

The Scottish Country Dance Teacher

TAS Newsletter November 2018
Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)
Recognised as an RSCDS Teachers' Association

www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk

Chairman: Jimmie Hill

Secretary: Susan Mackay

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Treasurer: Sue Porter

Committee: Janet Johnston, Anne Robertson, Jayne Riddet

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From the Chairman

Thank you to everyone who made our AGM Workshop such a success. A day of great teaching with an excellent social atmosphere. And thank you to all those who came off the committee and all those who came on! It was good to report the grants we gave to young dancers to attend Spring Fling and to a young teacher in training. It was never our intention for TAS to have any funds surplus to our immediate needs, so it is wholly appropriate that the AGM again agreed to give grants to young people to attend Spring Fling in Paris. Think how excited we would have been when we were in our 20s to go to Paris to dance for a weekend!

At the AGM in Perth a few of us who have been involved with the Schools Working Group met incoming Chairman Andrew Kellett and Chair Elect Lorna Ogilvie. Now that there are no Scots on the Youth Services Committee our group is even more important. We are hoping that at its November meeting the Management Board will formally recognise the Scottish Schools Working Group as a MB working group.

Editing of our book of dances for Scottish Primary Schools is progressing and we should shortly be at the stage of sending the dances out to be tested by teachers working in schools or with children's classes.

Our Spring Workshop on Saturday 6 April will be in Perth and I hope as many as possible will be able to attend. Perth is very central and easy to get to from different directions by car, bus, or train. And as the day will finish by 4, there will be time for some shopping too! See you there!

Jimmie Hill

From the Editor

As always, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue. Anne Taylor provided a succinct and informative report on the Autumn Workshop. Moira Stephen took lots of photos, a few of which have been included in this Newsletter. You can see more of them on the website. Sue Porter's report on the Teachers' Conference is interesting and gives food for thought. As always Jimmie has come up with more gems from the archive which I'm sure you will enjoy.

TAS Dates for your diary:

Saturday, 6 April 2019

The Spring Workshop on Saturday, 6 April, will take place in **Perth** (not Pitlochry as discussed at the AGM). The venue is St Matthew's Church of Scotland, Tay Street. Further details will be published later.

Saturday, 31 August 2019

The Autumn Workshop and AGM will take place in Canon Hoban Hall, Broxburn.

TAS Subscriptions

TAS subscriptions for the year 2018/19 are now due. If you have not yet paid please use the form on page 9.

GDPR Update

In view of the recent changes in data protection regulations (privacy), member contact information will no longer be distributed to members. Contact between members should be initiated via the TAS secretary using the e-mail address above.

Report on the Teachers' Association Scotland Workshop on Saturday, 1 September, in Broxburn

Following a warm welcome by Judith Borup, Treasurer, and after the paying of the dues, we had coffee, biscuits and a chat with fellow members prior to the morning class.

Jimmie Hill, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the workshop. He outlined the programme for the day and introduced the teachers, Eric Finley and Andrew McConnell, and musician, Muriel Johnston.

Morning Class

Eric Finley did an energetic warm up and had everyone smiling and laughing with arms flying everywhere except in the right direction. Eric followed this by a stretching session to lovely waltz music by Muriel Johnston.

Book 52 dances taught were:

Farewell to Balfour Road, a 32 bar for 5 couple Jig. An interesting dance with a twist!

Trip to Timber Ridge, a 32 bar Reel for 4 couples in a longwise set.

Ysobel Stewart of Fish Hoek, a 32 bar Strathspey for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set.

The Aviator, a 32 bar Jig for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set, just watch you don't go flying off.

Triple Happiness, a lovely romantic type 32 bar strathspey for 3 couples in a 3-couple set.

The Bon Viveur, a Medley of 2 x 32 bar Strathspey and 2 x 32 Reel for 4 couples in a square set.



Eric gave clear and concise instructions and got everyone through the dances with enthusiasm and fun. All the dancers showed their enjoyment of the class. Muriel gave some information on the tunes and of course her playing was outstanding and was also much appreciated by the class.

Jimmie Hill thanked both the teacher and the musician.

Lunch followed with much noisy chatting going on.

Afternoon Class

Andrew McConnell began with a walking warm up and some stretching exercises concentrating on positioning.

Having practised the Allemande turns Andrew began with:

City Lights, a 32 bar Jig for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set.

The Ullapool Ferry, a 32 bar Reel for 4 couples in a 4-couple longwise set.

This has a Hello-goodbye poussette and Andrew taught this very well

Slytherin House, a 32 bar Strathspey for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set, with a traditional tune called Benrinnes (*Ben Rin is*) A hill in Moray – a Corbett.

Forty and Counting, a 40 bar Reel for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set.

This dance has the Chain progression but on the diagonal.

Ruby Wilkinson's Farewell to Cranshaws, a 32 bar Strathspey for 4 couples in a 4-couple longwise set. The tune has rather Jazzy feel about it.

The Scallywag, a 40 bar Jig for 3 couples in a 4-couple longwise set. A flirtatious dance!



Andrew taught with authority and with humour and was well received by the group. Once again Muriel's playing was superb.

Jimmie Hill thanked both Andrew and Muriel.

Jimmie also thanked the helpers in the kitchen and Jane Meikle and Judith Borup for their sterling work over the past 3 years. He reminded everyone that replacements were required for Secretary and Treasurer positions.

Jean Martin asked for members to think seriously and apply for positions on the Management Committees of the RSCDS.

Brief Notes from the AGM held in Broxburn on 1 September 2018
The Minutes of the 2018 AGM will appear in the newsletter immediately preceding the 2019 AGM.

Here are the main points from the meeting:

- It was excellent to see so many members present.
- The membership fee remains at £5.
- Elections:
Susan Mackay agreed to serve as Secretary for the next year
Sue Porter agreed to serve as Treasurer for the next year
Jayne Riddet volunteered to join the Committee
All nominees were duly elected.
- The Spring workshop in 2019 will be in Perth and the Autumn workshop in Broxburn.
- Use of Funds – After discussion the following provision was agreed:
 1. Spring Fling 2019 in Paris - £100 grant each for 5 Scottish applicants. Further details will follow in due course.
 2. Grants for Scottish prospective teachers - 50% of cost for Certificate class (at the discretion of the TAS committee)
 3. Production of a 'Festival Book'.
- Members extended a vote of thanks to retiring Committee members, Jane Meikle, Judith Borup and Maureen McCrudden.

Teachers' Conference, Friday 2nd November 2018 in Perth

This year the Teachers' Conference, held on the Friday at the start of the RSCDS Conference Weekend and AGM, attracted teachers (Certificated and non-certificated) from all over the world. Prior to the event Malcolm Brown, Convenor of Education & Training Committee (E&T), contacted the four Teachers' Groups inviting them to give presentations of their choice.

The morning commenced with Jane Rose, from SERTA (South East Region Teachers Association, England) giving a talk on *Recruitment and Retention*. Jane briefly outlined some advertising methods and then gave a more in depth talk on how the class she is involved with runs a beginners' session parallel to the general class for the first part of the evening and then they all join together. They also organise other activities to bring the members together socially outwith dance classes eg garden dances in the summer.

TAC (Teachers Association Canada) was represented by Fiona Miller, TAC Chairman and Sharon Barker, a past TAC Chairman. They gave an excellent presentation on *The Drewry Project*. John Drewry bequeathed TAC the copyright for his dances. Sharon is leading the project to compile an Index of all John's dances. As well as listing the name of some 800 plus dances there will be information such as -

- Type of dance (reel, jig, strathspey, etc.)
- Number of bars
- Number of couples
- Set shape
- Year the dance was devised
- Recommended tunes

This is very much still a work in progress. You can view the project on www.tac-rscds.org by clicking on the *Latest News* -> *Index of John Drewry's Dances*. TAC realise that there may be some dances in folks' cupboards that they do not have the instructions for. Sharon appeals to dancers to check any dances of John's that they have, especially if in leaflet form, against the Index. If yours isn't there, please get in touch with her via the link given on the TAC website. This is a very worthwhile project to preserve John's dances for future generations.

Before lunch, Anne Taylor, E&T Committee, gave us an update on the review and subsequent proposed revisions to the DAA (Dancing Achievement Award) Syllabus and Marking sheets. As the current system had been introduced in 2014 it was time for a review as to whether it was meeting the original purpose or had that purpose changed. The proposed changes in the marking sheet will help to give an improved reflection of a dancer's ability and thus the grade awarded. Also, the change in dances will enable the assessors to see a wider range of formations and steps within the 3 dances a couple perform as 1st couple. E&T are looking to train suitably qualified RSCDS Teachers to become assessors for the DAA. If you are interested please get in contact with Malcolm Brown, Convenor of E&T via info@rscds.org

After lunch, Anselm Lingnau, Convenor of Membership Services, gave an *Overview of the new RSCDS website*. This was followed by Malcolm Brown taking us through *E&T Navigation and New Developments* on the website. Malcolm then gave an update on the progress of the *New Teaching Qualification* (Core Teaching Qualification). He assured us that the current Units 1-5 would not be replaced by this new CTQ.

Malcolm had asked TAS to give a presentation on *How we used to dance*. This was to involve dancing to 78 rpm records. Janet Johnston and Sue Porter gave the presentation in the form of a practical dance session transporting us back to the pre-1960 days, pearls, twin sets and all. They took the starting point of how the tempo of the recordings influenced how we performed our steps. Pas de basque lost its 3 distinct beats becoming almost 2 beat, skip change had less forward travel with a bit of a 'kick' as you hopped and, well, strathspey had no time for a 'long reach forward' or a 'slow pull through'. Dances were often 24 bars or 48 bars, even for strathspeys. After a practice of dancing skip change to today's CDs and then to 78 rpm, the dancers were asked to form up sets for '*Triumph - Book 1*'. However, they were given the instructions as per the first edition of the book, where the 1st and 2nd couples danced the poussette and then the 1st couple repeated the dance again from second and third places. There is a note in the book that there is an alternative version, where 1st couple only poussette to the foot of the set as we are accustomed to dance *Triumph* today. This was followed by strathspey steps and the dancing of *Mrs Stewart's Strathspey, Book 13 - 48 bars*. This was then contrasted by *Crathes Castle*, a 48 bar strathspey from *Book 44*. While *Mrs Stewart's Strathspey* (48 bars for 3 couples in 4 couple set) contained six 8 bar recognised formations, *Crathes Castle* (48 bar 3 couple set) contained only one 8 bar recognised formation along with several 4 bar or 2 bar phrases. The dancers were asked to consider which would be easier for less experienced dancers to remember should there be the requirement to dance a 48 bar strathspey at a dance. The session finished with a popular dance of that era, *La Russe*. Again, this was danced to 78 rpm recordings. Janet & Sue were very grateful to Alan MacPherson, RSCDS Archivist, for recording the 78 rpm music and sending it to Malcolm Brown to play via his laptop. Unfortunately, on the day there were various technical hitches and Jane Rose stepped in to save the day with her laptop. Thanks Jane.

The day finished with Malcolm Brown showing various videos he had made to illustrate his presentation on *Videoing - How to use it, what can it do?*

Sue Porter

Two things we take for granted: The 4-couple set

In the introduction to the first edition of *Book 1* the Scottish Country Dance Society defined a country dance as one in which the dancers are in lines: 'the men facing their partners, and the women having their right sides to the dais or orchestra'.

No indication was given about the number of couples in a set, but the advice was that 'a dance should not contain too many couples'. They suggested that every fourth couple should begin and continue dancing until they 'end below the bottom couple'. Historically, this is the way country dances were danced – one long set 'for as many as will'. Mrs Stewart, in particular, would have been very familiar with this tradition. The diagram in the *Book 1* Foreword contains 5 couples. A later edition of *Book 1* around 1938 states that 'it is usual to number off the lines into sets of 4 to 6 couples. The reason I say 'around 1938' is because there is an advert at the back of that edition for *Book 12*, which was published in 1938. We can assume, then, that set size was not yet fixed at 4 couples by the beginning of the War.

What are the implications of a 6-couple set? In a three-couple dance in a 6-couple set, each couple would dance the dance four times each – 24 times in all. A dance would, therefore, last three times as long as the same dance today in a 4-couple set where each couple dances only twice. With a reel or jig taking around 13 or 14 minutes, you would need fewer dances on a programme. Dancing a strathspey in a 6-couple set would take up to 24 minutes. If the dance was 40 or 48 bars long, the time would be even longer. Dancers would need more stamina – think of the way 2-couple dances have fallen out of favour in the past 20 years. Dancing the *Duke of Atholl's Reel* in our 4-couple set means 96 bars of continuous dancing. In a 6-couple set it would be 5 times 32 bars = 160 bars non-stop! The 2-couple strathspey *Lady Auckland's Reel* in a 6-couple set would be 5 times for each dancer – 30 times in all! In some areas of the country today you can be hard pressed to find one 8 x 32 bar strathspey on a programme! I wondered if the answer to this issue lay in our early gramophone recordings, but it seems that the early 78 records just fitted in the dances as best they could, given the space allowed by the technology of the time. I have a copy of the Beltona record for *Hamilton House* from *Book 7* in 1931. The band is Mrs Shand's Dance Orchestra and the record is 'officially recorded and issued by arrangement with the Scottish Country Dance Society'. It plays 6 times through and the strathspey, *Ye'll aye be Welcome Back Again* on the other side plays 4 times – and at a much brisker pace than we are used to today. In *Book 7* the advice on tempo was: 'Strathspey time should be the pace of a horse trotting and reel time the pace of a horse cantering'. To record all 12 dances in *Book 7* would have needed 6 records.

With the publication of more and more dances it is possible that there was pressure to include more dances on a programme, so it was decided to limit set size to 4 couples, but this is speculation. If anyone can shed any light on

when the decision was made that we would henceforth dance in sets of 4 couples, please be in touch! However, if you were 20 years old and dancing in 1938 you are now 100!

The chord before and after

In 1938 the Society stated:

'a chord (or four bars of music) may be played before a dance begins, during which the women curtsey and the men bow to their partners. They also curtsey and bow at the end of a dance (without chord).'

Nowadays, we take the chord before and after for granted, but it is actually a fairly modern practice. Edward Payne's dance manual from 1814 advises the band to play the whole tune through before the dancers begin dancing. Where, then, did our chord come from? When the Quadrille arrived from Paris in 1815, the tradition was that the dancers used the first 8 bars to 'honour' their partners and the person opposite in the square set – and later their corners. The dancing always begins on bar 9 of the tune in a quadrille. And there is no bowing or curtseying at the end. However, each set of (usually) 5 quadrilles ends with a 'finale' quadrille – and traditionally, this one began with a chord and the dancers begin on bar 1. I wonder if this is the origin of our chord.

Jimmie Hill



Forthcoming events

Members are invited to join the Falkirk Branch of RSCDS at their annual Christmas Dance which will take place on Wednesday, 5 December 2018 in Grangemouth Town Hall. Music will be provided by George Meikle and the Lothian Dance Band. Tickets £15.

Contact Dance.convenor@RSCDS-Falkirk.org.uk or Tel 01324 562995

RSCDS West Lothian will be hosting the Lothian Branches Joint Dance on Saturday, 6 April.

The dance will take place in the Canon Hoban Hall at Broxburn. Music will be provided by Stuart Anderson. Contact secretary@rscdswestlothian.org.uk

(Editor's Note: If you have energy left, there's plenty of time to travel to Broxburn after the workshop in Perth!)

RSCDS Kirkcaldy Ball will be held on Saturday 2 March 2019 at Rothes Hall, Glenrothes.

Music will be provided by Frank Thomson and his Band. This is a ticket only event.

Contact kirkcaldyball@gmail.com or Tel 01592 205669.

Teachers' Association Scotland Membership Form

Membership Application/Renewal - £5
1 June 2018 - 31 May 2019

Title

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Tel. No.

Email

Branch

Teaching Certificate / Part 1 or Prelim / non Certificated (circle as appropriate)

Food Hygiene Certificate yes no (circle as appropriate)

First Aid Certificate yes no (circle as appropriate)

Cheque payable to 'Teachers' Association Scotland'

Please send form to

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