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Issue 2 - December 2004

Easter 2005

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Editorial

Firstly, apologies for the lateness of this issue; computers are great when they work! Never mind, it means you've only a couple of weeks to wait until you get the January issue (it's out before Christmas). Thank you for all your kind comments about issue 1, we've almost sold out of our print run. We really need lots of subscribers and advertisers so that we can give you an even better quality magazine. Don't lend your copy to your friends – ask them to subscribe! (Or buy them a subscription for Christmas!)

Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles. If you have anything you would like us to print, please post or e-mail it to us at the address at the bottom of this page. It would also be good to start a letters page, so if you want to respond to any of our articles (one or two of them are quite controversial, and invite discussion) please feel free to do so.

Finally thank you to our friends at Culross Printers – Ian, Bruce & Derek, they make my life a lot easier. Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year, and Dance On!

Karin

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Take The Floor

4th December Sandy Nixon SDB
(The Hamefarers from The Sound Hall, Lerwick 1987)

11th December Craig McCallum SDB
(Simon Howie reviews this year's CDs)

18th December Jimmy Lindsay SDB
(Chris Stout in concert from Fiddle 2004)

25th December Alasdair MacCuish & The Black Rose CB
(OB from Oran Mor, Glasgow, with guests The Annie Grace Trio)

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Dance On! will be published on the 1st of each month.
Deadline for all articles is the 3rd of the preceding month.

Dance On! is printed by Wm Culross & Son Ltd, Queen
Street, Coupar Angus, PH13 9DF Telephone: 01828-627
266 Fax: 01828-627 146 e-mail: culross@btinternet.com
www.culross.co.uk

Front cover photograph © Northbeat.

Front cover design by Bruce Dow, Culross Printers

Subscriptions

Dance On! will be published in the 1st week of each month.
The full season will begin in January. To subscribe for the
2005 season (January to December), please complete the
section below and send it, together with your remittance
made payable to "Northbeat" to:
Dance On!, 7 Achachork, Portree, Isle of Skye IV51 9HT

Subscription is **£24 plus Postage & Packing**

P&P: UK (inc N. Ireland & Channel Islands)	£ 8.40
Europe (inc Republic of Ireland)	£15.60
USA, Canada & Falklands	£25.20
Australia & New Zealand	£26.40
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Full Page	£220.00	£140.00
Half Page	£110.00	£ 70.00
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Eighth Page		£ 18.00
Small Boxed		£ 12.00

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Calling Orkney

Finding Your Calling

To repeat a question posed in the last issue – what's in a name? Dance figures I mean. If you get a coach party in from planet Zog and you try to teach them something "simple" like a Gay Gordons where do you start? I just checked Miss Milligan's 1956 issued "101 Scottish Country Dances" where the *Allemande* figure takes a page of description and a page of drawings! Okay so I just want you to take an *Allemande hold* but even that takes half a page including the words "lift partner's right hand over her head to form a sort of arch..."

And so it was that the Zog coach party arrived in Kirkwall, Orkney a few weeks ago (I suppose if it's Kirkwall it would be a cruise liner) where they made their way to the lovely St Magnus Centre. There, they found a course in progress designed to assist dance callers in their job. The instructor, one K. Ingram, had just set the students the task of calling the easiest dance they could think of. And that's when the fun really started!

The Zogs were confused enough with the language barrier but they weren't half as disruptive as the students determined to make the caller give accurate information! "Star? Which



The Dance Callers

one?" or "Ballroom hold – what do you mean?" and "But I AM facing my partner!" were all heard among other queries. And that's just what Karin was looking for – making the caller THINK what they were asking dancers to do, with clear, concise instruction. Timing was another issue for callers and teachers to consider. There's no point in rushing through a set of instructions so that the dancers think it all happens in 8 bars (unless it's an English barn dance in which case it probably does). Whether it's a couple dance or a set dance we should all be together – same move, same figure, and same music.

It does help if you let the dancers hear the music in sections so they know how it all fits, though that doesn't seem to be a common practice these

days. Surprising when you think how awkward it was to find the right track on the LP compared to modern CDs! And it's much easier if you have a talented musician waiting for your instruction to "play the last four bars please" to see how things fit.

Which brings me on to what was happening in another room at the St Magnus Centre that weekend. We had accordionist Nicol McLaren over to take local musicians through their paces – pace being an important consideration. The Orkney Traditional Dance Association (OTDA) who organised the course had asked Jean Leonard to bring some of her musicians from all over the islands. They were all keen to hear just what was the difference in "playing for dance".



The Dance Musicians



**Linda Lennie puts the dancers
through their paces**

Nicol demonstrated correct tempo – vital if you want dancers to feel comfortable (too slow is probably worse than too fast) – and the difference between playing as a group and being a dance band. Forgive me if I go off on a time-tangent at this point to illustrate the difference. I've been to a couple of events recently where the musicians brought in to play for dance hadn't a clue what dance music was all about. Worse than that, they barely knew what dances to announce ("call" doesn't fit here). But both bands could have run a better than average music concert or pub session so whose fault was it that they were called to play for dances? Hmmmm...

Not all musicians want to learn to

play for dance and you cannot force them – apparently we are too fussy for most capable musicians! Which brings us back to Orkney. Here was a very talented group of musicians who were keen to learn about *why* we are so fussy. If only we could get more musicians to at least have a look at what's involved.

Nicol took them through some simple tips like why set dancers like a chord to begin, how to put together a set of tunes that don't jar with the flow of the dance, and the importance of knowing how many bars a dance is supposed to be. If there's a caller involved that last point is down to

floor – a daunting experience but they all did well. Yes, even one who shall be nameless, who took the easy way out and announced "Virginia Reel. 48 bars. You all know it"! The party from Zog didn't so they sat it out.

Whether you sat out or danced though, it has to be said that our band was just *wonderful!* Nicol had got them all up to speed (the correct one of course) and the result was truly memorable. I must do some name-checks : Jim Anderson (who provided the sound equipment for the weekend), Lesley MacLeod, Eddie Firth, Ricky and Jimmy Marwick, Ellen Grieve and her two boys, Diane Kelday, Michael



Elma Bews calls The Festival Glide

them – such as: which version of the Virginia Reel is it? 48 bar? 64?

The callers back in the main hall at the St Magnus Centre were picking up all this knowledge as well as useful guides to speaking into a microphone. Apparently you talk to the blunt end. And you use your mouth not your ear to speak into it. Even the most mic-shy students were using it as comfortably as old crooners before the day was out and they could concentrate on their calling.

We had a couple of dances during the weekend and all the students had a chance to call in front of a full dance

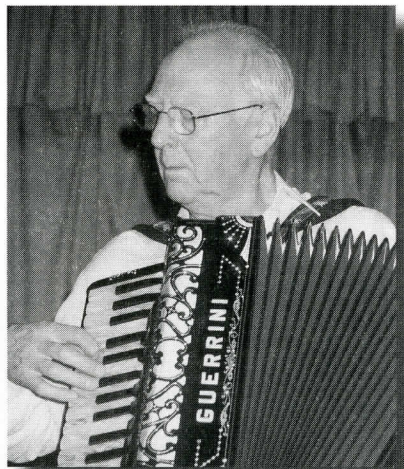
Johnston, Inga Nicholson, Emma Flett, Amy Westwell, Andy Leonard, and of course Jean Leonard – thanks Jean for bringing them together.

A very successful weekend courtesy of the OTDA and we wish them every success with their efforts to encourage traditional dance. There is quite a revival of interest on Orkney and I'm really looking forward to the first Orkney Dance Festival taking place next Easter. Those of you familiar with the Island Flings on Skye will recognise the core of the new festival to which we have added exotica such as Salsa, Arabic Dance and Flamenco! Details are on page 2 in this month's magazine.

So – it's been a busy old month, with the magazine taking off in a big way. We are almost sold out of the first issue so keep hold of your copy, as it's likely to become a collector's item. The centre pages of dance notations are definitely there to be filed and we hope you like the selection this month. Don't forget to write in to us if you have any opinions or ideas or things to sell. Which reminds me: white SCD frock, size 14-16, polyester, Princess style, small cap sleeves; dark blue velvet waistcoat, button front, size 16 offers. (You've got 3 words left. Ed.) Phone 01478-613 104.



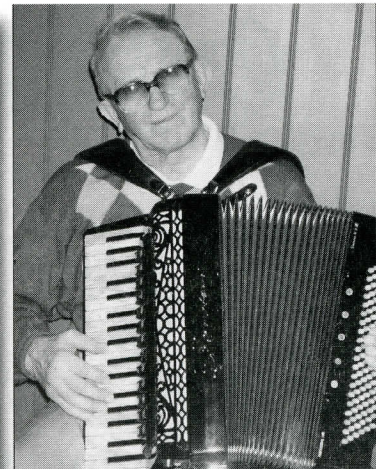
Shifin' Bobbins



Jim Anderson



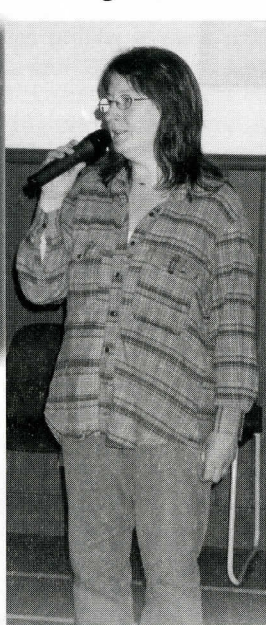
Lorna Fotheringham teaches the dancers



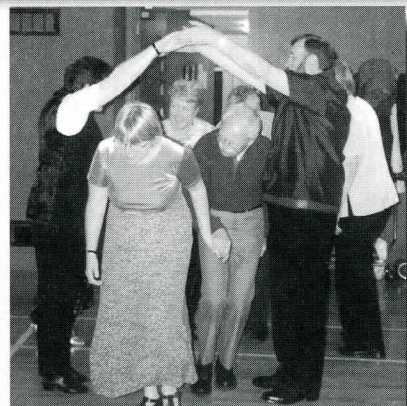
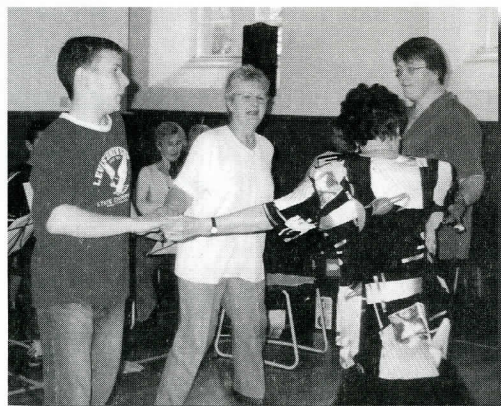
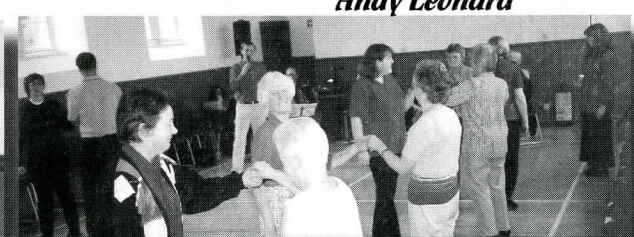
Andy Leonard



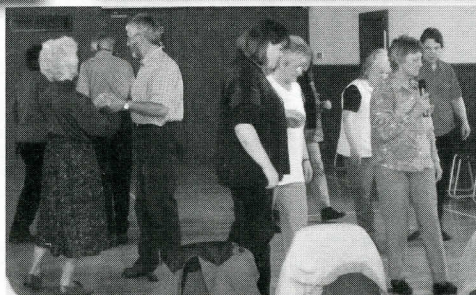
Lesley MacLeod



Pam Farmer



Linda & Chris Vasey



*All photographs © Northbeat or OTDA
More on page 31*

Orkney Traditional Dance Association

Orkney has a history of dance and music with lots of tales from bygone days throughout the parishes and islands. I remember being picked up by bus every Saturday, on Hoy, when I was a "peedie lass" and taken to a hall about eight miles away to learn Country Dancing at the classes held by our doctor's wife, Mrs Helen Peace. The dance that I remember most from those days is Petronella, which I now teach at the Monday night dancing I do here on Hoy. I suppose that was my foundation in dance and now, after an awful lot of years, I am involved with the work of OTDA.

OTDA was set up at a public meeting in Kirkwall on 8th February 1998 where a committee was formed and the work of preserving and promoting traditional dance began by raising funds to bring dance tutors to the islands. There has always been a lot of dancing going on in Orkney but there seemed to be a decline in children dancing, therefore the heritage would slip away easily if interest were not roused. The first tutor to come was Mats Melin in March of the first year and some workshops were done in schools and in the community halls. Maria Leask from Shetland has also been a regular visitor, leading very successful workshops in schools and community halls throughout Orkney over the past six years. She is always

willing to encourage people to get up and dance at ceilidhs. OTDA settled into a pattern of having about three main ceilidhs per year along with other regular workshop slots as funds became harder to find to do new things and the regular events we held were more or less self-financing. A lot of support was given by "The Wyre Band" who are always willing to play at a great pace and fill the floors with dancers.

In more recent times one of our committee members, Mrs Lana Fotheringham, has organised weekly dancing in the King Street Halls, Kirkwall throughout the summer months, then reducing these nights to fortnightly in the winter. Local tutors give their time willingly to make these evenings fun for everyone. A lot of visitors to Orkney have been warmly welcomed at these dancing evenings over the past two summers and we hope to see a lot more in the future. Some people just come along to listen to and enjoy the live music provided by local musicians.

2004 has been a very busy year for us, beginning with a weekend of dance workshops and ceilidhs with Jessie Stuart. This was planned for January but snow postponed the event until May. (No it didn't snow from January until May but Jessie is a very busy lady with a very full diary!) What a great weekend we had – it was worth waiting for! Maria Leask



Mabel Besant

did a great job in September during the Orkney Science Festival when she completed a very busy programme around schools through the day followed by a number of evening events and ceilidhs. The schools had a great time with Maria, many of them dancing outside in brilliant sunshine.

At the moment we are planning our next events, which have been supported by Orkney Museums and Heritage who have funded us to hold three events in the lead up to the Orkney Dance Festival at Easter 2005. The first of these events was held from 22nd – 24th October with Karin Ingram teaching calling for dance and Nicol McLaren teaching music for dance. The two combined workshops were fantastic and so many young musicians were there. A lot of new skills were learnt that weekend. The final two events are in the planning stages for February and March. We will let you all know what is happening through the pages of Dance On!.



The Anniversary Two-Step

Any Good Reel

By Finlay Forbes

Somewhere in my distant past when I had hair and acne, I possessed a book called "101 Scottish Country Dances". Its contents were recycled and, as I was to discover later, heavily adapted from eighteenth and early nineteenth century dance collections. Each dance had a caption headed "music", which was often along the lines of "any good reel", "any good jig" or "any good strathspey". As I recall, only "The Reel of Tulloch" carried the somewhat severe adjuration, "This dance should be danced to its own tune and no other". In my youthful cynicism I longed to see at least one entry reading "any bad reel" or even "any undistinguished reel".

In fact, the request for "any reel" good bad or indifferent is particularly unhelpful because the "Reel" as a specific type of tune has now ceased to exist. All that remains of it is a basic rhythm that probably dates from the late Victorian age. The melodic distinctions that once set reels apart from other dance tunes have long since disappeared. There are lots of tunes called reels but surprisingly few actually are. Perhaps I should qualify this by saying that very few of them are reels in the way that the contemporaries of Niel Gow and William Marshall would have understood the term.

There is a difference between tunes to which reels can be danced and tunes that are classic Scots reels of the kind that existed in the age of Gow and Marshall. It is possible to dance "Monymusk" to *Onward Christian Soldiers* but that does not make Sir Arthur Sullivan's hymn tune a strathspey.

Over the years, "reel" has become a generic term for a whole raft of different types of melody that just happen to have the same rhythmic pattern in the bass. The standardisation of rhythms in modern Scottish country dancing has resulted in distinctive old tunes such as quicksteps, Scots measures, hornpipes and Allemandes being subsumed into the category of reels. Even slow airs are not immune. *Johnnie in Nether Mains* now used for both "None so Pretty" and "Mrs. Stewart Linnell" started its published life as a slow air as did *Niel Gow's Farewell to Whisky*. Such extraordinary hybridisation of the reel may be anathema to some purists but historically it is probably

no bad thing. Victorian fiddlers lost the plot of the classic eighteenth century Scots reel somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century and it has remained lost ever since. The romantic notion that the Victorian fiddlers carried on a tradition going back in a direct line to Gow and Marshall may be attractive to

similar vintage would cause even today's stars of bellows and bow a headache or two and even if anyone did manage to play it, the result would be little more than an unseemly scramble of notes making little musical sense. The evidence

Scottish country dancing and Scots fiddle music went into serious decline in the eighteen twenties

died in the wool fiddlers (and to RSCDS historians) but it is a highly improbable interpretation of what actually happened. Scottish country dancing and Scots fiddle music went into serious decline in the eighteen twenties and did not really regain their popularity until Queen Victoria's love affair with Scotland made them fashionable again. By then, the trail had gone decidedly cold and a very different type of music (and probably a very different type of dancing) emerged from the Victorian revival.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society's somewhat whimsical interpretations of reel tunes from "the golden age of fiddle music" have merely served to confound confusion even further. Why, for example, are *Cadgers in the Canongate* and *The Stewarts' Rant* taken at twice the speed of *The Duke of Perth* and *I'll Gang Nae Mair Tae Yon Toun* when the collections from which they originally came made no such distinction? Or better still why is *Push About The Jorum* taken at twice the speed of *Maxwell's Rant* when both are variants of the same tune?

It is highly unlikely that eighteenth century fiddlers played *The Stewarts' Rant* (Stuart's Rant?) at anything like today's breakneck speed. Rob Gordon's half-speed version was probably much nearer the mark. The RSCDS version (courtesy of Gow) is playable in the modern style but some other versions published at around the same time probably aren't. Alexander MacGlashan's far more ornate arrangement of

that we have suggests that the eighteenth century reel was a much more leisurely and expansive affair than today's performing conventions would lead us to believe.

Cadgers in the Canongate is a good example of a tune that sounds pretty grim and dreary when played according to the instructions in RSCDS Book 9. If you try playing it in the "half-speed" style of *Maxwell's Rant* or *The Duke of Perth*, it actually sounds quite melodious. It also fits the dance a lot more closely by giving the dancers the same strain of music for both opening reels of three. The way the music is written in Walsh's "Caledonian Country Dances" from which the dance originally came, adds weight to this argument. (As a point in passing, Walsh's version of the dance has been watered down considerably to accommodate modern footwork. The Belles and Beaux of eighteenth century Edinburgh would struggle to recognise the dance that they did then as the dance that we do today.) There is certainly a strong body of circumstantial evidence to support the "half speed theory". In common with a number of eighteenth century reel tunes, *Cadgers in the Canongate* picked up a set of words. *contd over*

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McLaren**

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Lassies o' the Canongate, they are
wondrous wise,
They winna gie's a single kiss but for
a double price,
Gar hang them, gar hang them, high
upon a tree,
For I'll get better up the gate for ae
bawbee.

These somewhat uncomplimentary
(and probably bowdlerised) words
fit the melody very neatly at "half
speed". At the speed suggested in
RSCDS Book 9, they would sound
like the rantings of an auctioneer
from hell. There are a few other
more famous examples of reel tunes
with words such as *Green Grow the
Rashes O!* (Yes it was a reel in the
eighteenth century) and *Cameronian
Rant*, which Burns used for his song
The Battle of Shirramuir.

The second piece of evidence that
points to slower speeds is the
number of reels that are now played
as strathspeys. These include *The
Bridge of Nairn* (also called *The Old
Man Will Never Die*), *Lennoxlove
to Blantyre*, *Miss Betsy Robertson*
(published twice as a reel by Red Rob
MacIntosh), *Jenny's Bawbee* and *I'm
Ower Young Tae Marry Yet*.

The final and perhaps most
interesting pointer to slower speeds
is the number of old reels that didn't
survive beyond the decline of Scottish
music and dance in the second
quarter of the nineteenth century.
Obviously the eighteenth century
collections had the usual crop of
makeweights, pot boilers and tunes
that were published to flatter patrons
and guarantee subscribers but even
if we take account of these, there are
still a number of fascinating tunes
that Victorian collectors decided to
discard. These tunes are well out of
line with Victorian understanding of
reels but make perfect musical sense
if played in the style of *The Duke of
Perth* or *Maxwell's Rant*.

So where does this leave us?

The modern reel, which shows
genetic traits of such diverse melodic
progenitors as Scots measures,
hornpipes, marches and reels is a
robust, living and expanding art form.
New and interesting examples come
out regularly from a highly active
music publishing industry. The late
Victorian reels of Scott-Skinner and
his contemporaries are equally alive
and well, mainly because they fit
neatly and easily into the mould of
modern Scottish country and ceilidh
dances. It is the eighteenth century
reels that are likely to be lost to the
tradition unless we rethink the way
in which we play them. Perhaps
the time has come for musicians to
take matters into their own hands by
adopting the "half speed" approach
and giving dancers and listeners
some very pleasant surprises. Who
knows? We may even end up dancing
"Cadgers in the Canongate" to its own
tune.

Nearly Late Is Just in Time

The Lament of a Country Dancer who started too late in Life

By George Hobson

*Dedicated to all those clever-clogs, who find no difficulty in finishing at the same time as the music
(even though what they did in the dance may have had limited relationship to that music)*

We've all known a dancer like
Seoras
Whose technique was terribly
poor, as
The music was ending, with him
clearly intending
To launch into encore and chorus!

How clearly he does love the
dance,
He merely needs to hear it,
Here we go, just one more
chance,
To get him somewhere near it!

All down the set we'd hear him
humming,
With the tunes he thought he
knew,
Though off the beat set by the
drumming,
His simple pleasure caught us
too.

In his head, we know, his
singing,
Is as pure as Linties can,
So let's leave him to his swinging
For he's just an *Englishman*!

Lassie wi' the Yellow Coatie,
May I be your Brisk Young Lad
Twa Roguish E'en You have
a'twinkling,
Sad I was, but now I'm glad.

The Gilly Flower shall open
sweetly,
And hills o'Quern will Flower
anon,
And we shall ever dance them
neatly.
Hands across, and round, and
gone.

Bees and Geese will fly and
flutter,
The Papillon will have his day,
Though my feet may often
stutter,
Set and cast, and reel away!

Friends in Frolics Joe or
Campbell,
And All the Airts their Saltire's
Frae,
Where every heart that loves the
dance well,
While corners pass, shall dancing
stay.

Assembling each Summer for
Autumn in Appin,
These Braes are too Northern for
Roses to grace;
But Blooms are as Bonny when
we let Accord in,
So lassie let's step in, and move
up one place.

My Bobbins are Shifted,
The Reivers have reeled out,
The Thistledown's drifted,
And this rant is a rout.

My Love is But a Lassie Yet,
When birling swift and clean,
She is the darling of the set,
Not sixty? No, sixteen!"

How dearly do I love the dance,
How nearly do I know it,
Here I go, just one more chance,
To finish with... oh blow it!

And as each fertile precious
flower,
Is, in fruitfulness, beholden
To the busy dancing bees,
I will futile hold no passing hour,
But count them blest and full and
golden,
Spent with dancers such as
these.

***Cha leasachadh air droch obair latha a bhi fada
gun toiseachadh:***

***but finishing early is good riddance to a bad
workman.***

Appalachian Clog Dancers

(Kick The Cat)

The title above is correct yet misleading – the dancers do NOT wear clogs, they wear tap-shoes and two of the steps are the "Fred" as in "Astaire" and the "Gene" as in "Kelly"! Appalachian Clog is a fast and fun American step dance style with roots in Scottish and Irish step dance, influenced by Native American and African-American traditions. As a sample of some of the steps we include Cajun Lady, Calypso, Cowboys, Indians, Alamo, Kick the Cat, Wagon Wheels, Vine, Ponies, the list is endless and the music is lively and rhythmical.



The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 7.30 to 9.00p.m. in the Drama Room of St. Margaret's School at East Suffolk Road, Newington, Edinburgh. New members are always welcome and you don't need a partner. If you don't possess "taps" wear hard-soled shoes.

We dance for our own enjoyment but have been known to do a demonstration at the occasional ceilidh and at Traquair and Scone so we polished up the shoes and practised hard but good fun and fellowship in a refreshing dance is the main object. Interested? Come along any evening to find out more or have a trial. We are a very friendly group! Total beginners find they can do some basic steps on the first evening. For more information telephone 0131-552 1622 or e-mail mumsuth@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.appalachian-clogging.nildram.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you or, better still, meeting you, soon!

David & Sheila Sutherland

Strathspey Away

A Weekend in Heaven

We were promised a sensational weekend and it certainly lived up to it and more. "Strathspey Away with Dannsa" in its 2nd year in Kingussie managed to surpass most of the students' expectations. We were totally spoilt for choice with new classes being added in Fiddle, Puirt-a-beul (mouth music) and Mouthie and a wealth of talented tutors for all of the classes. More than 120 students from Scotland and England enrolled in classes over the weekend.

The Festival got off to a brilliant start on Friday night with a packed dance floor, all trying to keep up with the very lively "Incredible Fling Band". All ages took to the floor and enjoyed themselves whether they

knew the dances or not – or indeed whether they were able or not! After lunch on Saturday the group "Amh" gave a breathtaking performance in the Talla na Ros. No wonder they've been called the future of Gaelic singing, I feel sure we're going to hear a lot more from this trio in the future. Saturday evening's concert with "Dannsa" was excellent yet again. They danced steps, moves and rhythms pulling from the whole spectrum of Scottish Traditional dance, stretching the limits the whole time. And when you don't think you can be surprised by much more, on Sunday we were given a chance to see a contemporary piece of work performed by Caroline Reagh and Ian Hardie, which was stunning! All in all an incredibly well organised Festival with a very personal touch from the organisers and tutors. Thank you on behalf of all the students. Roll on Strathspey Away 2005 and give me another weekend in Heaven!

Sheila McCutcheon

Dunedin Dancers

A Scottish Dance Group in Edinburgh

Members of Dunedin Dancers believe that Scottish dancing should be fun. With members in Germany, Slovenia, California and New Zealand, Dunedin Dancers almost seems to be an international group of Scottish dancers, but it's firmly based in Edinburgh. Nevertheless, members travel overseas to attend international folk dance festivals every year, and over the last few years they have performed Scottish dances at festivals in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. In return, Dunedin Dancers invites folk dancers from other countries to its own international folk dance festival in Scotland. Scottish audiences have recently enjoyed performances of dancing from the Basque country, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Wales, as well as performances of flag waving from Belgium.

Origin of Dunedin Dancers

Indeed, this is why Dunedin Dancers was created. Back in the 1960s, members of Edinburgh University New Scotland Country Dance Society attended many enjoyable folk dance festivals abroad (as the current members still do). They wanted to thank some of their hosts by inviting them to a folk dance festival in Scotland. So they formed Dunedin Dancers in 1970 specifically to organise an international folk dance festival. That first festival in 1971

was a success, and Dunedin Dancers has organised a festival every second year since then.

The original members were graduates of Edinburgh University, but Dunedin Dancers soon widened its membership; it now has nearly two hundred members, most of them living within easy reach of Edinburgh. Other members who used to live in Edinburgh have retained their membership even though they have moved to England or farther afield.

Dancing in Edinburgh

As well as the biennial festival, Dunedin Dancers organises Scottish country dancing in Edinburgh throughout the year. About thirty to forty members meet each week for



enjoyment – the dancers enjoy themselves, which feeds back to the band, who play better as a result, which means the dancers enjoy themselves even more, which feeds back to the band ... and a good time is had by all. There are also social events throughout the year, such as visits to restaurants, barbecues, theatre visits, ghost walks, archery, clay pigeon shooting and so on.

Young and Old Alike

Dunedin Dancers still has strong links with Edinburgh University New Scotland Country Dance Society, and many people are members of both clubs. As a result, members range from about eighteen years old to well over retirement age, although members' children as young as twelve have performed in Dunedin's teams. This mix of ages is almost unique in Scottish country dancing clubs, and very refreshing. Dunedin Dancers also has almost as many men as women, which makes for a livelier atmosphere. Possibly as a result, Dunedin Dancers has been very successful at matchmaking; many members have married other members, and two members married Belgian pipers that they met on trips abroad!

Performing in Edinburgh

Every year Dunedin Dancers provides demonstration teams to perform Scottish dances (mainly country dances, but also Highland dances and ceilidh dances) at conferences, sales meetings, charity days and evenings, international meetings, sporting ceremonies, weddings and other functions. Highlights have included performing for Prince Edward in the Signet Library and for the



social dancing, with live music twice a month. These weekly meetings are quite different from most other country dance clubs' evenings. A different member chooses and calls the dances each week, and the dances are often new and challenging. Members are expected to learn each dance from a single walk-through; if you like your dances broken down into 8-bar phrases then Dunedin Dancers is not for you! But if you are a competent country dancer, and like a challenge, then you would probably enjoy the weekly meetings. Dunedin Dancers organises an annual Assembly in Edinburgh – "Assembly" being a traditional Scottish name for a Ball – and two informal dances each year, all with popular Scottish dance bands. The emphasis is on



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh. The dancers often encourage (or, indeed, force) the audience to join in dances such as The Gay Gordons and Dashing White Sergeant, and occasionally they organise a whole evening of Scottish dancing for the audience. These performances raise money to help pay for the biennial festival, and they also support one of Dunedin Dancers' key objectives which is to promote the appreciation of Scottish dancing.

For formal (evening) performances, the ladies wear an elegant long dress based on a 19th century Scottish costume; the men wear a standard Prince Charlie and kilt. The day dress for ladies is a white blouse, dark waistcoat and plain skirt, while the men wear the kilt and a Jacobean or French Revolution shirt.

International Folk Dance Festival

The highlight of the calendar is the Biennial International Folk Dance Festival. Every second year in July, Dunedin Dancers (now in association with Edinburgh University New Scotland Country Dance Society) invites three or four groups of folk dancers from other countries to Edinburgh for a week's performing and socialising. The last seven festivals have been based at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, with regular performances at Stirling Castle, Falkland Palace and the Church Hill Theatre in Edinburgh, and occasional performances in Peebles, Linlithgow, Dunfermline, Haddington, Dalkeith and elsewhere in Edinburgh. As well as giving audiences the opportunity to see folk dances and folk costumes from around the world, these performances help to set

seen everywhere, while every culture has its wedding dance. Dunedin Dancers' festival is the only regular event in Scotland where Scottish dancing can be seen alongside folk dancing from other countries. Workshops are organised during the

Scottish dancing in its international context. While everyone is familiar with the link between Scotland and France (the pas-de-basque, for example), dances and formations have been shared between many European countries for generations. Square and circle dances can be

objectives! Two of Dunedin Dancers' most popular ceilidh dances are The Stern Polka and The Swedish Masquerade – both learnt from folk dance groups at festivals.

This all takes a lot of money and a lot of hard work. Members and friends provide bed and breakfast for about one hundred visiting dancers and musicians, prepare and serve meals in the College for about two hundred people each day, organise and pay for transport to and from the venues, hire and organise sound equipment, run a bar (vitally important!), and undertake all the myriad other tasks which are essential if the festival is to be a success.

More Information

Dunedin Dancers is a charity. Its objectives are "to promote participation in, and the appreciation of, Scottish country dancing and highland dancing, and any other form of dancing, whether Scottish, folk or otherwise, including, in particular, the organisation of and the promotion of attendance at folk or folk dance festivals whether in the UK or abroad". It is affiliated to the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

If you would like to learn more about Dunedin Dancers, visit Dunedin's website at www.dunedindancers.org.uk, or contact the secretary (Katy Gray) by e-mail on contact@du

nedindancers.org.uk, or by post at 65 Laichpark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1XA, or by telephone on 0131-466 0074.

Peter N Edwards



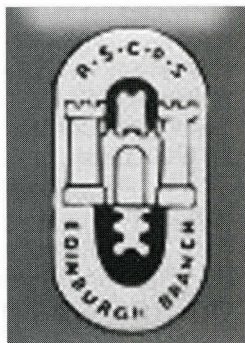
festival to allow the dancers to learn and try out each other's dances (some less successfully than others, for example the Hambo from Sweden!) and for the musicians to swap tunes and to jam together. The evening sessions provide more opportunities to try new dances and to make new friends. While promoting and performing folk dancing, including Scottish dancing, may be the main purpose of the festival, promoting international relations and having fun are certainly very important subsidiary



Web Dancer

By Sue Petyt

This column will appear each month and I will review two websites associated with dancing. If you would like your site reviewed please e-mail the link to me at sue@suepetyt.me.uk. These observations are based on my professional opinion and personal preferences, please e-mail your views or write to the letters page.



www.rscdsedinburgh.org

The Edinburgh Branch website has recently been redesigned and a couple of pages are still to be finalised. The new website is a significant improvement and the branch and Webmaster are to be commended.

The Home Page has photos, which don't take too long to download even on a slow dial up, and there is some text, but not too much. The menu on the left hand side of the screen is clear, and all the links work.

From the menu it is possible to print a form to apply for membership or to join a class. The classes' page tells you all you would need to know and provides an e-mail address if there is still uncertainty.

Functions and events run by the Edinburgh Branch are listed until June 2005 with programmes for the next two dances and a link to Minicribs (no excuses then!)

There is a shop page that lists items for sale, the only one I have seen so far for dancing (no doubt loads of mail to tell me otherwise!). The contact is via e-mail rather than on-line shopping, so presumably "snail mail" will take over after that, however an e-mail that I sent was responded to in less than twelve hours, very important to demonstrate that a site is actively managed. If you want to receive the "Dancing Forth" Magazine, which the Edinburgh Branch produces, you can complete a form and will thereafter receive it via e-mail, a great way of increasing circulation; I will let you know if it works!

The only criticism is the links page. Some of the information is out of date (I was at some of those Trinity dances last year) and some of the years may have been typed in wrongly and say 2004 instead of 2005. This is difficult to guard against and it is best to get members to check the site for these sorts of errors.

The links page could be expanded to include the RSCDS HQ page and other local branches, but I would say this is the most professional site I have seen so far.

**Remember – The Dance On! Website is
at www.danceon.co.uk
and is being constantly updated**

BBC RADIO SCOTLAND

92-95 fm 810 mw



www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/radioscotland

Take the Floor

To select the Take the Floor website you need to click on the drop down arrow and choose it from the list of Radio Scotland programmes. You can then add the link to your favourites.

I know the BBC has a huge website, and parts of it are very good, but I do find the Take the Floor page disappointing. As the BBC use a Content Management System for their website, the content of the page is likely to be the responsibility of the Take the Floor staff. (*No, it's done from a central point – Ed.*)

The main part of the page has a few words about the history of the programme and there is a link to e-mail Robbie, (and whenever I have done so I have received a reply) and there is also a profile of Robbie. These items do not change (for obvious reasons) and are interesting the first time you look, but if you are a regular user of the site they soon become ignored.

The best feature of the website is the ability to listen again, so if you missed the previous Saturday's programme, or thought it was particularly good, or live out of range of Radio Scotland it provides a wonderful opportunity which didn't used to exist.

The play lists for "this week" and "last week" are also available, but it is not always clear when the weeks are changed. I looked on a Sunday and the "this week's" list was for the programme the night before. This can be a bit confusing if the website is not going to be updated shortly after the programme finishes even though the dates are on the playlists, particularly as there have been occasions when the information has still not been updated by mid-week. The information on the front page has dates and photographs of the bands although it is limited. Why not include links to the bands' own web pages where they exist?

I think an opportunity is also being missed by not giving details of future programmes, the information must be available because it is published in both "Dance On" and "The 'Box and Fiddle" magazines. It seems odd that it is not on the programme's website.

One of the features that used to be on the website, but was dropped some time ago was the dance diary. I always found this very useful, but when I queried its disappearance (lots of e-mails between Robbie and me) I found that the reason was simply that hardly anyone looked at it. I still find this surprising, given the number of hits which I know the Dumfries RSCDS site gets on the events page. Perhaps through the pages of this magazine we could have a discussion on how the web can best help with the publishing of dance events. Should dance events be available by area, by type of dancing or some other way – what do you think?

The Dancer's Web

8 x 32 Reel

Formation: Longways Set of Four Couples

This dance has been written to recognise the increasing role of the Internet (the Web) in the proliferation of Scottish Country Dancing

1-4 First couple set and cast to second place, second couple step up on bars **3 & 4**

5-8 Second and first couples dance right hand across finishing in the centre of the set facing down, right hands joined, second couple behind first couple.

9-16 First couple followed by second couple lead down, right hands joined, between the third couple, cross over and cast up behind the third couple, meet in the centre, join right hands, dance up to the top. First couple cross and cast to second place, second couple cross and cast to first place (dancing a loop).

17-20 First couple dance half a reel of four with first corners.

21-24 First couple turn right hand (or spin) while second and third couples dance half way round the set in a clockwise direction.

25-28 First couple dance half a reel of four with second corner positions.

29-32 Second, first and third couples turn right hands (or spin).

Repeat having passed a couple.

© Sue Petyt

A video of this and of The Three Square Strathspey being danced can be found at www.suepetyt.me.uk

The Three Square Strathspey

3 x 32 Strathspey

A dance for three couples in a square set

First and third couples stand as for a normal square set. Second lady stands in second couple's place, and second man stands in fourth couple's place.

1-4 First and third couples dance right hand across all the way round, to finish in the centre of the set, first couple facing second lady and third couple facing second man, WHILE second couple set, and pulling left shoulder back, cast to finish second lady in first couple's place, and second man in third couple's place.

5-8 First couple with second lady, third couple with second man dance left hands across all the way round.

9-12 First couple with second lady dance half a reel of three, second lady giving right shoulder to first lady, WHILE third couple with second man dance half a reel of three, second man giving right shoulder to third lady.

13-16 First and third couples turn right hand to finish in partner's original place. Second couple turn right hand and finish, second lady facing first lady and second man facing first man.

17-20 First and second couple dance half rights and lefts, finishing second couple in first couple's original place, first lady finishes facing third lady and first man finishes facing third man.

21-24 First and third couples dance half rights and lefts, to finish first couple in third couple's original place and third couple (on the sides) in second couple's original place.

25-32 All circle round and back.

Repeat from new positions.

© Sue Petyt

The Dhoon

4 x 32 Reels or Jigs

Formation: Longwise sets of four couples

This is a children's dance and appears in a BBC Teachers' pack.

Bars

1-2 With hands joined in line, everyone takes four sidesteps to the right (lines move in opposite directions).

3-4 Everyone takes four sidesteps to the left (back to place).

5-8 Everyone turns their partner once with the right hand.

9-10 Everyone takes four sidesteps to the left.

11-12 Everyone takes four sidesteps to the right.

13-16 Everyone turns their partner once with the left hand.

17-20 Leading couple cast off one place, meet and join nearer hands in the centre, and dance back to place. (Lady 1 has danced round Lady 2 and Man 1 has danced round Man 2.)

21-24 Leading couple again cast off, but this time they go to the bottom of the set. (The other dancers stand still, they do not follow on.)

25-32 All join hands in a circle and dance to the left for eight steps and back to the right for eight steps.

The above thirty-two bars are repeated until each couple has performed the dance, or for the duration of the music.

© Dance On!

Duns Golden Years

This dance was devised by Elizabeth Bolton to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Duns & District Branch of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. The music is by Bill Ross who plays for their dancing.

32 Bar Reels

Formation: Longways set of four couples

Bars 1 – 8 1st couple set and use 4 bars to cast off into second place and set advancing to face 1st corners. Second couple step up on bars 5 and 6.

Bars 9 – 16 1st couple turn first corners with the right, partner with left, 2nd corners with right, and partner using the final left hand to finish in the middle ready for reels of three across.

Bars 17 – 24 Reels of three across, 1st woman gives left shoulder to 2nd man and 1st man gives left shoulder to 3rd woman; 1st couple pass right shoulder into

Bars 25 – 32 Reels of three across, 1st woman gives right shoulder to 3rd man and 1st man gives right shoulder to 2nd woman.

Bars 1 – 32 are repeated from second place with the Leading Couple now dancing with Couples 3 & 4.

© Elizabeth Bolton

The Call of the Pipes

This dance dates from the end of the 19th century

4/4 or 6/8 Marches

Formation: Couple side by side, lady on man's right, facing the line of dance with nearer hands joined.

Bars

1–2 Couple walk forwards for four steps
3–4 Couple walk backwards for four steps
5–6 Couple turn to face each other and the man links his right arm with the lady's right arm and they make a half-turn clockwise, thus changing places.

7–8 Couple make a half-turn anti-clockwise with left arms to return to their places.

9–12 In ballroom hold, couple take two side-steps towards the line of dance, and two against the line of dance.

13–16 Couple polka together for four bars.

The above sixteen bars are repeated for the duration of the music.

© Northbeat 1997

Sindy Swing

This dance appeared in the first official board new sequence dance competition, Latin Section, and was arranged by Peter Varley.

4/4 tempo

Side by side holding nearer hands

Bars

- 1** Step forward left foot and point right foot.
- 2** Step back right foot and point left foot back.
- 3** Lock step left foot.
- 4** Lock step right foot.
- 5–6** Both outside turn taking four steps.
- 7** Step to wall with left foot, step to side with right foot. Right foot close left foot to right foot.
- 8** Step back right foot, step to side left foot, close right to left.
(Gent facing diag to wall lady facing to centre and facing each other taking each other's right hands at shoulder height)
- 9** Left foot to side, right foot forward, join right hands, check.
- 10** Release hold, left back, right foot to side, close left to right.
- 11** Right foot to side, left foot forward, join left hands, check.
- 12** Release hold, right foot back, left foot to side, close right foot to left. Face wall.
- 13** Left foot to side, into double hold, right foot forward.
- 14** Left foot to side, into waltz hold, close right to left. Left foot back down line of dance.
- 15** Right foot to side, close left to right, right to side.
- 16** Left to side, into open hold, close right to left.

© D. Cronie

Did You Know?

The well-known dance, The Duke of Perth is also known as "Broun's Reel" and, in the past, "Clean Pease Strae". This dance has been popular for many years, dating from the early nineteenth century, although the original music first appears in The Drummond Castle Manuscript of 1734. The Duke in question is probably James Drummond, created first Duke of Perth by the exiled King James VII in 1695. The alternative titles are likely to stem from the names of tunes commonly played for the dance – "Broun's Reel", for example, came from Stewart's Collection first published in 1761 and the first written version of the dance appears in the Blantyre Manuscript (c. 1805).

Duns Golden Years

Elizabeth Bolton of Dunbar

32 bar Reel

First system of musical notation (measures 1-4). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords are indicated below the bass line: D, Em, A⁷, G, D, Em, A⁷. Measure numbers 1 and 9 are written above the first two measures of the bass line.

Second system of musical notation (measures 5-8). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords are indicated below the bass line: D, Em, A, G, A⁷, D, G, D. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are written above the first four measures of the bass line.

Third system of musical notation (measures 9-12). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords are indicated below the bass line: D, G, B⁷, A, A⁷, D. Measure numbers 17 and 25 are written above the first two measures of the bass line.

Fourth system of musical notation (measures 13-16). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords are indicated below the bass line: G, A⁷, D, G, D, A⁷, D, A, D. Measure numbers 13 and 14 are written above the first two measures of the bass line. The system includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.).

Composed and arranged by Bill Ross

Each month we will print one piece of music. If you are sending music please check with the composer/publisher that permission is granted to reproduce it in the magazine. If you are sending sheet music by post, please sent it flat, preferably in a cardboard-backed envelope, so that we can take a clear scan of it for printing.

The Barony Waltz

32 Bar Waltz

Formation – Couples facing line of dance, ladies on their partners' right and with nearer hands joined (man's right, lady's left).

This dance was devised by Davie Cronie of Dumfries, who has run a very popular dance group in the Barony College for a number of years. Freeland Barbour wrote the original tune for Davie and his wife Cathie.

1 - 2 Dancers balance away from their partners, and then together again.

3 - 4 Bars 1 - 2 are repeated.

5 - 6 Each dancer does one full turn away from their partner, (ladies turning clockwise, men turning anti-clockwise).

7 - 8 Facing partners, with both hands joined (men with backs to centre) couples take two side-steps towards the line of dance (man's left, lady's right), and finish facing against the line of dance with nearer hands joined (man's left, lady's right).

9 - 12 Bars 1 - 4 are repeated against line of dance.

13 - 14 Each dancer does one full turn away from their partner, (ladies turning anti-clockwise, men turning clockwise).

15 - 16 Facing partners, with both hands joined (men with backs to centre) couples take two side-steps against the line of dance (man's right, lady's left).

17 - 18 With the man still holding the lady's right hand in his left, couple move towards each other and change places with the lady passing underneath the man's raised left arm.

19 - 20 Facing partners, with both hands joined (ladies with backs to centre) couples take two side-steps towards the line of dance (lady's left, man's right).

21 - 22 With the man still holding the lady's right hand in his left, couple move towards each other again and return to original places with the lady passing underneath the man's raised left arm.

23 - 24 Facing partners, with both hands joined (men with backs to centre) couples take two side-steps against the line of dance (man's right, lady's left).

25 - 26 Each couple now stands side by side, facing line of dance, and with nearer arm (man's right, lady's left) around partner's waist. Each dancer takes two steps forwards starting with the outside foot (man's left, lady's right).

27 - 28 Each dancer now points toe of outside foot (man's left, lady's right) in front, and then places same foot behind to dip.

29 - 32 In ballroom hold, couple complete two waltz turns.

The above thirty-two bars are repeated for the duration of the music.

© Dance On!

St Andrews in the Square

64 Bar Jigs

Square Set of 4 couples

Men stand with partners on right. Old style numbering – couples one and two facing each other (back to band and facing band) three and four facing each other sideways to band.

The dance was written by Tricia Matthews for Glasgow's St Andrew's In The Square (S.A.I.N.T.S.)

Bars

1-4 Four ladies put right hands into centre to form a wheel and walk round for eight.

(This should bring them back to their own places)

5-8 Four men put left hands into centre to form a wheel and walk round for eight.

(This should bring them back to their own places facing their partners.)

9-12 All set to own partner twice

13-16 All swing partners

17-18 Ladies one and two give right hands and change places

19-20 Ladies three and four give right hands and change places

21-22 Men one and two give right hands and change places

23-24 Men three and four give right hands and change places

25-28 All set to own partner twice

29-32 All swing partners

33-36 Couples one and two arch over the side (arch over one couple back to original place.) (Facing round the line of dance, man on the inside of the set, lady on the outside).

37-40 Couples one and two advance to the middle for four and retire for four.

41-44 Couples three and four arch over the side (arch over one couple back to original place.) (Facing round the line of dance, man on the inside of the set, lady on the outside).

45-48 Couples three and four advance to the middle for four and retire for four.

49-50 Everyone faces own partner and gives right hand. Everyone turns their own partner for one complete turn with the right hand.

51-64 Everyone facing own partner, grand chain round, pass partner once and meet for the second time back in their own place ready to start again. The dance is danced four times through.

© Patricia Matthews

What is Ceilidh Dance?

By Mike Scott

How would you answer that question? Just think about it for a moment. Would you describe a ceilidh as a meld of wildly differing dance styles borrowed from many different sources? Perhaps you'd explain that the main styles are set dances – many of them shared with Scottish Country Dancing, old-time couple dances and circle dances with a sprinkling of others not so easily categorised? Maybe you'd also describe the music – jigs, reels, waltzes, marches and so on. Well that's a pretty good description of Ceilidh Dance and certainly clear enough. However, although it describes what *happens* at a modern Ceilidh, isn't it missing something rather vital? Put another way, would you describe the Mona Lisa as a mixture of subtle pigments applied to a small canvas? That certainly is what a painting is, but it doesn't say anything of the underlying image, the *spirit* of the painting. Who is the Mona Lisa? Why is she smiling? So describing Ceilidh or any dance by its outward appearance may be easy, but it misses the point. So what do I mean?

Well, when I'm asked about Ceilidh, I do of course describe the dances we do to form an initial picture. A first-timer at a Ceilidh would see it as that. But there's something deeper that perhaps takes longer to appreciate. The physical dance styles – the dances that we learn from Gay Gordons to Eightsome Reel – are the body. But Ceilidh also has a soul.

All right, I know what you're thinking. This is starting to sound a bit metaphysical – where's he going with this? But please bear with me for a moment. I'm trying to get at something insubstantial, something more difficult to pin down than a simple list of instructions for The Dashing White Sergeant. There's an underlying spirit or *philosophy* in Ceilidh that is very different from the other Scottish traditional dances. I believe that it's this, the *anima*, the mind, the essence, the soul of the dance that makes it what it is – much more so than the actual dances.

Let's change tack for a moment, by stepping back and looking from slightly further away. We all know that close siblings – two brothers or two sisters – can *look* very similar yet they are often very different in character. Their outward appearance may be the same but inside they're very different. And when we describe two such people, it's not on how they look that we concentrate but on their personalities. I believe this is a very good analogy for Ceilidh and its close cousin Scottish Country Dancing. Although they share many dances in common, they are in fact very different in character. Why is this?

Well one has first to ask, "Why do we dance?" Broadly speaking, there are two main reasons – one is for performance and the other is for enjoyment. The

raison d'être is where the soul of a dance starts to form. If a dance is done for performance reasons, there is a whole set of criteria that don't apply to a purely social dance. Since Scottish Country is mainly set dances with regular figures and is occasionally performed for an audience, it's considered important that all the participants dance with a similar style so that the overall pattern and appearance of the dance is attractive to watch.

Ceilidh, on the other hand, has evolved organically without external intervention as a purely social dance. It's done *only* for enjoyment – it has a single-minded purpose if you will. Scottish Country Dancing is also mainly a social dance but the existence of the performance aspect has had a very dramatic influence on its underlying philosophy. To me, Scottish Country is trying to be two things which are mutually incompatible. The result is a dual personality where one personality has stifled the other and killed the most important aspect of social dancing – *the expression of individuality*.

Dance is an art form. Fundamentally, we dance because the music moves us. We're all different and we express our uniqueness in the way we dance, just as an artist expresses himself in the way he paints. What would the world be like if all artists painted in *exactly* the same style so that we couldn't tell them apart? How would it be if we all painted by numbers? It's in this way that Ceilidh and Scottish Country Dancing are so different – diametrically opposite in fact. Where Ceilidh revels in the expression of individuality, Scottish Country requires everyone be the same. Ceilidh strongly encourages us to be ourselves and dance with our own style, to paint the dance floor with the inner essence that makes us what we are. Scottish Country teaches us to dance exactly like our neighbour; individual expression is discouraged. This is fine for a performance dance, but for a dance that's done socially?

I believe this is one of the reasons why Ceilidh has emerged and why it's becoming

increasingly popular. People love performing and love watching performances, but when they dance socially they want to let their hair down and be individuals. Ceilidh does exactly this. There are no "tuts" when someone puts a foot wrong or adds in an extra twirl or other flourish. It's a constantly evolving dance

form. In other words, *Ceilidh is alive*. It's a living, breathing dance that is always moving forward, moving with the times in which it lives. If any creature is to survive, this is what it must do. In contrast, the folk dances of many other countries are living dinosaurs, preserved by small passionate dance groups who have transmogrified them into performance dances to stop them from becoming extinct but they're no longer *alive*. Putting an animal in a zoo so that people can look at it robs it of the essence that makes it what it is.

One thing that changes very much with the times is music. With each new generation comes a new sound. Back at the turn of the 20th Century and into the 20s and 30s Jazz evolved. Then Bill Haley et al came along and gave us Rock and Roll. And so a living dance needs a living music. In Ceilidh, the Celtic beats and rhythms are still there, but they're being performed in a way that keeps them up to date, in touch with the styles of the modern day. Ceilidhs are full of young people because the music has moved on – it's wild and exciting.

However, many people, including most Scots, still have an inaccurate "shortbread tin" image of Ceilidh where teachers do weird, boring dances to old-fashioned music. Many have never experienced a modern Ceilidh Dance in Edinburgh or Glasgow. Traditionalists hate them, the older generation may not enjoy them, but the fact is that Ceilidh has moved on. That's the way life has always been and that's the way it always will be. We can maintain a link with the past, but if we live in it we'll surely end up extinct, a stuffy old museum piece to be stared at rather than personally experienced and enjoyed as something which is still alive. So go out! Dance Ceilidh! Let your hair down! Express yourself! Be moved *by the music*, not by how you were taught! **BE ALIVE!**

Ryan McGlynn
Ceilidh Band
01546-606 277
07747-017 047

Ceilidh, Scottish Country, Old Time, Modern
ryan.mcglynn@btinternet.com

Alasdair's Dance Diary December

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances							
December 2004							
Every Saturday	Fife	Largo Ward Village Hall	t.b.c.	8.30-11.30 No Bar	£3 (tea)	Door	Different bands each week.
Every Sunday	Fife St Andrews	Scout Hall, East Scores	Live Music	2pm-5pm	£3 (tea)	Door or tel 01334 472 375	MC/Caller Charlie Todd
Every Tuesday	Glasgow University	Student Union, University Ave.		7.30-10pm Bar	£4	0141 334 9869 07050 222 173	Dance Club
	Edinburgh	Café Royal, 15 West Register St.	Café Royal Ceilidh Band	8pm - late Bar	£5/£4 Caller	0131 478 1845 or Door	East End of Princes St.
Every Wednesday	Newtongrange	Morris Club	Live Music	7.30-10pm	£3/£1.50	Door (Karin Ingram)	Ceilidh & Old Time Dance Club
	Glasgow	St Andrews in the Square		7.30-9.30pm Bar	£4	Door (Tricia Matthews)	Ceilidh & Old Time Dance Class
4 th	Dufftown	Memorial Hall	Graeme Mitchell	7.30-11.30	£?	Door	Tel. 01542 887 616
	Newtongrange	Dean Tavern	Waverley	7.30-11.30 Bar	£5	0131 663 6022 to reserve table	Acc. & Fiddle Club Dance
	Auchendinny, Midlothian	Glencorse Comm Centre	Jimmy Anderson	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£5 Sausage Roll supper	Door or 01721 723 468	(near Penicuik)
	Partick, Glasgow	Lesser Burgh Halls	t.b.c.	8pm-11.30 Bar	£5 membership	0141 339 9679	Highlanders Institute Club
	Ayrshire	Sorn Village Hall	Lindsay Weir	7.30-11.30 B.Y.O.B.	£4.50 (Inc. Supper)	01292 220 344 01560 700 219	Tickets required
5 th	Angus	Tealing	Johnny Duncan	7.30-10pm	£2.50	Door	
7 th	Glasgow University	Student Union, University Ave.	Davy Morrison	7.30-11.30 Bar	£5	0141 334 9869 07050 222 173	Dance Club end of term dance
10 th	Midlothian	Bilston Miners Club	Gordon Pattullo	7.30-11.30 Bar	£4.50 (incl. Supper)	0131 660 1276 0131 663 6221	Wednesday Dance Club
	Helensburgh (Highlanders)	Commodore Hotel	Charlie Kirkpatrick	8pm-1am Bar	£12.50	01436 672 927 01389 841 208	Supper Dance
11 th	Lanarkshire	Strathaven Ballgreen Hall	Roger Dobson	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£6 (incl. supper)	01357 520 900	Avondale Ceilidh Society
	Perthshire	Glencarse Village Hall	George Rennie	8-11.30pm No Bar	£3.50	Door	Charity
12 th	Perthshire	Glencarse Village Hall	Johnny Duncan	7.30-10pm No Bar	£2.50	Door	Charity
18 th	Ayrshire	Hansel Village	Jean McConnachie	7.30-12mn Bar & Raffle	£5.50 Snack	Door or 01292 289 234	Charity
	Perthshire	Blackford Village Hall	Dave Husband Sound	8pm-11.30 No Bar	£4.	Door	Charity
	Glasgow	Partick Burgh Halls	Donnie & Diane	8pm-11.30 Bar	£5 membership	0141 339 9679	Highlanders Club
30 th	Fife	Windygates Village Hall	Bruce Lindsay	8pm-11pm No Bar	£3 (supper)	Door	
31 st	Cardross	Geilston Hall -doors close 10pm	Neil Sinclair	9pm-2am Bar	£8.50 in advance	01436 672 927 01389 841 208	Highlanders Ticket only.
	Ayrshire	Sorn Hall	Blair Gardiner	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£?? Dinner Dance	01292 262 729 01292 570 145	Advance Ticket only
	West Lothian	Pumpherstoun Village Hall	David Wilson	7.30-1am No Bar	£12.50 Buffet	01506 417 512 01506 434 365	Advance Ticket only
	Helensburgh	Victoria Halls	Voicebox	8pm-1am Bar	£25 buffet supper	Ticket only 01436 674 922	Tourist Assoc Fundraiser

Scottish Country Dancing							
December 2004							
3 rd	Stirling	Albert Halls	Lothian	7pm (Dinner)	£18	0141 942 5375	RSSPCA Charity
	Bearsden	Burgh Hall	Alan Ross	7.30pm	£5	0141 956 2134	Glasgow RSCDS
	Dumfries	Stakeford Centre	John Douglas			Contact:-	Jackie Johnstone
4 th	Gatehouse	School Hall	Kenny Thomson			01557 814 165	No other details
6 th	Dumfries	Marchmount High	John Douglas			01387 770 228	Dumfries Class
7 th	Dufftown	Memorial Hall		7.30pm-11pm	£?	01542 887 616	Xmas Social
10 th	Helensburgh	Hermitage Academy	Sandy Nixon	7.45 - 11.30pm	£7.50	01436 673 521	Xmas Dance
	Dumfries	High School	David Cunningham	8pm-12mn	£10	01387 265 815	Supper Dance
	Hamilton	Eddlewood Hall	Lothian Band	7.30-10.30pm	t.b.a.	01357 521 953	Supper Dance
11 th	Dundee	Fairmuir Church	Maple Leaf	7.30-10.30pm	£3.50		Charity
15 th	Stirling	Albert Halls	Iain MacPhail	7.30pm	£5	Pay at door	Xmas Dance
29 th	Scone	Robert Douglas Hall	Maple Leaf	7.30pm		01738 552 062	S.C.D. Club

Alasdair's Dance Diary January

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances

January 2005

Every Saturday	Fife	Largo Ward Village Hall	t.b.c.	8.30-11.30 No Bar	£3 (tea)	Door	Different bands each week.
Every Sunday	Fife St Andrews	Scout Hall, East Scores	Live Music	2pm-5pm	£3 (tea)	Door or tel 01334 472 375	MC/Caller Charlie Todd
Every Tuesday	Glasgow University	Student Union, University Ave.		7.30-10pm Bar	£4	0141 334 9869 07050 222 173	Dance Club
	Edinburgh	Café Royal, 15 West Register St.	Café Royal Ceilidh Band	8pm - late Bar	£5/£4 Caller	0131 478 1845 or Door	East End of Princes St.
Every Wednesday	Newtongrange	Morris Club	Live Music	7.30-10pm	£3/£1.50	Door (Karin Ingram)	Ceilidh & Old Time Dance Club
	Glasgow	St Andrews in the Square		7.30-9.30pm Bar	£4	Door (Tricia Matthews)	Ceilidh & Old Time Dance Class
1 st	Perthshire	Glencarse Village Hall	Wayne Robertson	8pm-11.30 No Bar	£3.50 Tea	Door	Charity
	Borders	Midlem Village Hall	Gordon Brown	7pm-12mn Bar	£5 bring own supper	Ticket only 01835 870 244	Charity - raffle
2 nd	Angus	Tealing	Ken Stewart	7.30-10pm	£2.50	Door	
7 th	Ayrshire	Hansel Village	Gary Blair	7.30-12mn Bar	£5.50 Snack	Door or 01292 289 234	Charity
8 th	Newtongrange	Dean Tavern	Glenelvan	7.30-11.30 Bar	£5 (incl. supper)	0131 663 6022 to reserve table	Acc. & Fiddle Club Dance
14 th	Midlothian	Bilston Miners Club	Gordon Clark	7.30-11.30 Bar	£4.50 (incl. Supper)	0131 660 1276 0131 663 6221	Wednesday Dance Club
15 th	Lanarkshire	Strathaven Ballgreen Hall	Jimmy Lindsay	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£6 (incl. supper)	01357 520 900 (Date change)	Avondale Ceilidh Society
	Glasgow	Partick Burgh Halls	Sandy Legget	8pm-11.30 Bar	£5 membership	0141 339 9679	Highlanders
26 th	Dufftown	Memorial Hall		7.30-10.30		Door	Monthly Social
27 th	Fife	Windygates Village Hall	Bruce Lindsay	8pm-11pm No Bar	£3 (supper)	Door	
28 th	Helensburgh (Highlanders)	Commodore Hotel	Alasdair MacCuish	7pm prompt Bar	£20 (incl. dinner)	01436 672 927 01389 841 208	Highland Ball
	Perthshire	Bridge of Earn	Simon Howie	8pm-11.30 No Bar	£? B.Y.O.B.	Door	

Scottish Country Dancing

January 2005

Date	Town	Hall	Band	Time	Cost	Contact	Comments
7 th	Ayrshire	Seamill Hydro	Ian Muir Sound		£?	01505 682 187 or 01294 823 865	North Ayrshire RSCDS New Year Ball
	Perth	City Hall	Jim Berry	7.30pm	£4.50	01337 840 313	Capability Scotland
8 th	Penrith	Ullswater College	Jean McConachie	7pm	£9/£10	Supper	ptrsmp@btoopenworld.com
14 th	Hightae	Lockerbie Academy	Colin Dewar	8pm	£6	01387 810 423	Hightae SCD Club
17 th	Paisley	Town Hall	Ian Muir Sound			0141 956 2134	Glasgow Annual Ball
21 st	Stirling	Albert Hall	Ian Thomson	7.30pm	£8.50	01786 461 275	Burns Night (+Meal)
25 th	Dumfries	Marchmount	Jean McConachie	8pm	£10	01387 265 815	Dumfries RSCDS
28 th	Bearsden	Burgh Hall	t.b.c.	7.30pm	£6	0141 942 7519	Motor Neurone Charity
28 th	Troon	Concert Hall	Marian Anderson	7.30pm	£5	01292 315 558	Ayr Branch Dance



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

The Glenelvan SDB

David Scott started playing the accordion at the age of ten, his first teacher being Ian Oliver from Walkerburn, then Bill Sharp and later The Laurie School of Music. (Judith says he now studies in the Linton Lounge of Learning!) The first band he played with was started by Bill Weir. They were called Altitude and David was a member for five years.



The Glenelvan Band was formed in 1991 and named after David's parents' house in Innerleithen. The band is equally at home playing for Old Time, Country or Ceilidh Dance.

The original members were Alan Stuart on drums, John Fairbairn on second box and Jim Nichol on piano. They made their first recording, "Back on the Road" in 1994.

The band's first "Take the Floor Broadcast" was in 2001. Judith Linton joined on fiddle for the second broadcast in 2003. Sadly John Fairbairn died in early 2003. Their latest CD "Real Time for Old Time" was released in 2004 and dedicated to John. There is also a John Fairbairn Memorial Quaich awarded as a trophy in The National Association of

Accordion & Fiddle Clubs' Musselburgh Festival. Glenelvan's third radio broadcast has been recorded and is due out in January 2005.

Judith Linton

According to her mum, Judith Linton showed no signs of musical talent until she was about ten years old. One day she arrived home from school proudly clutching a violin. Her great-aunt played the violin beautifully, but her family despaired of Judith ever following suit. Many months of screeching and scraping followed before she played anything vaguely recognizable. Her first fiddle cost the princely sum of £15.



Judith trained at The International Cello Centre with the late Jane Cowan, first weekly and later, after leaving school, as a residential pupil for three years. At last Judith moved to Scottish traditional music.

In 1980 Judith spent three weeks with the late Tom Anderson in Shetland. She had met Tom in Edinburgh at a fiddle course that she attended to gain experience – what better way to start than with Shetland music! Tom invited her to Shetland to join in with the Shetland Sessions and have some lessons from him.



In 1985 she met up with the Scottish pianist Muriel Johnstone, a prolific composer, who for many years has been associated with the musical arrangements for the RSCDS publications of music and dances. She gave Judith her first opportunity to play in a real Scottish Dance Band. This was all new to Judith, for having played classical music for so many years, her bowing technique for Scottish fiddle music was all wrong, and she says it took her about eight years to be able to play a strathspey in a Scottish style and not in the style of Bach.

In 1987 she started to enter fiddle competitions – winning some and losing others. The losing didn't put her off, as she knew the other competitors had been on the circuit for years. At the age of twenty-four, she found herself the oldest competitor, yet



the one with the least experience of playing Scottish fiddle music. Her biggest competition was The Glenfiddich Fiddle Championship in 1991, where she was one of the seven finalists. As a result of reaching the finals, the Director of BBC Scotland's TV farming programme, "Landward" asked if she would be interested in doing a documentary about her fiddling and farming. Judith jumped at the offer and it was broadcast in April 1992.

Judith is in great demand to play (as well as record and broadcast) with Scottish Dance Bands; she also has a ceilidh band - The Kadugan Ceilidh Band - and she runs her own music promotions agency. She teaches fiddle at the RSCDS summer school.

Jim Nichol

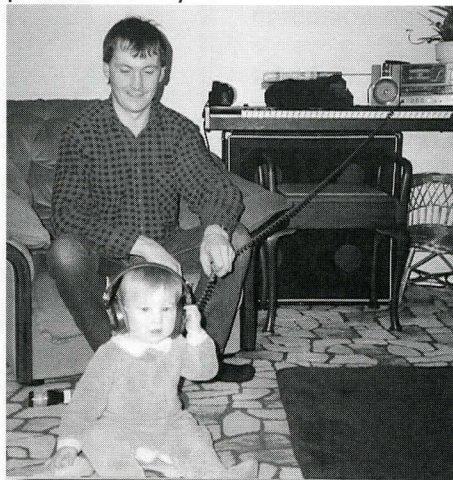
Jim Nichol started music lessons at the age of nine with his school teacher at Crawfordjohn Primary. He then went to Ian Wilson at Elvanfoot and it wasn't long before he became interested in Scottish Dance Music. Thanks to Ian's patience and encouragement (and a few chords) Jim joined his father's band in the late seventies when he was fourteen. The band consisted of Dad (Johnny) on 3-row accordion, Andrew Walker (from Crawfordjohn) on second accordion, Billy Goodfellow on drums and Jim. Ian Wilson also gave Jim the opportunity to fill in with other bands when he couldn't manage - Solway Sands Band (Chris Graham, Waterbeck) and The Clyde Valley Band (Alan Smith).

After three years at agricultural college Jim moved to Aberdeenshire to work and was lucky enough to be asked by Graeme Mitchell to play in his band; other members were Gordon Duguid on second accordion, Judith Davidson on fiddle, Brian Cruickshank on bass

and Billy Brown on drums. His two years with them was a great learning experience.

Having lived near Pathhead for the last thirteen years Jim has enjoyed being asked to play with a few well known bands in the area, including of course The Glenelvan Scottish Dance Band.

Jim says that he's feeling his age because his son, Scott, at age fourteen is now playing professionally.



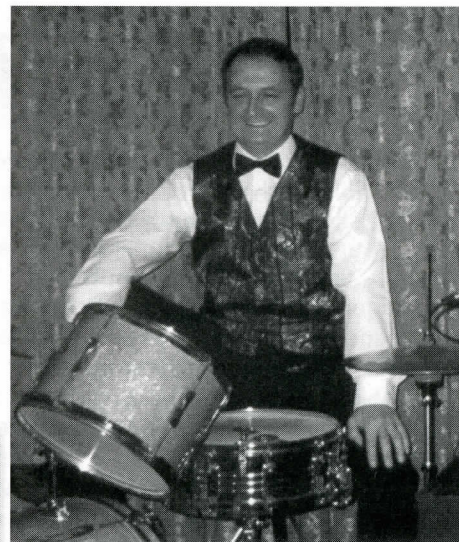
George Meikle

George Meikle first started taking drumming lessons with Aberlady Pipe Band when he was about nine. Mr Briggs came all the way from Kirkcaldy to Aberlady by bus



and train every Friday night to teach the youngsters.

George remained with the pipe band as a drummer until he was about sixteen when he decided to



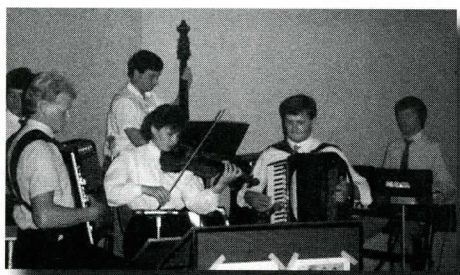
learn the pipes. The pipe band eventually disbanded in 1964.

When George's son Alistair became interested in the accordion and started going to clubs around 1980 George started practising the drums again. As he says, "My first outing was with George King couldn't have been that bad because twenty or so years and two stones later, we are still good friends and still have the odd tune together."

When Jimmy Riding, drummer with David Sturgeon, took ill George helped out to let Jimmy convalesce. He then played with Raymond Laidlaw Jnr (whom he met through Ormiston Accordion Club) until his father, who also played in the band, died and Raymond gave up the band.

George also played with David Hume and Keith Dickson at various places and when they went their separate ways, he got a phone call from Andrew Knight and started playing with him and Alistair Edmonstone, then Russell, Ricky and Karen - a period which he says can best be described as an experience! He still enjoys a tune with them.

About two years ago, George joined The Glenelvan Band, and the rest is history!



RSCDS AGM

Edinburgh Branch, under the able management of Elizabeth Harry, organised the AGM this year. It should have been held in Edinburgh, but due to unforeseen circumstances was to be moved to Perth at the last minute.

The organisation is now overseen by Headquarters with the branch pulling it all together. West Lothian and New Zealand composed programmes for the dances. The content of the one from down under, although thousands of miles away, could have been written for an Edinburgh Ball.

Alastair Wood and his band played on the Friday night for some 720 dancers and Iain MacPhail on the Saturday for 740. Both gave it their all and were well received by the assembled dancers.

Malcolm Brown, York Branch, managed to get all the stewards together, some sixty in total, and organised them into a very cohesive smiling group who directed, advised and in general saw that everyone knew where to go and when.

On Saturday morning we had two discursive meetings with a break for coffee. There was also a class of 200 taught by Theresa Wright, accompanied by Doreen McKerron on piano and Pete Clark on fiddle.

The AGM meeting itself – under the capable Chairmanship of Lord Mansfield, ably assisted by Jean Martin (retiring Chairman), Elspeth Gray (Secretary) and then by Stewart Adam (the newly appointed Chairman) – passed without any problems.

Robbie Shepherd of "Take the Floor" fame spoke a few words on behalf of Edinburgh Branch. With only a few words of the Doric creeping in most of the company was able to understand and appreciate his words of wisdom. We finished off the weekend with a choice of meetings on the Sunday morning followed by lunch.

A most enjoyable weekend was had by all.

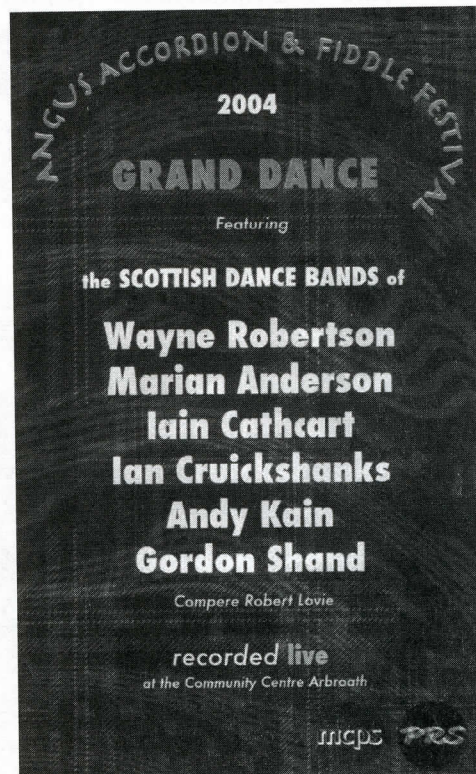
Dale Gray

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Band**

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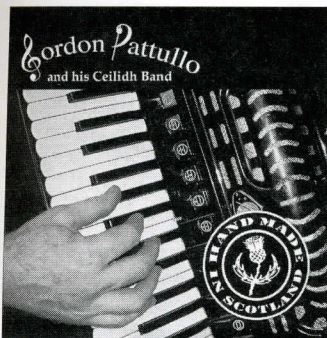
**Scottish Country Dancing at
"Perform in Perth"**

It looks as if Perth City Hall, despite much debate and publicity, is finally to close its doors. This will therefore be the last occasion for the Perth Music Festival, "Perform in Perth" to grace this wonderful building. As a result, the committee is pulling all stops out to ensure that the country dancing sections on Tuesday, 9th March 2005 are more successful than ever, by doing something a little different.

As well as all the usual classes for children and adults there is to be some social dancing in the evening after the competitions. This will be open to the public, and Neil Copland's Band will provide the music. The official accompanist for the competitions is Maureen Rutherford. Further information can be provided by the Secretary, Mr. Michael Jamieson, whose telephone number 01738-631 615.

Maureen Rutherford

Reviews



Hand Made In Scotland Gordon Pattullo and his Ceilidh Band GPD001

Available from Gordon
Pattullo, Tullybaccart
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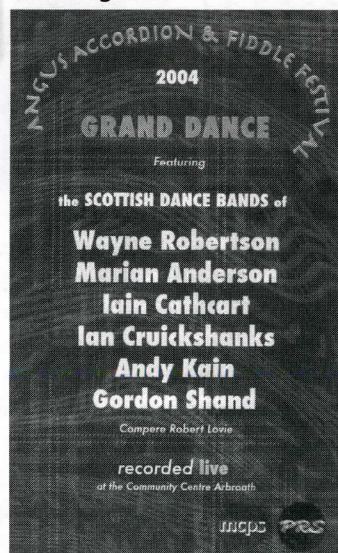
www.gordonpattullo.co.uk

Gordon's Ceilidh Band members are, Angela MacEachern on fiddle, John Crawford on piano, Brian Cruickshank on bass, Billy Thom on drums, Billy Young on guitar and banjo and Gordon's son Fraser playing small pipes and whistle.

This CD has a grand selection of tracks with a note of which dance each is for or a clear indication of the tempos. All dances suggested are the standard ceilidh ones such as The Virginia Reel, Strip The Willow, The Gay Gordons, and The Military Two-step etc. There is also an excellent balance between dancing and non-dancing tracks with some great tunes – *The Sands of Kuwait*, *Robbie Shepherd MBE*, and some of Gordon's own compositions including *The Furrows End* and *Angela's Waltz*.

I used this CD at my class on Tuesday 17th

November 2004 and it proved to be very popular with the dancers. Finally to Gordon and his band – as a teacher I found it to be well set out, with great dancing tempos, all in all a very useful dancing CD.



2004 Angus Accordion & Fiddle Festival Grand Dance

**Bands featured:
Wayne Robertson,
Marian Anderson,
Iain Cathcart,
Andy Kain and
Gordon Shand.**

**Video from Ron
Ramsay, Secretary, at
48 Hospitalfield Road,
Arbroath DD11 2LS
www.angus-festival.com**

What a marvellous idea to release a composite video with six great bands and 29 dances. An altogether wonderful source of reference for any teacher. This is not a video of expert or demonstration dancers, but several hundred people enjoying themselves on the dance floor. It was my intention to view the two-hour

video over two evenings but I was enjoying the music and dance interpretations so much that I watched it all on the first evening! As more and more country and sequence dances find their way onto ceilidh programmes, a video such as this with so many dances is a great find. The only reservation I have was the speed that the band

Campbell Hunter

chose for *The Black Mountain Reel* – which was so fast the dancers were running! With that one tiny reservation I would heartily recommend it to you.

**All items for review
should be sent to:
Campbell Hunter,
37 Carronvale Road,
Larbert, Stirlingshire
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Colin Dewar "Special Requests Volume 6" CD £13.00

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Iain Cathcart & His Band "As if By Magic..." CD £12.00

Simon Howie SDB "The Dark Island" CD £13.00

Ian Hutson SDB "Dashing White Sergeant" CD £13.00

"Take The Floor – On The Road" CD £13.00

Robert Whitehead & The Danelaw "Dancers' Choice 2" CD £13.00

The Occasionals "Reel of Four" CD £13.00

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Shetland Dancing

By Maria Leask

The Dancing in Shetland has gone through many changes over the last one hundred years. The oldest traditional dances such as the Auld Reels, three types of Shetland Reel and Shaalds o' Foula were done in people's croft houses, usually in the home of a local fiddler, and most dancing happened at Yule (the festive season). That was the ideal time to have house parties as the dark winter nights were long, and most of the weddings were held during the winter. Folk would not have danced in the summer months due to the endless daylight and heavy workload. Dr Tom Anderson said, in one of his interviews about Shetland music and dance, that the first reel recorded being danced on Shetland was in 1759. The Auld Reels consisted of continuous figure eights and were danced to the peculiar Auld Reel tunes. The dancers called to the fiddler for the

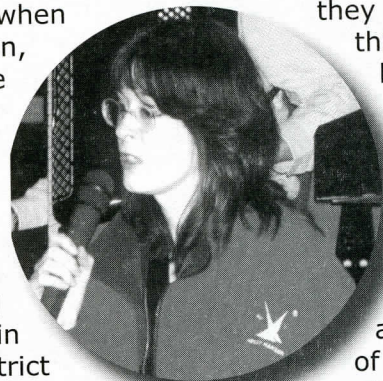
Auld Reel when cool down, welcome from the "reeling" "dancing" steps) Shetland The steps reeling differed in every district

All the reels were the wedding ritual and called "Bride" and "Bridegroom" reels. It wasn't until about 1930 that these dances fell into disuse, this again depends on the area. The cosy croft house dancing was replaced by dancing in the new local hall, where the people could do the latest arrivals like Lancers and Quadrilles that spread into most parts about 1904. The compact reels were ideally suited to the croft house "but end" (kitchen) and lost their atmosphere and appeal in the more spacious buildings.

Just before the turn of the last century, a lot of different dances were flooding into Shetland - The Scotch Reel, The Contra Dance Haymakers Jig, Waltz and The Polka. During the first part of 1900 Shetland was one of the main centres of the herring industry. Nearly 9,000 fishermen and boys were employed and 5,000 girls were employed as gutters and packers. Evening dances were held in the huts; the locals learned the standard Reels, Square Dances and Circle Dances, all of which were popular in the areas from which the fishermen and girls were drawn.

The compact croft house kitchen restricted the style in which the old dances were done. As six or more people were dancing at one time the steps tended to be neat and near to the floor. Although the steps and figure eight differed slightly in each area, the most common feature in every reel was the three stamps (called "digs") at the end of each eight bar sequence. These "digs" also formed part of the more common setting steps. Another characteristic was the way in which the men enjoyed the dance. The vigour and excitement was so intense that it is said the fiddler was sometimes barely audible above the noise of the dancers as they "heuched" and snapped their fingers. The women did their steps much more daintily than the men and didn't "heuch" or snap their fingers. The style is much more refined today in Shetland but the vigour and enjoyment have remained. The ladies in the past had to be tough because most of the men would show their strength by swinging the women off their feet. This

they needed a this gave a break vigorous a n d (setting in the Reels. a n d figures almost of Shetland.



trait still exists but is diluted and most couples enjoy controlled "sensible" dancing now.

For several years the local repertoire consisted of five dances, The Boston Two-Step, St Bernard's Waltz, Eightsome Reel, Gay Gordons, Highland Schottische, and Palais Glide (the last two were only used in The Paul Jones). The Lancers had lost its ground at this time and The Quadrilles was the more popular dance. Nowadays The Lancers is the favourite of the two, but both have made a very healthy comeback. In addition to these dances listed are The Pride of Erin Waltz, Dashing White Sergeant, Canadian Barn Dance, Strip the Willow, Britannia Two-Step, Hesitation Waltz and Veleta Waltz. The Paul Jones is rarely ever used now, so The Highland Schottische has disappeared from the dance floor but The Palais Glide has made a huge comeback in all its many renditions. Up to date many more dances have been added to the Shetland selection.

In the early nineties two of the dance groups functioning were the Lerwick Old Time Group and the Shetland Folk Dance Group. Since then other groups and classes have set up all over the islands where you are welcome to try Line Dance, Scottish Country, Contemporary, Jazz, Modern and Highland. The Shetland Arts Trust has been promoting Shetland Traditional Dancing over the past nine years by employing Traditional Dance Artists. These sessions have proved to be extremely popular, the majority of them are targeted at the education sector.

The local dances are easy and there is no exact way in which the dances have to be done. This makes it easy for beginners to join in, and likewise for visitors. There are only a few places in the world where the atmosphere at a dance is so special. At the moment dancing is at a high point and shows no signs of letting up. The Shetland Times Entertainment Page and Radio Shetland advertise a very busy dancing schedule. It's wonderful to know that dancing is so popular at the present time and looking healthy to continue well into the future.



Maria leads Bride-to-be Wilma Kennedy in a Shetland Bride Reel a few years ago at an Island Fling in Skye.

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John Sikorski

In Scotland, we have country dancing, Highland dancing and stepdance. My type of stepdance existed until the early 1800s, when it began to die out. Families in the Highlands were evicted from their homes, to make way for sheep-grazing (The Highland Clearances). Many Scots were forced to emigrate to Canada, where our stepdance and fiddle playing styles were preserved in areas such as Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island. In the past fifteen years there has been a cultural exchange between Scotland and Cape Breton, with Scots beginning to revive the older style of stepdance which previously existed here.

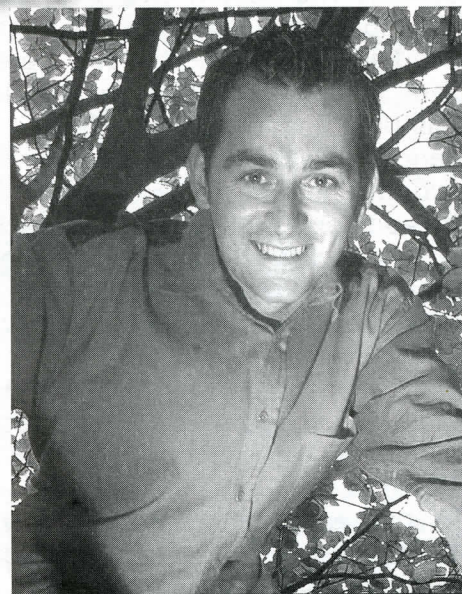
The Scottish stepdance style is similar to the old Irish dance style (Sean-nos), still found in parts of Western Ireland. These steps are more relaxed and "close to the floor", whereas the contemporary Irish hard-shoe style is more formalised for competitions, featuring higher kicks and more visual/flashy steps. Both cultures dance the reel tempo with common steps, however the Irish will also dance to jigs and hornpipes, while the Scottish will dance to the strathspey rhythm.

I and some musician-friends from around Scotland started The Stepdance Company in 1997, because there was nobody else doing a Scottish stepdance show, and we thought it was really exciting! We have performed at festivals and concerts throughout the UK and overseas. Now I'm working more on my own, exploring related forms of traditional dance and playing/dancing with a fiddler.

I was a musician first. I grew up on the Isle of Skye, and learned the piano accordion (by ear) from age fifteen. I played at local concerts, dances, hotels etc. I also taught myself piano, and I accompany fiddlers, pipers, and singers, now working with a couple of favourite ones. There were no stepdance classes when I was a kid growing up on Skye, so my first taste of stepdance was at age twenty, when I learned from a Cape Bretoner,

Harvey Beaton, who was teaching summer courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on Skye. I took to it like "a duck to water" and subsequently learned steps from people such as Ashley MacIsaac, Mairi Rankin and Sandy Silve.

Music and dance are the most important part of my identity – I cannot imagine my life without them. Over the past few years, I have had help from the Scottish Arts Council to explore related dance styles in North America and Transylvania. I teach and perform. However, I do have a broad outlook, and am always distracted by other possibilities like photography, stained glass, languages, and always travelling...



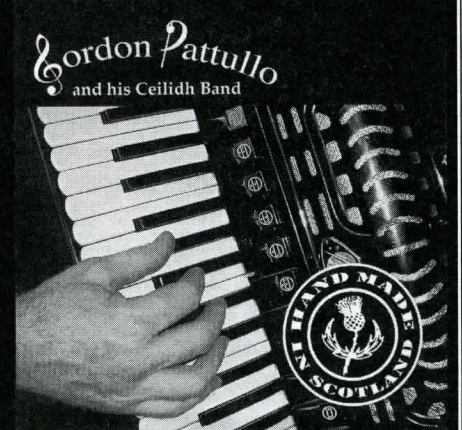
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Diary of a Dance Caller

By Lorna McLaren

Being a dance caller with a ceilidh band is great fun, especially encouraging people who may be new to dancing, but thank goodness callers' inner thoughts are not projected through the PA system for all to hear!

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the ceilidh dance. Let's get off to a good start with everyone on the floor for the first dance tonight – Circassian Grand Circle."

Nice easy mixer to get them going, nothing too taxing.

"Take a partner and make a big circle, I'll tell you how to do it, so up you get – here's a bit of music to get you going."

Well don't just look at me; it's a dance you've come to, not bingo.

"Partners for Circassian Grand Circle."

Don't all rush at once. But what is this? Three couples up now trying to stretch themselves into a circle. This could be a long night.

"Come on the rest of you, that's a pretty wee circle, just bring a partner, don't be fussy, the night is young."

You're certainly not being fussy, dear. Oh yes, I remember him; I recognise the hiking boots from last time – and your strappy stilettos. Adventurous combination.

"Form a circle, gents with your partner on your left."

Whoops, two instructions at once – information overload.

"Yes, a big circle, all facing inwards."

Geometry hasn't caught on here then.

"Nearly there, gents put your partner on your left hand side, – no, your other left, – no, still facing in the way – yes, that's it."

There's a job opportunity for a sheepdog here. When's the break?

"Ladies dancing as men, please stay that way or chaos will ensue."

No one's going to mistake her for a man. She'll be lucky if she stays in that dress for two turns of the dance.

"Now all join hands in the circle." *Come on, you're not Primary fives.*

"That's it, now all forw..."

And here's another couple joining in – and they've split a couple so now two ladies are together and two gents are together. Let's see them sort this out.

"In you come, just let that couple back together again."

Oh dear, the divided pair are looking at each other, across the new couple like they're on opposite sides of a chasm, immobilised by a wicked witch – that's probably me.

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"Yes, she is your partner, (don't you recognise her?). Reclaim her. Take her back beside you on your left."

Ye Gods, they're all trying to sort it out now; half the circle is giving instructions especially that bossy woman. Excuse me; I'm the bossy one here.

"Don't get excited; just take one each as a partner. You won't be keeping them once the dance starts anyway."

Shock horror!

"All set now, everyone forw..." *Heavens, more late arrivals – mummy and little son. Aw, isn't that sweet, he can nearly walk on his own...*

"Yes, super to see the wee ones up. Yes, that is how they learn isn't it."

Progression could be interesting. Child abuse?

"Perhaps if you two dance together, we'll find you a partner. One more gentleman please?"

Maybe not Postie's Jig tonight then.

"OK, everyone hold hands and forw..."

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Dancing on an Island

When I first moved back to the family croft on Skye a few years ago the kids soon fitted in with all the after school activities – shinty, scouts, youth groups, all those things that keep the family taxi service going. But my daughter Ruth, already a keen all-round dancer, found that there was not much organised for her. It was quite a shock after living in the Central Belt with a vast number of choices around us.

I had made friends with Bronya Barnes at a school activity and we talked about the possibilities for dance, especially as Bronya was a classically trained ballet dancer. We decided to test the water and placed an advert in the local paper, offering ballet classes. We thought there might be a handful of girls interested.

From the start we had around forty girls aged from 4 years to 16 – and yes, we had two budding Billy Elliots as well! The classes have now been running for 18 months and the numbers have increased not fallen. We have 4 classes running each week after school and Bronya is already looking for help to increase capacity and relieve the load on herself.

Around a year ago I went looking for a modern dance teacher because I knew that Ruth and some of the other older girls were interested in that dance form too. The nearest place we could find someone suitable was Inverness, which meant a round trip of 250 miles and an overnight stay.

I approached Highland Council and they were generous enough to back the idea, so the classes ran for a few months.

There was never a particularly large group of girls interested and the cost per dancer was always high. Even with the backing we were getting it proved difficult to maintain the classes and they eventually folded.

It was around this time that I began to look for people interested in forming a group to support dance classes. It's always easier to find funding if you have a constituted group – and it helps to spread the workload involved! Half a dozen local people with an interest in dance turned up for the first meeting and *SkyeDance* was formed – the name coming from a dance tune collected in 1784.

We've worked hard since then and put on a day of dance and concert that really made an impression on the local community. We had taster sessions in ballet, modern, stepdance, Scottish Country dance, Salsa and Arabic dance. These were well attended and the young people and adults enjoyed the opportunity to try new dance forms.

The evening concert brought together our local panto dancers (*Skye* runs the second largest panto in Scotland), ballet, Highland, step, modern, Arabic (courtesy of local team Celtic Shimmy) and the local Scottish Country Dancers. The Aros Theatre was packed to capacity to watch our

dancers and some of our local talented musicians and Gaelic singers too.

We are still looking into funding and have had assistance from the local Enterprise, initially with a set-up grant, and they have proposed that we seek a Community Project Worker. This post would help us both with dance projects and with funding applications. Our big dream is to have a Dancer-in-Residence for Skye – someone experienced in dance and with the other organisational talents needed to run projects. We think there will be someone out there keen to settle on Skye!

Most recently we have succeeded in re-starting Highland dance classes,

which had stalled after the retirement of Skye's most experienced teacher. A combination of distances to travel, the expense of hiring premises, and the small number of girls motivated to attend was proving uneconomic for the replacement teachers. *SkyeDance* has found a venue, is paying the teachers, placed an advert in the local paper and thirty-five to forty young girls have turned up for the last few weeks. The future looks good for dancing on Skye, and *SkyeDance* is doing its bit. So if you fancy a job in one of the most beautiful places on earth – step this way.

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Tom Orr



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