

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter November 2012

Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)

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From the editor

TAS continues to develop. The September AGM saw Peter Clark return to the committee as Secretary and Les Lambert come on as Treasurer. We made decisions about what to do with our excess funds and we decided to go to Lockerbie in the Spring. Let's hope for as good a turnout as we had in Inverness. And, as we all know, turnout is what it is all about . . .

One of the main reasons for existing is to act as a focus for country dance teachers in Scotland. Speaking as editor, it would be good if more people were in touch with me! Hardly a lesson goes by in my own teaching when a question does not arise – it might be about a point of technique not covered in the Manual or it might be about the interpretation of a dance. I can't be alone. Please share your successes and your failures with everyone. For example, when was the last time you taught *Sodger Laddie* from Book 12? The last eight bars have the dancing couple dancing back to back for four bars; they then cast off and 'turn' in the final four bars. Try it! Right hand? Back to place by bar 32? Elegantly? The dance is credited to "Walsh 1731". Let's go back and find it and see what light the 'original' instructions can cast on the dance we have. Is this why we avoid so many of the older dances? I taught the dance, but we were not happy with those final four bars! Were dancers fitter in 1731? We do know sets were narrower. *JH*

Dates for your diary

Saturday 13 April, 2013

TAS Spring Workshop at Dryfedale Parish Church Hall

Lockerbie

Saturday 31 August, 2013

TAS Autumn Workshop and AGM

Broxburn

Autumn Workshop and AGM

The Autumn Workshop in Broxburn was a great success with 62 members attending. Les Lambert took us through the Jubilee Book dances in his thorough and enjoyable style. Even charging the small amount of £4 per person, we still managed to make a profit – small but a profit!

New Book Notes

Normally, when a new book is published, somebody produces teaching notes. We are not aware of any circulating at present. If you have taught the dances, why not e-mail the editor with comments or helpful suggestions – macleodhill@mac.com and we can include them in the next newsletter.

What happened at the TAS AGM?

Sixty-two members were present and forty-four sent their apologies. The minutes of the 2011 AGM were adopted and there were no matters arising. The Secretary reported the healthy state of the Association. Membership had grown to 144. The two workshops had been successful events. In demitting office Oluf Olufsen thanked his fellow officers and committee for their hard work and commitment to the running of the Association.

The Treasurer's reports showed the Association was financially healthy. Some funds had been used to subsidise the Inverness Workshop but the northerly event did result in a few new members. There had been no conclusive resolve from the committee's discussion about surplus funds. Leaving £1000 in reserve, the Treasurer thought the Association could spend the other £1000. The annual accounts were adopted.

Officer bearers were elected to fill the vacancies: Treasurer – Les Lambert, Secretary – Peter Clark.

Peter Clark pointed out that one ordinary member of the committee should retire annually as per the constitution. It was acknowledged that this rotation had "got somewhat out of kilter" for some inexplicable reason and could be rectified in the coming year.

Discussion of the location of next year's workshops was discussed at some length with a view that TAS should visit every region eventually. Galloway was the most favoured area and eventually it was resolved to select Lockerbie on April 13th 2013. There were a number of comments about the content of the workshop for the committee to review.

Surplus Funds were discussed at length. Sue Porter had sent out a proposal to provide a Certificate Scholarship at Summer School. Peter Clark suggested six bursaries for young dancers to receive towards expenses at Spring Fling, and Anne Taylor added a third proposal to assist young dancers to any Society educational activity by small grants. The final decision was to award one £500 Scholarship towards attending a Certificate Preparation class at Summer School, and five £60 Bursaries for young dancers attending the Spring Fling. The committee were left to resolve the detail.

Margo Priestley requested that the AGM should be at the start of the day or the end of the workshop so that the teacher/musician present would not have to waste time in the meeting.

The meeting agreed the next AGM would be on Saturday August 31st 2013 in Broxburn.

Spring Workshop

Continuing the tradition of holding our Spring workshop outside the Central Belt, we are going to Lockerbie in April. It was felt that it was an easy place to get to by car in the South.

If anyone in the Central Belt or south is willing to offer overnight accommodation to someone coming from the further afield, could you perhaps contact the Workshop Organiser, Jenny Greene, and she will co-ordinate this. Her e-mail is jenny.greene183@btinternet.com and her phone is 01764-650428.

New Members

If you know of any teachers (qualified or not) who are not TAS members, or any newly qualified teachers in your area, please introduce them to TAS. If you ask them for their e-mail address, Peter can send them the latest newsletter. His e-mail is kd@pjclark3.plus.com. Please note the full stop at the end of the last sentence is a full stop and not part of Peter's e-mail address!

TAS Website

It had to come! These days everyone and their auntie must have a website. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain. Neil Macphail has taken on the task of setting this up and we are most grateful to him. If you have any ideas for things which should be on it, please e-mail him direct – neil.mcphail@gmail.com.

TAS Bursaries and Scholarship

During the discussion at the AGM, it was finally decided that we use some of our funds to encourage young dancers and teachers in training.

There will be five bursaries of £60 each for dancers to attend the Spring Fling in Manchester. Applicants must be under 25 and reside in Scotland. They will not be in full-time employment and will not be in receipt of any other SCD scholarship or bursary in the same year. If you know of anyone who might qualify, give them a copy of the application form at the end of this newsletter. Applications by 1 March 2013 to the Secretary, Peter Clark.

There will be one scholarship worth £500 towards a Teachers' Certificate Course, part 1 or part 2 at RSCDS Summer School 2013 or 2014. Applicants must be under 35 years of age and reside in Scotland. They will not be in full-time employment or be in receipt of any other SCD scholarship or bursary. This scholarship will be offered by HQ but on our terms.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in applying for a bursary to attend Spring Fling or a scholarship to attend a certificate course at St Andrews, please encourage them to apply. Applications for a bursary should go direct to our Secretary, Peter Clark on kd@pjclark3.plus.com while scholarship applications should go to Coates Crescent.

A point of view – do we appreciate our musicians?

The phrase "music is the stimulus of the dance" was coined by Jean Milligan a long time ago. Interestingly, it means different things to different people. There are those dancers who notice the individual tunes and appreciate both the rhythm and melody that is incorporated into the movements of the dance. Others appreciate the overall effect and rely on the music to give them their timing in the dance, but unfortunately, there are some who just rely on the beat, and even then fail to dance with the music. With a lack of competent musicians in many areas, recorded music is often all that is available for the weekly class and regular socials. The annual dance or major event will warrant a band. There can sometimes be a lack of appreciation of the contribution that live music can play in a social situation. In Scotland many are fortunate to have a band at many of their functions, and yet, one notices the musicians are often taken for granted by many dancers as though they were not actually present – as is the case of CD music.

When we arrange for a band to come and play for a country dance, we expect many things, but do we consider their needs and commitment? How long is the engagement? Do we really consider the travelling time, which can be considerable, compared with the actual playing time? While some musicians do make a livelihood out of playing, the majority do it as a part-time job. Who would play for four hours and travel for six hours for £120 - £140? The accordion may have cost in excess of £4000 to buy, never mind the cost of amplification and other equipment that is brought along. The time given to practising at some stage in the musician's life to acquire the playing skill is a large commitment in time. The hospitality offered by some branches is excellent, but many a band will have tales to tell of how they had to go and find fish and chips

prior to the start of the dance. Is the band asked if they would like to share supper with some members and made to feel at home? Again their experiences include the occasions when they are they set apart from the party and left to sit alone.

What about the dance programme? Some bands that have regular engagements obviously have music previously used to hand. However, there will have been at some point, an appreciable amount of time given to preparation. For example: finding the original tune, checking the number of chords, the number of bars, the number of times through, matching alternative tunes to the original and making sure members of the band have the arrangement to play the same chords in the rhythm section. Then there are those requests for the local dance or unpublished dance with its own unknown tune. More often than not, our secretaries write off to the band confirming an engagement giving the date and place, and later send a list of dances leaving the bandleader to do all the spadework. Besides the instructions to the venue, the general arrangements and a meal etc. it is very helpful if the list of dances has a reference indicating their source, number of bars, how many times through etc, and for those local unpublished dances the preferred tune, even the offer to assist if there are any problems in finding the tune, helps. It is also useful for the band to know in advance whether there will be a grand march and the format of the closing part of the dance – they only know what to expect if we advise them.

The actual playing of tunes for a dance is no easy task except for the well-experienced musician. There are many tunes that are quite difficult to play on a keyboard as apposed to the fiddle and vice versa. It is always fair to start the evening with something that is not going to be a great challenge at the beginning of the programme. Most musicians would prefer to start the evening with jig tunes, so they get themselves played-in and in the mood. Criticism direct from dancers to the band about certain tunes or the tempo is no way to improve the services of a band. It is very easy to lose count or the barring in some tunes – particularly if the melody is only two four-bar phrases. If the band is eight bars out, the only way to assist is for the MC to tell the leader just prior to the start of next time through that the dance begins with the next phrase. While there are bandleaders who think they know what is required, few are dancers and some are reluctant to take advice. It should be up to the MC to make a request for the tempo to be adjusted so as to suit the conditions of the floor or the dancers. The MC has a very important task in keeping the band happy. Such things as the arrangement for the introduction for each dance should be discussed before the start so that it is clear whether the dances are announced first or given eight bars introduction as the signal to take the floor. The provision of liquid refreshment is sometimes neglected particularly by an MC who is worried about his/her recaps. MCs should take control of the encores so that the programme can be finished. He or she might also give a quiet reminder to the leader about two chords, or 40 bars, or other features of a certain dance that can be helpful. Most bands hate listening to long-winded recaps as it dampens the spirit of the evening. Though recaps are desirable they should be slick and brief. Adjusting the programme as time becomes short should always be done after consulting the musicians and telling the dancers, as should the addition of any extras.

A most misunderstand issue at a dance is the interaction of the band and the dancers. Often a particular set of tunes will set off a rapport between dancers and the band, but if that does not happen, it is up to the MC to start the reaction. In Scotland one can go all evening without the musicians' efforts being mentioned. How encouraging it is to the musicians to have some appreciation during the evening in addition to the usual vote of thanks at the end. For those having danced in various countries it is interesting to note the reaction of dancers to the music. At Pinewoods Camp, America, one cannot help but see the appreciation for the musicians after every dance – the applause is resounding. It is not for an encore – that depends on the dancers raising their hand with the forefinger in the air to say, "Once more please". One wishes we saw more widespread appreciation of the music, for we cannot perform without it.

Having a band for a function is quite an expense. However, if one considers what a clubber, a golfer or a theatregoer will pay for an outing, a country dance is a very cheap form of entertainment. What is more, we expect the band to be good. Every musician has to start somewhere and those branches and clubs that encourage less experienced musicians to play for some classes or socials are helping to train our future musicians. We have a responsibility to help musicians gain experience. There are probably plenty of

musicians, but few who can meet the standard of playing the correct tune at the right tempo in the style we wish. Many youngsters who start the violin give up as the challenge of classical playing becomes too demanding. Yet we fail to encourage them to transfer to folk and dance music, which might be more feasible if they can develop the style and spirit. To some extent, we have been conditioned by the CD to expect perfection all the time!

Now what about the class musician? Only a few are able to secure the services of such a resource either because of availability or cost. Playing for a class is a demanding task and requires considerable confidence. Instrumentalists, particularly fiddle players, may learn their skill in two different ways. Those who learn by the traditional classical route are often less able to read music by sight because they seek such perfection in playing the notes. In many cases the ability to reach the desired tempo for some of the running reels proves a problem. On the other hand those who learn to play by rote find they have a limited repertoire and that provides them with insufficient alternative tunes to play in the initial stages of learning. What is crucial to learning to play is the opportunity to play for dancing even if only for part of an evening. So it is up to dancers to bear with them in the initial stages and for someone to give encouragement and help in achieving the sound we like best. A well-known fiddle teacher in the States has a fairly large school of young pupils. When they reach a certain level of competence they are introduced to Scottish tunes. If they take a liking to them, they are encouraged to play more and eventually given the option of taking a seat in the band for part of the evening, on condition they go on the dance floor for the rest of the evening. Isn't that great – musicians with a knowledge of the dancing!

What do we like and how do we help? Most of us in the UK like the accordion as part of the band. On the other side of the Atlantic the fiddle is much more in favour. Though some are content to dance to a large group, the idea of a stramash to others is that of a ragged sound. A neat small group is traditionally six. At today's prices we more frequently have bands of three or four players and the benefit of midi units to provide some of the base or rhythm. One will notice that the best bands never have more than two players on the melody line since it is difficult to keep the clarity and crisp sound in larger groups. Of course the rest of the band is so important in keeping the strong rhythm we like for our dancing. Training of musicians at music workshops is fine if the emphasis is on solo or small group playing. The stramash work only allows the weaker players to hide behind the rest and they never improve to the level we would expect in a dancing situation.

So let's not rely on the few dancers who show their appreciation for our music but inspire all dancers to show more appreciation, and in order to provide for the future, encourage our branch members to be on the look-out for possible musical talent, help new musicians to start, and really appreciate those who play for our dancing.

Contributed by Peter Clark, who has tried a hand at playing.

Another Jubilee Dance

At the end of this newsletter, I have included 'A Peep at the Jubilee' – a country dance published in 1770 in *24 Country Dances for the year 1770* when George III had been on the throne for 10 years. I have done my best to reconstruct it using contemporary dance manuals, but if anyone has any more light to shed, please contact me. The music published with it is in 2/4 time. One other dance in the collection seems relevant in this jubilee year – Harry's Frolics!

JH

Website change

John Sturrock informs us that after 9 years, British Telecom has closed the service to which this listing site was subscribed. It continues on another service. Those who use his services in advertising are asked to note the new address:

<http://www.scdevents.co.uk/scdevents.index.htm>

Forthcoming events of interest
Day / Weekend Schools and Workshops in Scotland

- Feb 24 - Mar 1** **Winter School in Pitlochry**
Teachers: Janet Johnston, Johan McLean, Jim Stott and Anne Taylor.
Musicians: Jim Lindsay, David Cunningham, Gordon Simpson and Roger McAndrew.
- Mar 8-9** **Lorn (Argyll) Branch Weekend School, Oban**
Teacher: Janet Johnstone
Musician: Roger McAndrew
- Mar 23** **St Andrews Branch Half-day School**
Teacher: Janet Johnston
Musician: Robert Mackay
Contact: Valerie Fraser on 01334 850054 or www.rscdsstandrews.org
- Mar 23** **West Lothian Branch Half-day School**
Teacher: Jimmie Hill
- April 5 -7** **Helensburgh & District Branch Weekend**
Teacher: Sue Porter
Musician: Adam Brady
- April 13** **TAS Spring Workshop in Lockerbie**
- May 10-11** **Millport Weekend, Isle of Cumbrae**
Teacher: Margo Priestley
Musician: Lindsay Weir
Contact: Jan Sommers on janet.sommers@gmail.com
- May 17-18** **Isle of Skye Branch Weekend**
Teacher: Johan Maclean
Musician: Colin Dewar
- May 17-19** **Duns & District Branch Weekend**
Teachers: Irene Bennett, William Williamson, Lyn Bryce
- August 31** **TAS Autumn Workshop in Broxburn**

*If your event is missing, make sure we have it for the next issue.
These should be events of particular interest to teachers - workshops and day / weekend schools etc.*

A Peep at the Jubilee

a dance in 2/4 time from

Twenty Four Country Dances For the Year 1770

Printed by Longman & Co, Cheapside, London

Original Instructions

The two first Men lead in Between the two first Women and foot it Back to their own place # the two first Women do the same with the Men # Cross over one Cu: # foot to the 3rd lead thru (?) the top and cast off.

- 1 - 8 1st and 2nd men, nearer hands joined, dance between their partners, cast round them and come in to face them, hands joined. They set to their partners and, casting away from each other, dance back to place.
- 9 -16 1st and 2nd women repeat.
- 17 - 24 Giving right hands, 1st couple cross over and cast off one place, finishing in the middle of the set with nearer hands joined, facing 3rd woman. 1st couple set to 3rd woman then to 3rd man. (2nd couple step up on bars 19 and 20.)
- 25 - 32 1st couple cross down between 3rd couple, cast up one place, then lead up between 2nd couple and cast off one place to finish in 2nd place on own sides.

Repeat having passed a couple.

Notes

1770 was the 10th year of the reign of the 33-year-old George III; it was also the 25th anniversary of the '45 and the year of the Boston Massacre. Captain Cook lands in Botany Bay. Wordsworth is born on April 7.

- My hash marks show the 8-bar boundaries in the instructions.
- You could argue that on bars 1-2 the men join right hand in right hand.
- 'Foot it' can mean set, but here there is no indication of how long- so I assumed 2 bars.
- The capital letter at 'Back' seems to indicate that this happens after the 'footing'.
- Notice the use of 'women' not ladies!
- 'Cross over one couple' meant cross and cast off one couple.
- The manuscript is unclear with a word missing, and I have assumed since the dancing couple were facing down, that they crossed down, cast up, led up then cast off to use the final 8 bars.

Please note how cryptic the original instructions seem to us. I have dotted many more i's and crossed many more t's in true RSCDS style! If anyone has any further thoughts on this interpretation or information on this dance, please contact Jimmie Hill on macleodhill@mac.com.

Teachers' Association Scotland

TAS

Secretary: Peter Clark, 22 Corberry Park, Dumfries, DG2 7NG.

Tel: 01387 269171 E-mail: kd@pjclark3.plus.com

Bursaries for Spring Fling 2013

TAS has five bursaries worth £60 each, to award to dancers attending the Spring Fling in Manchester, during the weekend of April 12th - 14th 2013.

Applicants:

- must be under 25 years of age and reside in Scotland
- must not be in full-time employment
- must not be in receipt of any other SCD scholarship or bursary in the same year

Dancers wishing to apply should contact the secretary of TAS and return the application form before March 1st, 2013. In the event of more than five dancers making application, the officers of TAS will make a draw to select the successful candidates. In no circumstance can an award be transferred to another dancer.

Application for TAS Bursary

Full Name

Home address

Postal Code Telephone Contact

Date of birth E-mail

Name of SCD Group/Branch with which you have membership

Contact telephone no of an official in that SCD group

If in part-time employment, give brief details (hours/week)

.....

I understand that the award cannot be transferred to anyone else, and I agree to attend the whole weekend of events at Spring Fling 2013. I am not in receipt of any other SCD scholarship or dancing award for financial assistance in the last twelve months.

Signed Date

Please return this form to The Secretary, TAS, 22 Corberry Park, Dumfries, DG2 7NG before 1st March 2013.