed with dance numbers 9,10,5 and finished the morning session with *La Baratte your way Home*. It was fun sitting out watching the various versions of "La Baratte" being demonstrated from one set of instructions - who says SCD is not fun! Time for lunch and catching up on gossip from around the SCD world.

After lunch Fiona Mackie (Dundee) finished off with dance numbers 11, 6, 8 and 7. Supporting the teachers we had Andrew Nolan (Edinburgh) on stage providing excellent music.

I felt that the 3 young teachers really had the difficult bit - quite daunting to stand there and tell experienced teachers with thirty or forty years teaching under their belt how to do a dance. But then even with thirty or forty or, in some cases, fifty years teaching Scottish country dancing behind you - mistakes are still made.

A very good workshop and always good to catch up with friends and discover what is happening in other parts of Scotland. I was particularly pleased to see other young teachers there, supporting their friends. Keep coming folks. TAS needs the young as well as the oldies.

Our thanks to Emma, Carol-Ann, Fiona and Andrew for an excellent workshop.

Roy Bain

Brief Notes from the AGM held in Broxburn on 27 August 2016

The Minutes of the 2016 AGM will appear in the newsletter immediately preceding the 2017 AGM.

Here are the main points from the meeting:

- It was excellent to see 55 members present with 45 apologies.
- The membership fee remains at £5.*
- Jimmie Hill was elected as Chairman and Janet Johnston as a committee member.
- Mary McFarlane volunteered to be Newsletter Editor.
- The Spring meeting will be in Dumfries and the Autumn meeting in Broxburn.
- Excess Funds – consideration to be given to best ways to use.
- Grateful thanks were recorded for retiring Chairman, George Watt, committee member Ross Colwell and Newsletter Editor Jimmie Hill.

*Note: Payment normally by cash or cheque but any member who particularly wishes to arrange payment of their subscription by electronic means/Direct Debit should contact the Treasurer for advice.

The South East Region Teachers' Association 10th Anniversary Weekend, Bournemouth, 16 – 18 September 2016

At the end of the week in September when temperatures were over 30 degrees and beaches in the south of England were packed, with trepidation my husband George and I headed to Bournemouth for the SERTA 10th Anniversary Weekend. Massive thunder and lightning storms the night we arrived thankfully reduced the temperature, making the prospect of dancing for the next 3 days more inviting.

The Hotel Piccadilly in Bournemouth has a ballroom with a sprung floor and is a popular venue for a variety of dancing classes and dance holidays and was an ideal venue for the SERTA weekend.

On the Friday evening, following a welcome drink and introductions prior to dinner, attendees enjoyed a short Social Dance dancing to the fabulous music of the musicians for the weekend, Judith and Ian Muir. The majority of attendees were from the South of England, one from Wales, one from the Isle of Wight, two from France and George and me from Scotland, though George was just there for a holiday!

On Saturday morning, Pat Houghton, the teacher for the weekend, facilitated a class entitled 'Getting the Most from your Class,' accompanied by Judith and Ian. Following discussion on tailoring classes to try to get the best out of each individual at the same time as making the class enjoyable for everyone, we split into 4 groups. Each group was given an 8 bar phrase of *Lord Eglinton's Reel (Miss Milligan's Miscellany)* to teach - to include the steps used, any step transitions, the formations involved, highlight any difficulties and teaching points and include a relevant skills exercises. It was good to see how the groups approached the different aspects of the dance and liaised with and involved the musicians.

After a very welcome coffee break, the groups were each given one dance from the new RSCDS *Book 50*. Groups were to choose the phrase in the dance they felt needed most attention and, including any relevant skills exercise and teaching points, teach it to the class.

In the afternoon, dancers got a chance to sit down and rest their legs during three sessions of different talks.

The first session, 'Mixed Ability Groups, How to Keep Everyone Involved,' was led by Anne Carter. In pairs, we discussed what we hoped to get out of the session and wrote on a post-it what we find most challenging when teaching a mixed ability class.

Anne outlined a scenario where all the sets are managing well but one set is struggling and the teacher ends up spending a long time concentrating on that one set while the rest of the dancers are standing for a long period. How would we deal with this?

In pairs, we shared a situation (not necessarily to do with dancing) that had not gone well and also something that had been successful. What was the difference in what made it a success or not?

From the discussions, the key points highlighted to consider when preparing classes / teaching were:

- Avoid over-complicating things
- Simplify things when possible
- Think about what strategies you have to spot/cope when you're getting into a 'black hole'
- Have a Plan B

With reference to some of the points highlighted on the post-its from the start of the session, Anne discussed what teachers require to think about to teach a mixed ability group – the different elements in planning the lesson and considerations for the varying levels of experience within the class. The main challenge most teachers highlighted was 'helpful' dancers talking and teaching within the sets.

A short break to stretch the legs prior to the second session of the afternoon "Keep Teenagers Dancing' led by Marilyn Watson. Marilyn was accompanied by one of her young dancers, Keely.

Marilyn outlined the background of 'The Macauley Dancers,' the children's class she taught for many years, a high proportion of the children continuing to dance as teenagers and into adulthood.

Marilyn read out letters she'd received from several of her teenage dancers, now adults and scattered across Britain, of their memories of their time spent dancing with The Macauley Dancers, the enjoyment and satisfaction they got from it and also their recognition of the time and effort Marilyn put in to making the classes enjoyable and producing accomplished dancers.

The main theme throughout was the importance of having other activities to attend and focus on to maintain the youngsters interest, rather than just having the weekly dancing class. The Christmas parties were a highlight of the dancing year, Festivals and Medal Tests gave something to work towards and the prospect of progressing to attending adult dances, Summer School and Spring Fling was always on the horizon. Marilyn also involved the teenagers in composing dances and producing a dance book.

The session finished with Keely giving a beautiful performance of the Ladies Step Dance *Blue Bonnets* accompanied by Judith & Ian Muir.

Another short break and we were ready for the final session of the afternoon, Ian Muir giving a talk on 'Music (the musician) and the Dance' – the chicken and the egg (or the egg and the chicken!) of Scottish Country Dancing' - a very intriguing title!!

To get us tuned in, Judith and Ian started the session with a lovely selection of music. Then Ian discussed the role of the class musician and what they bring to the class. 'Drive' and 'lift' were two words heard frequently over the next hour – the music being phrased to help drive the dancers and give them the impetus to lift off the floor.

Ian highlighted variations in phrasing and timing of tunes and played examples so we could hear the different styles of music and different tune types of jigs, reels and strathspeys (12 tune types in total!) and the importance of similar types of tunes being played together. Just to make sure we were listening, this was followed by a wee quiz where we were to name the dance and tune type from the 12 choices – Jigs (double jig, single jig, two-step jig, pipe jig); Reels (hornpipe, single reel, double reel); Strathspeys (slow air, song type, traditional). I'm afraid I failed miserably!

The types and speed of music played for step practice and also depending on the level of experience within the class, the teamwork required between the teacher and the musician and what the musician expects from the teacher were also discussed.

Acknowledging that a lot of classes do not have a musician, Ian, who is the RSCDS Music Director, brought to our attention that the RSCDS website now has sets of teaching tracks for *Books 49* and *50*, with the music broken down into sections for teaching purposes. These are available as free downloads and can be found in the Media section (in a zip file which can be downloaded).

Ian also mentioned there are two Scholarships available for musicians to attend the music course at Summer School - something for teachers to consider if you know of a musician who may be interested in playing for SCD and would benefit from attending the musician's course at Summer School.

With reference to the 'chicken and egg' title of his session, Ian highlighted that teachers, dancers and musicians need each other - dancers need music to dance to and musicians need dancers to play for. Judith and Ian closed the afternoon sessions with another lovely selection of tunes before everyone made a beeline for the bar and to meet up with the non-dancing/non-teaching partners who had enjoyed a very relaxing day.

Dinner on Saturday night was followed by the second Social Dance of the weekend. Any weariness was quickly forgotten once Judith and Ian's lively music started. To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of SERTA wine and cake was served during the evening and Brian Rose gave a brief celebratory speech and proposed a toast to commemorate 10 years of SERTA.

The first class on Sunday morning was on '*Book 50*,' led by Pat Houghton and accompanied by Judith and Ian playing. Four dances were covered, some of them relating to the session carried out the previous day on *Book 50* dances.

This was followed by a session facilitated by Jane Rose on 'Attracting Beginners & Keeping Them.' There was discussion around the reasons why people start dancing and coming to classes and different methods used for advertising and attracting newcomers. The importance of structuring the classes to provide consistency and

progression was highlighted as well as recognising that people learn things at different rates.

With reference to Marilyn Watson's methods for keeping her teenagers dancing, involving beginners in various social occasions rather than just the weekly class was viewed as being beneficial in retaining new dancers. Suggestions were drink breaks during the class, parties with bring & share suppers, garden dances (you can tell this discussion is taking place in the south of England & not in Scotland) and weekends and events that non-dancing partners could attend. Arranging to meet less experienced dancers and taking them to their first dance was also considered to be helpful as well as giving guidance on which dances to avoid.

Pat Houghton led the final session of the weekend on 'Suitable Ceilidh Dances for Warm-up.' This was a good way to finish the weekend as everyone could let their hair down and enjoy getting some new ideas for warm ups for the start of classes.

Thanks were given to all involved in arranging the SERTA 10th Anniversary Weekend, especially to Mervyn Short and Rachel Wilton. Those who didn't have to rush away for trains and other commitments had lunch at the Piccadilly Hotel prior to departing. Photographs taken during the weekend by Stephen Webb can be seen on the SERTA website.

This was a very good, well organised and enjoyable weekend and I would recommend attendance at similar events in the future to any teachers wanting to refresh their skills, gain new ideas, share experiences and continue to make sure Scottish country dancing is kept sociable and fun for all involved.

To enable the TAS committee to gauge interest, please let me know if you would be supportive of TAS organising a weekend event sometime in the future.

Jane Meikle

A Step in the Right Direction

Nithsdale Active Schools and Community Sport, Dumfries and Galloway have appointed a Casual Community Sports Coach, specializing in Scottish Country Dancing – me, Jayne Riddet.

The purpose of this engagement is to encourage children in the area to keep active by exercising regularly through dance using the Jigs and Reels Resource Pack. Ideally we aim to have this pack in every school in Dumfries and Galloway to be used in conjunction with school topics on Scotland's traditions, St Andrew's Day and Robert Burns' day celebration activities. Engaging children and teachers to interact in this project encourages enjoyment, teamwork, co-ordination, regular exercise and just good fun while achieving all the aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence.

So, how do we make this happen? Through discussions with Active Schools with clear explanations on the health and fitness benefits that our children will gain, it is essential to cascade the information out to the schools. A CPD Session on Jigs and Reels organized through the Coach Education/CPD programme has been organized for 22 September 2016. Teachers taking part in this opportunity will add to their own Continuous Personal Development achievements. Participants will be encouraged to take this forward by preparing and entering a set of dancers in the local Perform in Dumfries Festival on 11 March 2017. This year, for the first time the SCD Section has

introduced a non-competitive section for schools participating in the Jigs and Reels, Coach Education/CPD programme to give a platform to show their achievements.

So, how can RSCDS members and dancers help? Simply keep talking to friends that you know who are connected with education. Let them know that there is Scottish dancing available to them. Ask your children or grandchildren what is happening in their schools regarding Scottish dancing and if they don't know ask them to ask their teachers. Show them how easy the steps and movements are. Be positive about dancing for all ages and encourage them to take part, enjoy the activity, make new dancing friends, have fun and keep on dancing.

Jayne Riddet

Teachers' Conference at the RSCDS AGM Weekend

TAS was well represented at the biennial teachers' conference at the Perth AGM. The day was a combination of presentations, discussion groups, and a practical class.

Irene Paterson of TAC opened with a presentation of the joint project between the RSCDS and TAC on the Miscellany dances. The status of Tacnotes has always been a controversial issue within the Society, and it was good to see the way cooperation is now taking place.

The main morning session consisted of discussion groups on the ways the RSCDS and Teachers Associations can cooperate in future. The ideas were many, some new, many old. At some point in the near future, they will be listed on the Society website. What struck me was that if any are to work, there must be some continuing dialogue between the associations and E and T. And, as always, there is no point in having a good idea if you haven't worked out who is going to put it into practice.

The Convenor of MS, Anselm Lingnau, then gave a short presentation on the forthcoming updated Index to Formations, which should be of great help to teachers, and dance programme devisers.

The first afternoon session was a practical class on teaching low impact classes, led by one of our members, Anne Smyth. Anne bravely taught a class of 74 in what must be one of the most unsuitable venues ever – the Café in the Bell Sports Centre – with Angela Young on keyboard but with no amplification! There was no room to dance so we were forced to modify our dancing, just as we would when teaching dancers who can no longer achieve the standard they once could. The message was to keep our foot positions and extensions, but don't insist on the hop. This was a very similar session to the very successful TAS workshop I attended in Glasgow a few years ago.

The afternoon continued with a short presentation by TAS member, Anne McArthur, on all the initiatives of the Youth Services committee. Anne's enthusiasm shone through despite technical problems with the powerpoint presentation.

The final session was another group discussion on continuing teacher development both for newly qualified teachers and for those who do not hold a certificate. At times I felt like screaming – so many ideas which have been round the block countless times – but it struck me that we in TAS are putting this into practice in our two annual workshops. We include and encourage both new teachers and teachers who do not hold formal qualifications. The various suggestions from the group discussions will appear on the Society website shortly.

As a day, I felt there was too much talking and not enough practical pedagogical input. I did feel strongly that any future teachers' conference should be held in a more suitable venue, with a good floor and plenty of space for dancing. It doesn't need to be in the same venue as the AGM weekend. I wonder what the teachers from North America and New Zealand thought.

Jimmie Hill

Motion from our AGM

At the end of our AGM in August in Broxburn, we discussed the new Business Plan for the Society. On a proposal from Alice Oliphant, supported by all present, I was asked to propose to the Society that the inclusion of Scottish country dancing in the school curriculum be made a priority.

I had a meeting with Gillian Wilson, the Secretary. Given that strategic aims are mostly for the medium term, I proposed the following as a sixth strategic aim:

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.

I was told that we could not have this. I was rather taken aback that the Society Secretary had the power to refuse this, but I am clearly out of touch with changes in the running of the Society. Gillian Wilson pointed out that there had been complaints from overseas branches that Scottish branches get benefits which they do not, and no one country within the Society can receive special treatment. She pointed out that in the detail of the Business Plan, which members have not received, mention is made of the teaching of Scottish country dancing in schools. I have to say I left Coates Crescent feeling very disconsolate. Like all of you, I consider this to be of the highest strategic significance for the future health and stability of the RSCDS in Scotland. Perhaps we need a 1923 Committee to remind ourselves what we are about! Now there's a thought!

During the Saturday morning discussion of the Business Plan at the AGM there was a handout summarising some of the feedback. One of the proposed actions under Aim 3 is to develop a Schools SCDing Project in Scotland with funding from the Scottish Government.

The idea that Scottish branches and members benefit disproportionately more than other countries is a comment I hear fairly frequently from some overseas members. Perhaps TAS members could write to Mary, our newsletter editor, with their views on this.

Jimmie Hill

Forthcoming events:

Falkirk Branch will be holding a Christmas Dance on 13 December in Falkirk Town Hall. Tickets cost £14 – please visit the Branch website for more information <http://web.rscds-falkirk.org.uk/dances/>

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