

# *The Scottish Country Dance Teacher*

**TAS Newsletter June 2022**

**Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)**

**Recognised as an RSCDS Teachers' Association**

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

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## **From the Chair**

As life returns to greater normality after the emergency health measures necessarily imposed by the Coronavirus outbreak, we can see and plan further ahead again with growing confidence in our purpose and aims, albeit numbers returning to classes and dances are generally somewhat down on pre-Covid norms.

It has always been the intention that TAS should represent all those actively engaged in teaching Scottish country dancing and it is tacitly, and indeed often clearly, acknowledged that our meetings and workshops offer insights and ideas to inspire us on our return to our respective classes and thereby reinforce good practice. This is further strengthened by the articles and 'papers' produced over the years through the medium of our newsletter and the insights and shared knowledge, 'tips and wrinkles', as it were, accrued from being within the 'network' that is TAS. It is beyond doubt a valuable forum and platform for us all in dealing with the challenges we face.

Many of the challenges are all too well-known and rehearsed in discussions and policy development initiatives within branches and clubs (both affiliated and non-affiliated) as well as in the RSCDS committees of management. Perhaps we need to think afresh about our teaching intent, and thus successful accomplishment, in preserving and practising SCD, bearing in mind that the activity should afford pleasure and satisfaction and friendship's joy to a 'broad church' of individuals involved in a shared social group dynamic of involvement with its inherent elements of physical and mental effort.

The alliterative strapline, "Fun – Fitness – Friendship", used by many groups in their advertising of classes and dances, may arrest the ear and catch the eye but how is it interpreted both by teachers and potential participants? Does 'fun' mean laughter and not taking it too seriously or does it mean joy and satisfaction arising out of interpreting the music and achieving orderly, flowing social dancing? Is 'fitness'

something that arises or is maintained through SCD or is a certain standard of general fitness really a desirable pre-requisite to attending classes and dances in order to become a competent, and thus more confident, dancer? Is 'friendship' a chance element of attending a class or is it something our dancing style and tradition carries within it which we as instructors can actively encourage as a direct element of each dance taught and accomplished? We all know some of the answers to these questions and deploy them in our teaching but is there more to think on and develop and disseminate.

Someone said to me recently that the problem with the RSCDS was that, as an organisation, it spent most, if not all, its resources (human and financial) in teaching people to dance who could already dance. Another individual opined that the way ahead for Scottish country dancing's success and secure future lay in beginners. On the surface, two thought-provoking and interesting conceptual theories! However, dig deeper. What should we, as SCD educators, be doing? Remediation? Refinement? Reviving? Kindling the flame? Encouraging? Inspiring? Upholding 'standards'? All of these, plus? More importantly, how should we be doing all this?

TAS, dear members, is your organisation and as such it requires your expertise, experience and willing input in so many ways to make the Association a vibrant and influential force for SCD good as we approach the RSCDS Centenary year and beyond.

Bring your ideas and suggestions to the notice of the incoming committee through the platform of the AGM, future newsletter editions and the two annual workshops themselves. Cherish the past, adorn the present, build the future.

My best wishes to you all

*Oluf*

## From the Editor

It seems a long time since the October issue of the Newsletter was circulated. At that time dancers were gradually returning to classes and the future was uncertain. It was good news that the Spring Workshop took place, and I am pleased to be able to include a report on the event: it was clearly a very enjoyable day. Thanks to Debra McAlees for an interesting resume of the proceedings. As usual, Jimmie Hill has been busy among old books and papers and you can read all about *Petronella* – and learn about the history of the dance and the origins of the tune: none of it probably what you expected. A copy of the membership renewal form appears on page 9, together with instructions for sending your payment.

## A Date for Your Diary

TAS AGM & Workshop – Saturday, 27 August 2022

Venue: Victoria Halls, Dunblane (further details on page 8)

## Report on the TAS Spring Workshop April 2022

On a sunny Saturday morning at Bridge of Allan Parish Church the TAS Spring Workshop took place, with the focus being on the recent publication: Sir Walter Scott, A Celebration through Scottish Music and Dance – The Heart of Mid Lothian. Music was ably provided by Shona McFadyen on the fiddle for the first part of the programme.



Proceedings started with an introduction and welcome by Oluf Olufsen and then Jimmie Hill got us all on the floor to dance, explaining as he introduced every dance about his involvement in putting this book together, alongside other members of the RSCDS Membership Services Committee.

The publication celebrates the life of Sir Walter Scott, 250 years after his birth, and this book is inspired by a leaflet originally published in 1820, entitled *"The Heart of Mid-Lothian, a reel, the Laird of Dumbiedike's Favorite and Madge Wildfire's Strathspey and Reel to which are added two favourite dances for 1820"*, the latter also with connections to Sir Walter Scott, and originally published in 1822 by Nathaniel Gow.

All the dances, Jimmie explained, have had to be interpreted. You will see from the publication that it has the original 1820 explanations in it and then what Jimmie and the team thought it meant in our terms today. With some of the dances there is the same formation listed, but they have had to be interpreted differently in each dance as there is not description of how it should have been danced – for example the formation set, cross and corners. Lead outside is another movement that the team had to figure out. It was fascinating to hear all the hard work that had gone into making this publication come to life.

Back to the dances and the poussette formation, which, as Jimmie went on to enlighten us, was never a progressive movement and would have been danced by doing a waltz all the way round, which he got us all practising, which felt very strange especially having your partner in ballroom hold and shuffling around the other couple in the set.

Jimmie went on to describe that progressing during this time for a dance tended to happen when 1<sup>st</sup> couple danced down the middle (they would call it lead down, but it was always nearer hands) and danced back to 2<sup>nd</sup> place, so not the progressions we see nowadays in Scottish Country Dancing. He also noted that dancing at that time was mainly for 2 couples and in 24 bars, so the committee have added footnotes into the book to suggest the additional 8 bars if you need to make it into a 32-bar dance for



dancing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as adding 6 hands round and back at the end of the Jig Kenilworth, found on page 52.

Jimmie then introduced each dance in the book by giving us fascinating background information and the breakdown of how each was written at the time and the interpretation of them by him and the RSCDS Membership Services Committee. We covered most dances in the book, all in conjunction with the beautiful music played by Shona with her inputs on the tunes for each dance.

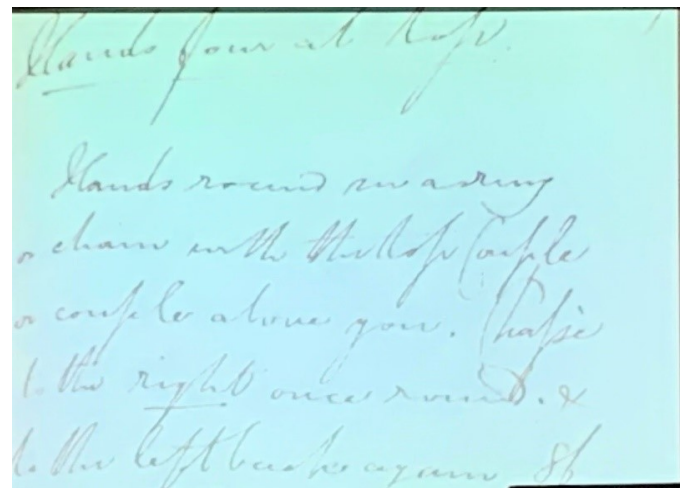
We covered *Kenilworth*, *Reuben Butler*, *The Heart of Mid Lothian*, *The Laird o' Dumbiedike's Favorite*, *Madge Wildfire's Strathspey and Reel* and *The Pirate*. *The Pirate*, as Jimmie alluded, was the second dance with Petronella turn in it, which is something that did not exist before 1820 in Scotland.



After a marvellous morning of dancing these historical dances with the tunes from the 1820s, Jimmie took us through a more detailed background of the publication process and Country Dance and its music at the time of the 1820 Heart of Mid Lothian leaflet from the perspective of the teachers. Each segment of dancing was dissected and given the background evidence that they had used for the decisions they made in the book. It was fascinating, seeing circles going round to the right, found in a manuscript: 'Contre - Danses à Paris 1818.'

Can you believe that more than 20 country dances were inspired by the works of Sir Walter Scott?

During the presentation, we heard musical excerpts from Mo Rutherford and Tim McDonald, who had worked on the tunes on the CD to accompany the publication. Some of them we recognised from popular dance tunes now. And who knew that back in the day it was common for the tune to go into a minor key for a Ladies Chain and only for that 8 bar phrase?



Jimmie discussed the theories of who had composed the tunes, no jigs, but always with a waltz. Could it have been John Coutts, who published music around the time, or Finlay Dunn, who was the son of Barclay Dunn, an Aberdeen dance teacher who

moved to Edinburgh? Finlay was famous for bringing quadrilles from Paris and bringing Mendelssohn to a bagpipe competition! Or was it Nathaniel Gow, son of Niel Gow and brother of John Gow? Nathaniel was the most active dance composer and musician from 1791 to circa 1830 and was even appointed as one of His Majesty's Herald Trumpeters for Scotland! With no evidence we don't know who devised the dances, Jimmie posed that question to us too. So, country dance music then and now? The instructions were very much secondary to the tune, with it being suggested that in 1820, formations were made up on the night by the top lady and the same tune would be played again and again and again for the whole dance, unlike it is now. Medleys were also used a lot more than they are now, but more often with a reel followed by a jig.

To finish off the day, we were back on the floor to cover teaching points for dances associated with Burns masterfully carried out by Oluf Olufsen. First teaching point was the lead down movement, yet it is easier to use nearer hands or at least dance up with nearer hands in the following related Burns Dances, which we danced - *Ha! Ha! The Woonin' O' It (RSCDS MMM 1)* and *Oh Whistle and I'll Come Tae Ye, My Lad (RSCDS Book 24)*.



Next it was the turn of *A Man's A Man For A' That (RSCDS Book 30)*, we tried back of hands for the grand chain with a great quote "Scottish Country Dancing is not judo – you are not trying to take your partner off balance".

This then concluded a very enjoyable and captivating day giving us food for thought about dancing back in the 1820s and how it all started, to some fabulous teaching points to take back to our classes and put in place.

*Debra McAlees*

## Future TAS workshops

Would you like TAS to hold a workshop/meeting in your home area? The Committee is keen to find new venues and facilitate access to local workshops for members across the country. If you know a hall or centre that would be suitable for a workshop please provide as much information as you can (using the form on page 10) and send it to the TAS Secretary.



## *Petronella*

### *Dance 1, RSCDS Book 1*

For us today *Petronella* is both the first dance in Book 1 and a dance movement. While working on the dances for the new Sir Walter Scott book we came across the reel, *The Pirate*, published in Edinburgh in 1822 by Nathaniel Gow. The novel, *The Pirate*, was one of the Waverley Novels, published in late December 1821. I am sure most of us have never read it! It is set in Shetland, which Scott had visited seven years earlier with the Northern Lighthouse Commissioners, and the novel was probably inspired by his visit. I have to admit that my collection of the Waverley novels languishes on a top shelf gathering dust!

*The Pirate* contains one of the earliest instances of the petronella movement. The dance begins with the 1<sup>st</sup> woman and 2<sup>nd</sup> man using 8 bars of petronella to change places. Their partners repeat this. This is the progression, but with the difference that both couples finish on opposite sides. They get back to their own sides using an all-round poussette in reel time.

We are told that the dance *Petronella* was introduced into Scotland at a ball in the George Street Assembly Rooms by Nathaniel Gow in 1820, just two years before his *Pirate*. Gow published *Petronella* in a leaflet of 1820, *The Cries of Edinburgh*, after his Ball on Tuesday 14 March along with *Hot Pyes, Kail and Leeks*, and a strathspey/reel medley – *the Gosforth Masquerade* – the strathspey by his brother John and the reel by himself. Unfortunately, Gow did not include the instructions for *Petronella*. We have to wait until 1827 to find them in *The Ballroom* published in Glasgow:

'First couple chassé round to the right, and set in the middle; round to the right again, and set on the sides.'

It is clear that the first movement to the right used skip change and not pas de basque and that is what we recommend when dancing *The Pirate*. The first edition of our Book 1 states clearly that pas de basque should be used in *Petronella* in bars 1 and 2. No sources are given in the first edition, so Miss Milligan and Mrs Stewart may have been writing down the dance as it was danced in 1923 rather than its earliest known source. From the diaries of Christina McKellar, we do know that *Petronella* was a repertoire dance in Argyllshire from 1919 to 1927. Although it seldom makes an appearance today on dance programmes, it is still a staple dance for Reelers and is danced at the end of every Asilomar Ball in California with great gusto by all the young people present!

Following the 16 bars of petronella, the dance continues with down the middle and back, then a poussette. We know in 1820 that the progression took place at the end of down the middle and back. One contemporary source tells us that, 'Formerly, after coming up the middle you went round to the outside and cast off. This is now in disuse. They (the 2<sup>nd</sup> couple) merely move up, and you leave them off.' With the progression having taken place, it means the poussette is all-round. The greatest writer on country dancing was Thomas Wilson, who was publishing his dance manuals from 1811 until 1820. He describes an all-round poussette and a half-poussette. The all-round poussette in fast time could be done by joining both hands and moving round each other in a 'draw' movement (forward and backward) with no turning. However, it is more likely that Wilson's waltzing movement was more

current in Edinburgh in 1820. In 'Traditional Dancing in Scotland' Tom and Joan Flett write, 'Following the introduction of the Waltz to Britain in the early years of the nineteenth century, the 'sauteuse' Waltz step was introduced into the poussette, and the forward and backward motion of the original figure was replaced by the circling motion of the Waltz. This change, which took place in Scotland at some time before 1818, was no doubt facilitated by the fact the original hold used for the Waltz in Britain was a two-hand hold, the same as that used in the original poussette. After about 1820 other 'ballroom holds' came into fashion for the Waltz, and some of these were naturally transferred to the poussette.' The Fletts note that the current RSCDS poussette was developed in the early years of the Society and is 'a modification of a poussette invented about 1925 by Mr John Duthie from Galashiels'. By deciding that the step used in a poussette would be the pas de basque, this limited the distance capable of being travelled, and it thus became our modern half-poussette in reel and jig time.

The *Petronella* tune is very distinctive and we like to think it is Scottish, but I am afraid it was composed in London by a Welshman, who dedicated it to a Persian nobleman. It first appeared as *The Persian Dance* around 1810. Even Nathaniel Gow published it as *The Persian Dance* in Edinburgh in 1812. It first appeared with the name *Petronella* in London in 1815, but with instructions that bear no relation to our dance – no petronella movement! The tune seems to have been very popular in London for a short time, then fell out of favour, but the Scottish tradition has kept it very much alive. So, there's more to that simple dance than we think!

*Jimmie Hill*  
Dunfermline Branch

Some thoughts on Dance (With thanks to Oluf)

*Dance is not separate from the life it comes from.* (Marie Brooks)

*Dancing as an art, we may be sure, cannot die out, but will always be undergoing a rebirth. Not merely as an art, but as a social custom ...* (Havelock Ellis)

*Concentrating for one hour or more on the manipulation of one's limbs relieves and refreshes a mind that may be over-engrossed in emotional problems.* (Dame Margot Fonteyn)

*Dance is an excellent amusement ... Its excellence consists in exciting a cheerfulness of the mind, in bracing the muscles of the body, and in producing copious perspiration.* (Noah Webster)



**Teachers' Association Scotland**  
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**A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**  
**TAS AGM and Workshop Saturday 27th August 2022**

**VENUE:**

Victoria Halls  
Stirling Rd,  
Dunblane  
FK15 9EX

**PROGRAMME:**

Coffee from 10:15

AGM 10:45 - 11:45

Workshop 12:00 - 16:00

Lunch 13:00 - 13:30

**Talk by Luke Brady - The Musician/Teacher relationship**

Class: Guided class, with a teacher and musician, which demonstrates different strategies and methods for utilising a musician well in class.

Talk: Utilising recorded music in class

Class: Guided class with a teacher and recorded music, which demonstrates different strategies for using recorded music in class.

Talk: How to incorporate the musicians into your dance programmes.

**16:15 Close**



# Teachers' Association Scotland

Membership Application / Renewal £5

Year June 2022 - May 2023

**NB: This form can be downloaded, completed and attached to an e-mail, or printed and sent by mail. Please return to the Treasurer, addresses below.**

Title ..... Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode: .....

Tel. No. .... Mobile .....

Email .....

RSCDS Branch.....

Teaching Certificate                      Full / Part / None                      (Highlight/delete as appropriate)

First Aid Certificate                      Yes          No                      (Highlight/delete as appropriate)

The preferred method of payment is by Bank Transfer, using the following details:

A/c name: Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)

Sort code: 80-05-40

Account no: 06002469

BIC: BOFSGB21340

IBAN: GB37 BOFS 8005 4006 4006 0024 69

If you prefer to pay by cheque, please make payable to **Teachers' Association Scotland** and **send to the Treasurer:**

Anne Robertson, 63 Waverley Drive, Wishaw, ML2 7JW

E-mail [calvine@btinternet.com](mailto:calvine@btinternet.com)

I enclose £ ..... / I am paying by Bank Transfer                      (Complete/highlight as appropriate)

Signature.....

Date.....

### TAS POSSIBLE VENUE DIRECTORY

With a view to planning future TAS workshops, the committee would value any local information re suitable halls and centres which you, as a TAS member, have used or have knowledge of. If you can help in this matter, it would greatly aid the committee in trying to vary our venues the better to cover the whole country and reach out to the entire membership of TAS.

Please copy and complete this form with as much relevant information as you have/can ascertain and return to the TAS Secretary.

NAME OF VENUE

.....

LOCATION/ADDRESS OF VENUE

.....

ACCESS: ROUTES, MILEAGE AND TIMES FOR (a) CAR (b) PUBLIC TRANSPORT (RAIL, BUS, etc.)

.....

CONTACT NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER FOR ENQUIRIES/BOOKING

.....

CARETAKER NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER

.....

FACILITIES AT CENTRE:

NUMBER OF HALLS

.....

APPROXIMATE SIZE OF HALL(S)

.....

TYPE OF FLOOR/AVAILABILITY OF STAGE, PIANO, POWER POINTS

.....

AVAILABILITY OF CHAIRS/TABLES/URNS

.....

AVAILABILITY OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT (e.g. MICROPHONE, PROJECTOR, SCREEN, etc.)

.....

KITCHEN AVAILABILITY

.....

CAR PARKING CAPACITY

.....

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

.....