

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter November 2013

Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)

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, Neil MacPhail, Bill Austin

Workshop Organiser: Jenny Greene

Newsletter Editor: Jimmie Hill macleodhill@mac.com

Two TAS Spring Workshops: Low impact teaching / unusual formations Glasgow and Aberdeen

12 April: Ruthrieston West Church, Broomhill Road, Aberdeen AB10 7NS

26 April: Westerton Hall, Maxwell Avenue, Glasgow G61 1NZ

TAS AGM and Autumn Workshop in Broxburn

30 August: Canon Hoban Hall, St John Cantius and Nicholas Church, East Main Street, Broxburn

Who Am I?

I suspect most of you are wondering who your new Chairman is so let me introduce myself. I'm reminded of some of those radio competitions where they give you some clues and you are to work out, 'Who am I?' I've been a member of the Dundee Branch for 13 years but have been dancing since I was 4. My three elder sisters were at dancing class and one rainy afternoon they wanted to practise their steps so decided to dance *Petronella* to one of our 78rpm records. Little brother was told to stand there and 'do what you're told!' I loved it and have been dancing ever since.

I am presently doing my second stint as Dundee Branch Chairman. I never really wanted to be Chairman first time, or second time, but if you hang around long enough and are not useful enough to be Secretary and are inept at book keeping, so not fit to be Treasurer, then they'll make you Chairman.

I have been a qualified RSCDS Teacher for about 5 years now and share a branch class in Dundee and also take a class in Arbroath. I enjoy taking classes, even though I find the preparation takes at least twice as long as the class lasts. I also like putting a programme together for dances and enjoy doing re-caps as well. I think I've actually only been to three previous TAS meetings, but I find it an excellent forum and indeed any master-class or day-school I've been to has proved advantageous. Improvement is as important as realising and correcting the bad habits we cannot help but pick up along the way.

When Peter asked me if I would be willing to stand as Chairman my first reaction was, No! There are others far better qualified than me. However, he had already asked over 20 others to take on the job and I found that incredible so I conceded. So here I am, Chairman by default.

At our AGM it was decided that we should run meetings both in the north and south of the country to give everyone the best possible chance to attend and gain from the experience of others. This means a lot of extra work for Peter, but he is busy arranging a meeting in Glasgow for 12 April and another one in Aberdeen for 26 April. The success or otherwise of these dual meetings will decide whether we continue with three sessions a year or revert back to two. We will be relying on the support of local members to help with teas, reception, opening up the hall etc., so please contact Peter. TAS relies on team-work just as a dance requires each person and couple within the set to play their part. It's good to be part of the TAS team.

George T. Watt

AGM - short report

This is a short report of our well-attended AGM. The minutes will appear in the July 2014 newsletter. It was encouraging to see how far some members travel to attend our meetings. The Secretary reported that membership was now 175, which must represent a good proportion of all active country dance teachers in Scotland. The Broxburn and Lockerbie workshops were well attended. We awarded one Summer School scholarship, but, disappointingly, not one application was received for a Spring Fling scholarship. The Treasurer presented a healthy balance sheet, with a profit of over £500, our surplus now standing at over £2,000. The question of how we spend our funds remains. The motion, making minor changes to the constitution was carried. There was some discussion of future workshops and their content. The meeting concluded that the September workshop and AGM should remain in Broxburn, but that we should try two Spring workshops in 2014, one in the north east and the other in the west. This would give us maximal national coverage. Three newsletters are planned: November, March and July. 2014 AGM: 30 August.

The New Manual

Members cannot have missed the fact that the Society has recently published the Third Edition of The Manual. It is on sale from HQ for £20 (£18 to RSCDS members). It comes in the same format of A4 pages with holes punched to fit a 2- or 4- ring binder.

TAS has produced a very comprehensive leaflet summarising the changes from the Second Edition. If you have not received this as an email attachment or hard copy, please let us know. There have already been many positive comments about this leaflet.

Subscriptions

If you have not paid this year's membership fee, please send your £5 sub to the Treasurer, Les Lambert, using the form at the end of this newsletter. Why not give or email a copy of this newsletter to a teacher who is not yet a member.

Are we up-to-date with current thinking on warm-ups?

Everyone has a view on warm-ups. Some think they are invaluable; some think they are a waste of time. A quick internet search throws up the following:

In *Men's Health* 2005 we read that "Stretching before workouts may weaken muscles, and impair athletic performance". *Play Magazine* 2008 seems to agree: "They are stretching It's discouraging". Even the University of Nevada maintains that "Athletes generate less force from their leg muscles after static stretching than they did after not stretching at all", while *The New York Times* reports "All athletes have injuries whether they do warm-up or not!" *Health and Family* reports "Why stretching may not help before exercise – University of Zagreb reviewed 104 studies of people who practised stretching as part of their warm-up; ... on average 5.5% loss in muscle strength. For fit weight-lifters (male) who did stretching in their warm-up, ... lifted 8.3% less weight than those who didn't stretch". The evidence piles up as an Australian Study found that "Stretching during warm-up had no statistically significant effect on the risk of injury either for soft tissue problems or bony disorders." Can we take encouragement from the Russian Ballet School Magazine, which reports that ballet dancers "always do warm-ups, yet 80% of professional dancers have serious injuries during their career."

On the other side, the United States Tennis Association found that "The players were the early adopters of a new approach to stretching." *The New York Times* in 2004 reported that "Golfers are notoriously nonchalant about warming up – a study of 304 found two thirds improved their performance if they did dynamic stretching".

What does all this mean for Scottish Dancers?

It would appear there is quite a lot of evidence to suggest that static stretching is not suitable for warm-ups. The most extensive study is one done over 44 years which has been reported in the *Scandinavian Journal of*

Medicine and Science in Sports. This states the outcome of warm-ups with static stretching before exercise does nothing to improve the preparation for physical activity. The reasons given are that it weakens the muscle strength, because the muscles become less responsive, and, in their study there was no evidence that stretching prevents injury. It is obvious that any movement involving muscular activity requires a source of energy and when the body is calm and inactive, the pulse rate is low and the circulation of the blood slower than normal. Sudden stretching can then make greater demands which might affect the muscle's action or create other areas of the body becoming deficient in energy. The accumulation of waste products in the muscle area while stretching will take more time to be removed by a slow circulation of the blood and hence leave the stretched muscles tired. Exerting tired muscles can cause injury.

There seems to be a simple solution: start a session of SCD with something to increase the blood circulation so that those parts of the body to be exercised will work most efficiently. In the old days when we never bothered about warm-ups most dancers walked to class and that was the activity needed to increase their blood circulation. Today it can be done by starting with a walking dance. Ideally, start with a slow walking tempo and increase it, so as to make the heart rate increase.

Static stretching is defined as stretching part of the body and holding the muscles stretched for a period of time. This is the dangerous part if the pulse rate is low and is best avoided during warm-up sessions. Movements that involve continuous movement of body parts into different positions is regarded as dynamic stretching and once the body is warmed-up that can help in a number of ways:

- it mimics the movements to be used during physical activity
- it flexes the muscles increasing flexibility, and provides a wider range of motion
- it prepares the body for more strenuous weight bearing and weight transfer
- it prepares the muscles for quicker contractions of the muscles
- it can assist in balance control, breathing and posture

It may also encourage mental alertness and concentration, all of which are important to dancing. Whatever is done in preparation for the class, it should not take an excessive time and detract from the pleasure of the dancing.

So, holding pliés, holding leg stretches, holding movements on the toes, points etc. should be avoided in the warm-up. Careful consideration should also be given to the movements required by different types of joints. The knee and elbow are hinge joints and should not be used in any circular movement. The neck is a series of complex joints which normally are used for nodding and turning side to side. To combine these movements into circular movements can be very dangerous particularly with older people.

In conclusion, once the body is warmed up, then the exercises should be used to enhance the movements the body will use in the activity to follow. There may well be a place for static stretching during cool down, but then the movements used should be slow, and combined with relaxation and controlled breathing.

Peter Clark

TAS Scholarship 2013

This year TAS invited applications from young Scottish dancers to attend Summer School to take part of their teaching qualification. Carol-Ann Stewart was awarded a scholarship and TAS congratulates her on passing her Unit 5.

I was grateful and lucky enough to receive an RSCDS scholarship, funded by TAS, for Summer School 2013. This allowed me to not only dance to the amazing music all week but to undertake my Unit 5 and complete my teaching certificate.

My class was held in the Common Room of University Hall: one teacher, one musician and ten international candidates - doesn't sound like my normal class that is for sure! Jim Stott was the man in charge while James Gray played fantastic music to keep our tired legs moving. As the only Scottish candidate I was a little

outnumbered by 4 English, 2 German, 1 French, 1 Canadian and an Australian. That feeling stopped by the end of the day as everyone was getting on so well!

The structure had classes running into the mid-afternoon, but we could often escape after this, before we completed homework and danced in the evening. I certainly wanted to make the most out of summer school so I danced most evenings and socialised well into the small hours. It was great to see old friends and make new ones.

The fortnight flew in and before I knew it - it was exam day. Having pulled names out of a hat I was up 4th out of 10. I was happy as this meant a sneaky bit of shopping after the exam to get ready for the candidates' party. After the exam everyone asks how it went - I would have to wait for the results to be emailed to me! The candidates' party was a great opportunity to relax and thank all the people who made the course fun. I have to say a particular thank you to the stooges. The candidates could not express just how helpful it was having volunteers in the afternoons - if you did stooze for either candidate classes - Thank You!

Attending summer school for a fortnight would have been outwith my financial capabilities and I would never have been able to complete my teaching certificate. Since I passed I am now able to teach an RSCDS class, which I will be starting this September.

Carol-Ann Stewart

How have you faired with *The One o' Clock Canon*?

Having seen *The One o' Clock Canon* taught more than once, I think teachers are giving little thought as to how to approach this unusual dance. It appears some branches, in organising a review of the dances in a new book for teachers, simply go through the motions of giving the instructions as to the geography of a dance. Unless teachers give more attention than geography to their teaching, we are surely failing many of our class members.

The One o' Clock Canon is a long dance with interlocking formations, and needs some care if we are going to have it appear on dance programmes and danced successfully. When *The Bees of Maggie Knocker* and *Rob Roy* first appeared, they caused quite a lot of confusion. *The Bees* is done quite well now by the majority of dancers, though at the beginning, there were many times in a social dance, when it was ruined by those making a real mess of things. So many of the less experienced dancers were never taught the dance, but were just expected to follow the instructions. Thus, they ended up by being pushed around by other dancers making grabs for their hands and shouting at the set. Some old hands will remember these situations, and probably still see it happening when inexperienced dancers are involved in *The Bees*.

Let's get back to *The One o' Clock Canon*. Most classes are mixed ability groups, and the teaching has to cater for the less experienced. It is a long dance – a memory feat for the less experienced and some experienced dancers getting on in age! So point one is only to teach this dance when the class has a good grasp of the formations and terms meant by *cast one place*, *cast two places*, *dance up one place*, *rights and lefts*, *hands across*, and *reels of four*. These formations should be learned in other simple dances first.

The second issue is to consider the length of *The One o' Clock Canon*. It is really two dances of 32 bars each. So initially, success and confidence will be achieved by most of the class if taught the first 32 bars as a first couple.

- Cut out the talk.
- Put the weakest couples in first place, so they do any walking required.
- Go straight in with demonstrations of 8 bars at a time, giving instructions as one goes, in one set.
- Then perform in every set.
- Dance the easier movements straightaway with appropriate coaching; give way to walking where there is tricky phrasing, movements or a very inexperienced first couple.
- Follow the same strategy for the next couple.
- The other couples should try taking 16 bars at a time.
- Finally, all dance the 32 bars once.

It might seem slow progress, but every minute spent dancing successfully at this stage will reduce the time wasted later on. Keep the music and dancing to the forefront. Dancers have to learn to remember what has been said previously, because excessive talking or repetition simply leaves most of them switching off and forgetting what has been said!

As we move on to the next 32 bars, it is important to explain the terminology that is to be used. One successful way has been to call the original 1st couple the old first couple, and refer to the new top couple (2nd couple) as new 1st couple in all the subsequent instructions. This helps those who get confused as to which couple they are dancing. Usually third and fourth couples do seem to remember since their place is fixed for a longer period of time. Additionally, it is also easier for most dancers to follow instructions by place occupied, rather than their original number and this is a good idea when possible.

For the introduction of bars 33-64 there is more than one way to approach the teaching.

- It may be best to let everyone see the old 1st couple do the formations first. This means asking the new first couple to stand in 2nd place and dance as required, while the old first couple are prepared to do bars 33-64.
- Take 8 bars at a time after a suitable demonstration in one set, build up the whole 32 bars, eight bars at a time.
- When everyone has had a chance to see what happens once, then ask the new and old first couples to do bars 33-64 together to see the progression to the foot of the set.
- Now repeat the process until all the dancers have danced bars 33-64 once through, remembering to add and point out to the whole class that during the last 32 bars the original first couple do not start again but stand still.

Then comes the time to dance *The One o' Clock Canon* once through. It will appear to take a long time. Yes, teaching 64 bars can be expected to take twice as long as 32 bars. If the class is more at intermediate level than an experienced stage, then a short pause between each 64 bars can help them orientate themselves and bring to mind the next group of movements.

If the dance is repeated the following week, there are bound to be some who missed the first instalment so take the first 32 bars separately again, giving less time to the geography, but adding the details of covering and phrasing which will help make a good performance. It is always sound teaching to repeat new elements of dancing so that the performance can be improved to the enjoyment of all those participating. Including all these issues during the first time through tends to make the pace of the teaching rather slow.

How have you taught the dance? Any other ideas that you have found that assisted your class? Write in and tell us so we can all hear the experiences of learning this dance.

Notes on the dance – The One o' Clock Canon

A set slightly longer than normal is best – there must be room between 3rd and 4th couples; and also room for the casting behind the lines. The music is played 5 times 32 bars.

Bar 16: Anticipate the exit from the left hands across, so that dancers pass through the side line positions for the start of the entry into the reel of four – it is easier in some positions than others.

Bar 24: Middle dancers finish the reel of four passing by the left.

Bars 25-26: There is a two-bar turn with no loops so that the turn flows into hands across.

Bars 31-32: 3rd man must anticipate the change of direction to dance up with partner while (new) 1st couple cast off.

Bars 33-34: New 1st couple giving right hands cross covering with those couples (old 1st couple and 4th couple) crossing in the rights and lefts.

Bars 35-36: Keep the rights and lefts within the set while new 1st couple cast down outside the side lines to below third place.

Bars 37-40: Careful phrasing so new 1st couple dance between old 1st couple and 4th couple and all cross together during the rights and lefts across - the new 1st couple taking slightly longer second step to be outside the set for casting up while the others are giving left hands within the set on the side line.

Bars 45-48: Anticipate the exit from the left hands across ready for the entry into the reel of four.

Bars 57-58: A quick two-bar turn, with no polite turn for the woman in third place.

Bars 63-64: New 1st couple and old 1st couple both cast off, while the 4th couple dances up to second place.

Next turn: The couples in 3rd and 4th (the new 1st couple and the old 1st couple respectively) places must be ready to dance rights and lefts at the beginning of the next time through as the original 3rd couple become the new 1st couple.

Errors in the printed instructions

Page 14, Bars 63-64: Last phrase "dance up to second place"

Page 15, Second paragraph, last line, "On the last two bars of the final repetition 3rd couple dance up to third place to finish all in the original order 1,2,3,4."

Peter Clark

Every teachers' nightmare

I am sure all teachers have had the experience of teaching beginners when someone new arrives and you wish they had chosen yoga or pottery classes instead! In Fort William in 1802 a certain Mr Kennedy had just opened a dance class. We understand that until then there had been no need for such a class as highlanders adapted their steps to the music, but times were changing and new dances were being introduced. Kennedy's class was attended by those who 'considered themselves the elite' of the town. The new beginner did not fit in. The following report appeared in *Antiquarian Notes* for the parish of Kilmallie:

"Fired with an emulation rather unsuited to his years and situation in life, Mr J. Macmillan, of the somewhat mature age of 22 for beginning this kind of schoolery, whose daily occupation was while by no means dishonourable yet of an humble nature, viz., that of strapper (*he worked with horses Ed.*), presented himself for admission, which the poor dancing master, glad of support, did not hesitate to give him. The rest of the scholars, young ladies and others, with their parents and friends were furious, and insisted that if the objectionable person whose activity when on the floor was rather dangerous to others' limbs were not excluded, they would all leave. This put the poor dancing-master in much distress, and he offered to instruct Macmillan alone for nothing. Macmillan declined, and was in consequence dismissed. He thereupon raised an action against the dancing master, maintaining that so long as he kept open school he was bound to receive the petitioner in common form with others on payment of the usual fees, and that if he declined he should be found liable in heavy damages. This ridiculous case, after going through the Sheriff Court, was debated at great length in the Court of Session, talented advocates gravely debating the pros and cons as if important issues depended upon it. Local feeling was much embittered, and large sums were foolishly subscribed to carry on the proceedings."

Beware of strappers in your schoolery! Interesting that in 1802 22 was considered 'somewhat mature'.

Future workshops

The committee does its best to plan workshops which will be of interest and practical use to members. They want to know what you would like: one topic per day; two topics per day; a morning class plus one topic; one or two workshop leaders for the whole day? They want to know who you would like to see leading workshops; they need to know what areas you would like covered. Please email or ring anyone on the committee with your views. After all, we are an association of **members**.

Book 47 Teaching Notes

Notes compiled by Helen Russell and Sue Porter, Summer School, St Andrews 2013

These notes were developed by staff teaching Book 47 at Summer School. They are offered as an aid to teachers and dancers but are not exhaustive and do not replace the original instructions or The Manual.

Bill Clement MBE

21-24 A slow turn for 4 steps. 1st couple take shorter steps.

Linnea's Strathspey

15 - 16 1st couple require long steps.

17 - 24 Chain progression.

19 - 22 2nd man and 3rd woman phrase the one-and-a half turn carefully.

24 1st couple should shorten their track to finish in the middle facing up.

Flight to Melbourne

16 2nd and 4th couples finish the reel by curving towards their partners to join hands with them.

Ageing Gracefully *(This is a dance from Chicago - hence the American spelling of 'ageing'... Ed.)*

12 & 20 At the end of each turn, both dancers stay in the middle facing each other diagonally.

15 - 16 1st woman and 2nd man, face in diagonally, while setting.

23 - 24 1st man and 2nd woman, face in diagonally, while setting.

Linking of second turn of the dance into third turn:

31-32 At the end of the second time through, 1st couple cross up to own side and cast off to foot of the set while 3rd couple, in fourth place, continue the reel up to third place, ready to be the new third couple. The order is now 2,3,4,1.

Vintage Simon

1-8 On bars 1 - 2, 1st and 5th couples change places but 5th man and 1st woman are not expected to go out to the sidelines so that it is easier to anticipate the change of direction for the chase. Think of the phrasing as 2 steps, 4 steps, 2 steps. Dancing couples finish shoulder to shoulder facing first corners.

7-9 Right hand followed by right hand for 1st and 5th couples.

9-16 Dancers in corner positions face in diagonally when setting.

29-30 1st and 5th couples face their opposite sides.

The One o' Clock Canon

A long set is required. The music is played 5 times 32 bars

16 Anticipate the exit from the left hands across ready for the entry into the reel of four.

24 Middle dancers finish the reel of four by passing by the left.

25 - 26 This is a two-bar turn with no 'twiddles', just flow into hands across.

31-32 3rd man must anticipate the change of direction to dance up.

33-40 Careful phrasing as 2nd couple dance between 1st and 4th couple who are dancing rights and lefts.

35-36 2nd couple dance down keeping outside the couples dancing rights and lefts.

37-38 2nd couple cross over and out through the sidelines.

39 -40 2nd couple dance up to second place.

45 - 48 Anticipate the exit from the left hands across ready for the entry into the reel of four.

57 - 58 A quick two-bar turn with no polite turn for the woman in third place.

63- 64 2nd and 1st couples both cast off, but 2nd couple must be ready to begin again. The couples in 3rd and 4th (the original 2nd and 1st couples respectively) places must be ready to dance rights and lefts at the beginning of the next time through.

Memories of Mary Ann

- 12-13 1st couple anticipate change of direction from set and link to turning left hand.
12 2nd and 3rd couples finish facing partners across the set.
23 - 24 1st couple dance long steps to sidelines and change direction for the knot.

Welcome to Ayr

At the end of the second turn of the dance the woman coming into second place faces out ready to flow into bar 1 of the double figure of eight.

The Kissing Bridge

No notes.

It Wisnae Me

- 9-16 Phrase one step for each half turn , one step to change left hands. End couples dance a long first step. Keep the formation circular. Anticipate finishing facing for reel of four at the end of bar 16.
17 Anticipate the change of direction to begin the reel of four.
24 – 25 Exit from the reel of four into left hands across - men in third place on women's side and second place on men's side curve round by the left to follow other dancer into left hands across.

Glastonbury Tor

- 29 – 32 1st couple attack the turn in order to get out to the sidelines.

The Mentor

Part 1, similarly for Part 2

- 1 Women square off. (Part 2 the men square off)
1 - 4 Dance round the woman opposite your original place. (Part 2, dance round opposite man)
16 Men dance into the middle, keep facing in while pulling back, slightly by the left, to flow into hands round to the right.
17 - 20 Dance hands round to the right in three steps and pull back by the left on the fourth step.

Part 3

- 11-12 / 9-20 Keep the casting within the set so that men do not dance beyond the standing couples if the sets are small.

Teachers' Association Scotland 2013-2014

Membership renewal

Name

Branch

Address

.....

Post Code

Tel

E-mail

Personal details – mark appropriate qualifications held:

RSCDS Teacher's Certificate Full / Part / None

Certificate for First Aid / Food hygiene

Fee due: Membership £5

I enclose £

Signature

Date

Send to:

**The Treasurer, Les Lambert, 16 Ewing Street, Kilbarchan, PA10 2JA
(Tel: 01505 704398)**