

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter November 2014

Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)
TAS is an RSCDS affiliated group

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

Chairman: George Watt

Secretary: Peter Clark, 22 Corberry Park, Dumfries, DG2 7NG Tel: 01387 269171

Treasurer: Les Lambert, 16 Ewing St, Kilbarchan, PA10 2JA Tel: 01505 704398

Committee: Margaret Harris, Helen Bain, Ross Colwell, Neil MacPhail (website)

Workshop Organiser: Linda Gaul (Spring) and Marjorie MacRae (AGM)

Newsletter Editor: Jimmie Hill macleodhill@mac.com

From the Chairman

As I write the clock has been turned back, rain has swept through the country, the heating is back on and I carry the vain hope that Christmas, or at least the gaudy, commercial side of it will fail to materialise! Our meeting in Broxburn seems a long, long time ago. However, it is not too late to welcome Linda, Helen and Ross onto our committee. Already the work of putting together our next meeting in Pitlochry is under way and committee members will be doing their best to make sure we have a successful day. Many of you will be busy too with your own classes in halls all over Scotland. I'm sure many of you, like me, come to TAS workshops intent on gleaning new ideas to keep our own classes fresh and interesting. For me, that is the most important part of our association. There is too much politicking in certain areas and it is the lack of politics which keeps TAS both friendly and helpful. Long may it continue. For now, I do wish you all a lovely, peaceful Christmas, one that reflects the true meaning of giving.

George Watt

From the Editor

Perhaps the most significant thing that has happened this year for teachers is the publication by the Society of not one, but four, dance books: 15 new dances in *Book 48*; 14 in *Graded Book 3*; 15 in the reprint of the *Foss Song Tunes Book*; and 46 in the *Imperial Book*. That makes a total of 90, not all new. I doubt if many of us could get through them all in a year of weekly classes!

I am sure I did not endear myself to the Management Board or Membership Services committee when I said at the AGM in Perth that we needed more dances like a hole in the head. As a former publisher, I feel that the Society has lost its sense of publishing policy. Policy is set by the Management Board, its decisions on direction then informing the work of the Committees. At least, that was the theory.

Our job out in the branches has just been made harder. We have known for a long time that it is more and more difficult to attract beginners and then to see them progress, stick with it, and become experienced dancers and Society members for the future. Is involvement in country dancing in inverse proportion to the number of dances in the repertoire? The current situation was brought home to me recently when I taught *The Lovers' Knot* to a class. As the final chord died away, an experienced dancer chirped up, "Where did you dig up that rubbish?" The older simpler dances on which the Society's growth was based are being danced less and less. We no longer dance to a Scottish tune! The tune is now international. When most Scots hear of our vast repertoire of dances, they think, "This isnae fur me!" I hope everyone reads what Oluf has to say in his article below.

Jimmie Hill

Concern about the number of new dances

During one of the discussion sessions at the last TAS AGM, concern was raised over the apparently never-ending tide of new dances and how this could be managed or controlled in the interests of both teachers and dancers as well as in the interests and healthy survival of the activity of Scottish country dancing itself.

Obviously, stemming the tide would be impossible and, moreover, could be regarded as negative stifling of a living tradition, vibrant by the very fact that it is continually renewing itself. However, with the number of dances in circulation already exceeding 14,000 and the continuing publication of yet more dances in traditional style by both the RSCDS and other bodies, as well as individual devisers, it becomes clear that many dances enjoyed over the last half century or so are now at best sadly overlooked, at worst completely forgotten.

The idea of TAS being an agent in promoting old or overlooked dances in relation to its role as a teachers' forum is an interesting concept worthy of some consideration, debate and action. Members will be aware of such RSCDS initiatives as published lists of core or recommended dances to include on social dance programmes or some branches offering classes/evenings for revisiting 'forgotten' dances. For a time at least, such processes have, in some way, alerted dancers and teachers to the existence of pleasurable dances which have lain languishing in the vaults, so to speak. Yet not everyone would regard such methods for revitalising and retaining dances in the 'repertoire' appropriate or even effective.

So what makes a dance worth being kept 'green'? Fluency? Fine 'construction'? Fun? Fecundity of teaching points? The answer will vary depending on one's role - teacher, experienced dancer, beginner, 'weekend dancer' etc. Newcomers to what is essentially a recreational, social pursuit must, at times, feel overwhelmed and may well give up any sense of progress or achievement or pleasure once the 'going-to-dances-and-balls' stage has been introduced to them and they struggle to cope with the range and complexity of different programmes. Of course, there are also those who start dancing at the persuasion of a friend who assures them they will easily "pick it up" and such misguided individuals never attend classes at all. In any case, under the pressured urgency of what someone in another context termed 'the tyranny of the new', so many classes have now become treadmills for teaching up-to-date 'dances for forthcoming events' rather than for teaching 'dancing'. Therefore, from the TAS point of view, there is perhaps the value of some kind of directory of certain - possibly forgotten - dances as teaching instruments for specific formations or points of technique which renders each particular dance the seminal one of its kind and thus a key to 'unlocking' other dances. A clear example would be "Petronella" for obvious reasons, or "The Duke of Perth" with its corner turning and reel formations.

If it should prove a possibility that TAS be an agency for promoting the retention and exposure of dances old, forgotten, or overlooked; for establishing some kind of 'classic' dance catalogue, then the criteria to be applied in selecting and publicising such dances requires discussion and decision. The pedagogical worth of whatever final format this would take, and purpose it might serve, could be significant.

There is, perhaps, a case to be made that RSCDS Book 27, from which *The Round Reel of Eight* came to eclipse *The Eightsome Reel* of Book 2, was something of a watershed. On the other hand, some may argue that such 'accolade' might go to RSCDS Book 26 with at least half of its content still very much in active circulation. Given this, it may be pertinent - initially at any rate - that TAS concentrate on selecting and publishing/circulating a directory based on RSCDS books 1 - 25. Some consideration would need to be given as to how this end might be effectively achieved - an invite to selected 'volunteers' to teach their preferred dances at future workshops? Members to nominate the dances they would like to see included in any such listing? The basis for a discussion session at future meetings? A scrutineering sub-committee? A membership vote? If deemed appropriate and purposeful, these are questions which members may wish to consider and debate.

Oluf Olufsen

(If you have a view, please e-mail the editor at macleodhill@mac.com)

2015 Workshops – 11 April and 29 August for your diaries!

It was agreed by the membership at the AGM that there will be a Spring workshop in Pitlochry on Saturday 11 April 2015 and the AGM workshop will be in Broxburn on Saturday 29 August. It was agreed that in 2016 we would hold two Spring workshops – one in the North and one in the South.

Here is the provisional programme for the Pitlochry Worksop in April:

Saturday 11th April 2014

The Tryst (Parish Church Hall), West Moulin Road (A924)

Entrance just above the Town Hall

Pitlochry PH15 5ER

Musician for the day: Muriel Johnstone

Morning Session : Observational Skills in teaching SCD

Afternoon Session: Teacher Alasdair Brown (Glasgow)

Some dances from Dances for Song Tunes (Foss) and Imperial Book

Membership 2014-2015

A reminder to everyone who has not renewed their membership for the current year. Membership remains at £5 and should be sent to the treasurer, Les Lambert, 16 Ewing Street, Kilbarchan, PA10 2JA (Tel: 01505 704398).

Society AGM Promise

During the Society AGM in Perth one of our members Aad Boode noted that 3 teachers associations are listed in the Society's Annual Report, but there is no mention of TAS on the Society website. Despite requests in 2013 and 2014, TAS is not entered in the website "branches and groups" page as an affiliated group. The incoming chair, Jim Healy promised to look into this. It was pointed out that the North American teachers' association, TAC, has branch status and is recorded as having only 7 primary branch members. The vast majority of its members are secondary branch members, their primary membership being with their local branch. If the Society truly values its teachers' associations, perhaps we should have a presence on the official RSCDS website. Well done Aad from making this public at the AGM!

TAS AGM and the membership question

The AGM Minutes will appear in the newsletter prior to the 2015 AGM. The following is a summary of the discussion about membership and might be of interest to those members not present:

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE III in the CONSTITUTION.

A late request from Jimmie Hill and seconded by Ian Brockbank had been circulated to members six days ago.

The Proposed Motion: that Clause III which reads: "Membership shall be open to all teachers of Scottish Country Dance provided they are members of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) and have paid the TAS annual subscription, which shall be determined by the committee for approval at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)" should be changed to read: "Membership shall be open to all teachers of Scottish Country Dance provided they have paid the TAS annual subscription which shall be determined by the committee for approval at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)."

Jimmie Hill expressed the view that TAS ought to be able to reach out to all teachers of SCD and not just RSCDS members. Those unable to participate in RSCDS functions such as Summer School because of issues of time or expense might well find workshops of TAS a help in their delivery of Scottish dance. They might well use more RSCDS publications and even join the Society from our introduction.

General discussion followed. The idea of a separate associate membership creating two levels of membership was not favoured. There was support for the need for TAS to reach out to unqualified teachers and leaders of dance, so that they might be involved in some training such as that provided by TAS.

The secretary indicated comments sent in from two members who were not in attendance. They supported the proposal because TAS could assist in helping more teachers outside the branches to keep in touch with SCD policy and trends. Two other members asked via e-mail that we should increase the liaison with the RSCDS. Aad Boode and Deidre Bark sent messages pointing out that the RSCDS Constitution 2011 required Teachers Association members to be members of the Society.

The secretary then pointed out that our affiliation:

- can offer help and guidance in promoting good standards of dance to non RSCDS teachers/leaders, by using experienced and well trained teachers of the RSCDS. In the long term, this would result in benefits for SC dancing in a wider audience
- had been offered free affiliation without a fee; this was not allowed in the RSCDS Rules
- was not on the same terms as affiliated groups, who were allowed non-Society members to join their Scottish dance groups
- had not been recognised by the Society in that our name had never been included in the listed affiliated groups nor mentioned on the website
- had not resulted in any communications from Society HQ until this year, when we have been asked to support events run by the Society.

It appears there was a very limited working relationship with RSCDS. Some found conflict between the rules for Teacher Associations and dancing Affiliated Group status (the latter being allowed non-society membership), and possibly as the Rules stood we should decline RSCDS affiliation if we adopted the proposed change. Eventually, it was agreed to postpone the decision on the basis that it might be better to approach the RSCDS and have influence from within, rather than relinquish our affiliation and to have no influence in the Society. The secretary was left to negotiate that TAS could be an affiliated group under the same rules as affiliated dancing groups, so we could do more outreach work amongst teachers who did not belong to the Society.

TAS AGM/Workshop – Book 48 dances

Les Lambert reports on the dance workshops

Of course we can always gain an understanding of a new dance from reading the description, but there is no doubt that having the opportunity to work through a dance with a competent group of dancers (note – competent group) in the hands of a good teacher, supported by a good musician is not to be sniffed at. With 15 dances to choose from, Book 48 gives good value for money and the choice of dances offered by Sue and Janet was interesting.

Maybe taking account of our more mature years, Sue included a short strathspey which was very welcome after that rousing 5x48 bar reel. Janet however takes no prisoners, a jig, a reel and a jig was the order of the day with one or two energetic exercises thrown in for good measure. It was obvious though, when listening to the animated and enthusiastic chat afterwards, and observing the response to the choice of dances, that members appreciated the opportunity to work through some of the more complicated dances in the book. Whilst both Sue and Janet were obviously well prepared and taught the dances comprehensively and clearly, when faced with challenging dances for the first time, the value of good musical accompaniment cannot be overstated. Pat did not let us down and provided the support, lift and enjoyment of the music that is an essential part of Scottish Country dancing.

For the dances from Book 48, there are teaching notes at the end of this newsletter.

TAS AGM Workshop Discussion Groups

Morning Discussion Groups

Chairperson: Linda Gaul

1. The RSCDS Manual 2013

Margo Priestley was present to answer questions and give the Society's opinion on issues regarding the latest edition of the SCD Manual.

It was evident that only a proportion of TAS members had purchased a copy of the new manual. The cost was felt to be high and the supplementary sheets that had been intended when the previous edition was produced had turned out to be a full reprint. This was caused by a substantial enlargement of certain sections and cost factors. Comments were made about certain amendments and the difficulty older teachers had in coming to terms with change. Some members were pleased to hear it was intended to make an on-line version available. It was felt by some members that in a time when many dancers were becoming less able, the Manual was making SCD more prescriptive. Comments were made about the information in the music section which was very technical for the ordinary country dance teacher. The success of SCD throughout the world was a result of the standardisation of the technique and dances. As teachers, we were not to lose sight of the true spirit and enjoyment and were to promote participation in our national dance. Some change was inevitable in a living tradition. The Secretary was to supply copies of the TAS Review of the Manual to those who requested it.

2. Issues about TAS

Members had enjoyed having the option of the second meeting nearer to home. As two meetings did not provide opportunities for us to come together, group 1 proposed the Association had a bi-annual cycle, alternating between one spring workshop followed by two in the following year. Group 2 were less favourable to this, preferring a single workshop each springtime. A number of places were suggested for future workshops: Troon, Lockerbie, Galashiels (when the railway was complete), Dundee, Forres and, the most favoured, Pitlochry. Members thought we should always have some dances from new publications in part of any workshop, and for next spring, the most popular topic was a session on observation skills in teaching and how to correct faults in dancing.

A suggestion was made that since we tend to neglect the better, old, traditional dances, a small core of old dances could be produced for members to promote. Oluf Olusen had looked at this issue and would provide some information for the secretary to produce a survey for members.

Linda Gaul made a plea for members willing to help run the Association to let her or the secretary know, since nominations for office were not forthcoming. She also encouraged members to write something for the newsletter - a good experience, personal viewpoints, different styles of teaching or even grumbles about SCD. Short articles would be most welcomed to help Jimmie Hill provide an interesting TAS newsletter.

Afternoon Discussion Groups

Chairperson: Jimmie Hill

1. The Dancing Achievement Award

Peter Clark gave a very brief outline of the new scheme and produced a leaflet for members giving the basic information. Full details are available on the RSCDS Website.

2. Simple Dances for Festival Work

Since the issue of Graded Books 2 and 3, which did not grade dances or provide sufficient basic simple dances, there has been a growing difficulty to find alternative Society dances for young dancers in Festival work. Similarly, there is insufficient scope for beginner dancers to grasp the elementary skills without using non-RSCDS publications. The same few easy dances had been in festival syllabi for many years. It was agreed there was a need for a book of suitable simple dances. Members thought TAS should initiate the production of a book, "The Festival Dances", by offering to gather together a small working group representing TAS, Scottish Music Festivals, and Teachers of children's classes. TAS could offer to collate the dances and possibly contribute to the book's production, if the RSCDS would publish the book. The latter requirement is needed under existing SCD Festivals Rules where only Society dances are used. Jimmie Hill offered to move the idea forward.

3. Problems within the RSCDS

Small groups in the room produced, after a few minutes discussion time, the following issues:

- keeping the members on board by improving the links between members (partly lost with the demise of the Executive Council)
- make the navigation of the RSCDS Website easier
- RSCDS is too slow in adopting ideas, other means such as you-tube and independent websites are now used by new dancers to do their dancing research
- the Youth subscription was far too high at £9 for two issues of the magazine
- standard of technique of new teachers is in decline
- falling membership is not being addressed nor is any strategy or help given to branches to change the trend
- not enough young people in any given area to be viable and successful group
What might help in the future?
- Find a prominent figurehead/performer
- Encourage and support SCD in Scottish universities; give them a much higher status
- Run late night classes
- Contact other youth organisations that could use SCD for social activities e.g. the Guides
- Run major ceilidh and country dance events in towns. The Commonwealth Games seem to have been a success in many places
- Society sponsor area events to bring branches together
- The Society needs to keep a closer eye on supporting Scotland by reducing the time given to international issues/events.

If you were not at the AGM this year, please be in touch with your ideas on any of the topics discussed and we can include them in the next edition of the newsletter.

What did you teach last week?

We asked a few teachers to tell us what dances they taught last week in their normal classes. The classes represent a spread of levels and areas. Here they are:

Linda Gaul's intermediate social class did:

Maxwell's Rant
The Music Makars (revision from previous week)
The Duchess of Atholl's Slipper
Rev John Macfarlane
The Laird of Milton's Daughter

Jim Stott's plan for his general class included:

12 Coates Crescent
Tri-Mariner
Berwick Johnnie
The Honeymoon (Graded)
The Gaelforce Wind
Karin's Strathspey

Ian Brockbank's improvers (2 - 4 years experience) did:

The Swedish Masquerade (warm-up)
Little Ross Light
The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh
Linton Ploughman

Helen Bain's social class, preparing for a ball, did:

Vintage Simon
The Outer Circle
The Land of the Prince Bishops
Crossing the Line

Anne Smyth's general class did:

Dance for Joy
The Rutland Reel
Corian Strathspey
Old Nick's Lumber Room
Bedrule
The Duke & Duchess of Edinburgh

Anne's Advanced Class did:

Moonrakers
The Caledonian Strathspey
The Newburgh Jig

Book 48 Notes

Notes on Book 48 are available on the RSCDS website as a pdf download. We print them here for those who do not have access to the website.

1 Newburgh Jig

Bars 17-20 and bars 21 -24: 1st couple have eye contact as they dance round each other. At the end of second turn through for 1st couple, they step down as the 4th couple enter the six hands round and back from fourth place when becoming the new 3rd couple.

2 The Rutland Reel

Bar 16: no polite turn at end of ladies chain for 1st man

3 The Golden Years

Bars 5-6: 1st couple dance first half of turn with wide arms so easier to cover with other couples on bars 7-8
Bars 5-8: 2nd, 1st, 3rd couples need to be spatially aware of the other couples in turns.

4 Monica's Way

Bar 8: 2nd and 3rd couples 'flatten' into the sidelines

Bar 16: 4th and 1st couples finish set & rotate on the sidelines

Bars 24 – 25: 4th and 1st couples approaching to pass partner right shoulder on bar 25

Bar 28: curve onto the sidelines by the right. Don't make a big loop outside set, as dancers would end up with sets interlocking at a social dance.

5 Rye Twist

Bar 5: 1st man takes a small step to allow 1st woman to catch up to cover in the reels.

2nd, 3rd and 4th couples dance up one place at end of their full reel of 3 across. At the end of bar 20, 5th couple are in fifth place

Bar 17: 1st woman 'parallels' 1st man momentarily as she enters the left shoulder reel with the 5th couple as he casts up on the women's side and across to 4th place on his own side.

Bar 22: 5th and 1st couples retain left hand with partner, ready to cross left hand to own sidelines.

6 City of Belfast

Bars 5-8: release hands end of bar 7 to curve into place ready for the reel of four across.

1st man and 2nd woman have a change of direction to enter the reel.

Bars 9-16: reel of four across in second place with 2nd couple dancing up to finish in first place at the end of the reel.

7 Sunshine and Sweetie's Jig

Bars 9-12: corners dance four steps

Bar 16: emphasise 1st couple finish on the sidelines.

Bar 28: 1st couple, 2nd woman, 3rd man finish half reel of four facing anticlockwise ready for chase.

8 Tri Mariner

Bars 3 and 4: 1st couple step down after second turn on bars 3-4

4th couple (as new 3rd couple) step up bars 3-4 and set immediately on bars 5 - 6

9 A Summer Meeting

Bars 3-4: 1st man and 2nd man be spatially aware when setting / casting out so as not to collide, similarly 3rd woman and 2nd woman

Bars 8 and 12: 1st man and 3rd woman (middle dancers at beginning of half reel of four) pass by left shoulder

10 The Festival Man

Bar 4: 1st woman pull back right shoulder to face partner, eye contact

Bar 20: 1st couple finish left shoulder to left shoulder in the middle of the set

Bars 21-22: 1st couple dance straight up / down the middle of the set then cast.

11 The Fireworks Reel

Bars 10-11: ready to anticipate pas de basque into skip change for left hand turn

Bars 21-24: 1st couple slow down by shortening steps into second place on opposite sides finishing with 1st woman facing up / 1st man facing down

12 Rougemont Castle

Bars 11-12: leading two women / men must lengthen steps to let third dancer into line across

13 The Lady In Red (A SLOW JIG)

With less experienced dancers , it may be easier perhaps to teach to normal jig tempo while class learns the choreography of the dance.

Bars 3-8: 2nd and 4th couples lengthen steps as a long way to go

Bar 16: 2nd man and 4th woman retain hold of left hands ready for left hands across

End of bar 19: release hands in left hands across to finish on opposite sidelines

14 Farewell to Helensburgh

End of bar 8: 1st couple are on the men's side and 2nd couple are on the women's side

Bar 16 – 17: change of direction for 2nd woman from set and link into entry for reel of three

Bar 20: for 1st couple the left hand turn is a guidance to enter the next reel

Bar 24: for 1st couple the right hand turn is a guidance to own sides

In the diagrams at end of the book – bar 8 arrow for 1st woman should show curving clockwise into first man's place and similarly arrow for 2nd man curving clockwise into 2nd woman's place

15 MacLeod's Wedding

Bar 1-2: no hands are given when crossing down

End of bar 2: 1st and 3rd couples are not meant to be back to back with partners

Bars 5-8: lengthen steps as a long way to go

Bar 8: 1st and 3rd couples think of pass person coming towards you by the right (3rd woman and 1st man pass by the right then pass own partner by the right to second corner)

Bars 12, 16, 20, 24: at end of half reels of four dance 'loops' for dancers going into third place in the set if coming from fifth man's place going onto first man 's place ie. coming up the set ; also if starting from first woman's place going down the set to fifth man's place.

Other dancers just flow from one reel into the other.

Bars 37-40: 1st and 3rd couples dance up / down the sidelines facing up at end of half reel behind 3rd woman's place and similarly on men's side but facing down behind 3rd man's place.

Dancing couples are only doing a quarter of the reel of three thus must shorten steps.

Bars 41-44: 1st and 3rd couples have a long way to go to do half reel of three and finish in the middle of the set.

Dancers starting the half reels of three in the 3rd positions in the set (ie. 2nd woman and 5th man) will dance all four half reels with 2nd woman following 1st couple and 5th man following 3rd couple in the reels.

Please write in or email with your comments on any of the dances published this year. Tell your colleagues which dances you like and why. Tell us which dances your classes liked or didn't like and why. Give us your teaching tips for any of the new dances.