



Dances from the Collections of



**Mary
Isdale
MacNab**



Volume I

Music by the Muriel Johnstone Ensemble



Mrs MacNab (nee Mary Isdale) was born in Govan and emigrated to Canada in 1907. She taught highland dancing and, encouraged by some old highland ladies in Vancouver to learn some of the dances they knew as children, collected dances outside the standard competition repertoire. Most of her collecting, which was mainly from visiting teachers, was done in the 'twenties but she collected the Hebridean weaving lilt as late as 1946.

Many of her dances were step-dances, including sword-dances and a magnificent dirk-dance. Others, including many on these CDs, were the sort that a highland teacher would display at his or her annual concert, and once Mrs MacNab's school became established she used them for her own concerts, reconstructing them from her brief notes, her memory, and her feel for the kind of movement that is a valid part of Scottish tradition.

These dances were for various numbers of couples, mostly in square or longwise formation, but using three sides of a square in some, half a square in one, and in McNeil of Barra a formation that represents a ship. This dance is clearly a rediscovery of An long Bharrach (the Barra ship), thought to have been lost. The dances vary from some with plenty of highland stepping, through The Braes of Balquhider, with a sporadic highland schottische and the Earl of Errol's reel with only balance, polka and pas-de-basque, to the stately waltz-quadrille Kelvingrove.

In 1948 Mrs MacNab taught four of her dances at the RSCDS summer school, adding much-appreciated variety to country-dancers' repertoire. The RSCDS published them and others later, ending with the books from which the dances in these CDs are taken.

Mrs MacNab died in 1966, leaving many gaps that will not be filled, but her dances will remain a fitting memorial.

Hugh Thurston

The dances on this C.D. are those contained in Volume 1 of the books "Scottish Dances collected by Mary Isdale MacNab" published by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. The following changes have been made to the music as published in the book: Because He Was a Bonnie Lad features the tune of the same name followed by "Marchioness of Huntly" as published; Mrs Mackinnon Corry is played as the original tune for "Miss Fiona MacRae of Conchra" rather than "Banks of Clyde" which is also the published tune for "Brig o' Doon" in Volume 2. The music is arranged for different groupings of instruments giving a rich variety of musical colour. One of the highlights on this C.D. is the Puirt a beul of Gillin Anderson for the Hebridean Weaving Lilt which provides a rare opportunity for many people to experience one of Scotland's oldest traditions.

1. **BECAUSE HE WAS A BONNIE LAD** Medley (64S + 48R)
Because He Was a Bonnie Lad; Marchioness of Huntly; The 21st of October
2. **THE BRAES OF BALQUHIDDER** Strathspey (128 bars)
Mrs. Russell of Blackhall; Braes of Balquhiddier
3. **THE EARL OF ERROL'S REEL** Jig (200 bars)
Mrs McMillan's Quadrille
4. **HEBRIDEAN WEAVING LILT** (intro + 112 bars + exit-fade)
Broachan Laoimh: 'S ioma rud tha dhidh orm
5. **KELVINGROVE** Strathspey (152 bars)
Miss Ann Lothian's Strathspey; Mr. Murray; Lieut. Col. Baillie of Leys
6. **LAMONT OF INVERYNE** Reel (208 bars)
Original; Mrs. Blair of Avontoun's Favourite; Kempshott Hunt
7. **MACDONALD OF SLEAT** Jig (120 bars)
Dovecote Park
8. **MCLAINE OF LOCHBUIE** Reel (176 bars)
Callum Beg; Lady Mackenzie of Coull; The Parks of Fochabers
9. **MACLEOD OF HARRIS** Reel (144 bars)
The Bride; Dornoch Links
10. **MCNICHOL OF THE BLACK ISLE** Reel (104 bars)
Original; Dunnechan
11. **MISS FIONA MACRAE OF CONCHRA** Strathspey (64 bars)
Mrs. Mackinnon Corry; The Brig of Ballater
12. **ST. ANDREW'S NICHT** Jig (4x48 bars)
Original; Coupar Angus Jigg; The New Water Kettle
13. **THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK** Strathspey (4 bars intro+72 bars)
Duke of Gordon