

# The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

## TAS Newsletter March 2016

Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)  
TAS is an RSCDS affiliated group

[www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk](http://www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk)

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### From the Chairman

April will soon be upon us and I am looking forward to meeting you all again at our next TAS workshop. Margaret Ross and Kate McArdle have done a power of work up in Forres, and your Committee under our very vigorous secretary, Jane Meikle, have put together what I believe will be a very interesting and fulfilling programme for you, looking at some of our overlooked dances and why that might be.

I wear two hats and in this instance they have come together. As well as the one you all know about, I am also membership secretary for the Scots Language Society and take more than a passing interest in Scots Literature. Literature in Scots didn't start and finish with a certain Mr Burns and much poetry written before Burns was and still is considered among the finest ever written by academics the world over, although almost totally ignored in Scotland. However, what should be of interest to you is the dance Tulloch Gorm. In the RSCDS Book 8 it is recorded as a Strathspey (Campbell 1796) and a pretty dreary dance it is too, yet this dance was all the rage in the early 1700s so much so that it appears in at least two different poems. Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), much admired by Burns, wrote:

Fiddlers, your pins an tempers fix  
And roset weel your fiddle-stick  
And banish vile Italian tricks  
From out your quorum  
Nor fortes wi piano's mix  
Gie's 'Tulloch Gorum.

which he describes as, 'a cantie Highland reel'. John Skinner (1721-1807) eulogises a whole poem to Tullochgorum, and the meter is quite clearly reel time:

Let Whig and Tory all agree  
To spend the night wi mirth and glee,  
And cheerful sing along wi me  
The Reel o Tullochgorum.

Try it and see in your own dance class, you will immediately see the difference the quicker tempo makes.

Our efforts to have TAS represented as an affiliated group within the RSCDS Website appear to have run aground. According to Chairman Jim Healy, the computer system is not able to accommodate the change. I find this incredible. When the website was being set up surely the two most obvious questions to ask the designers would be, how flexible is the system? How much room will there be for expansion? However, we do now have a 'link' to our own website. See you on the 9th of April.

*George T. Watt*

## **Spring Workshop Forres - Saturday 9 April**

The Town Hall, High Street, Forres, IV36 1PB

**Musician**

**Frank Thomson of Aberdeen**

**Teachers:**

**Angela Young (Aberdeen & London Branches)**

**Oluf Olufsen (North Ayrshire Branch)**

**Jim Stott (Aberdeen Branch)**

10.30	Coffee or tea, and registration	
11.00	Morning session: Neglected Dances 1	Oluf Olufsen
12.30	Lunch - bring your own - tea and coffee provided	
13.15	Afternoon session: Neglected Dances 2	Angela Young
14.15	Update on Dance Trad	Jim Stott
14.45	Popular Social Dances	Angela Young
16.00	Finish	

If you intend coming, please email or phone the Treasurer, Judith Borup.

**Judith Borup: 01738-842789 or [j.borup@btinternet.com](mailto:j.borup@btinternet.com)**

**Cost: £4 for TAS members £6 for non-members of TAS**

TAS workshops are open to anyone teaching country dancing, whether they are qualified or not.

### **Accommodation in Forres**

If you intend staying the night and are looking for accommodation in Forres, Margaret Ross has kindly sent in the following list. Details of the hotels and guest houses are all on-line. Margaret is happy for anyone to contact her if they need any more information on where to stay. (01309 673325)

#### **Hotels**

Ramnee Hotel, Cluny Bank Hotel and Knockomie Hotel

#### **B & Bs**

Mayfield. Victoria Road  
Springfield, Croft Road  
Uralla. Sanquhar Road

Reiver House, Victoria Road  
Caranradh. Sanquhar Road  
Morven, Caroline Street

2 miles out Sherston. Hillhead, by Forres

4 miles out Old Kirk B & B Dyke by Forres

## TAS Autumn Workshop and AGM - Date for your diary

The Autumn Workshop and AGM will be held in Broxburn as usual, on Saturday 27 August. The main teaching focus of the day will be on the dances in Book 50. The three teachers will be Emma Allsop, Carol-Ann Knox and Fiona Mackie and the musician will be Andrew Nolan. More details and information about the AGM will be in the next newsletter.

## Forthcoming events

### Friday 1 April - Sunday 3 April

The Helensburgh Weekend. Teacher - Heather Cowan. Hermitage Academy, Helensburgh, G84 7LA. More details on the branch website. [rscds-helensburgh.org.uk](http://rscds-helensburgh.org.uk)

### Saturday 24th September 2016

Dumfries Branch Half Day School. Teacher - Janet Johnston. Musician - Ian Muir. Band for Evening Dance - Ian Muir and his Scottish Dance Band. See website for further details [www.dumfries-rscds.org](http://www.dumfries-rscds.org)  
Or contact Dumfries Branch Secretary Janette Kirkpatrick 01387-253456

## Membership list

Jane has asked that members let her know by 31st March 2016 if they do NOT want their name, e-mail address or telephone number and Branch distributed to members. We intend distributing a TAS members contact list.

## Newsletter editor

I have now brought out quite a number of editions of the newsletter. I feel it is time for someone with fresh ideas to take this on. If you are interested, please contact our Secretary, Jane, before the AGM. The next newsletter will be my last.

*Jimmie Hill*

## Letters to the editor

Please remember that letters from members are very welcome on any topic relating to TAS and country dancing generally.

### From Moira Stacey:

In response to the article on "Old Dances", TAS Newsletter, January, 2016. I was surprised by the lack of interest in these dances. I thought this TAS initiative was a good one and needed airing. Does this lack of apparent interest mean that teachers are not looking at the roots of traditional Scottish Country Dancing? We use terms like "Petronella turning", but how many look back to see where the name comes from? New formations and progressions are mostly developed from old ideas, often sensitively and traditionally. Roy Goldring's dances spring immediately to mind. Not only is it tragic not to use the old dances but the music for many of them is glorious. Listen to the music and you are drawn into looking up the dances. Often you realise that they are not quite what you would teach today, but sometimes you find a gem and can't wait to share it with your class. Listen to the CD of RSCDS Book 7. There is a variety of wonderful music and yes, I have taught some of the dances. Disappointing too that none of the "Miscellanies" were in the list. Another good source of interesting dances.

With regard to the article on "Song and Dance in Scotland" and in particular the aims/objects of the RSCDS, they are written out clearly if not in as much detail as TMSA. Perhaps we are lacking there and maybe more detail about what we do and try to achieve would promote more enthusiasm for the form of music and dance that we love. Again it's a matter of looking at the roots of Scottish Country Dancing and how we see it developing. I for one do not want it to become a form of international dance. Its very world-wide attraction comes from it being intrinsically Scottish.

### **From Keith Stacey:**

Thank you for the latest TAS newsletter, which I found very interesting. I would like to reply to Jimmie Hill's article and comments relating to Song & Dance in Scotland.

In the mid 90's I was elected to the Finance Committee and later elected Convenor for two years, during this time working closely with Marilyn Jeffcote, the then Society Treasurer. We started to discuss different ways forward for the Society.

One major point was the change of business status as we were, if I recall, becoming VAT registered also 12 Coates Crescent was too small and restricting to capitalise on the 25,000 plus members.

At a meeting with Marilyn I raised the point of the premises being too small and limiting. Marilyn said the Plumbers Association had for some time shown interest in purchasing the ground floor indicating a price of £350,000-400,000. It appeared that there was a very traditional school not too far away which was on the market. It had ample car parking, two large halls built over two stories high plus an attic.

Our idea developed when we realised we could hold the Executive Council meetings there plus all types of dance and dance examiners courses and be able to provide overnight accommodation for both overseas and UK visitors, thus creating income. By consolidating all administration and training under one roof we would reduce many overheads. There would be surplus office space to rent out. It showed great potential. Of course there was the question of finance as the school would cost about £900,000. We looked at ways of financing this and were directed toward the new National Lottery Fund, but the then Chairman was sceptical so the matter was not pursued. How many more times do we turn away due to the lack of commitment and foresight? The following year the new Chairman, Bill Clement, again raised the banner hoping to give a fresh outlook on the future of Traditional Scottish Dance and Music. Now we have competition in the same field.

## **The poussette**

In *The Manual* we read that Miss Milligan wrote *The Scottish Country Dance* in 1931 and *Won't you join the Dance* for Paterson's in 1951. They served as the main instructional books for teachers until the first *Manual* in 1992. What many newer members probably don't know is that Allie Anderson, Principal Teacher of PE at James Gillespie's High School for Girls, Edinburgh, and John M. Duthie MA, wrote *A Complete Guide to Scottish Country Dancing*, published by McDougall's, one of Scotland's main educational publishers. Much of the book is similar to what we find in Miss Milligan's writings. There is more about the teaching of children as you would expect from someone who was doing it on a day to day basis, unlike JM. And, of course, they recommend skip change when turning corners after setting. Anderson and Duthie, however, present two versions of the fast-time poussette. The first is the same as the one we do today.

The second version of the poussette is described as a variant and they say it was danced in the South-East Border Counties of Scotland. This version starts in the same place with dancers' hands the same, but both begin on the right foot. They maintain that the tradition of the men starting a poussette on the left foot is a relic of the late 19th century when the poussette was done in waltz hold and the couples waltzed round each other. The instructions are the same as far as bar 5 - into the centre. Instead of turning half way on bar 6, the dancers only turn a quarter so that they are in a line facing up or down the dance. On bars 7 and 8, they use skip change to turn with both hands into sidelines. They point out that the quarter turn on bar 6 is much easier than the rather awkward half turn - even more awkward for the man on the left foot! They also like this version as it keeps the basic rule of country dancing (with the exception of slip step): you start with the right foot on the 'strongest rhythmic beat of the bar'.

They finish their description of this version by saying, "A good poussette is one of the most enjoyable of the dance movements and coming as it does at the end of a figure it should be swung through like a well danced reel." We know that our current version was an invention. Two whole bars to retire a tiny distance should have rung historical alarm bells! A two-handed turn at the end would certainly finish it off with a swing! Allie Anderson and John Duthie seem to have been neglected in the history of country dancing. JH