

**ORAL INTERVIEW  
WITH  
LIZ BRASH  
EAST LOTIAN BRANCH**

## RSCDS Oral History Project

### East Lothian Local Association

#### Interview with Liz Brash 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016

I have been dancing since I was 3 years old. Both my parents were Country Dancers. My mother started dancing in the 1920's. Both were members of the RSCDS and the Haddington Club.

My first teacher was Jean Henderson (deviser of Haddington Assembly). That was at Templedean Children's Home where my mother was a teacher. I remember Miss Henderson teaching us the Irish Washerwoman.

When I went to Primary School, my teacher was Mrs. Hazzard. She prepared us for after-school; competitions

At Secondary School (Knox Academy in Haddington), I was taught by Stanley Wilkie. I remember him being very strict, with emphasis on correct footwork and formations.

I recall that Scottish Country Dancing was quite challenging. You were expected to achieve perfect footwork and be able to dance all the formations correctly. But it was fun and I enjoyed it.

I continued dancing after I left school, finding clubs wherever I happened to be. There was a break when I left the UK in 1974. I re-joined in the mid 1990's.

In those days, it was the accepted thing that you joined the RSCDS. Both my parents were members. You got a free book every year and you had to be a member to be able to go to the dances.

I love dancing and it is an important part of my life. I only dance locally as my husband is not a dancer. At times, my life revolves round dancing. I call at dances, help with compiling programmes and have been Branch Treasurer for a number of years. I do, however, have other interests.

The key characteristics of Scottish Country Dancing - its involves teamwork, there's a mathematical element to the dances. It provides an opportunity to make friends, to join in a community activity, to participate in healthy exercise, and to have fun. Good music plays an important part in the enjoyment.

Classes and dances are much more relaxed nowadays, much less formal than they used to be - no 'tut tut's' when you make a mistake! In earlier years, you were expected to 'do your homework' - know all the dances. Dances were not re-capped.

Nowadays, at the dances, we recap all the dances and sometimes 'walk through' a new or complicated dance.. We also have a pre-dance practice evening.

We try to get involved in the local community. We host an open dance every year during the Haddington Festival. We contribute to local charities.

The Boggs class is a good example of involvement in the local community. We have 40 members. The hall is in an isolated spot in the countryside. The heating is not very good and yet we get a good attendance every week.

I'm not sure about the future of Scottish Country Dancing. Most dancers are the older generation – and getting older! We need to get younger people interested. My children are typical. They were taught Scottish Country Dancing, but now, in their 30's, they are not interested.

The RSCDS needs to shake of it's stuffy image and be aware that not everybody has the ability to be foot-perfect. Concentrate on the enjoyment aspect.