

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter March 2015

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

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

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

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From the Chairman

It seems no time at all since Christmas, yet here we are at the time of writing in the middle of February. Work is going ahead at a pace to finalise our next meeting in Pitlochry and we are grateful to Linda Gaul who has done much of the groundwork. As always we will be wanting to hear the views of the membership on our way forward. Personally, I am keen to hear what you have to say about the earlier dances. I always like to use dances from Books 1 - 10 as part of my classes and I think it rather a pity that so many dances follow the 8 x 32 format. When did someone last publish an 8 x 24? And is anyone going to suggest that we include *Tweedside* or *Yellow Haired Laddie* in a future class? I truly hope so. We in Dundee Branch have just celebrated our 90th Anniversary, on the 9th of February to be exact, with a social meeting in the Malmaison Hotel, Dundee, exactly 90 years to the time and place that the Branch was formed at 4.30pm. Our archivist Helen Lawrenson read from the Minute Book the details of that momentous occasion. A feature of that first meeting was the appointment of Meta Dow as Dance Teacher, a very able woman hand-picked by none other than Mrs Stewart herself. Miss Dow teamed up with the renowned Dancie Reid and taught at Summer School for many years. Excellent teaching has been a feature of our Society since its inception and we in TAS can be proud of the fact that we endeavour to continue this tradition.

George T. Watt

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of TAS will take place on Saturday 29th August 2015 in Broxburn. The secretary - Peter Clark - and the Treasurer - Les Lambert - both come to the end of their terms in office. We shall, therefore, need nominations for Secretary, Treasurer and one other committee / workshop organiser.

A new look at Corner Partner

Your editor was recently looking at a manuscript of dances from around 1750 by John McGill "*The Dancing Steps of a Hornpipe and Gige. Likewise Twelve of the best and newest Country Dances with their proper names and figures as they are performed at the Assemblies, Balls, and Dancing School in Dunse.*" The dance *The Colonel* contains the instruction: "first man oxters round 3rd woman, first woman oxters round 2nd man at the same time, then oxters round your partner then first man oxters round 2nd woman first woman oxters round 3rd man at the same time then oxters round your partner." I have a feeling we have lost something . . .

Jimmie

Spring Workshop in Pitlochry

Saturday 11th April 2015

**The Tryst (Parish Church Hall), West Moulin Road (A924)
Entrance just above the Town Hall
Pitlochry PH15 5ER**

**Leaders: Margo Priestley, Peter Clark, Alasdair Brown
Musician for the day: Muriel Johnstone**

- 10.30 – 11.00 Reception and Coffee/Tea
- 11.00 – 12.30 Morning Session: Observational Skills in teaching SCD
Led by Margo Priestley (Edinburgh Branch) and Peter Clark
(Dumfries Branch)
- 12.30 – 13.10 Lunch – PLEASE BRING A PACKED LUNCH
Tea and coffee provided
- 13.10 - 13.30 Discussion Session
- 13.30 – 14.30 A selection of dances from “The Imperial Book” and “Dances to
Song Tunes”
Led by Alasdair Brown (Glasgow Branch)
- 14.30 – 14.40 Short break
- 14.40 - 15.45 Dancing continues with Alasdair

Numbers are to be LIMITED to 48 dancers. Members please apply by telephone message or e-mail to the secretary, stating name (please indicate if you will not be dancing) and agree to pay £4 on arrival. (Non-members will be allowed to take up places after April 1st. Please apply giving name, address, e-mail and telephone number, and agree to pay £6 fee on arrival.)

Make a whole weekend of it!

For those who wish to have a weekend away in Pitlochry when coming to the TAS Workshop, you may be interested in the Perth Ball. The RSCDS Perth Ball will be held on Friday April 10th, 7.30pm - 11.30pm at the Station Hotel, Perth. Music by Jim Lindsay. Tickets, £26 each, from Pat Fraser. patriciafraser@btinternet.com

April Workshop

Since numbers are to be limited, please apply before the day of the workshop. Please bring a pencil or pen to record your notes.

New Book from one of our members

Anne Thorn has just produced a new book of dances: "The Magic of Music Book 2". It costs £5 plus £1 for postage and packing. All of the £5 will be donated to Cancer Research. Please make cheques payable to Mrs Anne Thorn. Books are available from: Anne Thorn, 8, Pladda Way, Helensburgh, Argyll, G84 9SE
Tel No: 01436 677474 (please leave a message on the answer machine) or am_thorn@hotmail.co.uk

Youth Services Committee (YSC)

As so many teachers in Scotland are involved with young people, we are grateful to Roy Bain for the following report updating us on the activities of the Youth Services Committee.

- At the AGM 2014 in November Anne McArthur (Banff) was elected as Convenor-elect and will assume the Convenor's role later this year.
- Spring Fling 2015 will be held in Hounslow, London on 17-19th April. Currently we have 70+ registrations, and one vacancy.
- Our Dance Competition, in association with SF London has attracted 46 entries from devisors of various ages. To trial the dances and report on their "danceiness" we have 34 groups dancing as they interpret the devisors' instructions. Closing date for submission of results is 22nd March. The final trial will be held on Sunday 19th April at Spring Fling with Gillian Frew, London, putting the Spring Fling dancers through their paces and selecting the winning dance.
- Jigs & Reels resource continues to flourish and with the launch of the School Accreditation Scheme we have another avenue into the education system. The Children in Education WG is finalising the big brother to J&R – Dance Trad, and this should be launched later this year.
- Spring Fling 2016 will be in Edinburgh and then back to Europe for 2017 with Central Germany being the probable location.
- Our UK Workshops are becoming popular and we hope to identify locations outside the UK where we can organise others. In the meantime, we are planning for Oxford and Perth later this year, with Newcastle and Manchester in 2016.
- At our recent MB meeting an application for the formation of a Youth Branch was approved with an age range of 12-35 and strong links to the Youth Services Committee.
- We have a few other possible projects being investigated at present which may come to fruition in the months ahead.

Roy Bain, Convenor YSC

Overlooked dances that need airing!

You will remember reading Oluf's article in the last Newsletter suggesting TAS might be the agency for promoting and exposing overlooked dances in the earlier books. There has been no comment. However, the committee think it would be a good project to involve all members. As teachers we can then be dancers who will bring back some of the dances enjoyed in the past. With the help of members it is hoped TAS can draw up a list of dances worthy of being revisited occasionally. Here is the plan:

- a) Members are asked to look through four named RSCDS books each month and suggest two to four dances to be considered for the final list. Every member is invited to participate.
- b) Since most busy people like reminders to do little jobs like this, it is suggested a monthly return is requested from those with e-mail or by using telephone. The recording of the results can then be done over a period of time and not left as a massive job at the end of the season.
Any member who uses postal mail or the member who wishes to sit down in one session to view 260 dances, can submit all their suggestions in one response on the attached "return slip".
- c) The secretary will record the suggestions.
- d) At the workshop on April 11th we shall nominate a subcommittee of four members to analyse the list of dances by August 29th. They will produce a list of the most popular suggestions, eliminating those that have a very similar set of formations e.g. down the middle and up with poussette, or a repeat corner formation.

- e) At the workshop on August 29th members will receive the list of 24/27 dances on the list. We then decide if the list should stand in the order presented or we select an equal number of reels, jigs and strathspeys.
The subcommittee will adjust the list accordingly.
- f) At a dancing session in the next season we ask a member who nominated the dance on the final list, to teach it to us and to explain why they like the dance.
- g) Finally, we ask a member to write an article for *Scottish Country Dancer* about the "Overlooked Dances" and why they recommend they should be visited again.

By 21st of each month a selection of two to four dances:-

March	Books 1,2,3, and 4
April	Books 5,6,7, and 8
May	Books 9,10,11 and 12
June	Books 13,14,15,and 16
July	Books 17,18,19,and 20
August	Miscellanies

Interview with Alice Oliphant and Ross Colwell, St Andrews Branch

Last November editor Jimmie Hill had tea with two well-known TAS members: Alice Oliphant and Ross Colwell of St Andrews Branch. They are experienced teachers and, in their own words, "d'un certain age". Jimmie began by asking them when and where they had qualified.

Alice: I went to Dunfermline College in 1952. Miss Milligan was my examiner, but it was the dance lecturers who taught us – Miss Tuck and Margaret Anderson. We all had to do our Preliminary Certificate in our second year at college. It was only when I started teaching that I met Charlie Todd in Markinch Junior Secondary School and he encouraged me to take my Full Certificate. I did that at Summer School in 1957. As a PE teacher I was peripatetic at first, teaching in both primary and secondary schools around the county. I remember one of the first adult classes I taught. I had this little boy playing the piano – it was Bill Ewan, who is still playing for country dancing. I was used to ladies with L.R.A.M.s after their name and here was this little boy. He was wonderful. I didn't know I had a gem sitting there at the piano. I recently attended a Dunfermline College reunion at which two new PE graduates were present. I asked them how much dance they had done in the course and was appalled to hear they had only done 4 hours in total.

Jimmie: Were the PE-trained country dance teachers different from other teachers?

Alice: I don't know, but sometimes when I see teachers doing warm-ups nowadays, I wonder if they know what they are doing – or are they just doing things they have seen other teachers doing.

Ross: I don't see why you have to do a whole half hour of warm-ups before you start dancing. I remember a woman called Elsie who was fairly outspoken in class and said what she thought. Charlie would get some of us out to demonstrate something and she would say, "I'm here tae dance, no tae watch a demonstration team!" Once, when the trend for warm-ups first came in, she shouted out, "If I want keep-fit, I'll go tae a keep-fit class!" We need more people like that with their feet firmly on the ground.

Alice: I like a bit of banter in a class. I can understand that some people want to do things properly, but it isn't actually that serious! I'm glad I wasn't at Summer School the year there was a furore about who puts hands where during hands across. It reminds me of the story of the girl at the pictures, "Take your hand away! Not you! You!"

Jimmie: So where did you train, Ross?

Ross: I trained at an evening class in Perth. I had danced and taught a bit at the White Heather Club in Cyprus. My husband's job had taken us there. I was trained by Jean Muir, who had been taught by Florence

Adams, who was my examiner. The night of my exam was so snowy that the snow gates were closed, but we struggled and managed to get through, and of course in those days you were told whether you had passed or failed on the spot. I remember I had a young boy to play for my classes – he wasn't old enough to drive so his father brought him – it turned out to be Colin Dewar! Another of my musicians was a young lad called Kenny Anderson – now the famous King Creosote. He didn't want to play, but his dad told him it would be good training for him. Billy, his father, played for Charlie Todd for years. When Billy started playing you were on your toes and away. The Andersons were a very musical family. I think a lot of the fun has gone out of country dancing these days. Alice was a great teacher. She was great at motivating people and making it fun. Maybe today people are too worried about where they're going in the more complicated dances. I always remember something Charlie Todd used to say if he was teaching a familiar dance: "Some of you may know this dance and if you do, dance it better."

Alice: Charlie didn't go in for all these exercises at the beginning of a class. But as he went along, he dripped things in. A lot of dancers just want to do dances in classes. I like to take a really simple dance and do every bit of it really well. Last night at the Branch dance, the last dance was *The Laird of Milton's Daughter*. I had forgotten what good fun it was! It all comes down to the giving of hands and having counter balance. A really super super dance. Jim Lindsay was playing and the fiddler gave us such lift. It's a pity that we don't do the older dances as much as we used to. One teacher recently had five minutes left at the end of lesson, so he said, "We'll just do *Jessie's Hornpipe*." Hardly anyone knew it!

Jimmie: So why was there so much dancing in Fife?

Alice: I think the reason there was a lot was because the Co-operative ran classes for juniors. The miners did so much for education – evening classes and so on. I think some miners didn't want their sons to go back down the mines like they had done. I remember there was a man called Charlie Kennedy who trained boys in country dancing. He had been a miner, but became an English teacher. At one point Fife Council primary schools had 14,500 children one year doing country dancing at the Fife Festival Week, but it sadly changed when only a few years ago the peripatetic PE Teachers were removed.

Jimmie: What changes have you seen over the years?

Ross: I think there is now the idea that if a dance is difficult, it must be good. People sometimes say to me that it must have been easier years ago because there weren't as many dances around. That is true to an extent, but there were lots of dances not published by the Society and we did them too. There were also bigger regional differences. If we went to a dance in Dundee or Perth, the programmes would be totally different from ours in St Andrews. Living in the area, we used to enjoy attending Summer School classes, but for us in St Andrews I think the cost of just attending the classes has become very expensive. There should be a basic cost for people who just want to attend the classes. We end up paying £250 for 12 lessons – over £20 per class! That is expensive. Three years ago was the last time I went and it was one of the best classes I have attended. The class really gelled. Robert Mackay and Muriel Johnston were the musicians and Helen Russell and Angela Young were the teachers. It was superb. And there were no stupid questions!

Jimmie: What was it like when you started dancing, Alice?

Alice: I think country dancing got a great boost after the War – everyone wanted to dance. All the dance halls had a specific SCD night, so it was possible to dance Scottish every night of the week. In Dundee you could even go to the Empress Ballroom down at the docks – you thought you were being very risqué going there. When I was in sixth year at school, I went with parents and aunts on Saturday nights to the Rockwell School where Jimmy Shand played. They did the *Quadrilles* there and that was great fun. I remember seeing *Macdonald of Sleat* there. I went back to school and told the PE teacher. She had all the girls from 4th, 5th and 6th years doing it as an item in the Bell Baxter (Cupar) annual gym display. I think the primary schools are still teaching dances like the *Gay Gordons*, but I don't think they do anything very different in the secondary

schools. Charlie used to get them doing the five figures of *The Lancers*. And the boys just loved the basket figure where the girls' feet come off the floor. But we also taught things like the tango and the cha cha cha because that is what people did at social dances in those days.

Jimmie: Why don't we get more beginners?

Ross: We have a 'Come and Try' dance every year and we usually get two or three new people and we integrate them. But it isn't fashionable. We need to stress the health aspect. Unlike something like aerobics, all you need is soft shoes.

Jimmie: So you both must have been taught at some time by Miss Milligan?

Ross: I thought she was very good. She used to shout out, "Come on, sort these lines out. Breadth always better than length – or it might have been the other way round!" And the other comment I remember her shouting was "Nobody is laughing!" We were all too frightened.

Alice: You remember, Ross, what she used to say about two women dancing together! I still say, when there are two men left at the side – like lambs to the slaughter, "Men, you'll have to split these ladies' combinations." People don't know what combinations are nowadays so it falls flat. I know I have been doing it for all those years, but I just think Scottish Country Dancing is such fun!

Jimmie: And, finally, what are your favourite dances?

Alice: Years ago it would have been The Reel of the 51st and Montgomeries' Rant, but nowadays there are so many. I also love Miss Allie Anderson.

Ross: The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. I remember seeing it in a demonstration at Pitlochry and I thought it was just wonderful. And my other favourite is The Robertson Rant.

(In the RSCDS we hear a lot about Jordanhill, but Alice trained as a teacher at Dunfermline College. It was founded as a training college for women students of PE in Dunfermline in 1905. In 1908 it was opened to men and a year later it was recognised by the Scottish Education Department as a central institution. In 1931 the male students transferred to Jordanhill and 'Dunf' became a women-only college again. During the war the staff and students transferred to Aberdeen when its buildings in Dunfermline were commandeered by the navy. In 1966 the college transferred to newly-built accommodation at Cramond, just outside Edinburgh. In 1986 it merged with Moray House College of Education and the following year the male students from Jordanhill transferred to the enlarged Moray House. In August 1998 Moray House became the Faculty of Education of the University of Edinburgh. The Cramond campus closed in 2001 and the department relocated to the Holyrood campus. The Edinburgh Branch used to hold its annual Weekend at the Cramond campus.)

Is anyone out there?

In the last newsletter I asked if people would write in with comments and suggestions about the dances in *Book 48*. Peter also asked for contributions. Since nobody responded, here is something from me. Recently, I had to recap *Monica's Way* at a dance. There are a lot of words on the page in *Book 48*. I reduced it to the following for recap purposes. So here it is for what it's worth just in case you have to recap it.

3s and 4s cross over on the second chord.

1 - 8 Ends cross right while middles set. Then three quarters of a double figure of 8 at each end.

9 - 16 New Middles set and rotate and finish the way they are going - up on the men's side, down on the ladies' side.

17 - 24 Starting on the diagonal from 1st woman's to 4th man's positions, the set and rotaters in tandem dance two consecutive half reels of 4, changing the lead on each corner.

25 - 32 The Tandem people dance into the middle, pass their partners by the right and curve into sidelines. All advance and retire.

Note that the tandem dancers either do two half reels down **or** two half reels up. No mixing and matching! Come on everyone, share your best ideas!

Jimmie

Members' Details

All members should have received a revised list of 'Members Contacts 2015'. Please note the following:

Mike Johnstone should be spelled Mike Johnston.

Sue Steele does not have an e-mail address. Her contact is 01782-6787411.

If any member without e-mail wishes to contact another member, please contact the Secretary for assistance.

Book of Festival Dances

Further to a suggestion at the AGM that we approach the RSCDS to put together a book of dances suitable for schools festivals, we have heard that the Society are planning another book of children's dances which will include some dances suitable for festivals.

What did you teach last week?

We asked a few teachers in different situations to let us know what they taught last week. Here are the replies.

Marjorie McRae from West Lothian taught an afternoon social class, with mixed ability, most with many years dancing experience and in the upper age bracket:

My Love's she's but a Lassie yet (round the room) walking warm up
Lassie come and dance with me
She's ower young tae marry yet
Oh whistle and I'll come tae ye my Lad
The Valentine
The Mairrit Man's Favourite

Allana Creighton from Perth taught her general class:

The Grassmarket Reel (as warm up)
Tribute to the Borders
Linnea's Strathspey
Rye Twist (repeated from previous week)
Granville Market
Festival Fling
The Swan & the Tay
The Homecoming Dance

Margo Priestley taught her Very Advanced class in Edinburgh:

The Baldovan Reel R32x4 Baldovan Leaflet
MacLeods Wedding R48x5 Bk48
The Wapenshaw J32x4 Drewry
Bannockburn 700 J40 Stirling Bk
The Celebration Strathspey S32x8 Bk43
Athens of the North S32x8 Edinburgh Bk

Are you a potential examiner?

We have received the following from Sue Porter, Convenor of Education and Training.

I am contacting the Teachers Associations to inform them that at the E&T meeting in February, it was decided to put a call out for experienced tutors to apply to be considered for the post of potential examiner. The advertisement recently appeared on the RSCDS website News section along with a link to the relevant documents. This will be followed by information in the March Branch mailing, ezine and notices to the Teachers Associations. Those who have tutored over the last 10 years will also be notified.

Applications have to be with Julia Parr in HQ by 15th May. This will allow the panel to meet and make recommendations to the E&T meeting on 13th June and onward to the Management Board on 28th June.

Letter to the editor

I read your last TAS newsletter with interest but with considerable dismay at the lack of concern and action regarding the state of the Society. Teaching has been a part of the fabric of the Society from the start and teachers must therefore "carry the can"!

A few points:

- Action must be taken even if it is wrong. To do nothing, I do not think is an option now. For example why was the last AGM in Perth like it always has been when there is so much scope to do something different? This year?
- A Manual of 252 pages is a joke.
- What we call "ceilidh dancing" (and reelers) must be embraced because they are doing country dancing.
- Warm-up dances are important and give scope for using something different: It was good to see Ian Brockbank using the *Swedish Masquerade*.
- The present teaching may be fine for existing (and ageing) members but is it 'fit for purpose' for possible new members?
- Has teaching been looked at by an independent committee? ie, not just teachers.
- Oluf makes some interesting points. Why have teachers not done more to prevent so many new books: the damage has already been done to Scottish dancing. Dancers certainly think there are too many dances and some years ago AGM delegates voted overwhelmingly for a review but there was a whitewash job and we were told the "the system had served us well"! At the last AGM who allowed the motion to include a Publications Committee, rather than a Members Services Committee, so that we would have had yet more new dances? Does the Society have to produce any books of new dances when there are many others eg, Foss and Drewry
- Yet again the Spring Fling is not in Scotland and is talking about new dances!
- Do dance programmes lack variety and texture because too many (and only) long-wise dances are being taught? Texture would be improved if dance programmes had perhaps a *Dunedin Festival Dance*, *La Tempete*, *Festival Interceltique* or *Come Under My Plaidie* in them and *Sheena's Saunter* would have been great in the Bell's Sports Centre!
- Why was there such a gap between the *First* and *Second Graded Books*?
- Do we require a Scottish Branch so that anyone interested in dancing, in any way, can join the Society but who would not fit into the present limiting Branch structure?
- Why have we so few males in dancing? Do we assume all dancers should wear ballet shoes? Do real Scotsmen dance *Strip the Willow* with skip change of step and wear white socks and ballet shoes as was shown last year in two films/videos. Were they teachers or who taught them?
- Is Scottish Dancing as danced in Scotland suffering from being part of a Society that thinks too much about being global? Why cannot we talk about Scottish Dancing, rather than separate Scottish Country and Ceilidh Dancing?
- Why are Scottish dancers from Scotland, not more evident on youtube? They could dance some dances on location!

Perhaps too much to think about but come on teachers, sort yourselves out and DO something!

Regards
John D. Carswell