


Dance On!

A group of four people, two adults and two children, are captured in a joyful dance pose in a snowy mountain setting. The woman on the left wears a green jacket, the man in the center a grey and black jacket, and the two children in the foreground wear a bright orange jacket and a blue jacket. They are all wearing winter hats and sunglasses. The background features snow-covered evergreen trees and a mountain peak under a clear sky.

Happy New Year!

**Dunfermline Dancing • What Jeannie Did
RSCDS AGM • Dancing in Russia
Dance Showcase • Strathspé Away**

**R.R.P. £2.25
Issue 44**

RSCDS AGM & Ball



*The Band listens to Margaret**



*Photographs © Streaming Pictures or *Pia Walker*



*Mary O'Brien from Hawaii & Ann Taylor from Scotland**



*International Branch Members**



Take The Floor

2 January: Look back at 2009,
Bands in Session and CD Releases

9 January: Iain MacPhail & Friends
Pay Tribute to Andrew Rankine

16 January: Ian Hutson SDB
Guests – The Calum Nicolson Trio

23 January: Marian Anderson SDB

30 January: Live from Celtic Connections, Glasgow
Tom Orr SDB

Saturdays 19.05-21.00 Sundays 13.05-15.00
BBC Radio Scotland 92-95 FM 810MW Freeview Digital 719
www.bbc.co.uk/radioscotland

Dance On!

To contact us
Telephone: 01334-654 427
Website: www.danceon.co.uk

7 Tarvit Gardens, Cupar, Fife, Scotland KY15 5BT

Executive Editor: Pia Walker
E-mail: danceon@intamail.com

Editor: Karin Ingram

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Front cover photograph, *Dancing in the Snow*

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RSCDS AGM

By Sue Petyt

Our trip to the AGM

"Have we got everything?" I am standing by the car looking at all the items we have managed to squeeze in. There are posters, leaflets, CDs, DVDs, cameras, tripod, oh and some clothes and other essential items for dancing and the voting papers for the Queensland Branch for which we are delegates.

With everything loaded we set off on the drive to Perth, which, apart from some road works was trouble free, and arrived at lunchtime going straight to the Toby Carvery for a hearty meal and to meet up with whoever else from the dancing world was there. The Toby Carvery, next to The Isle of Skye Hotel, is usually full of dancers at the AGM weekend and this year was no exception, so lunch lasted some time as we caught up with old friends and met new ones. Eventually we drove off to book in at our hotel and get ready for the Ball.

Our hotel was also full of dancers, some of whom we had met there the previous year, so getting the car unloaded and into our room took some time, well, we had to catch up with the news from everyone!

Finally we were on our way to the Ball, always an exciting moment as you walk in and find yet more friends, lots of people can be heard saying, "Oh, I haven't seen you for ages, we must have a dance." We



always try to dance with people we don't get to dance with regularly, or people we haven't met before, after all, that is what Scottish Country Dancing is about, being sociable. Unfortunately I wasn't able to dance this year due to a foot injury, so I had to sit and watch, which was very frustrating, however, on both nights the bands (David Cunningham and Jim Lindsay) played really well and listening to the music was very enjoyable.

On Saturday morning we were up early and at the Bell Sports Centre setting up our table. Streaming Pictures were having a closing down sale and we were launching next year's big event "Dance

Scottish for Pudsey" which will take place in Dumfries on 23rd October 2010. The afternoon will be a non-competitive dance festival in fancy dress with a Country Dance in the evening (see www.dancescottishforpudsey.org for details). Pudsey Bear will be making an appearance and it is likely the BBC will be there too.

We grabbed a sandwich for lunch and registered for the AGM, handing in the Queensland voting papers. Alastair MacFadyen chaired the meeting efficiently and with good humour. The usual message from the Queen was read out, and Scrolls of Honour presented.

The scroll recipients who were present were
Dorothy Hamilton
Isabelle Macpherson
Barbara Peel
Jean Sim

And those who were not present were
Jean Conway
Patricia Coyle
Geoffrey Selling
Elizabeth (Bunty) Wilson

The minutes of the last meeting were approved and update reports given by each of the Convenors.





It was reassuring to discover that, after the last couple of years of problems with finances the current General Purposes and Finance Committee have managed to get us back in the black, not by much, but the position looks a lot better than it did a couple of years ago which is fantastic, for although many of us can be critical of the RSCDS at times, we really do want it to survive and flourish. There was some discussion over the accounts which I can only describe as being of a "technical" nature between accountants, and the representatives of the Glasgow Branch in particular did not seem happy with them, however they were accepted by the vast majority of the delegates.

The results of elections to the Board and other Committees were announced, there are still some vacancies as there were not enough nominations to fill all the posts, which either means people will have to be seconded or those who are there will have to work extra hard. It was agreed that the membership fee would remain at £15.00, but that it would be a standing item on the AGM agenda to be reviewed every year.

After the end of the formal business it was time for coffee and a chat before going back to the hotel to change for the evening dance. Even at this stage of the weekend we were still seeing people whom we had missed so far, despite the fact they, like us, had been in Perth since the start of the weekend. As I wasn't dancing I sat and took some photographs on the Saturday evening as well as talking to other people who were

not dancing every dance. Then it was back to the hotel for a drink and chat in the bar with the other dancers at the hotel.

Sunday morning we were at the International Branch meeting, as usual we were greeted with Bucks Fizz and a warm welcome. Despite it being just after breakfast there was a superb spread of cheeses, meats, crisps, chocolate and all sorts of other delicious nibbles which we attempted valiantly to eat, well, we didn't want to upset anyone by refusing!

The group discussed various things including the possibility of videoing the AGM and putting it on You Tube so that those who cannot make the meeting can at least see what has happened (live streaming is probably a step too far at the moment) and the fact that Headquarters could e-mail members directly instead of relying on secretaries to pass on information.

Then, with no need for lunch as we had eaten too many nibbles, we set off home, having had another enjoyable AGM weekend even though I hadn't been able to dance. Accommodation is already booked for next year – see you there!



As Sue said in her article – a good time was had by all. The bands were fantastic and it is always good to catch up with kent and new faces. I'm sure that all the B&B and hotel owners in Perth know that RSCDS dancers are definitely not a boring lot – and that we had odd sleep patterns. Certainly my B&B had the usual pyjama-party upstairs and downstairs the usual "drop-in for a drink" party going to the early hours.

It is also good to see that Sue and Iain's pictures are a true picture of the various people attending – young and old, as I did hear some murmurs in the various corners about the official photographer concentrating mostly on the young set found near the stage – yes, I did hear the word "ageism" being uttered. Of course young people do look good on photos – usually slim, pretty, with hair, but we must not forget that SCD-dancers comes in all shapes and sizes and it is for all.

Pia



Dance Showcase

"All start with a right-hand star, back with the left, but not too far." So started this progressive new Barn Dance to warm up the dancers for an evening of celebration in the sheer joy of dancing. Twelve dance groups converged on Inverleith Church Hall in Edinburgh on Friday, 6th November for a night of demonstrations interspersed with a Ceilidh Dance or two and an opportunity to venture into another group's dance style. If any other part of Scotland would like to try this experiment we can warmly endorse it. Three hours of camaraderie and fun with like-minded spirits on a chill winter night can't be bad!

The groups comprised (in alphabetical order) Appalachian Clog "Kick the Cat", Balkan Folk Dance Group Zdravets, Edinburgh International Folk Dance, The Greek Dance Group, Historic Dance and musicians "Gaita", Irish Set Dance, Lanark and Carluke "Come Ceilidh" Dance, Playford Dance "The Edinburgh Assembly", Rapper Swords "Mons Meg", Scottish Country Dancers, Inverleith Scottish Country Dance Group, West Lothian Independent Dancers and Scottish Step Dancers.

All groups were invited to bring along flyers advertising their



details, which proved useful for potential new members. I still have flyers from all groups and shall be happy to supply information if requested.

The evening commenced with a welcoming glass of wine, then we started promptly at 7.30pm. The night went at a cracking pace to make sure we could fit in every group, as each was invited to show two dances, the second one with an option of audience participation. At interval time

we were indebted to an able-bodied team of helpers who swiftly set out the savoury and sweet treats and organised the teas and coffees, followed by a swift clear-up - then on with the dance.

The Assembly dancers, Gaita, Mons Meg and West Lothian Independent Dancers brought with them their own musicians and they were splendid and much appreciated by the company. Those of us less fortunate in the musician line made do with recorded music although the Appalachian Cloggers had voice accompaniment by their resident singer. Musicians /Singer were invited to bring CDs for sale.

We did have a paying audience to help cover cost of hall hire as performers were free, but dancers are obviously a very generous lot so with the help of a raffle, book sale and quiz we were able to send £350.30 to Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland and still have a fair amount to add to that figure when the quiz sales are completed.





Scots Snap, Strathspeys and Mr Angus Cumming

By Finlay Forbes

"The strathspey is unique to Scotland" is one of those pieces of received wisdom that is probably true but surprisingly difficult to prove. As far as I am aware, no other nation has a dance or form of music called the strathspey wrought entirely from its native musical idioms although some countries such as Hungary and what was once called Bohemia have tunes that display surprisingly similar characteristics.

A few countries such as Canada and New Zealand may have brought forth strathspey tunes composed by their own home grown musicians but such tunes are undoubtedly descended from a stock of melodies imported from Scotland and transplanted by successive waves of immigrants seeking new lives in foreign climes while still wishing to retain links with the old country.

Throughout history, the exile's dream of home has proved to be a powerful stimulus to the muses. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept" has been in some form of print for millennia even if the superb English version of it in the King James Bible has only been around for a few centuries.

Before I unwittingly start a flood of outraged correspondence, I shall wittingly acknowledge that some pretty decent strathspeys have been composed by people with not one drop of Scots blood in their ancestral veins. These tunes, however good they may be, are not relevant to this particular thesis because they are clearly written in the style of an already established form of Scottish music and as such can only tell us about the effect of the tradition rather than its cause.

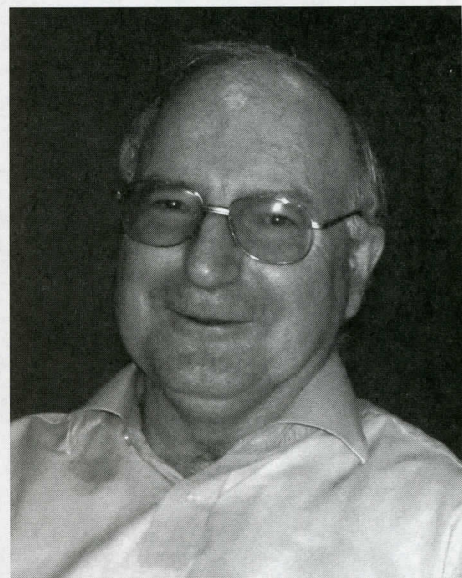
The exact origins of the strathspey are difficult to establish with any confidence given that most standard theories on the subject

are a long way from being conclusive or in certain cases even vaguely convincing.

One body of opinion, much cherished by the more cloistered members of the fiddling community ascribes the credit for the strathspey style to Angus Cumming, a fiddler from Grantown on Spey.

Nobody seems to know very much about Mr Cumming other than that he lived and moved and had his being in Grantown on Spey at some time during the eighteenth century and that the Glasgow music seller James Aird published "A Collection of Strathspeys or Old Highland Reels by Angus Cumming at Grantown in Strathspey" somewhere around 1780. Aird's title page advertises assorted other musical wares and services including a scheme for renting musical instruments but in common with so many similar collections of the time gives nothing as informative or useful as a year of publication. 1780 is probably a watermark date, which places it at the earliest possible end of the range of possibilities. The stiff heavy paper used in the eighteenth century for publications of this kind was watermarked with the year of its manufacture. This far on in history, the results of such a practice often provide the best available dating mechanism for publications that predate modern copyright laws.

None of the tunes in Cumming's collection cites him as composer. If Cumming did compose any of the tunes in the book, he made no claims to their authorship. What Cumming appeared to offer the music buying public of the time was a collection of established tunes edited and arranged in a way that reflected his style of playing them. At first glance the contents appear more unusual than they actually are in that a number of well-



known tunes carry unfamiliar titles. "The Grant's Rant" is a heavily dotted version of "Green Grow the Rashers O" and "The Dutchess of Hamiltons Reel" bears a remarkable resemblance to "The Ruffian's Rant" sometimes known by its associated song title "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch". (For the record, Cumming always spelt reel with a double l at the end.) In using these apparently unusual titles it seems unlikely that Cumming was trying to pass off old tunes as new. He was more likely to be using the titles by which knew them. After all, naming old Scottish dance tunes is an exact science only to those who have never bothered to apply much time to its study. It is one of those fields of research where an increase in knowledge more often than not leads to a decrease in certainty. In the eighteenth century not only was plagiarism rife but composers sometimes renamed their tunes to please their current patrons or even to conceal the fact that they were padding out their latest collections with previously published material.

The most interesting feature of Cumming's collection and the one on which his status as

the originator of the strathspey is based, is the prevalence of dotted notes in his versions of familiar tunes.

One of the most ear catching characteristics of traditional dancing strathspeys (as distinct from tunes hijacked to accompany dances using strathspey steps) is the use of dotted notes, particularly Scots Snap in the form of a semiquaver followed by a dotted quaver. Scots Snap gives music a jerky and slightly syncopated feel by placing the longer note after the beat.

In spite of any aural impressions that may suggest otherwise, most strathspeys make far more use of the "long short" (dotted quaver followed by semiquaver) form of rhythmic disruption and interpolate Scots Snap relatively rarely. Cumming's collection is unusually interesting on this point because although the tunes in it feature dotted notes a plenty, Scots Snap is very rare and certainly far rarer than in modern ballroom versions of old strathspeys. In some tunes such as the aforementioned Grant's Rant, it does not appear at all. All his dotted pairs of notes in this tune are "long short" as they would be in an Irish Hornpipe. In one very odd twist, Cumming's version of "Lord Seaforth's Reel" shows a complete absence of dotting. Most Country Dancers these days will know this tune through RSCDS Book 14 where it appears in heavily dotted form as the original tune for the strathspey "Jimmy's Fancy". The Society's use of the tune in this context is an interesting anachronism. Book 14 gives the source of Jimmy's Fancy as Thomson's 1751 collection of Country Dances and the source of the tune as "Here from Surenne". John Thomas Surenne's collection "Dance Music of Scotland" was not published until 1852. What did the birlers and skirlers use for Jimmy's Fancy back in the days of powdered wigs and knee

breeches? We can only assume that it was not Lord Seaforth's Reel or even Lord Seaforth's Strathspey in the unlikely event that such a tune existed back then.

Does all this prove that Angus Cumming was the progenitor of the strathspey style as we know it? The style of his writing, which presumably reflects the style of his playing, leaves the question open. Playing through his collection with its sprinkling of slightly wistful modal melodies, flattened sevenths and softish rhythms evokes the sense of a bygone era rather than the birth of a new one. To add further confusion there is the matter of dates.

Robert Bremner's fourteen part collection of Scots fiddle music was completed by about 1761, nearly two decades before the appearance of Cumming's collection yet Bremner's collection includes a number of strathspeys some of which also appear with remarkably few differences in Cumming's collection.

There is always the possibility that Bremner collected the strathspeys from Cumming before Cumming had the opportunity to publish them but this seems improbable given that the little information we have about Angus Cumming suggests that he was born at around the time when Bremner published the first part of his collection and would therefore have been about ten years old when the last instalment left the presses. He may have been some form of not quite Mendelssohnian wunderkind but the evidence is unconvincing.

The theory that Scots Snap is an attempt by fiddlers to replicate the effect of the grace notes played on the Great Highland Bagpipe is vaguely plausible but on balance unlikely given that even the very early fiddle tunes in which Scots Snap appears have a compass well beyond that of the open chanter of the bagpipe

and are clearly written with the characteristics of the fiddle in mind. Some eighteenth century tunes were undoubtedly written in the style of bagpipe melodies but these appear to date from the time when strathspeys were well established in the repertoire rather than in its earlier phases. At this stage it is worth noting that Scots Snap is not unique either to the strathspey or to Scotland. Joseph Haydn was using it long before he was introduced to Scottish music through his arrangements for William Napier and George Thomson and Haydn's great contemporary Mozart also exhibited a fondness for it. In all probability, these two musical Titans knew it as Lombardic Rhythm.

Scots Snap also features in the Hungarian inspired music of Zoltán Kodály, the Czech inspired music of Antonin Dvorak and even the overtly Germanic late romantic works of Johannes Brahms (although the tempo of the snaps in the finale of his second symphony makes them sound more like grace notes than anything else).

Perhaps the desire for rhythmic distortion lies so deep in the human psyche that it transcends nationality and language. Maybe Scots Snap and the strathspey style into which it was absorbed were not "invented" by anybody - they just emerged by common consent and practice.

What is clear is that the strathspey style evolved over the years into something markedly different from but clearly owing a debt to its earlier manifestations in the collections of Bremner and Cumming. The truth must be out there as they say but so far the truth has proved irritatingly coy about putting in an appearance. In any case, the origins of the strathspey are less important than its continuing existence as a living musical form. Let us hope that it continues to delight our ears and toes for many generations.

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances Regular Weekly Events

Date	Town	Hall	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Comments
Every Saturday	Fife, Largo Ward	Largo Ward Village Hall	t.b.c.	8pm -11pm No Bar	£3.50 (tea)	Door	Different bands each week.
Every Sunday Most	Fife, Cupar	Old Parish Church Hall, Kirk Wynd	-	2pm-5pm	£3 (tea)	Door (Owen & Catherine Harrison) 01383 415 142	Ceilidh, Old Time & Social Dance Club
Sundays Every Tuesday	East Kilbride	Girl Guide Hall, Dundas Place	-	7.30 -10pm	£2 (tea)	Door or tel : - 01355 230 134 or 245 052	Ceilidh & Old Time Club
Every Wednesday	Humbie, East Lothian	Village Hall	- (Tuition Given)	7.30-10pm	£3 B.Y.O.B.	Door (Owen & Catherine Harrison) 01383 415 142	Ceilidh, Old Time and Social Dance Club
	Newtongrange	Dean Tavern	Live Music	7.30-10pm	£3/£1.50	Door (Jennifer Cowie)	Ceilidh & Old Time Club
	Midlem	Village Hall	Live Music	8pm-10pm	£2 (tea)	Door 01835 870 244	Old Time Class (G. B. Scott)
	Glasgow	St Andrews in Square	Live Music	8pm -9.30	£5 Bar	Door (Tricia Matthews)	Ceilidh & Old Time Class
Every Thursday	Penicuik	Town Hall	-	8pm-9.30	£2.90/ £1.50	Door (Annabel Oates) 01968 672 631	Ceilidh Class

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances January 2009

Date	Town	Hall	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Comments
1 st	Glencarse	Village Hall	Johnny Duncan	7.30-10pm	£2.50	01738 860 331	Set & Couples Dances
	Foulden	Village Hall	Dod Hutchison	8pm-12mn	£5 [No Bar]	01289 386 400	Supper - Soft Drinks available
8 th	Irvine	Volunteer Rooms	Colin Garvin	7.30-11.30	£6 BYOB	Door	Ayrshire Ceilidh Club
	Penicuik	St Mungo's Ch Hall	Sandy Nixon	7.30-11.30	£5 No bar T	0131 660 1276	Wednesday Dance Club
	Oban	Gathering Hall	Charlie Kirkpatrick	8pm -	£15 Buffet	01631 563 914	Acc. & Fiddle Club dance
9 th	Kinellar	Comm. Hall	Garioch Blend	7pm-11pm	£6 T (Raffle)	01224 713 674	Phone for Ticket [Charity]
	Dumbarton	St Patrick's Hall	Stuart McKeown	8pm -	£8 T (Raffle)	01389 842 034	Annual Charity Dance
11 th	Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre	Live Music	8pm-10.30	£2/50p	01856 873 534	Old Time/Ceilidh/Country
15 th	Banchory	British Legion	Johnny Duncan	Ticket	£6 [Stovies]	01330822 462	Bowling Club Funds
16 th	Beaully	Phipps Hall	Colin Donaldson	7.30pm	£.50	Door	Old Time Dance
	Strathaven	Ballgreen Hall	Jimmy Lindsay	7.30-11.30	£6 supper	01357 520 900	Avondale Ceilidh Society BYOB
	Partick	Burgh Halls	Colin MacDonald	8pm-11.30	£7 per month	Door	Highlanders Club £45 year
17 th	Montrose	Park Hotel	Scott Band	2pm-5pm	Door	01241 879 487	A & F Club ceilidh
22 nd	Foulden	Village Hall	Ewan Galloway	8pm-12mn	£5 [No Bar]	01289 386 400	Supper - Soft Drinks available
25 th	Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre	Live Music	8pm-10.30	£2/50p	01856 873 534	Old Time/Ceilidh/Country
27 th	Dufftown	Memorial Hall	-	7.30-10pm		01542 887 616	Monthly Social
28 th	Windygates	Greig Institute	Bruce Lindsay	7.30-10.30	£3.50	01333 351 127	Monthly Dance-Tea & Eats
29 th	Helensburgh	Commodore Inn	Marian Anderson	8pm-12.30	£7 Bar	07766 390 570	Highlanders - Dance
	Glasgow	City Chambers	Caledonian Fiddle O.	7.30pm -	£10 T	0141 248 9972	Scottish Epilepsy Initiative
	Peebles	Ex-Servicemen's Club	Johnny Duncan	8pm-11.30	£5 Door	01968 679 583	Old Time/Ceilidh/Set

Scottish Country Dances January 2009

Date	Town	Venue	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Remarks
Dundee (Starts 11 th)		St Andrews Church	Jimmy Boal	7.30pm	£2	01382 509 103	King Street Hall Every Monday
8 th	Helensburgh	Victoria Halls	D. Cunningham	7.30pm	£5	01436 670 631	Members Dance
	Kirkpatrick	Victoria Hall	Stuart Adamson	7.30pm	£6	Sue Petyt	Kirkpatrick Fleming Dancers
	Scone	RDM Institute	Jim Berry	7.30pm	£5.50	01337 840 313	Charity - Society for the Blind
9 th	Stirling	St Ninian's Hall	Gordon Shand	7.30pm	£5.50	01786 461 275	Stirling Castle Club
	Edinburgh	Pollock Halls	James Coutts	6.45pm	£30	0131 447 1645	Trinity Club - Annual Ball
	Penrith	Ullswater Comm College	Neil Barron	7pm	£10	01768 881 359	Penrith Club
11 th	Stirling	Albert Hall	Lothian	7.30pm	annual	01259 742 560	Martice Club
15 th	Ersrine	Bridge Hotel	Ian Muir Sound	7.30pm	£23	0141 942 7519	Glasgow Branch Ball
	Lockerbie	Academy	Colin Dewar	8pm	£7	01387 810 423	Hightae Club Annual Dance
16 th	Blairgowrie	Town Hall	Colin Dewar	7.30pm	£5	[Bring & Share]	Perth Charity Dance - Raffle
22 nd	Stirling	Albert Halls	Marian Anderson	7.30pm	£16	01786 822 853	Branch Burns Night
23 rd	Stirling	St Ninian's Hall	Marian Anderson	7.30pm	£5.50	01786 461 275	Stirling Castle Club
	Edinburgh	St Serf's Ch. Hall	Roger Crook	7.30pm	£8/£6	0131 447 1645	Trinity Club (note venue)
25 th	Stirling	Albert Hall	Lothian	7.30pm	annual	01259 742 560	Martice Club
29 th	Ednam	Village Hall	Gordon Brown			01450 371503	Kelso Club
	Troon	Walker Hall	Ian Muir	7.30pm	?	01292 315 558	Branch Dance

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances							
February 2009							
Date	Town	Hall	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Comments
6 th	Penicuik	St Mungo's Ch Hall	Gary Donaldson	7.30-11.30	£5 No bar T	01721 723 468	Old Time & few set dances
	Linlithgow	Academy	Last Tram to Auchen.	8pm-1am	£12.50 T	01506 844 844	Young Farmers Dance
8 th	Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre	Live Music	8pm-10.30	£2/50p	01856 873 534	Old Time/Ceilidh/Country
12 th	Irvine	Volunteer Rooms	Donny & Dianne	7.30-11.30	£6 BYOB	Door	Ayrshire Ceilidh Club
	Penicuik	St Mungo's Ch Hall	Steven Carcary	7.30-11.30	£5 No bar T	0131 660 1276	Wednesday Dance Club
	Foulden	Village Hall	Jock Borthwick	8pm-12mn	£5 [No Bar]	01289 303 400	Supper Dance - Soft Drinks
13 th	Strathaven	Ballgreen Hall	t.b.a.	7.30-11.30	£6 supper	01357 520 900	Avondale Ceilidh Society BYOB
	Glencaple	Barbour Hall	John Douglas	7.30-11.30	£6	01387 265 660	Dumfries SCD Old Time Dance
19 th	Glasgow	City Chambers	Billy Ferguson	7.30-11pm	£6 Bar T	01292 471 848	SYHA Ceilidh
20 th	East Kilbride	Calderwood Hall	David Wilson	7.30-11.30	£6 supper	01355 230 134	Highlanders - BYOB
	Partick	Burgh Halls	Susan MacFadyen	8pm-11.30	£7 per month	Door	Highlanders Club £45 year
21 st	Montrose	Park Hotel	Rob McCombie	2pm-5pm	Door	01241 879 487	A & F Club ceilidh
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24 th	Dufftown	Memorial Hall	-	7.30-10pm		01542 887 616	Monthly Social
25 th	Windygates	Greig Institute	Bruce Lindsay	7.30-10.30	£3.50	01333 351 127	Monthly Dance-Tea & Eats
26 th	Helensburgh	Commodore Inn	Alan & Jan Roy	8pm-12.30	£7 Bar	07766 390 570	Highlanders - Cabaret Dance
	Peebles	Ex-Servicemen's Club	Ewan Galloway	8pm-11.30	£5 Door	01968 679 583	Old Time/Ceilidh/Set
27 th	Pumpherstoun	Village Hall	Gordon Pattullo	7.30-11.30	£5 (Supper)	01506 205 051	or 01506 417 512 - (BYOB)

Scottish Country Dances							
February 2009							
Date	Town	Venue	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Remarks
	Dundee	St Andrews Church	Jimmy Boal	7.30pm	£2	01382 509 103	King Street Hall Every Monday
5 th	Bearsden	Burgh Hall	Nicol McLaren	7.30pm	£7	0141 563 9637	New Kilpatrick Club Dance
	Peebles	Burgh Hall	Marian Anderson			01450 371 503	Peebles Club
6 th	Stirling	St Ninian's Hall	James Coutts	7.30pm	£5.50	01786 461 275	Stirling Castle Club
	Dundee	St Andrews Church	C.D.'s	7.30pm	£4	01382 509 103	Charity Dance
	Helensburgh	St Joseph's Hall	Andrew Warren	7pm	£7/£5	01436 670 631	Family Ceilidh
	Dalston	Caldew School	David Cunningham	(Irene Bennett)		01228 546 936	RSCDS Carlisle Day School
8 th	Stirling	Albert Hall	Lothian	7.30pm	annual	01259 742 560	Martice Club
12 th	Jedburgh	Kenmore Hall	Marian Anderson			01450 371 503	Jedburgh Club
	Dumfries	High School	David Cunningham	Ball		01387 265 815	Dumfries RSCDS
13 th	Edinburgh	Academy Jnr. Sch.	Ian MacPhail	7.30pm	£8/£6	0131 447 1645	Trinity Club
15 th	Aberfoyle	Rob Roy Motel	Recorded	Daily	£100	01465 811 252	Resident Dance Holiday
Daily until 19 th with optional daytime classes & evening dance						(George Ralton)	Must be pre booked
19 th	Helensburgh	Victoria Halls	Kenny Thomson	8pm	£10	01436 670 631	Charity Dance - Mary's Meals
	Troon	Walker Hall	t.b.a.	7.30pm	?	01292 315 558	Branch Dance
20 th	Stirling	St Ninian's Hall	Alan Ross	7.30pm	£5.50	01786 461 275	Stirling Castle Club
	Dalbeattie	Town Hall	Kenny Thomson	7.30pm	£7.50	01556 611 784	Kippford Group
21 st	Glasgow	t.b.a.	t.b.a.	7.30pm		None to date	Glasgow Uni. Students Ball
22 nd	Stirling	Albert Hall	Lothian	7.30pm	annual	01259 742 560	Martice Club
26 th	Melrose	Corn Exchange	t.b.a.			01450 371 503	Melrose Reel Club
27 th	Edinburgh	Academy Jnr. Sch.	Sandy Nixon	7.30pm	£8/£6	0131 447 1645	Trinity Club



The Dance Diary Please send all information to: Alasdair Graham, First House, 1 First Avenue, Dumbarton, Dunbartonshire G82 2PU
or e-mail: alsadair.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

Please note that the Dance Diary website address is now www.dancediary.info/

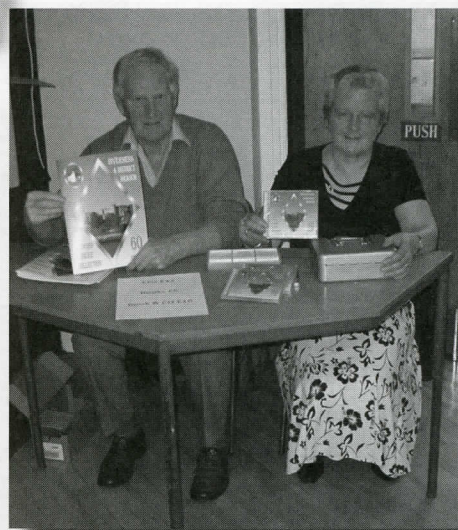
CD Launch



Welcoming our Guests: Liz Mackenzie, Kate Gray, Roderick McLachlan, Alex Gray



Pat Clark



Roger Aiton & Marlene Munro, Inverness Branch members on the sales table at the launch



Drummond Cook (Band Leader / Composer) and Alex Gray



Mrs. Helen Allan, Edith Cook, Drummond Cook, Eric Allan, Ena and Bill Brian (Fine Blend)



Roderick McLachlan & Alex Gray

Cauldeen School, Inverness on the 30th October was the venue for the launch of Inverness & District Branch of the RSCDS's Diamond Jubilee Collection of Dances Book and accompanying CD recorded by Colin Dewar and his Scottish Dance Band to celebrate 60 years of dancing in the Inverness area. The Branch was pleased to welcome for the occasion Alex Gray, Chairman of the RSCDS and his wife Kate. Among the other guests were Eric Allan, Bill Brian and Drummond Cook who composed original tunes for some of the dances. Also present on the night was Branch Member Pat Clark who arranged the piano music for the book. On stage for the dancing was, of course, Colin Dewar's Band.

Home to Scotland

32-bar reel for 3 couples in a 4-couple set.

Bars

1-2 1st & 2nd couples set advancing and face up.

3-8 1st & 2nd couples cast down two steps behind 3rd couple, 2nd couple leading, and turn outward to cast up, 1st couple leading. 1st couple dance up to 2nd place and half turn, right hand, into promenade hold facing down, as 2nd couple dance up to the top.

9-16 1st couple passing 3rd man right shoulder to begin, dance a full diagonal reel of three with him and 2nd lady.

17-24 1st couple face set to 3rd man, set to each other, set to 2nd lady and release hands to set each one to own 1st corner.

25-32 1st couple dance a diagonal reel of four with 1st corner people, finishing in 2nd place on own sides.

Repeat having passed a couple.

Devised by Martin Sheffield, 2009.



The Forthill Four Square

40 bar reel for 2 couples in 4 couple longwise sets.

Bars

1-4 First Lady dances right hands across with 2nd Couple

5-8 Second Lady dances left hands across with the men

9-12 Second Man dances right hands across with 1st Couple

13-16 First Man dances left hands across with the ladies

17-24 1st couple gallop down the middle and up.

25-28 1st couple cast round to swing/birl/turn right hand on the sidelines to end with 1st couple below the 2nd couple.

29-32 Both couples swing/birl/turn their partners right hand.

33-40 4 hands round and back

NOTE: Can be danced also as a Square set with 4 people or for 2 couples in a longwise set of 3 couples where bar 25-36 is danced as a basket by followed by a circle round to the left back to place.

© Pia Walker November 2009

The Blethering Ghillie

The Blethering Ghillie is the deviser's pub, located in the basement of his home in Beavercreek, Ohio, USA. Much blethering has transpired there over the years, especially at after-parties following dance events.

A 32 bar strathspey for three couples in a four-couple longwise set

Bars

1-8 1st and 2nd couples set, turn partners with both hands, and circle four hands round to the left.

9-16 1st and 2nd couples dance the knot; 1st couple finish facing first corners.

17-24 1st couple dance corners pass and turn with first corners, pass right shoulders in the center of the set, dance corners pass and turn with second corners, and pass right shoulders across the set to finish in second place on own sides, facing out. (Corners turn with both hands.)

25-32 1st couple dance figures of eight on their own sides in six bars, beginning by giving right shoulder to the person on their right, finishing with 1st woman between 2nd couple facing down and 1st man between 3rd couple facing up. On bars 31 and 32, 1st couple turn with left hands $\frac{3}{4}$ to finish in 2nd place on own sides, ready to begin again.

© Donald L. Fuell, Jr., 2008.

May be reproduced for dance instruction and use.

The Malachite Casket

The Malachite Casket contains a wealth of folk tales written by Pavel Bashov and inspired by his family's experience of mining the precious stones found in the Ural Mountains near Ekaterinburg.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Bazhov)

The March is based on the Russian folk dance taught by Denis from the city of Ufa, as a warm up for the Russian quadrilles class he took, and reminds us of the poise and grace of the Romanovs.

The last Tsar of All Russia and his family were murdered on the site of the Cathedral of the Holy Blood in Ekaterinburg.

The Strathspey expresses the elegance of the baroque figures the dancers demonstrated at their Saturday night Ball in the Museum of Costume and Furniture.

The Reel brings out the liveliness of the Scottish country dances taught by Patrick Chamoin from Paris to the energetic and enthusiastic young dancers, who met together for classes in the Ekaterinburg Children's Library, a beautifully restored 19th century house, while the snow lay on the ground outside and the temperatures dropped away below freezing.

To give you a flavour of the creativity and inventiveness of the Russian dancers and their accomplished young musicians, I'd like to recommend you try dancing to Thelma MacPherson's Raised Bass Set, recorded by the late Jerry Holland on his CD Fiddler's Choice. If you use this recording, the march and strathspey both go twice through, the reel at least 4 times through.

I first met Jerry at the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention in Aberdeen, Scotland in 2006. If you are able, try to get to Aberdeen to attend the next one in July 2010: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nafco/>

Inspired by the friendliness and energy of the Russian dancers from Ekaterinburg, Ufa and Chelyabinsk attending their Festival of Historic Dance in snowy Ekaterinburg, 12-15 November 2009. <http://www.legenda-dance.ru/>



A March, Strathspey and Reel

Couples all start facing anti-clockwise around the room.

March

Bars

1-8 All walk forward for 4 steps, then walk backwards for 4 steps, using the dancers' walk (toes point to the floor), men hold the back of their left hand across the small of their back, ladies extend their right arm downwards and slightly away from their bodies, or hold their skirts. Ladies rest their left hand on top of the extended back of their partner's hand who leads them in the dance. All $\frac{1}{2}$ turn partners right hand for 4 steps, then $\frac{1}{2}$ turn left hand for 4 steps.

9-16 All turn solo, walking away from partners in small circle for 6 steps (pull right shoulder back), then taking right hand with partner balance forward and back (this is a rise up towards your partner, and back away).
Repeat pulling left shoulder back.

17-32 All walk 4 steps towards centre of room, then 4 steps back to place (couples may retain right hands for this). All walk back to back with partner passing right shoulder. All walk 4 steps away from centre, then 4 steps back to place (couples should not take hands for this). All walk back to back with partner passing left shoulder, but on retiring all walk diagonally back moving to their left, so that everyone is ready to start again with a new partner.

Depending on the music recording, the march can be repeated as often as required or preferred.

Strathspey

Couples still facing around room in promenade hold.

Bars

1-8 All promenade forward for 4 steps, face partner and set and $\frac{1}{2}$ turn right hand

9-16 All repeat bars 1-8 returning, but set and $\frac{1}{2}$ turn with left hand to place

17-24 All set to partner; then with right hands joined advance for 1 step and retire for 1 step; all change places with partner, the lady turning under her partner's right arm; then all half turn right hand back to place

25-32 Repeat 17-24 using left hands.

Depending on the music recording, the strathspey can be repeated as often as required or preferred.

Reel

Couples still arranged around the room, but face each other, man with his back to the centre of the room, his partner facing inwards.

Bars

1-8 All set to partner, all turn solo with 2 pas de basque steps, all join two hands with partner and dance 8 slip steps to the man's left

9-16 All repeat bars 1-8 to return to place, slip stepping to the man's right.

17-24 All turn partner right hand $\frac{3}{4}$, turn new partner (next person round the circle) left hand, turn original partner right hand, turn new partner left hand and finish facing this person.

25-32 Taking allemande hold all the men lead their new partners to promenade around the room for 4 bars, on bar 5 all turn to face into the centre of the room (all dancers are now in a circle), on bar 6 all the men bring their right hands over their partner's head to turn their partners to face them, all turn left hand once round to finish facing this partner.

Depending on the music recording, the reel can be repeated as often as required or preferred. On the final turn, the couples may retain hold of the left hands to bow and curtsy.

Quint Reel or Old Urray Reel

This dance was devised at the 20th Anniversary camp of the Valley of the Moon Scottish Fiddling School (VOM), California in August 2003.

It started out as quick Scandinavian Waltz but it works well as a Reel too.

If danced as a Waltz read $\frac{3}{4}$ turn instead of $1\frac{3}{4}$ turn on bars 9-12 and 41-44.

Dedicated to VOM and also to my very good friends Archie and Anna Crawford, of Old Urray, Ross-shire, Scotland. Thank you all for the laughs, great dancing and inspiration.

Reel 5 x 64 bars.

5 couples in a Square Set. with the 5th couple in the middle, with 5th man nearest the top. Reels of the "Jenny Dang the Weaver" type are ideal for this dance.

Music

[1] (1)

(4) (5)- [2]

[4] -[5] (2)

(3) [3]

Bars

1-8 5C Set; half turn R hand; Left Hands Across (5M with 3C and 5W with 1C).

9-16 5C turn R hand $1\frac{3}{4}$; Left Hands Across (5M with 2C and 5W with 4C).

17-24 Reel of Three: 5M with 3W and 1M and 5W with 1W and 3M). 5s give R shoulder the women in their reel to begin (5M to 3W and 5W to 1W). Finish in the middle of the Set facing each other up and down the dance.

25-32 5C dance **La Baratte** to change places.*

33-40 5C with L hands still joined, Set; $\frac{3}{4}$ turn L hands; Right Hands Across (5M with 4C and 5W with 2C).

41-48 5C turn L hand $1\frac{3}{4}$; Right Hands Across (5M with 1C and 5W with 3C).

49-56 Reel of Three: 5M with 4M and 2W and 5W with 2M and 4W). 5s give R shoulder the man in their reel to begin (5M to 4M and 5W to 2M). Finish in the middle of the Set facing the 1C. All couples take Allemande hold (or if preferred Promenade hold).

57-58 5C and 1C change places passing by the Left.

59-60 1C and 2C change places passing by the Left.

61-62 2C and 3C change places passing by the Left.

63-64 3C and 4C change places passing by the Left. 4C dance straight in, releasing L hands, Man turns his partner under his R arm in to starting position.

Repeat 4 more times with a new couple taking up the middle position.

***La Baratte (The Churn):** 8 bars – couple facing each other up and down the dance, join R hand and Set (2); half turn with R hand (2); retain R hand hold and arm's length from each other; couple rotate anti-clockwise as woman turns to right dancing under man's R arm man passing behind woman and join L hands as well when crossing back to starting position and releasing R hand woman turns to right dancing under Man's L arm (2); keep hold of L hands and half turn to change places (2).



Dancing in the Snow

What happens when a group of young SCD enthusiasts go to the mountains for a weekend of winter sports? Yes, they end up dancing, even in the snow... Walking boots and snowshoes may not be quite as good as ghillies and pumps when it comes to pointing your toes and it is definitely more tiring, but the two turns of "De'il Amang the Tailors", that we managed to do, (arrangement for one musician whistling and a two couple set) were great fun! This probably answers the question of "why" we did it. A small tip for anyone wants to have a go: If you have a choice, opt for a shorter type of snow-shoe suitable for running on packed snow, rather than the long back-country type. (Health and safety warning: if you do use the latter, do not attempt a first or third position!)

The photos were taken in January 2008, while walking back down from the "Tête du Danay" (French Alps, 1731m). The dancers were Claire Eymin, Raphaëlle Orgeret, Vincent Broquié and Sophie Rickebusch, all living in the Rhône-Alpes region of France at the time. Philippe Kocian from Switzerland provided the music and took the photos.



What Jeannie Did

By The Dancie

This is a rather large subject, and I feel rather daunted in trying to write about it. But then, anyone writing about Dr Jean Callander Milligan would be daunted, wouldn't they? First, a bit of the history; JCM learned her Country Dancing with Cecil Sharp and the English Folk Dance Society, but obviously wasn't too keen on the word English in it! At the time it was just Country Dancing, as danced in England, with no especially national characteristics, but evidently that did not suit JCM.

Those who, in the 1920s, were trying to find out how Country Dancing was done, found that although much was still known, and danced, different places had contradictory ways of dancing. They had to make decisions about how to dance, both from the various local varieties and from the terms used in the books of dances, sometimes without these latter having much in the way of descriptions. So, particularly for aspects that had been forgotten, they guessed using the few facts that they had; it was a case of guess or don't dance, and the latter was not an option!

As an example of things lost because they had gone out of fashion, there is a term "siding"; and they guessed a movement that, when later descriptions were found, was shown to be slightly incorrect, with the result that there are now two styles of siding, one called "Pat Shaw siding" which is the new one, worked out when more information was available, and the earlier guess which is now called "Cecil Sharp siding". As far as modern dancers are concerned, Cecil Sharp siding is used in dances constructed in the 20th Century, as they were choreographed with that type of siding in mind, but the old dances have usually been changed to the Pat Shaw style, and of course, a modern choreographer can now choose which style of siding he wishes to use.

We know that JCM had to make such decisions even though she

knew that these were based on inadequate knowledge of how things were. Not surprisingly, we now know that some were wrong, which gives rise to the problem of what to do about it. Some can be quietly put right. Have a look at Jessie's Hornpipe, and you will find the casting off on bars 1&2 for first woman which is published in the RSCDS book 8 No 9, has been altered to have the first woman mirror her partner for the figure of eight when "Miss Milligan's Miscellany" was produced. Yet it is still possible to find people who will tell you that the latter way is wrong!

Her "Allemande", she told us, was based on a dream that someone had, even though the allemande figure was still being danced in the Borders, and danced quite reasonably correctly, as we now know, just about as it was originally published in Book 1, edition 1; but this was altered to the JCM version for later editions.

So some of her decisions were necessary, and some, like her Allemande, were rather more wilful departures from the normal versions of Country Dancing. Though I admit it is a pretty figure, and I like it when used in modern dances, I would prefer the original version in such dances as "The Deil amang the Tailors", and the other old dances that used it. I guess that folk who like a good swing would enjoy it, too. As one of these, I could say, "we was robbed"!

I would again stress that to make an incorrect choice when there is inadequate knowledge is not a wrong thing to do; the only alternative is not to dance! And everyone who was reconstructing dances made mistakes - Cecil Sharp decided on the "walking" step that is used rather a lot in English Country Dancing, but only by extremely tired Scottish Dancers. That is one they haven't corrected yet, though the evidence against it is growing; it isn't yet by any means certain either way, though I incline against walking.

Let's now have a look at the strathspey, which seems to me



to be almost entirely a product of the fertile imagination of the said Jeannie. I say "fertile imagination" with absolute sincerity; I admire the tremendous feel for dance that JCM repeatedly demonstrated. Her guesses, made at a time when knowledge of dancing masters' thoughts, as written in their books, was much less than nowadays, were mostly excellent. Obviously, or we wouldn't be here, would we? Not only were her thoughts proven by the success of SCD, but also, they added a female dimension to what was previously an entirely male area of thought. Her idea of a dip in the strathspey is a good example. It seems that the Dancies were only concerned with the "up" part of the movement; it came at the start of the step, on the count "one", and from a bent knee, and

the "up" was to the posture of an "alpha male", as Desmond Morris would say (or alpha female, in the case of the ladies). That was the critical bit of the step; the rest was a gentle lowering of the body during the "-close-step-hop" until the next rise on the next count of "one". This was typical of Baroque travelling steps, and posture was always of immense importance. I think that the "dip" is the first instance of a contribution to SCD choreography by a female mind; nowadays there are many, and sometimes I can tell that a dance has a female choreographer just because the dance feels subtly different.

The steps given by Peacock, the Aberdeen dancing master, give only one travelling step for ALL tempos, and the description is of a strathspey step as we know it, without the dip, but otherwise quite similar; it is "step, close, step, hop". He says the movements are much jerkier, though, more like a Highland travelling step. And there is one enormous difference, the tempo. The tempo is described as "faster than a reel, and rather like a jig", which is wildly different to a JCM strathspey!

This explains the speed of all early recordings of strathspeys, such as those by Scott Skinner, which go at a cracking pace. As the said Scott Skinner was called, especially by himself, the Strathspey King, I think we can assume that he played at the speed he thought to be the best, and at the speed that he played for the dancers of the period, though this was in the early days of recording, and also, he was not above showing off his talent!

The recordings from the 20s and 30s that I have met are all playing at the same speed, more or less, whether "SCDS approved" is on the label or not, and that would suggest that it was a typical speed. There certainly are not any that are at anything like the speed of a modern strathspey.

I find it interesting that the fling and foursome seem to have shown the same reduction in speed. It seems to me that they are done at much the same tempo as the RSCDS strathspeys; the idea of zooming through the fling at Scott Skinner's pace is daunting, though I dare

say it could be done; the footwork would be much more challenging in the precision department. I came across one (recent) bagpiper's recording of the fling that was so slow that I couldn't think how it could be danced – then I thought of two solutions. One was dance it on the moon, and the other on a trampoline, neither of which I fancied! Of these two extremes of speed, I would prefer Scott Skinner, and I am fairly certain that the recordings of the early RSCDS are the correct speed for both then and earlier periods. Oh, and they could possibly be slower than in earlier periods!

So, the original strathspey has no dip, it goes like the clappers, and the foot movements are sharp in-and-out Highland style, which goes well with the speed.

That gives us the problem of having two strathspeys; there is the old version, which livens up a Monymusk to how it was when it was written – I know, as I have just tried it at the original speed, having a 78 rpm, 1930s recording of it! – and there is the new more romantic, dreamier, and possibly flirtier, version, much more suitable for dances such as The Duchess Tree, Sugar Candy and many more such dances.

It strikes me that the slowing of the strathspey is rather like the slowing of the waltz, which has a brisk tempo in the Strauss (the Waltz King) version, and all previous styles of waltz, but is much slower for the smoochy modern waltz.

But what do we call these versions of strathspey? I would suggest the Original, or Traditional, perhaps, for the old version, and Milligan or Modern for the new RSCDS style.

I notice that all the Scottish Waltzes are still played at the faster speed, and getting a Ceilidh Dance Band to play slowly is uphill work! I have a feeling that the bands would be quite happy to go back to the traditional speed for strathspeys. I know of one brilliant keyboard player for local bands who seems to be in serious danger of falling asleep when playing strathspeys!

The next question that sprang into my mind was "when did the change take place?" The "official" recordings of the SCDS, (before the R was added,) are all at the old/original/traditional speed, and they

are from the 20s and 30s. Then came the Second World War, and things went rather quiet; I think it happened then. I know that it was well established in the later 1940s – I know 'cos I was there!

To me there is no question of "who done it?" – JCM was, like Miss Jean Brodie, in her prime! I heard nothing about the change of tempo apart from the official line that we were not to dance the degenerate style of the early 20th century, but to go back to the style of the Regency period, which was much superior; and JCM would tell us what that was.

That is the first part of my review of the changes produced by JCM. I hope that you find it balanced. I don't have any problem with the changes in themselves; I do have a problem with the way they were introduced, because we were told, quite specifically, that what we were dancing in the later 1940s was "Regency style, the high style of the golden age of Country Dancing". This was supposed to be the reason for the ubiquitous white dresses, too, though that may be apocryphal.

The fact this style was, to a significant extent, JCM's own production was never mentioned, nor was the loss of half of the tempos. The emperor's clothes were sorely scanty in some departments!

However (and perhaps I should say the empress), the clothes were far from all being scanty. There was one major change that JCM made that I think far outweighs any others, and after looking at some negative changes, I would like to finish this part by mentioning it.

She went right back to the basic idea that the "Folk Dance" brigade all forgot about; the idea that the dancing was taught by dancing masters. That is why their ideas on elegance in our dancing are so important, and why SCD stands out at folk dance festivals as significantly more elegant and suited to the Ballroom when compared to the "Country Bumpkin" style of much folk dancing.

So, yes let's raise our glasses and drink a toast to JCM; she did a wonderful job by getting the basic essentials absolutely right.

To be continued!

Strathspé Away

Homecoming 2009
Kingussie

It was a kind of homecoming for me to return to Kingussie on the 6 November, as this is very much the base of Dannsa – the organisers of Strathspé Away. I now live and work with dance in Ireland as a lecturer in dance with the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. Back in 1999 I initiated the first choreography – The Spinning Reel – for a one-off performance at a charity gala for the Kidney Foundation at Eden Court in Inverness, bringing dancers Frank McConnell, Sandra Robertson, Caroline Reagh and piper Fin Moore (and Gaelic singer Mary Ann Kennedy and fiddler Ronan Martin) together. This performance led to the formation of Dannsa in 2000. The ethos of Dannsa was always to promote Scottish dance (step dancing in particular) but always integrated with music and song, with an emphasis on the Gaelic song tradition and the piping and fiddle traditions of Scotland, in particular the Highland traditions. Strathspé Away is very much the brainchild of Sandra Robertson, who lives in Kingussie. Seven years ago Sandra, helped by the other Dannsa members – set up the first Strathspé Away. By 2009 Frank McConnell and I have both left Dannsa to pursue other paths in our dancing lives. Having the pleasure of being invited to teach at this year's edition of the festival, I brought with me four final year dance students on the BA Irish Music and Dance – Jenny and Sarah from Ireland, Pam from Canada and Kate from the USA – along with fabulous Irish box player Derek Hickey, who is one of our regular instrument tutors on

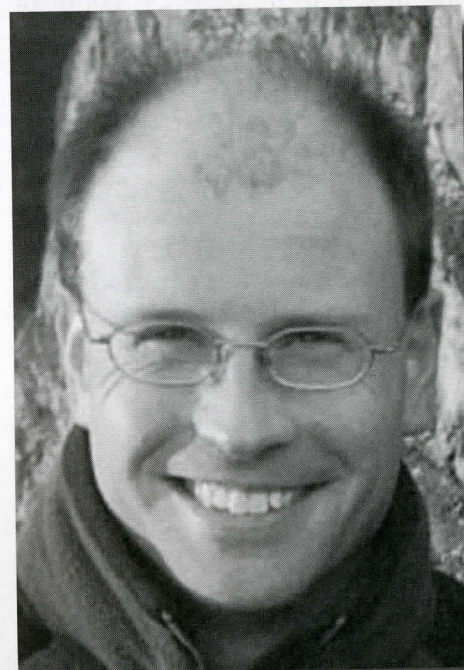
our University courses and one time member of Irish traditional super group De Danann.

Strathspé Away 2009 kicked off on Friday evening with its upbeat opening Ceilidh Dance, this year to the fiddle led Bella MacNab's Ceilidh Band from Edinburgh. The choice of tunes was fabulous and the selection of dances called by Dave Francis was a healthy mix of old and new Ceilidh Dances that encouraged a good numbered crowd to keep the floor busy all evening. From standards such as Dashing White Sergeant to new more recent additions – Strip the Willow Square – all helped the weekend come off to a great start.

Strathspé Away has always combined a performance aspect with social dancing and the classes offered. This year the Saturday evening concert and dance was headlined by Dannsa and Cape Breton band Beolach. This was also the starting point of a short tour of the Highlands by this new collaborative initiative in music, song and dance.

Classes this year included Step Dancing on several levels, Ceilidh Dancing, Irish Set Dancing, Contemporary Dance, Hebridean Solo Dancing and Dances from the North and Flamenco Dancing. Also music workshops in tin whistle, fiddle and guitar were given alongside Gaelic song and Gaelic classes. All ingredients to make up a busy weekend schedule with each class an hour to an hour and a half long. In addition to this there was a lunchtime concert each day and a music recital or this year a talk on the Saturday. The weekend finished with Ho-Ro Gheallaidh, a final session for all participants. A Photographic exhibition was also held alongside the festival. The organisers make good use of the local halls, hotels and Kingussie High School facilities.

By Mats Melin



I was kept busy on the Saturday teaching two classes in Hebridean Solo Dances, the first covering "Aberdonian Lassie" and the second "First of August" both from the repertoire of dancing master Eoghainn Mac Lachlainn who was teaching in South Uist and Barra during the latter half of the 19th Century. After this my students and Derek Hickey performed at the Saturday lunchtime, which drew a good crowd consisting of a good proportion the 170 or so weekend participants and from the local population. We provided a traditional programme showing a good selection of different types of Irish solo dance styles such as Solo Set Dances, including St Patrick's Day and the White Blanket, Slip Jigs, Reel and a Brush Dance. Derek also played a most wonderful slow air. My own contribution to this performance was the dance the "First of August" accompanied by Beolach's Mairi Rankin and Wendy MacIsaac playing some hornpipes common in Cape Breton.

The afternoon resumed with more classes and I gave a talk – “Putting the dirt back in” outlining my findings in researching the Step Dance revival in Scotland since the early 1990s to round up the day.

A session then commenced in The Silverfjord Hotel, while tutors had a meal and members of Dannsa and Beolach did sound checks in preparation for the evening’s performances.

The Saturday evening performance was in three parts. The first five sets were performed by Dannsa, who featured the fiddler Gabe McVarish and Gaelic singer Gillebride MacMillan along with piper Fin Moore, who also doubles up as dancer alongside Sandra, Caroline and John Sikorski. Then followed a strong set of music and dance from the Cape Bretoners in Beolach. They kicked off with an acapella step dance routine into a long set of strathspeys and reels in true Cape Breton fashion. To round up the performances both groups joined forces in a lengthy step dance routine involving parts of Scotch Reels and one of the Cape Breton square sets. After this followed a Ceilidh Dance to the music of Dannsa Ceilidh Band strengthened by the members of Beolach.

Personal highlights for me were to perform the choreographed version of First of August with Dannsa again and to do a Scotch Four with Mac Morin, Mairi and Wendy of Beolach. But maybe most of all I enjoyed doing a full Inverness County Square Set called by Wendy MacIsaac and seeing a pretty much full floor enjoying this dance.

The evening was rounded off by a good tune in The Silverfjord Hotel and I gather a house party continued until 5.30 am with two pipers playing in a very small kitchen at a very early hour in the morning. Well at least so I was told by two of my students who seemed to have enjoyed the session to the fullest!

The Sunday commenced with



more classes, this time I was teaching “Dances from the North”. The question was – from the North of what – South Africa?? Joking apart, a good selection of dances I have picked up over the years from Shetland, Orkney and North Highland districts and the Western Isles featured in these classes. Other popular classes were of course Jim Barry’s over subscribed Irish Set Dancing class, a firm favourite since year one of the festival and Sheila McCutcheon’s Ceilidh Dance classes. All Step Dance classes taught by members of Dannsa and Beolach were well attended too. I had no opportunity to see Flamenco Dance teacher Saliha Haouach in action, as my Irish contingent had a plane to catch at Prestwick Airport that evening so we missed the Sunday lunchtime performance of Saliha and her accompanying musicians. Seeing her warm up just before the concert started promised a great experience for those around to enjoy it.

Strathspé Away seems to go from strength to strength. It was well attended and with a wide choice of dance and music on offer

right through the weekend one can hardly go wrong. Hopefully they will keep being successful in getting the vital Arts Council and other funding to keep this weekend going. It has in my mind firmly established itself as one of the main multi-dance festivals in Scotland. It could not be done without great support from volunteers including current and past Dannsa members and locals (including High School students). From a visiting tutor and performer’s point of view one could ask for little else as all was very well prepared and organised. Dannsa made my Irish contingent feel very welcome and integrated. My students did help out as volunteers as well as performing and taking classes. I got very good feedback from all in my group – to Dannsa I say – well done and keep the dancing and good music and songs going! Until Strathspé Away 2010 check out www.dannsa.com for updates. After the Strathspé Away weekend Dannsa and Beolach went on a mini tour round Scotland but unfortunately I was not there to enjoy the shows.

Hobson's Choice

*If only we understood
anything it would probably
explain everything!*

Put any three people in the same situation and their separate understandings will, if turned into normal conversation, become modified towards a common view, with perhaps some secret withheld reservations! This common view is often held to be some democratic guideline to truth! Would that reality were so simple. Well, before I go and concoct my application for triple expenses from Dance On! for attendance at three Highland rallies that may or may not figure in my future fanciful ramblings (**Ed. What's he on about? He should be paying us for the paper he wastes!**) I had better relate two vignettes around this construct from my latest sojourn in that great Northern Heaven, the Valhalla of dance, the fastness of Moray, Nairn, Inverness, Ross, Cromarty, Lochaber and Skye; before my mini-Valkyrie sweeps me through distraction into forgetfulness!

So there I was morosely considering the raffle table, or rather morosely considering that my lifelong aversion to gambling and games of chance never saved me any money, because she-who-holds-my-wallet, always insists on a contribution equal to the price of tickets! (Never marry a Scottish-Yorkshire woman; it's only the males who are squeezed at birth to remove rays of sunshine and generosity) when a voice in my ear said:

"My name's on that!"

Looking up, yes, despite my new lengthened hips, I still look up to everybody, and I discovered it was "A Lady from the North" not an auditory hallucination speaking.

"Your name's on what?" was my incisive rejoinder.

"On that orchid you're looking at, of course!"

"Don't you accuse me of knowing anything about orchids or quiches, or any of those girlie things!"

"Och! Don't be so touchy, nobody's impugning your masculinity, it's just that that's the best prize there,

and I'm determined to win it."

Well what's a chap going to say to that, without giving away the meanness of his thoughts? So quick as a flash I jumped straight in with:

"What! That spindly white thing? Last time I saw anything that peelie-wallie it was in a coffin about to be screwed down."

"Oh you! What do you know anyway? I like it fine enough."

"What's peelie-wallie?" - This from "**The Class Teacher**" who was apparently overhearing half a conversation.

"That stupid thing there, she wants to win it in the raffle!"

"That's no way to talk about "**The Lady from the North**"! What is it she wants to win anyway?"

"No! No! Not her! It's the stupid white plant she's set on winning."

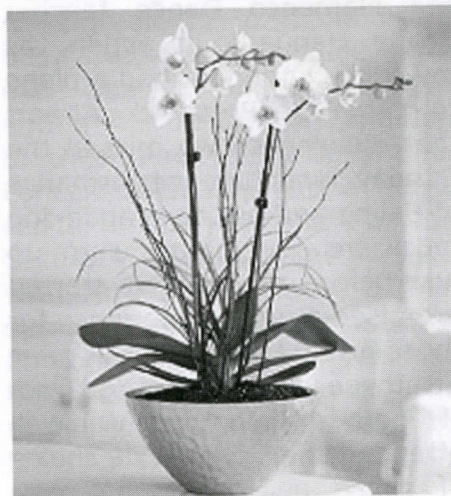
"Stupid yourself! I think it's bonnie, and anyway with legs like yours, who are you to talk about peelie-wallie?"

"Whoa! Whoa! Hang on those legs have been in hospital, they've a perfect right to be pale and interesting."

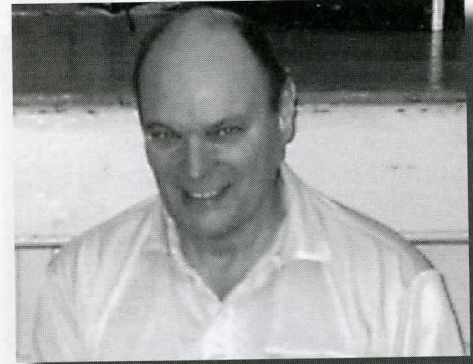
"Well, I think "**The Lady from the North**" is right about the legs, but I agree with you about the orchid, I don't like them in general, and those white ones are like something from a Gothic horror movie."

"Will you two stop, it's my orchid anyway, and who cares what you think?"

At this stage "**The Chairman/MC**" broke up further discussion, by announcing that he was to make the presentation of the class gift to "**The Class Teacher**", and



By George Hobson



promptly picked it up from where it was concealed on the raffle table. Yes, you've guessed it! **The lovely white orchid.** I don't think he'd ever made a presentation before, greeted with howls of derision from a small clique, and one pink-faced teacher muttering something inaudible about stupid interfering Englishmen!

Well, I thought that was that, and went on to do my stint of impressed recapping, which I thought most impressive. And then back to dancing.

But the rest of the evening was spent noticing a lot of sideways smiles, and behind the hand mutterings, and even the odd lady who said "Oh! you're the one who thinks '**The Class Teacher's**' plant's peelie-wallie?"

I just don't see how I came to be the villain of this piece! And I don't know if it was truth or revenge, but when "**The Class Teacher**" thanked me for my stint, she added, "But I've had to promise not to ask you again, because somebody quite close to you finds it too nerve wracking when you're up there bumbling your way through dance recaps!"

Cheek!

But back to the dance for the main point of this amble down short-memory lane.

In common with nearly all summer dances of late, the numbers were down. No, I mean really down! With a dancing attendance of about forty, the large, high-ceilinged, sprung-floored, Victorian hall approached by double marble steps, was looking a tad beyond our needs.

There were many, many reasons, from individuals who were having to

entertain families, to whole groups of local stalwarts on dancing trips to Germany or Austria, but the net result was the same whatever you thought to be the main cause – much pause for thought!

The three key mindsets, a bit like the three surveying the raffle, were in essence

"Why do we bother? I don't think we should put our club at this risk and bother for something that's clearly not wanted."

"These are unusual circumstances, unlikely to all coincide again, and if we can still virtually wash our faces (with the raffle thrown in, then I think we should remember that the purpose of classes is to go to dances, and if we don't put them on, there will finally be none."

When the numbers are low, the space for dancing is still the same and we have much more room and freedom to move. Everyone receives a higher premium as a partner. The food table becomes a groaning cornucopia of second and third helpings, and goody-bags home. And there is definitely the feeling that the joy that would have been experienced by those who stayed at home was still there to be shared amongst those of us already nearly hysterical with pleasure.

Of the three responses that are possible in these circumstances, the one decided upon may depend on the conversation between these three mind-sets, and the result may be as ludicrously out of touch with reality as the white orchid discussion.

As an outsider my advice is of no value or relevance, but to this dear club (You know who you are!) I say I have seen the different decisions taken by other clubs at other times, and have seen their consequences: Put up the ticket price, or insist on pre-booking.

Stop putting on the dance or move it to a different time or venue.

Carry on cheerfully and worry about losses and covering them when they actually occur.

The first two either quickly or slowly result in a loss of characterful local events. The third nearly always sees good times come around again!

Good luck to you in your deliberations, and I look forward to your summer rally next year.

George – they could always advertise their dances in Dance On!

Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust

On behalf Angela Dreyer-Larsen of The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, I am writing to ask for your assistance with a research exercise to gather external views of the organisation. The purpose is to help shape how it is promoted in future.

To enable you to be as frank as you wish, they have commissioned Heather Stewart and me to help them with this exercise. We would be most grateful if you could spare some time to participate. It should take about 5 minutes. All responses will be confidential and used only for the purpose stated.

The survey can be completed at www.surveymonkey.com/stdt

In order to show their appreciation for your help, The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust will enter all respondents' names into a prize draw for the chance to win a Family Ticket to Vue Cinemas.

If this research is of relevance to any of your colleagues within your own or other organisations, please feel free to forward this e-mail to them.

If you have any difficulties, technical or otherwise, in completing this survey online, please e-mail or call me.

Many thanks in advance for your co-operation.

Kind regards,
David

David Wallace
Strategy Point
07809 225 661
davidw@strategypoint.co.uk
www.strategypoint.co.uk

Dancing in Dunfermline

By Pia Walker

The International Branch held its second weekend workshop in the beginning of October. This time it was held in Scotland, in Dunfermline, with the Dunfermline Branch co-hosting. Fourteen months plus went into the planning. Halls were booked, teachers and musicians selected for the three levels of classes, with three lessons on the Saturday and two on the Sunday – all teachers and musicians are members of the International Branch. See photographs on back page.

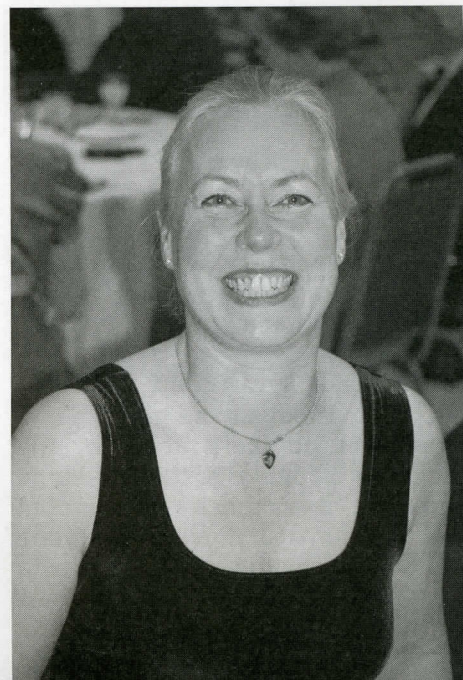
Eighty dancers from all over the world signed up, some for the sightseeing before hand – a trip to Edinburgh, to see the most important of places: Holyrood Palace, Parliament and RSCDS HQ; a trip to Stirling, to the Castle there plus of course a distillery – Glengoyne in this instance. The evenings were taken up by a visit to Aberdour to dance, and a ceilidh with a pre-ceilidh concert practice by the Dunfermline Strathspey and Reel Society, a first for many of the visitors – one even admitted to thinking that he was going to

see a dance rehearsal, and not music.

A hotel was booked in Dunfermline, so most people could be housed under one roof, although some people were hosted by the Dunfermline Branch members. The Holiday Inn Express opened their conference room to us for the weekend so we could have a party-room where many converged after the dances on Friday and Saturday.

Most participants were met at the airport and put on the 747-bus to Dunfermline where they were met and taken to the hotel by members of Dunfermline Branch. This is a logistical nightmare, but well worth it for travellers' piece of mind.

The evening dances attended by approximately 150 people each night were played for by International Branch musicians – ehmm, not without its sound problems, and a spectacular breakdown in The Wee Coupar of Fife – you know, the incident, where you are just waiting for the next note to peter out dying-swan-style, or wondering if you should start singing aloud, but once the problems were solved, the musicians, who had



never played with each other before, played with a joy for music which was nothing but infectious. Many dancers, and perhaps musicians too, may not realise how important the band and their demeanour is for a good atmosphere at a dance.

Catering at these events is a tricky thing – you have to keep the price reasonable, but don't want it to look as if you are scraping the barrel. We were recommended Fife Council and they did a tremendous job – every meal was festive, colourful, plentiful, and catered for carnivores and vegetarians alike, with the odd food intolerance thrown in for good measure.

It is great to once again see so many people mixing with each other, dancing with each other, laughing with each other, some came from just down the road, one came from Hawaii, some knew each other, some had never met, but all were intent on having a good time, which made it so much worth while. There was only one fly in the ointment: NO SLEEP!!!!



Saturday Night Supper

University of the Third Age

I recently joined my local U3A. If you don't know what U3A is, here is a description from their Website.

"U3A stands for the University of the Third Age, which is a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment, providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment.

It consists of local U3As all over the world, which are charities in their own right and are run entirely by volunteers. Local U3As are learning cooperatives, which draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership.

The teachers learn and the learners teach. Between them U3As offer the chance to study over 300 different subjects in such fields as art, languages, music, history, life sciences, philosophy, computing, crafts, photography and walking. A typical U3A has about 250 members but could be as small as 12 and as large as 2000."

In other words, groups of people get together, share their skills, and have fun. I looked at the Website of my local group in Dumfries to find out who to contact and there, in big letters, in the middle of the screen it said "We would like to start a Scottish Country Dance Group, but we don't have a teacher, does anyone know of one."

It was obviously fate, and I found myself as a Group Leader before my membership cheque had cleared the bank!

We run from September to March, and have had a very successful first year. There are sixteen members and we get about twelve on a regular basis. I have stressed that it is a programme of learning and that like any course it is best not to miss a session and they all do their best to come every time.

For the last session I invited a few members of the Dumfries Branch to come and join the group and with encouragement four of the U3A class are now regularly attending branch classes as well, and we hope more will follow.

If you have a U3A in your area why not find out if they have a Country Dance Group and if not, persuade them to start one. The Web address of the International U3a is <http://worldu3a.org/> and for the UK is <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>

Richard Whiting and his wife Carol are two of the regular members. Richard is also a member of the poetry group and combined these two skills to write this poem.

Scottish Country Dancing

I go to Scottish Country Dancing,
Carol said I should
I really do enjoy it
Though I never thought I would

Our teacher, Sue, says what to do
She makes it very plain
Trouble is there's no connection
'Twixt my feet and brain

Sue sprinkles talcum on the floor
To help us not to slip
But as I dance with two left feet
I'm likelier to trip

We start with warming exercises
That's the worst of all
I'm terrified I might seize up
And frightened I might fall

The ladies skip so daintily
It's very nice to see
But I'm just thankful if I end up
Where I'm s'posed to be

Skipping's really not my style
My joints and muscles groan
I sort of lurch and clump around
In pain, but I don't moan

It's good for circulation
And it stimulates the brain
It helps to keep the body trim
So though there's pain there's gain

So now I reel and promenade
And Petronella too
I set and cast off with the best
All as explained by Sue

All this exertion makes me hot
I feel I'm going to fry
So casting off is what I do
With pullover and tie

But though my feet are all at sea
Of aptitude I've none
The thing about this dancing is
It's all tremendous fun

So I look forward every week
To coming to the hall
For Scottish Country Dancing
'Cos I know I'll have a ball!

Sue Petyt

By Richard Whiting © 2009

Dancing in Russia

By Fiona Grant

On a cold wet November morning before dawn, I met up with Patrick Chamoin in Sheremetyevo airport for the flight from Moscow to Ekaterinburg. Bright sunshine and sparkly snow met us on arrival with a warm welcome from Maria Kulakova and her partner Vitaly, the organisers of the Legenda Historic Dance Festival. Maria lent me her fur coat, made from an Asian sheep, to keep me from the -10° deg C temperatures outside. Later that day, after registering our residence at the main Post Office, we were guided around the city centre, seeing the old merchants' houses and palaces, the City Hall and Russian Orthodox churches with their golden onion shape domes, a museum of beautiful artwork made from the precious stones mined in the nearby Ural Mountains, and then to the Church of the Holy Blood, built on the site of the murder of the Romanov family, where

we listened to the singing of the evening service.

Classes next day brought over forty students, all young people from as far away as Ufa and Chelyabinsk, as well as Ekaterinburg.

The Scottish party that evening was great fun, with dancing to the local band, games and a wonderfully energetic display of Highland Dance.

Next day were scheduled classes in Quadrilles, Renaissance and Baroque Dance. In the afternoon, Patrick and I were escorted over the snowy roads, through the tall silver birch woods to Ganina Yama, the wooden monastery built on the site of the mass grave of Tsar Nicholas II and his family.

Then another day of classes, ending with everyone dressing up in magnificent costumes for the Ball; dancing to violin and piano accompaniment in the salon of the museum of costume and culture. It was an unforgettable evening as the girls swirled around the dance floor in their crinolines, led by their poised partners in white gloves.

If you ever get the chance to dance in Russia, the Russian



Guy Lawrence & Patrick Chamoin
discuss finer points of dance

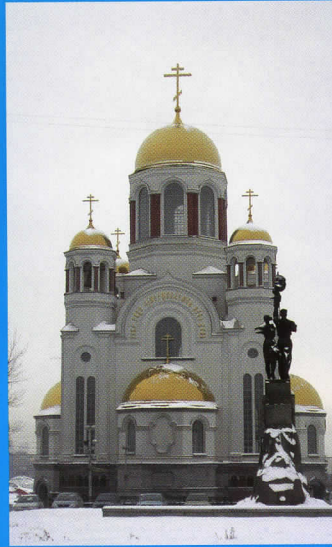
enthusiasm and energy for music and dance is an experience to be treasured. Ilona Velichko and I are thinking to organise a dance holiday in Krasnodar, near the Black Sea in early September 2010. Let me know if you are interested in joining us: fiona@dancetour.co.uk
Happy dancing everyone.



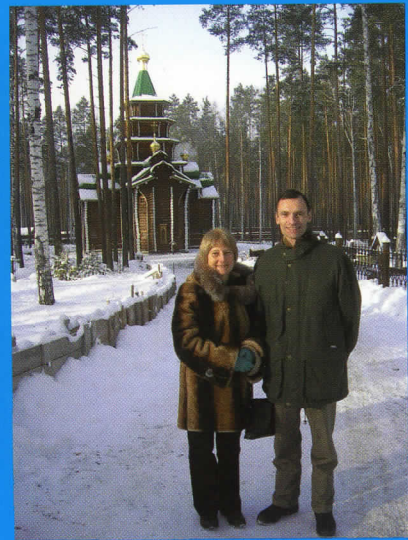
Dancing in Russia



Dancing at the Scottish Party



*Church of the Holy Blood,
Ekaterinburg*



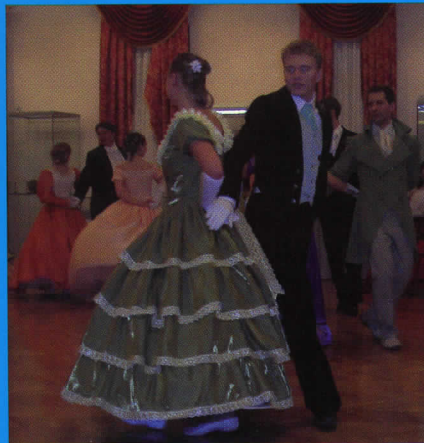
*Fiona Grant and Patrick Chamoin
visit the monastery in the silver
birch forest where the Romanovs
were buried.*



Above: At the Scottish Party



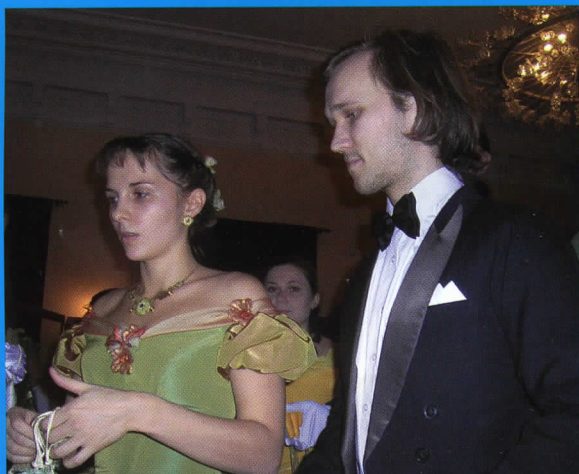
Patrick teaches



*Below: Organisers Maria &
Vitaly*



The Quadrilles



Dunfermline Dancing



Pia keeps the musicians in check



Hana & Falcone



Mary from Hawaii & Sjoerd from Holland



The Danes – and lots of them!



At Glengoyne