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Editorial

Firstly, I owe both George McLeod and George Meikle a huge apology. I do of course know that George McLeod is the drummer with The Glenelvan Band and George Meikle is the leader of The Lothian Dance Band. My brain obviously wasn't in sync with my typing fingers!

Welcome to all of our readers who have taken out an annual subscription, your support is much appreciated. If you haven't yet renewed, we do hope that you will do. The more subscribers that we have, the better the quality (in terms of colour, number of pages etc) we can offer each month. Spread the word!

Some more great articles this month, please write or e-mail and let us know what you think.

Happy New Year!!

Karin

Take The Floor

25th December Alasdair MacCuish & Black Rose
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Come the Resolution

It's January! There has to be something about resolutions! And concentrating on New Year resolutions helps the mind to ignore the fact that another year just whistled out of your life. This whistling past is actually a mathematical fact based on percentage life experience but I will not bore you non-mathematicians with the detail at the moment. Let's be positive and look on the brighter side – the days are getting longer already! Well the daylight is if not the day.

So on to the resolutions. There has to be one about "making more out of my life" but frankly, at the moment I don't have any spare time for "more". When you don't go *out* to work it's amazing just how much work comes knocking on your door. This magazine is doing well but there's been a phenomenal amount of setting up and settling in to do (and I love it of course).

But perhaps as part of this busy-ness I suppose I could cut down on the tea breaks. You see I'm actually allergic to tea so I have to have a brace of Co-op best digestives to go with each cup, and even the low fat ones add up to a fair few calories each day. After I gave up the properly paid job I lost around a stone (7 kilos for our younger readers) simply by missing out on the office biscuits and cake routines. Soon put it back on though.

That's a good resolution because if I lose a few pounds/kilos I might be lighter on my feet and even able to SEE if I'm pointing my toes correctly. This dancing is supposed to be good for the

heart but jumping around with a couple of sacks of potatoes under your arms cannot be good for anyone (no, I don't mean Edinburgh ceilidh dancers!). That settles it – no more biscuits, more fruit, and Alfie Westie will have to lose weight too.

Next, I must concentrate more, particularly on instructions and walk-throughs. How can the teacher or caller drill it into you if half the group is yapping away or day-dreaming? You're very lucky if you can remember lists of instructions – I've never had that capacity and have to "draw" the dance in my mind, that's why I like Mr Drewry's stuff because it's all pretty patterns! I know you can train your memory but that sounds like hard work. Perhaps next year.

No I'm not going to resolve to learn a musical instrument. There are enough talented people out there who are doing a grand job keeping us dancers happy. What I *will* do though is try to get to the Skye Accordion & Fiddle Club meetings on first Thursdays – lots of fine music there. If only we could get some of them playing for Skye RSCDS dances...

I *could* resolve to learn/practise my quickstep in case I'm ever auditioned for SCD (*Strictly Come Dancing*) or *Musicality* both of which have worked wonders for the image of dance. In fact I predict that in 2005 dance will become the new gardening (or did history become the new gardening?). Let us all work on this theme while it's fresh in people's minds – get advertising for new members and *please* make them welcome!

I hereby resolve, in front of all you readers, to write a dance this year. No, I've never written one even though lots of ideas have flashed through my mind. Perhaps I should start by drawing pretty

patterns? How do you draw highs and lows in a pattern I wonder, because that's what good dances are supposed to consist of isn't it?

As a starter towards that last resolution I will carefully remove the centre pages of this magazine, obtain a ring binder from my office manager, and file all the dances for future reference. We are going to have a great collection building up here and I hope you are all taking them to class to try out. It's a good enough reason to buy your own copy instead of reading it over someone's shoulder during the walkthrough!

Finally, let's all resolve to be nice to each other! You youngsters must remember to give up your seat when an arthritic RSCDS dancer is in need, and us old fogeys must forgive those young 'uns who just want to have fun. Also, never forget your old teachers. I just heard that our very first teacher, Eve Clegg, has passed on to the great dance hall in the sky. She was a lovely lady who will be missed. And she liked to have fun too.

Rob Corcoran

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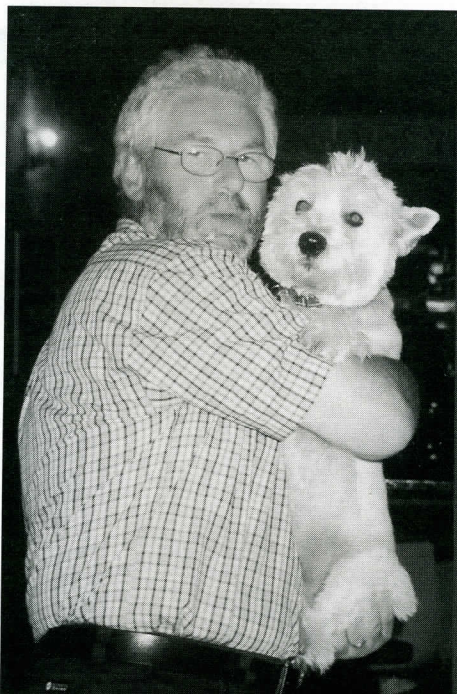
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An Evening With Friends

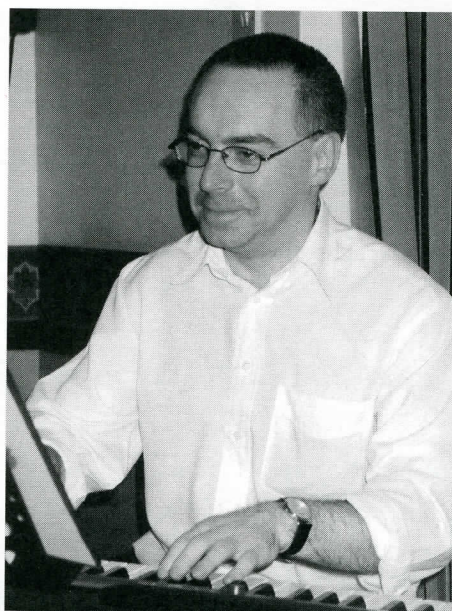
December 11th saw the launch of the fourth volume of "An Evening with Friends".

When Jimmy Norman of The Halcrow Stadium, Gretna celebrated his sixtieth birthday he decided that, rather than having a party (which would all be over and forgotten in the blink of an eye), he would commission a CD. Jimmy is known as a man who gets things done, so in no time at all he had roped in the services of Ian Holmes from Dumfries, Judith Linton from Duns and Jim Halcrow from Shetland and a stunning CD was released. These three bands are among the many that have played at The Halcrow over the years. (Indeed the venue itself takes its name from long-time friend and accordionist Jim.) The popularity of this first recording was such that Volumes 2, 3 and 4 were soon to follow.

There are regular Old Time dances held in The Halcrow



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Dennis Morrison

Stadium and one of the most popular bands is that of Ian Muir from Prestwick. Ian's playing style really suits the local dancers, and he is a real master of the waltz and quickstep. Jimmy invited Ian to play on Volume 2, and again CD sales were excellent, so Ian was asked back for Volume 3.

Jimmy chose yet another

top class broadcasting band for Volume 4 – Colin Dewar and his Scottish Dance Band. The line-up for the recording was Colin himself on lead accordion, Alasdair MacLeod on second accordion, Gordon Simpson on fiddle, Dennis Morrison on piano, John Delaney on bass and Gus Millar on drums.

Jimmy says, "My addiction to



Alasdair MacLeod



Gus Millar



The Riverside

Scottish Dance Music started in 1955 and over the years my wife Dorothy and I, along with the dancers at Halcrow, have enjoyed many visits from some of the best Scottish Dance Bands in the music scene. Words can hardly express the happiness we have enjoyed, listening and dancing to all the great bands that come along to Halcrow for our dance nights. For Volume 4 we have invited Colin Dewar and his Band, who have played many times for us at Halcrow over the years."

For the dance to launch the CD Colin brought along Alasdair, Dennis and Gus and we all had a great night dancing to their steady tempos and uplifting tunes. It's always interesting to see which dances are popular in different areas. The Circassian Circle seems to be losing its popularity in the South of Scotland, as does The Virginia Reel. Fiona's Polka had the dancers on the floor in droves, and yet it's rarely seen just a few miles away from Dumfries



Colin Dewar

and Galloway in the Borders. There's a slight variation in The Mississippi Dip with a point at bars 3 and 4 and 7 and 8 rather than a balance. They also dance The Eva Three Step similarly to how I learned it in Glasgow – which isn't the original!

Jimmy was a founder member of Gretna Accordion and Fiddle Club about forty years ago, and it's easy to see why the Club won the National Association of Accordion and Fiddle Clubs award for "Club of the Year" and was among the top four nominees for this year's Scots Trad Music Awards. The hospitality extended to all of us at the launch of the CD was second to none! (Special thanks for the veggie catering!)

All in all it was a great night of dancing and socialising – a real "evening with friends"! Jimmy is, as ever, looking forwards, and his thoughts are already on Volume 5. Watch this space!

Karin Ingram



The Bon-Accords

The Bon Accords are husband and wife team, Robin and Deryn Waitt from the South of Scotland. Robin plays the famous Shand Morino 3-row accordion, which is fitted with MIDI to enable the accordion to produce a vast range of sounds to accompany the music. Deryn plays piano accordion – also with MIDI, and is the main vocalist. Robin started playing at ten years of age when his first accordion was brought by the great Jimmy Shand, who also gave him tuition and advice. Deryn started a lot later in life but, thanks to her mother, had a thorough training in music and piano.



Deryn with Johnny McEvoy

The Bon Accords started their musical career playing in pubs and country dance halls building up a reputation (which still stands) as a hard working and versatile duo. Winning numerous trophies for accordion playing, they quickly developed a unique sound together and were soon one of the most sought after groups around, playing for instance on the same stage as the Shand Band on many occasions.

Their popularity was attributed in no small way to their presentation and approach. After meeting the legendary Dermot O'Brien on his first visit to Scotland, the pair were particularly impressed by his sheer professionalism and emulated his approach, giving a smart enthusiastic performance which was unique in the area.

The Bon Accords play a wide variety of music, but most important is the Scottish traditional. Ceilidh dancing in Scotland is



Robin & Deryn at Gretna Green

undergoing a huge revival at the moment, and there are dancing classes all over, introducing new dances all the time. They play at many of the Traditional Music Festivals including The Isle of Mull Festival, The Kyles Festival, Tighnabruaich and The Tingle Creek Festival near Kyle of Lochalsh.

They have appeared on television, in the Borders, Tyne Tees and Southern Ireland, and have been on radio many times, again both in the Borders and Southern Ireland.

They have toured Southern Ireland on numerous occasions and another trip is being planned for spring 2005.



Deryn with "Big Chief Flaming Star" in Fermoy, Co. Cork

The Bon Accords are popular in the exiled Irish communities, and have entertained in Tyneside Irish Centre on many St Patrick's Days. They are also proud to have appeared on shows with many of their favourite Irish artists, for example - Bridie Gallagher, Philomena Begley, The Indians, Paddy Reilly, Brendan Shine, Johnny McEvoy, The Bachelors, Foster & Allen, to name but a few.

Deryn is not only talented as a player, but is an avid learner of songs. Irish songs in particular are her favourites and she has been known to learn new songs



The Bon Accords at Carlisle Great Fair

them. Bon Accords however, thrive in this situation! They are still much in demand all over for dances, concerts etc, and are frequent guests at Accordion and Fiddle Clubs in Scotland. Well-known for their energetic performance, enthusiasm and love of entertaining, they look forward to many more years in the entertainment scene.

Contact details:

bon-accord-music.co.uk

bon-accord-ceilidh-band.co.uk

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With friends including Manager,

Tony Hegarty, in Cork City

en route to a gig, which is a challenge for Robin, as often he hasn't heard them before. Robin however, always copes brilliantly as he has a natural talent for producing great harmonies off the top of his head!

The Bon Accords have completed fourteen years of entertaining at Gretna Hall Hotel, Gretna Green which is world famous as a marriage centre.

They never work to a programme or pre-arranged sets, which means that every night is different. Requests are welcomed - and in this day and age, with backing tapes etc in common use - it's very rare for musicians to accommodate



Susan McCann, Robin & Deryn

Who Was Mrs Milne of Kinneff?

A Tribute to Doris Milne, late Honorary

President of Stirling Branch

Doris Milne, born in the Kincardineshire village of Kinneff, came to Bridge of Allan with her family in 1960 to join relatives working there. She died peacefully, on 10th June 2004 aged 89, survived by her son, two daughters and several grandchildren.

Her musical enthusiasm made her immediately accepted and sought after as an accompanist for local ballet classes. She also made herself at home singing in the choir of Chalmers Church, Bridge of Allan, in which she served faithfully for over forty years. She accompanied singers and musicians with the musical group "The Inverallan Occasionals" at varied entertainments including ceilidhs for the local branch of "An Comunn Gaidhealach" and many other organisations.

Doris Milne was a country dancer, and she joined the local class in Bridge of Allan before moving over to the piano stool as the musician. She was soon persuaded to join the Stirling Branch of the Scottish Country Dance Society by the senior teacher at the time, Miss Bowie, and she played piano for branch classes for over thirty years. Doris was also invited to be one of the pianists at Summer School in St Andrews.

Although "retired" from playing for the Stirling Branch classes, Doris continued into her 88th year playing for some local country dance classes and even travelling as musical accompanist for the Scottish Country Dancing which was part of "after hours entertainment" on some "Holiday Fellowship" walking holidays.

Doris was delighted to be elected Honorary President of the Stirling Branch of the RSCDS, and especially pleased when she was presented, in 1990, with the original copy of her dance, "Mrs Milne of Kinneff," written by Alan Macpherson, and ascribed "In appreciation of her musical contribution to the Demonstration Team of RSCDS Stirling". Doris herself chose the tune *The Rose of Allandale* thus linking her origins in Kinneff with her long term residence in Bridge of Allan. This graceful strathspey quickly became popular locally, not only as a demonstration dance but also featuring on dance programmes. It was no surprise to learn soon thereafter that the dance was being promoted as far away as Australia.

The dance was published by the Society in "Leaflet 32" which appeared in 1997. This dance is a fitting tribute not only to a wonderful ambassador for the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, but also to a very warm, sociable lady whose uplifting music must have put extra life into many weary legs on class nights.

John Crawford (RSCDS Stirling)



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Letters

Dear Editor,

Finlay Forbes has a good old rant at the changing use of Scottish tunes. I suspect that as an accordionist he, in company of many other accordionists, finds difficult some tunes written for the fiddle. The same is true of fiddlers who find some tunes difficult if they have been written by and for accordionists. We have to keep in perspective the fact that not all music was written for dancing. However if music is good when played at dancing speed it will be used for that purpose. Also, dancing is a living art: it is changing continuously, as it should, otherwise it most likely would die. There are many interesting publications, such as Flett and Flett, of the history of dancing in Scotland and it does not surprise me to find the changes in speed of music as Finlay describes. Wearing my personal hat, I would also be critical of the earlier versions of music published by the RSCDS, but over the years there has been a better understanding of traditional music for Country Dancing.

Most of the dances in 101 SCD, as Finlay points out, do not have specific music allocated to them for one reason or another, and the challenge and opportunity is given to the musician to find good tunes to make the dancers want to dance. It is a great advantage for the musician to have some dancing experience as this helps in the choice of music.

The purists have a terrible time nowadays: some musicians cringe at having to play slow airs up to strathspey speed, while some dancers feel that slow airs do not give the proper strathspey feel. Yet slow air strathspeys are popular mainly because dancers can sing along. Perhaps we need more classes of dances than simply reel, jig and strathspey. I tend to think not, as it would just lead to confusion.

My advice to Finlay is that you have a good story but the "reel" essence of the liaison between the dancer and the musician is the provision of music that makes the dancers want to dance and enjoy themselves. The resulting feedback gives equal enjoyment to the musician.

I am not worried that some of the old tunes are being lost – they obviously don't appeal at whatever speed they are played – there are so many good new tunes appearing all the time, we have a musical cornucopia. Long may it continue.

Wilson Nicol

Finlay responds,

I am not convinced that I was having a rant but clearly that is how it came across to Wilson.

Wilson makes a number of interesting points, some of which relate to what I wrote and some of which do not. I shall try to restrict my responses pertinent to the original debate but there are one or two tempting byways that are worth a comment.

Point 1

My argument has nothing to do with the technical difficulty of the music. I find most old fiddle tunes easier to play than the more exotic creations of our current crop of accordion virtuosi. The point relates purely to the tunes' musical qualities. The tune that we now call *Auld Lang Syne* would work as a reel but to my ear, would be a musical travesty if used in this way.

Point 2

In the world of Scottish Country Dancing, the idea that any tune can be adapted for dancing is a given. This is an area in which imagination knows no bounds. I have danced to Offenbach's *Gendarme Duet* (adapted), *In Dulci Jubilo* (which may well have been a dance tune once), odd bits of Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Dambusters March*, *Old Macdonald had a Farm* and the theme from *Pink Panther* to name but a few. Adaptations vary from the clever to the gauche but it is probably all pretty harmless fun. For some reason known only to psychologists and other serious students of human nature, *The Dambusters* unfailingly inspires a significant minority of dancers to emulate aeroplanes with defective navigational equipment. Is this strange practice *di rigueur* in certain circles?

Point 3

"Dancing is a living art: it is changing continuously, as it should, otherwise it most likely would die"

I agree wholeheartedly but it is important for the changes to be driven by the participants rather than imposed by some self-appointed guardians of propriety. If any form of dance needs a preservation society to keep it alive or "on the rails" it is probably in terminal decline.

Point 4

Here we come to the passionate debate about the "slow air strathspey". This is a subject on its own and one that may be covered in a future edition. The sing along aspect is a bit of an oddity. Most instrumental keys are not particularly vocal since they place the upper register of the tune well above the stave. Kenneth McKellar would manage fine but your average country dancer would be well advised to desist. I have

prepared "sing-along" sets for these dances but I always find that I need to transpose the tune into a lower key for comfortable singing.

I believe that we are in total agreement over the last point although I am a bit confused by the use of the word advice. The process of natural selection applies to tunes as much as to anything else. The best will survive and the worst will die but it is unfair that a good tune should fade away purely because of poor musical editing rather than through any inherent fault in the tune itself.

I totally agree with the point about the quality of new tunes coming out. From that point of view at least, we are in a golden age.

Finlay Forbes

Dear Editor,

I hope others have come to the defence of "anything that's not ceilidh" in response to Mike Scott's article (December issue). Among the inaccuracies I would dispute one phrase he used – "individual expression is discouraged" in Scottish Country Dance. I do not think so. He is confusing the performance of demonstration dance with the far more typical social dance where the intention is to have a good night out. We don't all have stony faces and I always interact with my partner as well as the rest of the set – not forgetting the music too. There's nothing wrong with being graceful, whatever age you are.

Yours etc

Richard Wilson, Ormskirk, Lancs

Dear Editor,

I particularly look forward to seeing the dance instructions each month – it's good fun trying them out too. So far the bar counts have all been given, which makes it relatively easy to work out what to do and when (usually assuming there's two beats to a bar), but recently when I've been exploring the Web I've come across instructions divided into A1, A2, B1 and B2 with no bar counts. How do we work them out?

Elizabeth Cooksey, Berks

Editor replies: You will often see this style in instructions for English Country or Folk Dances. A1 refers to the first part of the tune (usually 8 bars), A2 refers to the repeat of the first part of the tune, B1 is the second part of the tune, and B2 is its repeat. So normally this notation would refer to a 32 bar dance, a 48 bar one would also have figures C1 and C2, a 64 bar dance D1 and D2 etc

A Night Off The Box

By Rob Corcoran

It's nice to learn something new every day but occasionally is usually quite sufficient. And what I learned just lately was that when a box and fiddle club takes a night off for its Christmas Dance it's gonna be a cracker! They don't mess about when it comes to booking the best bands for the members and that's how it was for Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club's bit of a do recently. Your reporter went along to see how it went. The Club's regular Portree venue in The Royal Hotel has recently been converted to a very smart restaurant. That meant that this year's dance was on a slightly more confined dance floor but with a small restriction on ticket sales there was still plenty of room to dance and socialise.

It was great to see a couple of young local box players warming up for the band, with Alan Palmer and Lorraine Gillies putting on a very competent and confident performance. Lorraine has recently started coming to RSCDS classes with us and could prove to be that formidable combination of fine musician and dancer in the future.

The Graeme Mitchell SDB has previously impressed as guest artistes and made a very welcome return to Skye, the band featuring Graeme, Gordon Duguid, Brian Cruickshank and Duncan Christie in the quartet. A rousing Gay Gordons soon had the floor busy and was the start of a set of Ceilidh and Old Time dances without a single repeat until The Dashing White Sergeant came round again well after midnight!

Graeme had put together an excellent programme and there was no time lost in getting people up to dance – it was such good music to dance to that you just couldn't resist his invitations. The floor at the Well Plaid restaurant (how

aply named) was wide enough for circular dances and long enough for a decent number of Willow Strippers, so sticking with the regular venue was a good choice.

Even more so when it came to Buffet time. Wow, what a choice laid on by The Royal – enough seafood and salmon, meat and salads, garnishes and giant pickled onions to satisfy any crofter-dancer! It was a good opportunity to cool down and chat as well, with the hotel opening up the Dining Room for dancers to spread out and eat in comfort – where else would you get such 4-star treatment?

The break was the opportunity for Elizabeth the Raffle to do her usual duty and, as an old semi-pro raffle salesman myself, I have to hand it to this lady – she's a champion. She takes no nonsense and you get the colours she picks, just don't argue!

After the break we were back to some serious ceilidhing and it was a joy to watch the west-coast footwork at close quarter. I was tempted to take some photos of feet to do a "Guess the Dancer" competition but the shutter speed would not have done them justice. There were a few champion Highland Schottische operators on the floor at one stage followed soon after by a group of Quickstep dancers who would have won "Strictly Come Dancing" the following night.

I did manage to capture a couple of the younger dancers on the floor during a Strip the Willow with Lorna Masson and Murdo Maclean among the eight or ten young people in attendance. Good to see them keeping up traditions!

I was reminded of the Orkney trip when Graeme called a Virginia Reel. He was keen for us all to do the same version so he called it – very competently too. He



Graeme Mitchell

then played it (we sang it) and lo and behold, we all finished together, and the top couple were back at the top!

There was another swift break while the raffle was very swiftly called and the 20 (twenty!) prizes doled out (if you won the *Dance On!* subscription get in touch). Our corner managed to win a few prizes including a beauty facial, which was quickly re-cycled as a birthday prezzie – smart thinking from the Edinbane boys!

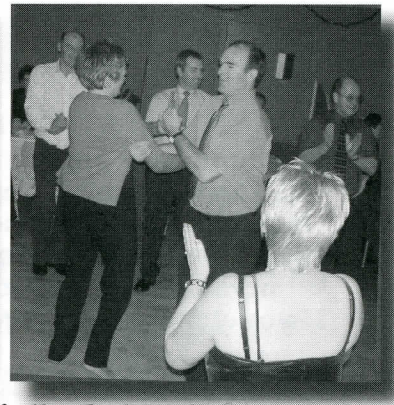
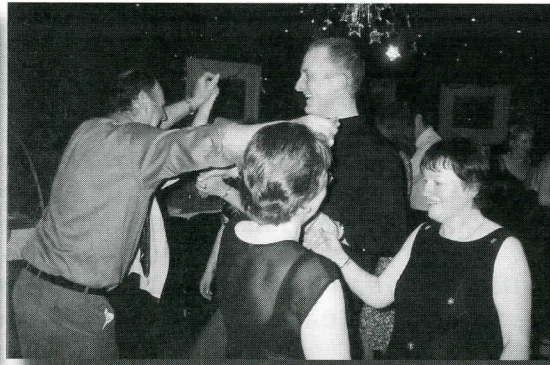
It was soon back to the dancing and not long before the midnight hour struck. Your reporter was obliged soon after to make his excuses and leave, but not before thanking Club Chairman John MacKinnon and MC Jim Campbell for a great night. They made an excellent choice with Graeme Mitchell's band too – thanks Graeme!

The Club has a busy programme in 2005 starting at The Dunollie Hotel in Broadford on 6th January with local artistes. The big news though is the Isle of Skye Accordion & Fiddle Festival running from Thursday 26th May to Saturday 28th May – provisional programme includes The Ballochmyle Ceilidh Band, an extra Club night with Tom Orr, and there will be informal music sessions around the hotels, plus music workshops and visiting artistes. For details ring 01478-612 153, get it in your diary and note that Skye Branch RSCDS have their major dance event the weekend before – you might as well stay for the lot!

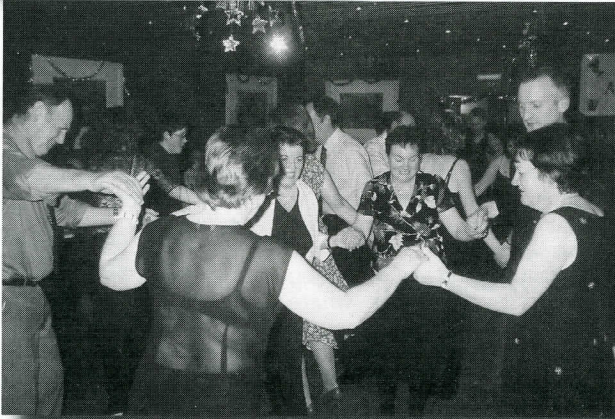


Lorraine Gillies and Alan Palmer

Isle of Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club Dance

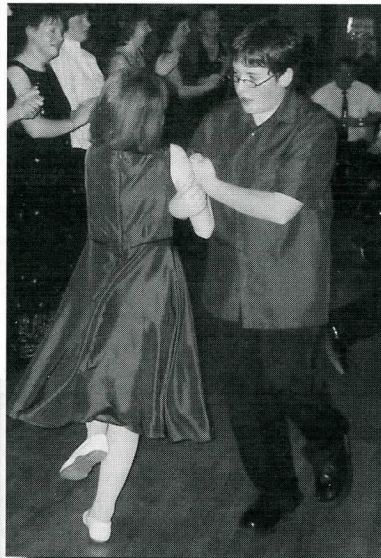


Peggie MacFarlane & John MacIver

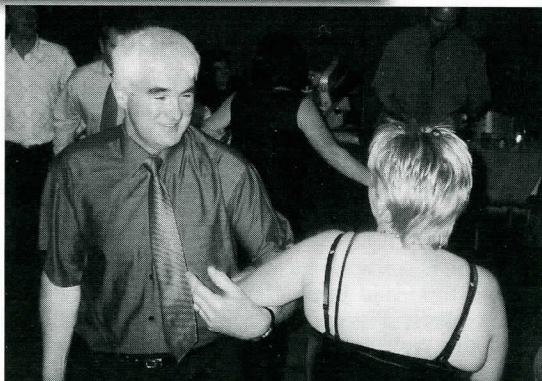


Isobel Gillies, Elizabeth Cumming and Jan Nicolson sort out the raffle.

*There's nothing like dancing
for building up an appetite!*



*Lorna Masson &
Murdo MacLean*



Roddy MacFarlane & Marie MacPhie



Web Dancer

By Sue Petyt

This column will appear each month and I will review two Websites associated with dancing.

Due to publishing deadlines, I write this review about five weeks before the magazine is published so please be aware that Websites can change between my review and the publication of the magazine. These observations are based on my professional opinion and personal preferences, please e-mail your views to me or write to the letters page.

If you would like your site reviewed please e-mail the link to me at sue@suepetyt.me.uk

www.stdt.org

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust (STDT) claims it is "THE national organisation which exists to promote research, conserve and foster all of Scotland's Dance Traditions", so I was expecting to find loads of interesting information on the Website.

The heading shows a picture of dancing feet, with the names of dancing styles fading in and out in sequence. These are Step, Military, Hebridean, Early, Ceilidh, Old Time, Shetland, Country, Orkney and Highland. Unfortunately this is the only place where most of these dance types are mentioned. I was hoping that each dance style would have its own page with relevant information about the dance style, origins, history etc, and where I could learn or dance it – but I was disappointed.

The Home Page, like the rest of the pages has lots of words, too many words. It isn't easy to sit and read from a screen and it isn't the best use of a visual medium like the Web. There are some pictures of dancers, but they don't immediately look to me as if they are doing Scottish dancing, it looks more like ballet. There are interesting paragraph headings such as "Development of National Resources Centre" which I would have liked to know more about, but there is no link to any further information.

Having ploughed my way through the home page, I still wasn't clear what STDT was about, so I looked at the "About Us" page. This reveals that funding is being sought for a new commission called "Funky Faeries" (yes I checked, and I was still on the STDT website). It transpires, when I looked at the "Highlights" page that Funky Faeries is "a piece of dance theatre based on the Scottish traditions which will be fun and innovative with a twist of world dance" however until funds are available it can't be developed. This development of Scottish dance into a performance art may encourage young people, and it has its place, but I still hadn't found what STDT was doing about traditional dancing.

The "Events" page didn't help much, there were only seven events covering the period from October 04 to March 05, which didn't seem very many. The "News" page indicated not much was new, I did this review on 16th November 2004 and the most recent news was from 15th July 2004.

The "Video Gallery" was interesting and the video clips downloaded reasonably quickly, even over a dial up line. The pictures are small and the quality not brilliant (the price which has to be paid for quicker download), but good enough to see what was happening. They were all clips from shows that had been put on such as Generating Heat and Celtic Spirit, which were great to watch, but where is the traditional dancing?

The links page was a disappointment. The first five links were to American websites, and several others were to sites that had no reference to Scottish dance at all but did include salsa, belly and contemporary dance. I do think that a links page should only contain relevant links, after all if you want someone to be interested in what you're doing (in this case traditional dance) why make it easy for them to leave the site (and maybe never come back)?

I left the website feeling that STDT may be doing good work with traditional dancing as well as developing a theatrical style for performance, but that they were not making the information available on their website. Apart from references to "work with local authorities" and lots of things they would like to do if they had the funding, it is not clear from their Website what they are actually doing or what they have achieved so far.



www.rscds-stirling.com

The Stirling RSCDS website has recently been redesigned and is a huge improvement on the previous version.

One very important thing to note about the Web, which is often forgotten, is that anyone, anywhere in the world, can look at the Website, and unless you make it very clear where you are in the world, people may not know. The Stirling RSCDS site is headed up with "Stirling – Scotland" which leaves no room for doubt.

There is brief but interesting information on the front page, and the link to voting for the Scottish Traditional Music Awards encouraged me to go and vote, which I would not have done otherwise.

The "Classes" page tells you all you need to know to go along and have a good time, assuming you are a local. To come back to the earlier point about saying where you are, if you are holding a class or a dance, saying it is in St Andrew's Church Hall (or wherever) is fine if you live locally. If someone is new to the area or visiting, they may not know where it is, so ideally the address and postcode should be included.

The "Events" page listed local events and gave details of programmes. It also allowed you to fill in an online form to apply for places at the forthcoming day school with a promise that a member of the committee would ring or e-mail you to confirm your place, not quite on line booking but a very good system.

The first item on the page was a previous event (testing Book 45 dances), with links to photographs and videos of the event. The room was obviously not ideal for photography, or the camera was not set correctly, as the pictures have a yellow tinge, however if you knew someone who was there you would have been able to recognise them.

When I went to look at the videos however I could not find a link to click on. The information indicated I needed to load Quicktime* but when I went to do this I discovered it was going to take over an hour on my dial up line so I abandoned the idea until a more convenient time. I emailed the technical help address on the "Contacts" page and received a response within a couple of hours, (excellent service!) however a note on the page saying that unless I had Quicktime installed I wouldn't even see the pictures, would have saved time.

The Contacts page has photographs of the committee officials and plenty of opportunities to e-mail people. There are several people that I recognised from dances I had been to, but hadn't previously known their names. As long as people are happy to have their pictures and names on the Web (they should be asked first) it gives a more personal touch.

Overall this is a useful Website which provides the information people need to come along and dance, it is easy to use and has a friendly feel to it.

* Quicktime is software for viewing videos and I was a bit puzzled why Quicktime had been chosen when most PCs already have Windows Media Player and/or Real Player installed however I am told the Website is hosted on an Apple Mac and this is the reason.



Barton Barbecue

4 x 32 Bar Reel

Longways Set of Four Couples

This dance was written for the annual Barton-upon-Humber Barbecue, which is attended by many non-dancers, as well as those with more experience.

1-4 First and second couples dance half rights and lefts.

5-8 First and third couples dance half rights and lefts.

9-12 First and fourth couples dance half rights and lefts.

13-16 All turn partners right hand one and a half times.

17-20 Second couple with third couples, first couple with fourth couples dance right hands across all the way round.

21-24 Second couple with third couples, first couple with fourth couples dance left hands across all the way round.

25-32 Second, third, fourth and first couples circle round and back.

Repeat from new positions

Sue Petyt

Did You Know?

The well-known dance, The Virginia Reel, probably appeared during the late seventeenth century when it was known as Sir Roger de Coverley. By the time it reached Scotland and Ireland in the late eighteenth century it was known as The Haymakers or The Haymakers Jig. The dance seems to have travelled across the Atlantic to New England where it became known as The Virginia Reel and eventually came back to Scotland with that name. The years and the miles probably account for the myriad of variations and durations of the dance as we see it today.

Corstorphine Road

4 x 32 Bar Strathspey

Longways Set of Four Couples

This dance was inspired by watching the traffic negotiate the double mini roundabouts near the end of Corstorphine Road in Edinburgh.

1-8 Each dancer (all 4 couples) dances a figure of eight round the set and back to place. Dancers in second and third lady's positions cross each time, and to start, the dancer going up (third ladies position) having priority. Join right hands at the top of the set, and left hands at the bottom of the set as in a wheel. (When you are crossing, do not be too anxious to join the wheel, wait until you get to the other side or the 8 will look like a B)

9-12 First man with second man and first lady with second lady turn right hand, WHILE third man with fourth man and third lady with fourth lady turn left hand.

13-16 First lady followed by second, third and fourth ladies dance down the middle of the set, staying in the middle and facing the men's side, WHILE fourth man followed by third second and first man dance up the middle of the set, staying in the middle and facing the ladies side. (All should be facing partner in the order 4,3,2,1)

17-20 Fourth couple with third couple, second couple with first couple, circle to the left for three steps, then drop hands and leaving the circle, dance one curving step out to the sides to finish on own sides 4,3,2,1. (Do not cast out of the circle)

21-24 Fourth couple and second couple turn partner right hand for two bars. Second couple cast to top place, WHILE fourth couple with right hands joined dance down the middle to third place. (Fourth couple should stay in the centre of the dance).

25-32 Second couple with third couple, fourth couple with first couple, dance double figures of eight. Second and fourth couples cross down to start and third and first couples dancing (not casting) up.

Finish 2,3,4,1 and repeat from new positions.

Sue Petyt

Duvet in the Dunes

4 x 32 Bar Jig

Square Set of Four Couples

This dance was devised at The Lowender Peran Festival 2001 in Cornwall. Fiddler Judith Linton had been "out on a jolly" and found herself locked out of her accommodation. Luckily she had a duvet in the car...

Bars 1 - 8 Leading Man chases Leading Lady thus – they dance out behind Man 4, then in front of Lady 4, behind Man 3 and so on back to their original places. They always dance behind the men and in front of the ladies.

Bars 8 - 24 All dance Grand Chain. When they meet their partners half way round, they keep holding hands in a circle and set twice. When they meet their partners again at the end they do the same.

Bars 25 - 28 In "Gay Gordons Hold" couples all face the centre and take four steps in and four steps back.

Bars 29 - 32 Releasing right hand hold, each lady makes ¼ turn anti-clockwise to face her partner. Left hands (still joined) are raised in the air and each dancer places his/her right arm around partner's waist. In this hold couples swing for 4 bars.

Bars 1 - 32 are repeated with next couple chasing to begin.

© Karin Ingram

Golden Slipper Two-Step

Any Two-Step

Round the room progressive couple dance. Couples stand side by side facing the line of dance. Men hold partners left hand in their left hand and place their right hand on partner's waist. Lady places her right hand over partner's right hand. This is essential to complete the movement on the turn.

An original dance created in Orkney by Linda Lennie. Orkney's "first nightclub", in Stenners, is called Golden Slipper.

Steele's Reel

32 Bar Reel

Three facing three round the room (two men and a lady with the lady in the centre, or two ladies and a man in the centre).

*Devised by Jan Miller and Annabel Oates
In memory of Davy Steele, a great dancer and a great pal.*

Bars

1-4 All join hands and circle left for eight.

5-8 Circle back to the right for eight.

9-12 "Teapots": centre joins right hand with own right partner and left partner from opposite three, circling right.

13-16 Centres pass left shoulders and form left-hand teapots with remaining two dancers (own left and opposite right), circling left.

17-18 Centre turns right partner.

19-20 Centre turns left partner.

21-24 Centre (only) do-si-do.

End of 24 Dancers nearest the middle of the dance floor (one in each three) turn towards middle and all join hands to form an inside circle; Centre and outside dancers join hands and turn towards middle, joining with others to form an outer circle.

25-28 Advance in circle, kick (optional hooch) and retreat.

End of 28 Return to initial formation, three facing three around the room, and join hands.

29-32 Line of three slips to left and travels past opposite three to meet three new pals.

© Horniegollach 2003

1-4 Both starting on the left foot set to the left then to the right. Starting on the left foot walk forward for three steps turning on the fourth and reversing the hand positions

5-8 Both starting on the right foot set to the right and the left and walk forward for three making a quarter turn on four to face the wall. Hands are now at shoulder height

9 Sway against the line of dance

10 Keeping left hands joined the man sways along the line of dance while the lady does a half turn to end in a position between her partner and the next gent with whom she joins right hands (we are now in a position where the men are facing out and the women are facing in).

11-12 All set along the line of dance and set against the line of dance

13-16 Letting left hands drop each person now swings the new partner on the right ready to start again.

© Linda Lennie

Steele's Reel

8 × 32-bar reels: Play ABBCCDDA

© Brian Miller 2003

A: Steele's Reel

B: The Giftie

C: First o the Year

D: Yorkie

The Circle Waltz

32 Bar Waltz

Five couples forming a circle, all facing into the centre, and ladies standing to the right of their partners.

This is one of several dances with the same name. this one is popular with children who enjoy doing the "pancake turn".

Bars

1 – 2 All dancers hold hands with those on either side and take one step into the centre and out again, swinging their arms forward at the same time.

3 – 4 Each man lets go of his partner's hand, and passes the lady on his left across in front of him from left to right. (Some ladies like to complete a full clockwise turn under the man's raised left hand while they are moving across.)

5 – 16 Bars 1 – 4 are repeated three times.

17 – 18 Each man faces the lady on his right and joins both hands with her. They swing their arms in towards the centre of the circle, and back out again.

19 – 20 Each couple, still with hands joined, swing in to the centre again, but this time they continue swinging in so that their arms are raised above their heads and they turn back to back and complete a full circle to finish facing each other once more. (This is sometimes referred to as a "pancake turn" and becomes easier if joined hands are kept close together throughout the turn, rather than having arms spread wide apart.)

21 – 22 Still facing and with hands joined, each couple swing their arms away from the centre of the circle and back in again.

23 – 24 Each couple swing away from the centre again, and continue – thus completing a "pancake turn" in the other direction.

25 – 28 Each couple joins in ballroom hold and takes two side-steps into the centre, and two back out again.

29 – 32 Couples waltz together for four bars, each lady finishing on the man's right.

The above thirty-two bars are danced for the duration of the music – usually five times – to enable dancers to dance with everyone in the set.

© Northbeat 1999

St Magnus

4 x 40 Bar Reel

Longways Set of Four Couples

This dance represents the beautiful architecture of St Magnus Cathedral, Orkney.

Bars

1 – 8 1st couple lead down the middle for four steps and cast up behind their own lines to the top while 4th couple cast up behind their own lines to the top and lead down the middle for four steps.

9 – 16 Giving inner hands 1st couple dance down the middle for two steps, while 4th couple giving inner hands dance up for two steps. Both couples face each other and set (2nd and 3rd couples step up and down) 1st and 4th ladies joining inner hands dance through between 2nd and 3rd ladies divide and dance round to their own places, 1st and 4th men do the same dancing through between 2nd and 3rd men (2nd and 3rd couple step down and up their own places).

17 – 20 All cross to opposite side of dance, men making arches, ladies dancing under passing partner on the right.

21 – 24 Repeat **Bars 17 – 20** men again making the arches.

25 – 32 2nd and 3rd couples giving right hands – wrist hold – make a wheel and dance round to the right for eight steps finishing in their own places facing out while 1st and 4th couples dance a chain (or circle) round them giving right hands across and left in passing for eight steps back to their places (2 steps to each giving hands).

33 – 36 1st couple touch hands and dance down for two steps while 4th couple touch hands and dance up, ladies join inner hands facing own side and move round with two setting steps to face partners, who have joined hands and set with same movement.

They finish 1st couple in 3rd place 4th couple in 2nd place

During **Bars 33 – 36** 2nd couple cast up to the top to meet partner facing down the middle while 3rd couple cast down to meet partner facing up the middle

37 – 40 All join hands (to form a circle) advance for two steps raising hands high above heads and retire for two steps to finish on original lines of the dance

Repeat with new couple top and bottom

Isobel Dennison

Nae Reel!

On 27th March 2004, Ken McNaughton of Ullapool had a 60th birthday party and ceilidh. There was lots of music and dancing, and lots of the guests had been friends of the late Davy Steele. Jan Miller, who had co-authored the dance, suggested that I call "Steele's Reel". I didn't have any crib with me, and I guess I didn't make a very good job of calling it. Or maybe the dancers had got past the point of listening and understanding. Anyway, the attempt was a bit of a shambles, but one of the funniest points of the night, whether you were dancing or watching. Hence the poem, written a few weeks later.

Ah gaed tae this auld gadgie's pairty
It wis held wey up in the North West
We Kenn't that the crack wid be hearty
For the company wis aa o the best.

There wis aa kins o drink for the drouthy
There wis scan and a bonny brow bun
(Wi the host there depictit sae couthy
Makin ploothers aneath a bricht sun)

Mony bodies hid ettled tae turn up
(There wis pals that we miss'd awfy sair)
And the band fiddled on for the burn up
And we stomped muckle holes in their flair

We jaloused Davy Steele widna jig it –
Ane o they that wis noo somewhaur ither –
But Jan had a dance she hid biggit
Tae his memory, fine singer an brother

So she telt me that ah wis tae caa it
Tell the fowk on the flair whit tae dae
An they'd aa verra sune toddle thro it
An hae a brow time at it, tae.

Sae ah telt them the richt wey tae dance it
Apart fae the bits ah forgot
Quite a few o them thocht they wid chance it
(Optimistic and naïve the lot)

Weel ah shouted them thro aa the fankle
They cuidna tell left fae their richt
There was three strokes and ane broken ankle
An there's some no been richt since that nicht.

When ah telt them tae circle they'd teapot
When ah shoutit retreat they'd advance
When ah yelt dosiedoe they aa leapit
Ah wis mebbe jist caain the wrang dance.

Weel, they feenisht the stushie, breasts heavin
Vermilion in aabody's cheeks
Jist pairt o a maist perfect evenin –
We were cheerily puggl't fur weeks.

And I heard oer the Brae, on the breezes
A faint echo fae Sandwood tae Stirlin
Like a heavenly hostin o wheezes
Or mair likely oor pal Davy – birlin!

Brian Miller 2004

There Has To Be An Etiquette

*(A half formed dotty ditty about the tribulations of a
drippy dancenose by George Hobson)*

A cold coming we've had of it
We froze and stung in pelting hail.
The dancers stamp to ease their feet
And wear their vests to no avail.

But now we hear the merry feast
The music draws us heel and toe
This dance is just horrid beast
But just for warmth let's have a go

Eight quick bars have melted all the snow,
Sixteen of reeling in this piece
Have made the feet and fingers glow
One full dance has stripped off every fleece
And all are warm and comfy so

But soon these skins once blue as druids
Now glow bright red
And leak their fluids
While all around each hoary head
The steam arises

And when this perspiration breaks its banks
And trickles now
From scalp, down brow
And onto nose
A silent panic rises in the ranks
Of when and how,
Where next it goes

O for an etiquette from some kind boss,
To tell me how a man may strive
To keep some dignity alive
While dabbing at this fiendish dripping
And simultaneously skipping
Into giving hands across

The brave man gives an honest puff of air
To blow fine droplets everywhere
The timid turns his trembling head
And hopes the drop discretely shed

A real man wipes it on his sleeve
Though this may make a partner heave
The sly and slimy have a way
To share it in a close Strathspey

Only those of absolutely caddish hue
Would catch it with their hand to
Wipe it on their partners dress.
And worse the ones who will confess
They always like to share the mess!

The etiquette of steps and figures
Well I know
And everything a dancer
Ought to show
But every time the sweating
Starts to flow
I never can decide just when and
How to blow
That damned damp nasal drip that seems to
Grow and grow,
There should be some guidance in The Manual
But it's no more use than Oor Wullies Annual!

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	Live Music	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
	Carlisle	District Hall	Hartfeil	7.30-12.30 Bar	£? (supper) Ticket requ.	01555 773 327	Highlanders
	Crieff	Crieff Hotel	Gordon Pattullo & Willie Simpson	8pm-1am Bar	£12 (incl. buffet)	Ticket only 01764 681 654	Crieff A. & F. Club Dance.
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	£? 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 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 McConnachie	7pm	£9/£10	Supper	ptrsmp@btopenworld.com
14 th	Hightae	Lockerbie Academy	Colin Dewar	8pm	£6	01387 810 423	Hightae SCD Club
	Paisley	Town Hall	Ian Muir Sound	7pm	£17	0141 956 2134	Glasgow Annual Ball
21 st	Stirling	Albert Halls	Ian Thomson	7.30pm	£8.50	01786 461 275	Burns Night (+Meal)
	Edinburgh	The Merlin	Stuart Anderson			0131 337 4482	RSCDS Ceilidh Night
25 th	Dumfries	Marchmount	Jean McConnachie	8pm	£10	01387 265 815	Dumfries RSCDS
28 th	Troon	Concert Hall	Marian Anderson	7.30pm	£5	01292 315 558	Ayr Branch Dance
	Bearsden	Burgh Hall	t.b.c.	7.30pm	£6	0141 942 7519	Motor Neurone charity

Alasdair's Dance Diary February

Ceilidh & Old Time Dances

February 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
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5 th	Newtongrange	Dean Tavern	George Hood	7.30-11.30 Bar	£5	0131 663 6022 to reserve table	Acc. & Fiddle Club Dance
	Auchendinny, Midlothian	Glencorse Comm Centre	Webster Craig	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£5 Sausage Roll supper	Door or 01721 723 468	(near Penicuik)
	Ayrshire	Sorn Village Hall	Dick Black	7.30-11.30 B.Y.O.B.	£4.50 (Inc. Supper)	01292 220 344 01560 700 219	Tickets required
	Haddington	Corn Exchange	Lismore	(No other)	Details)		Town Twinning
6 th	Angus	Tealing	Johnny Duncan	7.30-10pm	£2.50	Door	
11 th	Midlothian	Bilston Miners Club	Sandy Legget	7.30-11.30 Bar	£4.50 (incl. Supper)	0131 660 1276 0131 663 6221	Wednesday Dance Club
	Lockerbie	Town Hall	Neil Hardie	7.30-11.30 Bar	£5 (incl. supper)	01576 610 272 01576 202 665	Lockerbie A. & F. Club Dance
12 th	Lanarkshire	Strathaven Ballgreen Hall	Dave Husband Sound	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£6 (incl. lt. supper)	01357 520 900	Avondale Ceilidh Society
18 th	Glasgow	City Chambers	Billy Ferguson	7.30-11pm Bar	£5	01355 222 189 07720 017 616	S.Y.H.A. annual dance.
	Carlisle	District Hall	Charlie Kirkpatrick	7.30-12.30 Bar	£? (supper) Ticket requ.	01555 773 327	Highlanders
	Ayrshire	Hansel Village	Lindsay Weir	7.30-12mn Bar & Raffle	£5.50 Snack	Door or 01292 289 234	Charity
19 th	Glasgow	Partick Burgh Halls	Ian Muir	8pm-11.30 Bar	£5 membership	0141 339 9679	Highlanders Club
	East Kilbride	Calderwood Hall	Alan Doig	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£5 B.Y.O.B.	01294 212 267	Highlanders
23 rd	Dufftown	Memorial Hall		7.30-10.30		Door	Monthly Social
24 th	Fife	Windygates Village Hall	Bruce Lindsay	8pm-11pm No Bar	£3 (supper)	Door	
25 th	Perthshire	Bridge of Earn Hall	Simon Howie	8pm-11.30	£? B.Y.O.B.	Door	
	Helensburgh (Highlanders)	Commodore Hotel	Albany	8pm-1am Bar	£?	01436 672 927 01389 841 208	Cabaret Dance
26 th	West Lothian	Pumphreston Village Hall	Gordon Pattullo	7.30-11.30 No Bar	£3.50 B.Y.O.B.	01506 417 512 01506 434 365	Advance Ticket only

Scottish Country Dancing

February 2005

4 th	Milngavie	Town Hall	John Renton	7.30pm	£5	0141 956 2134	Glasgow Branch Dance
11 th	Broxburn	Strathbrock Community Centre	Alan Ross	7.30pm	£6 supper	01506 500 457	St Valentine Dance with proceeds to C.H.A.S.
18 th	Aberfoyle	Rob Roy Hotel	D. MacLeod	(overnight)	£30	0141 570 1001	Glasgow Branch Dinner Dance
	Helensburgh	Victoria Halls	Nicol McLaren	8pm	£7	01436 673 521	Charity Dance
19 th	Bearsden	Burgh Hall	(Glasgow University SCDC)			0141 581 6331	50 th Anniversary Ball
	Edinburgh	Cluny Centre	Sandy Nixon			0131 337 4482	Edinburgh Branch Dance
25 th	Dumfries	High School	Jean McConnachie			01387 265 815	Dumfries Branch RSCDS
26 th	Stirling	Albert Halls	Colin Dewar	7pm	£5	01738 440 356	Stirling Day School

Dancing is People!

*Ut meam dentis ne carborundum
erabim ad gingivum*

Everything Mike Scott says is true, but only insofar as it reflects the facts and experience of many attending Country Dance and Ceilidh Dance for the first time or two. I would like to defend Country Dance from this allotted image of being rule, style and technique obsessed; and essentially anti-individuality, but I fear I cannot.

We would do better to accept his insight into why we fail to keep our young and early middle age adults, despite the flying start we have with every young Scot learning the basics, at school, at parties, at Scouts and Guides, virtually with their mothers milk.

Believe it or not we want people to have fun, to dance in their own way, to express the new and vigorous music appearing every year, to explore the possibilities of the new dances and figures pouring down upon us.

Even when we survive the trials and tribulations of learning the steps, figures and progressions well enough for our self-respect, fun may have to be had carefully. It isn't just "Tuts" that worry me about improvisations, and believe me, in Highland our Rallies are more famous for their "variations" than for RSCDS correct. No, it is the second and third aspects of dance-respect, respect for the partner and respect for the set, which cause problems. Spin, birl, twirl, caper, set with elevated entrechats, reel with pirouette and slaps, double up in ghost reels, poach partners from other sets, but remember your

partner may not know these moves, there may be beginners in the set who barely know the unmodified dance. So the considerate inventive dancer in Scottish Country Dance may have to choose between the wonderful serendipity of picking partners from friends we don't know yet, and the freedom to experiment by getting up with people we've known for years and just swapping within our sets.

In the first issue we heard of the Edinburgh Gardens scene with experienced dancers avoiding Tyros. In the second we hear we are not being individualistic enough. Both are true and both have us grinding our teeth down to the gums. What can we do?

I have only a simple mind, and all my dancing leaves much to be desired. I dance anything that has music to it. I have found in all forms of dance a few simple things are alienating. Not knowing what you are doing is the most obvious; local variations that leave you standing out, or going the wrong way are similar; tight-knit groups that stick together clearly exclude you. Country dancing has all of these faults and it is not alone. Classes seek to tackle the first two, giving basic solid technique and introduction to range and variation. The etiquette of RSCDS seeks to tackle the third; i.e. you do first and last dance with your partner, all the rest are shared around the company remembering how you were helped as a beginner. However one aspect of etiquette is probably causing more of our problems than would seem possible. Sets form from the top of the hall, and are counted from the top by the top man, and stepping in must never happen!

Now I come to my only real point in the whole article. It is people who dance. Most of the people at rallies want the individualism and freedom that Mike Scott alludes to. My estimate is that about two-thirds of them get up quickly, at the top of the hall, usually with the same people in the same top sets. I find rarely more than

By George Hobson



Emma Elliott-Walker takes pity on George and gives him a dance!

a dozen or so free partners in an evening, mostly beginners and a few dancers new to that rally. I always enjoy their company and dancing. But we are always in the bottom sets, under the balcony, squeezed to the door, dancing round pillars; or worst of all, counted out and asked to dance fives or even sit down. The smug top sets of course are only annoyed that they have to wait while we desperately seek extra dancers or space.

This seems a bit petty, but I have seen it for years. I know there have been many beginners and dancers on their own who have had such a miserable sitting-around experience that they have gone to other forms of dance, or worse, given up.

I would make a plea for a simple change. Perhaps the MC or caller or recapper could randomly announce, "This dance requires X couple sets, would the man at the bottom please count to the top in Xs?"

Who knows, this might break-up cliques at least occasionally. It might release experienced dancers to pick up the loners and beginners. It might just make us more considerate of everybody who paid to come in. And I might just be counted out less often!

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Scottish Dance
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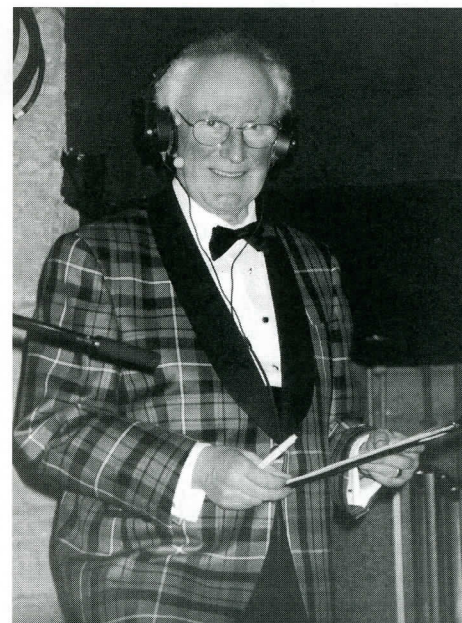
Take The Floor

Over the years I've been to several Take The Floor outside broadcasts and I was really looking forward to the Christmas one this year. Alasdair MacCuish and The Black Rose Ceilidh Band, with guests The Annie Grace Trio were appearing in Glasgow's Oran Mor. The venue, a converted church on the corner of Byres Road and Great Western Road, is spectacular, and apparently upstairs is even more so. It reminded me a little of the late lamented Caley Brewery, perhaps it was the pillars around the edge of the dance floor.

I can remember the very first Take The Floor recording I went to. At the start of the night Ken Mutch explained the procedure and asked the dancers to remain quietly on the floor after

Grace had difficulty hearing herself sing on the quieter numbers. A group of gentlemen who go to nearly every recording said that their evening had been spoilt by the group sitting opposite them talking loudly the whole time. For those who did bother to listen, the music was wonderful. Annie Grace played several songs and tunes from her recent CD, *Take Me Out Drinking Tonight*, and there were quite a few men in the audience who would gladly have taken her up on her offer!

I have danced to Alasdair MacCuish for many years, in fact as a teenager he used to play regularly for my dance class in The Riverside Club, and it was great to see lots of old friends from those days. Alasdair has the ability to play to his audience. Many people think of him as a fast



Robbie Shepherd

and furious Ceilidh player, but ask him to play for an Old Time or Country Dance and his tempos will be perfect. On stage with him he had Tom Orr on second box, Alison Smith on fiddle, Iain MacFadyen on drums and David Gracie on keyboard. The programme mostly consisted of well-known dances and the floor of course was filled for every one. Accordionist Phil Cunningham was there along with some of the crew from the BBC Hogmanay Show, but he would not be persuaded onto the dance floor! You don't know what you're missing Phil!

Karin Ingram

each dance until after Robbie had completed the link. This always used to happen without any problem. However, at the last few I've been to many of the dancers completely ignored this instruction! They either walked straight off the floor or stood around chatting at the tops of their voices. I don't think the acoustics in Oran Mor helped. The bar is at the opposite end of the room from the stage, and the sound from there really seemed to carry. However that really didn't excuse the behaviour of many of the dancers. Despite being repeatedly asked by Robbie to quieten down during the links, they just carried on regardless.

When people were actually dancing on the floor the sound was fine, but real problems arose when the audience were supposed to sit quietly for the guest artists to perform. Poor Annie



Jennifer Cowie, Isobel Robertson, Jimmy Young and Ronnie White

Scottish Country Dancing

Just How Traditional Is It?

By Finlay Forbes

I remember reading an article in which the now somewhat precarious survival of Scottish Country Dancing was attributed in no small way to the Scottish aristocracy's espousal of Episcopalian values during the Reformation. Apparently, this denominational individualism allowed our esteemed aristocrats to ignore any prohibitions, real or imaginary, that John Knox and his Presbyterian followers imposed upon dancing. But for their faith, we should all be dancing something else.

As a piece of Episcopalian propaganda, this could hardly be bettered. As a piece of Scottish history it is a complete non-starter. According to most authorities on the subject, John Knox died on 24 November 1572. I cannot verify this as I was not there at the time but in the absence of anything better, I am inclined to believe it. The first country dances to show any kind of specifically Scottish traits began to appear somewhere around 1720. It is unlikely that country dancing of any kind reached Scotland much before the end of the seventeenth century. Even if John Knox and his fellow Presbyterian reformers were as curmudgeonly as some historians would have us believe they were, banning something that did not exist would have been a particularly bizarre combination of superhuman foresight and wasted effort.

For some strange reason, many Scottish country dancers and more particularly dancing teachers, like to think of their art as particularly ancient and to see themselves as guardians of a tradition that goes back to the time of Bannockburn or even earlier. In fact, the roots of the activity that we now call Scottish Country Dancing may go back no further than the time of the First World War. There were certainly Scottish country dances well before that time but how much resemblance they bore to the dances that we do now under that name is open to question.

The popular alternative to the theory of Episcopalian salvation is that Scottish country dancing began somewhere in the first half of the eighteenth century, peaked somewhere around 1800 and

survived steadily all the way through to the years of the First World War. The social upheaval that followed this conflict would have consigned Scottish country dancing to an almost certain death from the popularity of "jazz" (so the story goes) but for the efforts of the redoubtable duopoly of Mrs Stewart of Fasnacloich and Miss Jean Milligan.

This tale is more plausible than some others but is still improbable. Scottish country dancing along with Scots fiddle music went into serious popular decline from the second decade of the nineteenth century. This was a time when all manner of artistic edifices were falling all over Europe. The patronage system under which composers had operated since the Renaissance had virtually disappeared. Even the great Joseph Haydn was pensioned off into a sinecure (one setting of The Mass per year). The next generation of composers, dominated by Beethoven and Schubert had to rely on a combination of teaching, freelance commissions and public concerts rather than regular salaries from discerning patrons. Scotland was not immune to these changes. By the 1820s, the generation of patrons that had supported fiddlers and dancing masters like Robert MacIntosh and Nathaniel Gow had died out. Their heirs and successors, who were generally less interested in culture and more interested in making money, were now dancing waltzes and polkas. In high society, couple dances were supplanting country dances in all the prestigious ballrooms. The world that made it worthwhile for the likes of MacIntosh and Gow to leave their native Scotland and set up in London as "teachers of Scotch dancing" had passed away. The Scottish country dances that were to survive through to the Victorian Age were mostly feral strays from the elegance of the late eighteenth century ballroom nurtured by a few eccentric nationalists out of step with the spirit of the age. In terms of ballroom fashion, "Scotch Dances" had become yesterday's chic.

The idea that these unfashionable dances were preserved assiduously for the best part of a century by

a few marginalised but dedicated enthusiasts is little more than wishful thinking. Preservation was not something that Victorians did well. They didn't believe in it. The Victorian age had an unshakeable faith in the superiority of its own values and Victorians were committed to imposing those values on any ancient buildings, music, artefacts, institutions or anything else that they considered to be in need of the unquestionably improving effects of modernisation. To such a generation, Bach's organ music sounded far better on the assemblages of foghorns that passed for organs in many English cathedrals of the time than it did on the light, clearly voiced North German instruments for which it had been written. St. Albans abbey was improved into a state of hideousness that led to the coinage of the verb "Grimethorpe" after the perpetrator of the worst excesses of this reforming zeal. With the benefit of hindsight, they were a pretty tasteless crew but they probably meant well.

Given this somewhat chequered tale of shifting fortunes and Victorian values, one thing seems certain. Whatever it was that Mrs Stewart and Miss Milligan rescued from doom and destruction back in 1923, it was not the Scottish country dances that had totally won over the powdered wig generation in the high noon of "Scotch dancing" around the turn of the eighteenth century.

That oft quoted extract from "Tam o' Shanter" that reads "Nae cotillion brent new frae France, but hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels pit life and mettle in their heels" would not have made any sense to a dancer at the end of the nineteenth century. It probably makes even less sense to dancers today now that hornpipes, jigs and reels have a distinction that many prefer to leave entirely to musicians to unravel.

The current separation of country dances into "Reels and Jigs" on the one hand and Strathspeys on the other is far simpler than it was in the eighteenth century. Back in those days, dances with time signatures

such as 3/2 and 9/8 were not unknown. The dance "The Sutters of Selkirk", which appears as a reel in RSCDS Book 18, reached its present destination from Walsh's Caledonian Country Dances of 1748 where it linked to a tune of the same name in 3/4 time. ("Up wi' the Sutters o' Selkirk and doon wi' the Earls o' Hume".) As far as movements are concerned, the dance in Book 18 is clearly the same as the one in Walsh. What is equally clear is that the dancers in Walsh's day did not use the currently taught versions of the pas de Basque and skip change of step to get through the figures (not in 3/4 time they didn't!).

The essence of the post 1923 revival appears to have been based on pragmatism rather than authenticity. A new style of dancing was forged out of the remains of old dances and the sometimes rusty memories of some of their participants. There is nothing particularly wrong with this. After all, it is better to have a living and growing art form than an ossified piece of museum fodder but is important for the proponents of pragmatism to be honest about what they have done and are continuing to do. What they should not do is pretend that what they are fostering has some kind of historical legitimacy when clearly it does not. If the surviving remnants of Scotland's old dances were repackaged and standardised for ease of teaching, they are none the worse for it. Given the history of the genre, any attempt at revitalisation was bound to involve a fair degree of guesswork and the odd bit of trial and error. The main difficulty facing Scotland's country dancing is that it loses that spirit of trial and error and becomes hidebound by its own highly artificial traditions.

There may be a case for taking a more careful look at some of the older dances and reviving old practices. "Kiss me quick my mother's coming" may well be worth starting with a genuine kiss as the original instructions require although the health and hygiene police will probably step very firmly on that idea. Strathspeys may once again be taken at the genuine "andante" required by Thomas Wilson (he of "Companion to the Ballroom" fame) back in 1816. Forgotten melodies and rhythms may make a comeback but until that happens, we can but soldier on in the knowledge that what we are doing is a lot less "Royal and Ancient" than perhaps we should like to believe.

Country Dancing in Switzerland

On Friday November 26th some fifty dancers from various parts of Europe gathered at The Sternen Hotel, Muri, in Berne for a weekend of Scottish Country dancing. After a good dinner in the hotel, dancing commenced to the music of The Cairns from the UK. A special floor had been laid in the large conference room. The Berne Scottish Dance Group, which is affiliated to the RSCDS, organises this event periodically as part of the their St Andrew's Day celebrations. They are a group that meets weekly and their membership has some Scots (currently in exile) as well as local Swiss folk. This year Christine Mair, who is wife of Alan Mair a former Chairman of the RSCDS, was the tutor and led the Friday social dance programme consisting mainly of dances which had connections with people in the room.

During Saturday there were workshops lead by Christine covering technique and some unfamiliar formations from both RSCDS publications and recently devised dances. Fairly tired dancers took a quiet rest for an hour before the evening activities commenced.

At the Ball on Saturday evening an additional twenty visitors joined the dancing. The evening began with a superb three-coursed dinner at tables round the ballroom. The Cairns, Duncan Brown on fiddle, Peter Clark on accordion and Pat Clark on keyboard,

provided the music again. Alan Paterson, who is author of the SCD Web-Index containing details of nearly 12,000 SCD dances, and a member of the home group, was the MC. During the jig, Roselath Cross, there were, in one set, seven different nationalities represented by the eight dancers – truly international!

As though nine hours of dancing were not enough on Saturday some fifty dancers stayed during Sunday morning for another workshop led by Christine. Besides the tutor and band there were two dancers who had travelled from the UK, and one from Hawaii. The rest of the gathering were just part of the large family of dancers that exists throughout the world as a result of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society's work in providing instruction in the Country Dance.

Peter Clark (Kingussie)

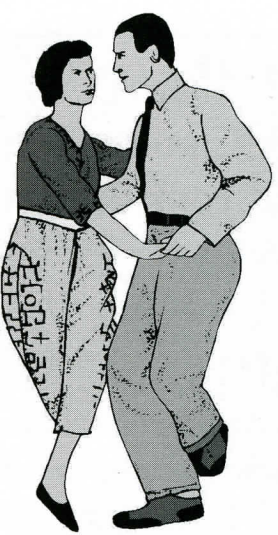
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Lights... Camera... Action

Back in October I was asked to dance in a scene in a new film called, "Heartless." It's being made by the Scottish production company Ecosse Films, best known for their television series, "Monarch of the Glen". The film is set on Skye and features a return to the screen for Angus Deayton, who leads the cast. It's scheduled for release on ITV in the spring of 2005.

Before agreeing to take part, I wanted first to determine whether the ceilidh would be authentic and that there would be no attempt to show ceilidh in an unfavourable light, as has happened in the past. Readers of my previous articles will know that I'm keen to see ceilidh lose its "shortbread tin" image, so I won't take part in any production which perpetuates this inaccurate depiction. Although the choreographer reassured me that it would be a "proper" ceilidh, she had absolutely no experience of ceilidh dance! Yikes! That set alarm bells ringing, but she seemed nice enough and well intentioned, so I agreed to do it. At least if I was involved I could try to make sure it would be done properly. There were to be five dances in all: The Gay Gordons, Dashing White Sergeant, Virginia Reel,

The Reel of the 51st Division and a "slow smoochy" number. That seemed fairly representative – a good start. However, the choreographer knew only the first two, and certainly had no idea of The Reel of the 51st. The director requested that particular dance, although I've still no idea of its special significance in the film. The actors and extras were to dance in the ceilidh, and the experienced ceilidh dancers were to be there to help them and to lead the dancing.

The scene was to be shot in the small hamlet of Fintry, north of Glasgow, in the village hall, which had been taken over for several weeks by Ecosse Films. Arriving for rehearsals on the eve of the first day of filming, it became apparent that things were rapidly sliding down the slippery slope towards disaster! For a start, only three of the eight dancers had ceilidh experience. Even worse, several of the women weren't Scottish and had never even been to a ceilidh! There are many extremely experienced and talented female ceilidh dancers in Scotland – both native and foreign – so you can imagine my horror when I realised that most of the "ceilidh dancers" chosen by the choreographer didn't even know what a set is. Help! But that was just the start – things were to get worse.

There had been a separate rehearsal the night before with the choreographer, the leading actors and the director. When he saw it, the director hadn't liked the Reel of the 51st. He felt it wasn't aggressive

By Mike Scott

enough! I'm sure he missed the irony. The dance was devised by battle-scarred soldiers of the 51st Highland Division, from whom it takes its name. They invented it while being held captive in a German prisoner of war camp during the Second World War. Surely there is no more aggressive Scottish Country Dance! However, the original aggressive men-only version was unknown to the choreographer, who had only just seen the dance during a break in a Scottish Country Dance class in Edinburgh the week before.

So what was to be done? No problem, she could just change the dance! Well since no one present at that rehearsal had any clue about ceilidh or Scottish Country Dance, you can perhaps imagine the result. Despite the fact that almost 10,000 Scottish Country Dances have been recorded, the choreographer managed to come up with a figure that doesn't exist in any of them. Instead of smoothly flowing into the diagonal balancing, this new version had the dancing couple stop abruptly, stamp their feet on the floor while slapping right hands with their corners, then turning, stamping again and slapping right hands with their partner. I couldn't believe it! This attempt to inject aggression looked like Larry Grayson having a temper tantrum, perhaps with a touch of the Bavarian thrown in for good measure! And to add insult to injury, the dance was renamed, "The Reel of the 49th"! Can you imagine me squirming? At that point I wished the floor would open and swallow me up. It looked ridiculous and it was exactly what I *didn't* want to get involved in. I was ready to throw in the towel. However,

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we'd been taken through to Fintry from Edinburgh on a production coach. I'd have to wait in the freezing hall until the coach was ready to take us home, so I decided to carry on to the bitter end of the evening. It was just as well. The next thing the director wanted was for Angus Deayton and the second lead actor to come together in the middle of the set and have a "dance off" to prove who was the better dancer. Oh, and to make things worse, the second lead was to be in another set and somehow had to work his way into the set in which Angus was dancing. Fortunately, we managed to devise an almost plausible way of getting the second actor into a corner position and by turning Angus Deayton's partner right around, both men ended up facing each other in the centre.

Then they were to compete with each other for the dance off. What was that to be? Fortunately, nothing had been planned so I suggested doing some aggressive setting, as in Hullochan's Jig with the men giving it the full "rutting stag" treatment, followed by lots of fast turning in the Hullochan's hold. A quick demonstration convinced the director that it would work. However, neither Angus Deayton nor the other lead actor could set or spin convincingly so we gave them lessons. Angus seemed particularly apprehensive about dancing but I have to say that he picked it up very quickly.

silly things happened, such as a Virginia Reel with a set as wide as a badminton court! I kid you not! Like many small halls, Fintry has a full size badminton court painted on the floor. We were made to start with the men and women on opposite sides of the court, standing on the sidelines. I've taken part in the world record breaking, "Longest Strip the Willow in the World", on George Street in Edinburgh as part of the Hogmanay celebrations. Can I now also claim to have taken part in the, "Widest Virginia Reel in the World"?

Despite these silly shenanigans, I believe we succeeded in keeping the ceilidh reasonably faithful. In hindsight, I'm glad I was involved as it would probably have been a disaster otherwise. I've not seen the result of course, but I'm sure that after editing it'll look fine.

I've been involved in producing and directing in the past. For example, my own small production company produced the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra's 10th anniversary video in Aberdeen back in 1990, which I directed. The thing that impressed me most on this set was the amazing professionalism of the crew. Everything was done incredibly smoothly and with absolutely no fuss. Camera, lighting, sound, wardrobe, continuity – each team did their job without even seeming to discuss anything.

Since my two "real ceilidh dance" colleagues and I had managed to prevent the scene from degenerating into a complete farce, I decided to soldier on and take part in the shooting over the next couple of days as originally planned. Other

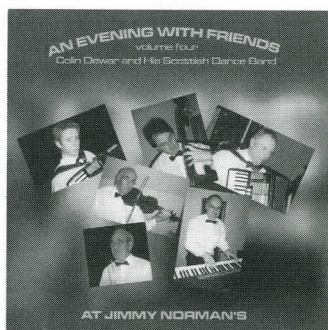
When the director was ready for a take, everything had already been set up perfectly. It was like watching a fine clockwork mechanism. Every member of the crew was immensely experienced – they were all specialists in their respective fields and knew exactly what they were doing. It was most impressive.

However, this amazing ability only served to highlight further the horrifying lack of professionalism in the approach to filming a dance scene. Whereas all the other crew were skilled experts, a choreographer had been hired who knew *nothing* about ceilidh. She had no concept of phrasing or the importance of bars, of sets, casting off, etc. In fact, rudimentary set dance technicalities puzzled her, such as how the dancing couple managed magically to work their way into second place in the Reel of the 51st after one time through!

What I wonder is, with all the money and effort that goes into a production like this, would one hire a weekend wedding photographer who had only ever shot stills and make him camera man, expecting him to be able to use a Hollywood film camera? Certainly not! Yet when it comes to dance, no effort whatsoever is made in trying to hire someone who actually knows what they're doing. And it certainly isn't hard to find someone with the necessary experience and talent. There is any number of experienced ceilidh dancers who would be able to do a far better job.

So my advice to anyone asked to get involved in a dance scene is this: make sure it's going to show the dance in a good light, and that the choreographer has experience of the dance form in question. And watch out for "Heartless" on ITV in the spring. See how many Edinburgh ceilidh dancers you can spot – both dancing in the ceilidh and as extras in the wedding scene! OK, that's it, I'm not giving away anything else – other than telling you it's a great story!

Reviews



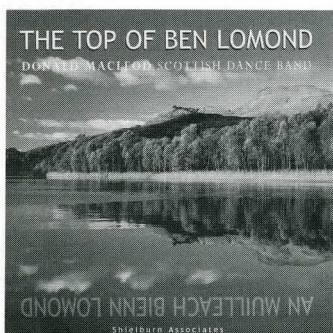
**An Evening with
Friends Vol 4**
Colin Dewar & His SDB
NORCD0204
Independent

Here we have the fourth in this wonderful series of CDs commissioned by Jimmy Norman of The Halcrow Stadium, Gretna. The first three were all crackers, and I certainly wasn't disappointed with this one. Colin Dewar (who must rate as one of the best dance musicians in the country) always surrounds himself with musicians of an equally high calibre. Colin of course is on lead accordion, Alasdair MacLeod on second box, Gordon Simpson on fiddle, Dennis Morrison on piano, John Delaney on bass and Gus Millar on drums. They produce a really tight "danceable" sound. The tune choices are excellent, but there are only two of Colin's own compositions and he does write some lovely music.

Although there are twenty tracks, there are only ten dances (each one has an encore). This makes the CD ideally suited for a dance class because you don't have to keep going back to the beginning of the track if

you want another round! There are just two set dances – The Circassian Circle and The Riverside Jig (I suspect that that is actually The Riverside). The rest of the dances are all for couples – The Eva Three-step, The Quickstep, The Southern Rose Waltz, The Canadian Barn Dance, The Flirtation Two-step, Fiona's Polka, The New Killarney Waltz and The Modern Waltz.

This CD is obviously aimed at dancers and will make a valuable addition to your collection.



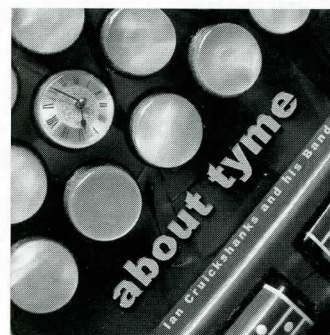
The Top Of Ben Lomond
Donald MacLeod
Scottish Dance Band
SHIELCD018
Shielburn Associates

On this, Donald's first CD, the band members were as follows: lead accordion – Donald Macleod, second accordion – Alasdair Macleod, piano – Scott Gordon, drums – Gus Millar and bass – John Delaney.

This is an excellent CD with superb tempos throughout. The sleeve gives a clear indication of which dance each track is for. The partner dances included are: Gay Gordons, St Bernard's

Waltz, Canadian Barn Dance, Two-step, Southern Rose Waltz, Polka, Britannia Two-step, Highland Schottische, Gaelic Waltz, and The Gay Gordons Two-step. The following set dances are also included, Shetland Reel (4 x 32 Bar reel), The Riverside (8 x 32 Bar jig), Dashing White Sergeant, Strip the Willow (8 x 32 Bar jig) and The Flying Scotsman (8 x 32 Bar reel). With this great selection of dances all clearly named, it has proved to be of great use to me as a teacher, and I whole-heartedly recommend it to you.

Campbell Hunter



About Tyme
Ian Cruickshanks and
his Band
CDN003
Independent

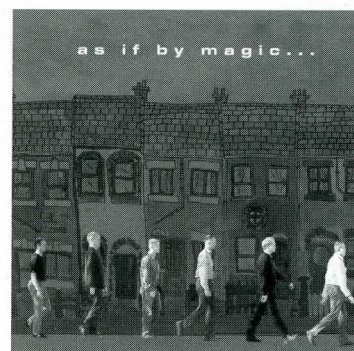
Ian Cruickshanks is one of the most popular Old Time Dance players around. On this CD he is joined by Jim

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Sturrock on fiddle, Bill Ewan on piano, Bill Milligan on drums, Brian Cruickshank on bass and Bruce Lindsay on second accordion (3-row).

There are twenty-one Old Time Dance tracks, five of which are for The Caledonians. Queen of the Dance, Jessie Stuart, is quoted in the sleeve notes as saying, "I'm delighted that Ian has included music for The Caledonians on this recording. This popular square dance, which originated in Scotland in the late 1800s, consists of five figures. Well-known dance teacher Major Cecil H. Taylor was a great enthusiast for The Caledonians, in his book "Old Time and Novelty Dances", published in 1944, he says, 'Of all the square dances, none lend themselves to real enjoyment more than The Caledonians,

all couples being more frequently occupied.' Happy Dancing!"

There are also tracks for The Gay Gordons Two-step, The New Killarney Waltz, Viennese Swing, Boston Two-step and White Heather Foxtrot, dances that will be familiar to many. In addition there are some that are less frequently seen, such as Red Rose Saunter, Valse Superbe and Mayfair Quickstep. All in all a great CD – any chance of a booklet of dance instructions to go along with it?

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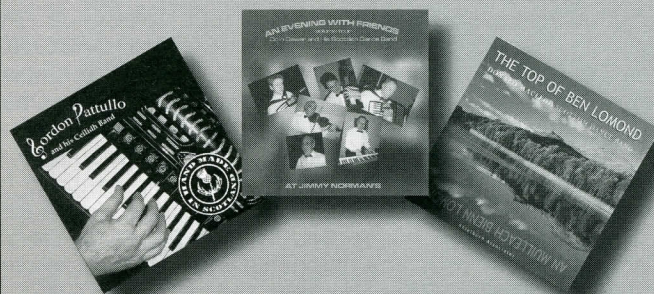


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Scottish Traditional Choreography

**Choreography explosion spurs
huge interest in Scotland**

Up until recently there was only one choreography competition in Scotland and one in England – despite massive interest overseas. Now there is almost an explosion of interest with new events springing up almost on a monthly basis.

Before, Scotland's solo team contest was at Oban's Highlands & Islands Festival where organisers have struggled to cope with the demand. That has led to restrictions on who can enter amid a string of complaints from spectators that they can't get tickets to see the various events.

"I'm surprised that no-one else had taken up the challenge," James McCorkindale told HIGHLAND DANCING. McCorkindale, based in Southend at the tip of the Kintyre peninsula, is one of the guiding lights behind the Oban competition. "Choreography has always been popular at the Highlands & Islands," he added. "It is so popular that there is no way we can fit in everybody who wants to be a part of it."

In 2004 the Stirling based Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust put on its own championships during the Stirling Festival in March. Then later in the year the Scottish

**By Bruce Campbell
of Highland Dancing Magazine**

Official Highland Dancing Association started its own string of events. "I found that they were very popular with the dancers," said SOHDA's Alex McGuire. "We were very happy with the response from the dancing schools and we will again run them as part of our monthly competition cycle."

And now a new event is being planned in conjunction with Edinburgh's Ceilidh Culture, the month long traditional music and dance programme run in the capital during March and April.

Billed as the City of Edinburgh Scottish Team Dance event it will be open to all dancers, Highland and non-Highland although the theme must be Scottish. "We see it as the way forward," said Rebecca Napier, Marketing Manager for the event. "It will be great to see teams competing from different disciplines and I am sure that it will be a big success. "We have been promised a lot of support already and I am sure that the contest will grow from strength to strength. "Edinburgh has the potential to match Oban, so who knows just what will happen in the future." The Edinburgh competition will take place on Saturday April 16.

Colleen Rintamaki

**By Fergus O'Hanlon
of Highland Dancing Magazine**

Speculation mounts over possible Colleen Rintamaki Cowal return

Five times, and undefeated, world champion Colleen Rintamaki seems set for an amazing comeback. Miss Rintamaki competed recently in the United States, fuelling speculation that she would return to Cowal next year for an historic tilt at a sixth world title.

That would set the stage for a tantalising showdown with 2004 champion Tony Cargill.

The Arbroath dancer is an admitted big fan of Miss Rintamaki who was forced to announce her premature retiral after breaking down during the Australian championships.

It had been expected that Colleen Rintamaki would have competed at Cowal in August but following on from her disappointment Down Under she announced her retirement from championships dancing. Her successful return to the boards in Detroit has now stirred up fresh speculation that a return to Cowal is very much a possibility.

"You shouldn't read too much into that," a source closed to the Canadian star said. "Colleen has her own pupils and she is dancing at some competitions. But there wouldn't appear to be much chance that she will dance at Cowal. It isn't for me to say, that kind of answer needs to come from her, but she has said repeatedly that she has retired from championship dancing and I would be very surprised if she danced at Cowal ever again."

Tony Cargill triumphed over Colleen Rintamaki's recent rival, fellow-Canadian Michelle Nadeau, at the Dunoon competition this year. It also looked likely that Miss Nadeau was set to retire but she was openly surprised at again being runner-up and another crack at the big one could be on the cards.

Should Colleen Rintamaki also change her mind then dancing would be set for the most intriguing Cowal for some years.

American star Kate de Good was also a late pull-out from August's Cowal Gathering and many felt that she too would have been a serious contender.

**John Stuart
Scottish
Dance Band**

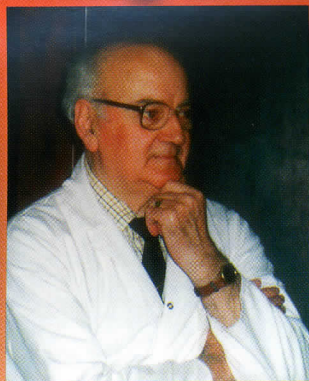
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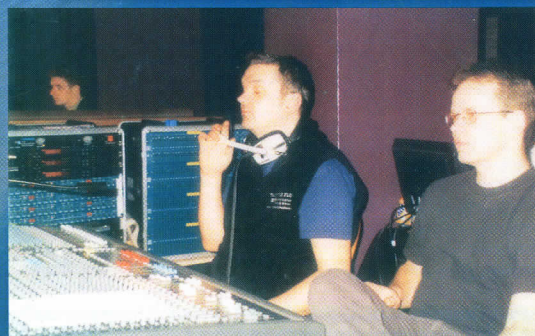
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