

**ORAL INTERVIEW
WITH
ANDREW KERR
EAST LOTIAN BRANCHI**

RSCDS Oral History Project

East Lothian Local Association

Interview with Andrew Kerr 22nd November 2016

I was born in Scotland. My father was in the RAF, so we moved around quite a lot when I was growing up. After graduation, I joined the RAF and remained in that job for 37 years. On retirement 6 years ago, we moved back to Scotland. My wife, Sandy, is a keen dancer, so we joined the club at Spott, which is nearby. This is a small club with no teacher. We found it to be fun, so we looked for a taught class. We joined the class at Oldhamstocks where John Wilkinson, then Chairman of RSCDS was the teacher. He made the learning fun. The first Country Dance we went to was in Gullane. I was very worried as I have 2 left feet! However, we received a friendly welcome and the dancers were very tolerant of our mistakes and inexperience. We have gone to many East Lothian Branch dances ever since.

We also joined the class in Eyemouth. So now we go to a class twice a week and also to some of the Borders Branch dances in Duns.

2 years ago, we went to Winter School in Pitlochry. The teachers were Jimmie Hill and William Williamson.. We received excellent tuition and this boosted our confidence.

I joined East Lothian Branch 4 years ago and 2 years ago, I was elected onto the Committee. I joined the Branch because I wanted to get more involved, to go to more dances and to 'give something back'

My wife is a 'natural' dancer. I am not and I struggled to start with. However, I have been given a lot of encouragement. I think that if you get the timing right, then you can learn and improve as you go along. The most challenging part for me is to get the steps (pas-de-basque) right. You can visualise the formations.

Scottish Country Dancing fits in well with other aspects of my life – golf, swimming, language studies, computer studies.

For me, there are 3 key characteristics of Scottish Country Dancing:

1. Social We've met lots of people and made new friends.
2. Exercise - it keeps you active
3. Mental stimulation – trying to remember all the dances!

Regarding the question 'How do you think the Branch fits into the local community' this is difficult to answer. East Lothian is a largely rural area, so it is difficult to define 'the local community'. People have to travel 20 or more miles to dances.

As I have only been a Branch member for a relatively short time, it is difficult for me to see the effect of any changes. In East Lothian, there are people who go to the clubs and classes, but don't go to

the dances. In order to counter the feeling that these people were lacking in confidence, the Branch recently started, in addition to calling all dances, 'walking through' 2 dances in each programme. I'm not sure whether or not this will increase attendance.

What does the future hold for Scottish Country Dancing? Locally, the numbers participating are decreasing and the remaining dancers are getting older. We are failing to attract younger members. Ceilidh dancing seems to appeal to many younger people, so maybe if Scottish Country Dancing was viewed as a progression from Ceilidh Dancing, we would get some people in their 40's and 50's joining. It would certainly be easier for those who had done Ceilidh Dancing to learn Scottish Country Dancing. It seems a shame that it's not an essential part of the School curriculum. If children could learn Scottish Country Dancing at school, if they have a gap until they are older, they have some idea of the steps, timing, basic formations.

How important is the music for you? Good musicians can lead you through a dance - better than CD's.