



# the reel

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**A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS**

## THE BRIAN HAMILTON SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE BAND



IN October 2000 my father, Brian Hamilton, announced his retirement from the Scottish music scene due to health problems. This has also led to the retirement of my mother, Patricia. Their retirement ends a career spanning 40 years.

In his youth, Brian was a keen English Country dancer, indeed he met Patricia dancing and they married in 1956. Their dancing life together was somewhat curtailed when Brian took up the accordion and founded his English dance band in 1958. Patricia soon joined him on second accordion and the definitive sound of the band began to take shape. The band scene in those days was somewhat different to today. There were no electronics and the band had to use primitive hall amplification. There were no electric pianos and those provided by the halls varied in quality and often unusable. Their first mode of transport to dances was a motorbike, with Brian driving, wearing one accordion on his chest, the other accordion on the carrier behind Patricia who carried the music in a rucksack on her back. How different from the large estate cars used to transport a band's equipment today!

After three years on the English dance scene, Brian was invited to play with Flora Argent's Scottish Dance Band. He made his debut in February 1961 at Fetter Lane, then London's home of Scottish dancing. Patricia at this time was concentrating on family matters, giving birth to their first son, my brother Ian, in the same month. Brian still clearly remembers his first dance with Flora. In those days the band set up on the stage with the curtains drawn. It wasn't until they were ready to start that the curtains were pulled back and the large crowd revealed, quite a daunting prospect for his first foray into a new style of music.

Brian continued to play with Flora until 1964 when Patricia rejoined him, the family having been completed with my arrival in May 1962.

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## A MAIR'S TALE

*We extend our best wishes to Alan Mair, newly elected Chairman of the RSCDS. Alan tells his tale...*

IT is a sobering thought that it is possible to be taking over as chairman of a society even though I have not met a majority of its members, most of whom would probably not recognise me. I think that was in your editor's mind when he asked me to write this article and why I appreciate the opportunity to communicate with your large and wide-spread readership.

I was born in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire but brought up in a country parish which included the Hopetoun Estate. At school we boys were taught what has come to be known as the ceilidh dances in preparation for school dances, but were not introduced to Scottish Country Dancing. The girls' PE teacher, Maggie Moir, who had been a regular in Miss Milligan's International Teams in the '50s, did try to interest them as I learned recently from my younger sister. She confessed during a recent Former Pupil event that she and two friends had been so bored with "Hamilton House" that they (accidentally) broke the record.

My early interest in "Scottish" dance began much closer to home. Hopetoun Estate, in those days, supported a large rural population on fairly traditional lines so I could witness the grand Balls in its splendid Ballroom and take part in the more down-to-earth social gatherings of the staff. The music was typically provided by estate workers who had skills on accordion, fiddle or drums.

Again the ceilidh dances featured strongly, as did the "Lancers". Romantics may like to know that Christine, my wife, came to many of these dances with a friend whose father worked on the estate. Since these were real ceilidhs, she used to sing.

Around this time, SCD was featured on TV in the conflicting styles of "The Kilt is My Delight" and "The White Heather Club". I remember as a young boy being taken to see a broadcast of the former from Hopetoun Ballroom. Having come to know and admire many of the dancers, I have to confess that the wonder of TV was what held my interest that day. Christine, a very proficient dancer by this time, was hugely impressed by "The Kilt is My Delight" but I saw the dancing on "The White Heather Club" as much more likely to appeal to me. Indeed I was to carry in my mind a perception of RSCDS and Edinburgh Branch in particular that was to mislead me for many years.

Having only a bicycle, dancing classes were never an option and there were plenty of

opportunities to dance at "Young Farmer's" Dances... and Christine went too! After University, she did try to encourage me to take up SCD but my perceptions continued to stand in the way.

It was not until we had married and work brought us to Teesside that I was finally tempted to go along to a class. In 1970 I encountered Laurie Kemp and have been trying to emulate him ever since. In the intervening 30 years I have met various challenges on and off the dance floor, visited several countries and met lots of memorable people.

One of these who deserves a special mention is Anna Holden. She tutored my Full Certificate class and also Christine's one year later. Anna had many attributes but possibly her greatest was her ability to engender self-belief and encourage others that they had a contribution to make to the Society. We both remember her with great fondness.

Having joined the Society in an English Branch, we moved back to Scotland and, after spells in Islay (before the Branch was formed) and Aberdeen, came to Fife – and St. Andrews Branch – in 1980. In the early 80s I began to take an interest in the Society's business, representing the Branch at Executive Council and attending my first ever AGM in Helensburgh as a delegate. I



have found committee work in the Society absolutely fascinating. Although sometimes frustrating, it is never dull. There is no doubt that, if you contribute to our Society, it will find a way of rewarding you.

That is how I will remember my two years as Vice Chairman. Since there was never any risk of up-staging my Chairman, Linda Gaul, I have been able to contribute freely – only to find that I visit more places, meet new friends and do lots of dancing.

I now look forward to the ultimate opportunity of contributing to the Society. Two years ago I said that reducing the size of the Executive Council was the first priority and that is still my view. However there is now pressure to have an even smaller Management Board than Linda and I envisaged. With other trends in membership becoming obvious, it is essential that the electoral college is decided at the same time.

*Continued on page 2 +*

+ continued from page 1 ALAN MAIR

I believe that the Society has not adapted well enough to its worldwide popularity. We are a unique Society and so are not able to find a comparable organisation from which to plagiarise a replacement management system. That was what Mrs Stewart did but I doubt if she thought the Society would grow in the way it has.

If we really wish to be more inclusive we must find a system which will allow more flexibility. We must accommodate situations in other countries such as South Africa rather than be constrained by a "one-for-all" policy. We must have a low-cost form of membership for those who, like me thirty years ago, have to be tempted in to find the RSCDS is not as they perceived it.

One of the most welcome outcomes of the present proposals is that the opportunity to serve on the Management Board or its Committees will be open to any paid-up member. This will enable many members, currently excluded, to become more involved in the Society's work. I hope this will send out a signal that member involvement is encouraged, whether on a work party to carry out a project at HQ, to gain the experience to teach at Summer School or become an Examiner.

Much more will be said before a consensus is reached and a new structure is in place, but there is still much that can be done to ensure the future of our Society. I, the rest of the Executive and the staff at HQ will provide support but it is at Branch level that our most effective work is done. The Charities Legislation has changed the relationship between the Society and its Branches but each Branch continues to BE the Society in its own area and that is one thing that must not change.

Alan Mair

→ continued from page 1 BRIAN HAMILTON

The Brian Hamilton Band had now arrived on the Scottish scene and for the next 36 years played for many styles of dance, Scottish, English, Irish, American Square, Playford, Ballroom and Old Time. As with every band the line-up changed through the years, but the defining sound of Brian and Patricia remained. Many fine musicians have played, including Judith Robertson (piano), Peter Macfarlane, Stuart Forbes, Ian Robertson (fiddle), Bobby Reid and Bill Hogan (drums). When I took up the drums in 1983 we began to turn out as a family band, famously introduced at one Pont Street dance as "Mum, Dad and the Nipper!"

During the last few years Brian and Patricia have tried to reduce the number of dances, and the distance they travel. Despite this they had a very full diary right up to their retirement. They were by now filling a niche for local societies, including smaller mid-week dances, as well as larger more formal events on Saturday nights. A few years ago Brian began to experience problems with an erratic heartbeat, often triggered by the stress of performing. This problem has worsened this season and reluctantly he has been forced to retire with immediate effect.

On a personal note this ends something that has done more to shape my life than practically anything else. From my earliest days there was always Scottish music in the house, Dad practised and prepared for each dance for hours on end. For the past 12 years my commitments with Craiggellachie have prevented me from playing regularly with my parents, yet I always look forward to the opportunities to turn out as a family again. There may not be any dances with Mum and Dad in the future but the sounds and memories will always be a part of me.

Graham Hamilton

[Thank you on behalf of all dancers for all the pleasure that your music has given us for such a long time. Enjoy your retirement. Ed.]

## BRANCH MATTERS

**CHRISTMAS** is almost here so do get your tickets for the Branch Christmas dance at St. Columba's with Ian Muir from Prestwick – an occasion not to be missed. If you have heard Ian before, you will want to again; if you have not, then here is your opportunity!

Other events lined up are the Burns Night dinner and dance on 20th January and the Spring Dance at Wandsworth on 24th February. Do bring non-dancing spouses and friends along to the former as the programme will include popular country dances and some old time and ceilidh dances. So come along and enjoy the food, music and dancing!

It is a while since we have used Wandsworth for a dance – it is an excellent venue, with parking. We are reverting to a bring your own supper as we have had in the past. Why not get together with friends and bring a shared supper? There will also be tables set aside for those not in groups which Margaret Shaw will host.

The band has changed for the dance on 21st April 2001. Sadly Brian Hamilton is retiring from playing. After many years on the London band scene he will be sorely missed for his reliable tempo, choice of tunes and his easy relaxed manner on stage with the MC. However, the good news is that Green Ginger will play in Brian's place – given their great success at the ceilidh at the Branch Day School, this will be a popular choice.

It was an excellent day at the Day School, with all the teachers and musicians pulling out the stops, but it was disappointing that, after all the hard work by those organising it, there were not more people there to enjoy it. The Classes Committee is having a think about the day school format – location, grading of classes, teachers, etc. If you have any ideas or suggestions, Rachel Wilton or any Committee member would like to hear them. If you usually go and did not this time, why not? We need to have feedback to ensure that we offer what is required.

Classes are reaching the end of the first term of the year, and it is good that the Wednesday afternoon class has been able to re-start under the guidance of Clare Cox. Thanks to the teachers and musicians who work so hard, this has been a successful term for all the classes.

In the wider field, the Society AGM in Troon has been discussing ways of restructuring the Executive to make it more responsive and better able to manage the Society in the 21st century. Please see the AGM report on page 3. It does seem sometimes that HQ is remote from the Branches, the main complaint being that we get nothing for the subscriptions we pay to HQ, but remember that we get the Society for those subscriptions. Without the Society we would lose the expertise in training teachers to set standards. Publications, research and music recording would suffer and there would be no Summer or Winter schools. We need the Society as much as it needs us!

On behalf of the Branch Committee I would like to wish all our readers a most enjoyable Christmas and peaceful and prosperous 2001.

Simon Wales

## MEMBERSHIP

**TO JOIN** London Branch, please see the last issue of "The Reel" for full details or contact our Membership Secretary Owen Meyer (address in the next column).

## SUBSCRIBE TO THE REEL

**TO subscribe** (if not a London Branch Member), please see the last issue of "The Reel" for full details or contact Rita Marlow, 17 West Farm Close, Ashted, Surry KT21 2LH.

## ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY



Patron - H.M. The Queen

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### STRUCTURE OF SUB-COMMITTEES

- Children:** Angela Young, Margaret Shaw, Alexander McClintock.
- Classes:** Rachel Wilton, Jenny Greene, David Hall, Owen Meyer, Pam Ray.
- Dances:** Simon Wales, Jim Cook, Jenny Greene, Davinia Miln.
- Demonstrations:** David Hall, Judy Berry, Caroline Sloan, Mairi Scanlan\*.
- Publicity:** Jim Cook, Alexander McClintock, Jeff Robertson, Rita Marlow\*.

- Membership:** ..... Owen Meyer
- Bookstall:** ..... Ian Anderson\*
- Branch Rep. to Headquarters:** ..... Rachel Wilton
- Central Council of Physical Recreation:** ..... Marie Jamieson\*
- Hon. Archivist:** ..... Iris Anderson\*
- Southeast Group:** ..... Simon Wales
- Combined Societies:** ..... Simon Wales

\*Indicates a non-Executive Committee member.

#### Branch Web Site

[www.scdlondon.freemove.co.uk](http://www.scdlondon.freemove.co.uk)

## BULLETIN 2000 / ST. ANDREWS

**THE** expected Bulletin is running late from HQ. Short of a last minute miracle, London (first) Branch Members will now receive their copies with the next mailing of "The Reel". In its absence, you are reminded that booking forms are available from HQ for the St. Andrews Summer School (15th July – 12th August 2001). Please enclose a stamped s.a.e. Application forms must reach HQ by 1st March 2001.

## LIFE MEMBERS

**PLEASE** note that your membership has not changed. There was an error on the last mailing flysheet. Membership category should have said "Life" not 01.09.01.

AGAIN the RSCDS stands at a crossroads, or, to be more precise, at the last turning before the crossroads. At least this time, most members are agreed on the general direction, but are discussing which way to turn when we reach the crossroads.

There seems to be general consensus that steps must be taken to reform the internal mechanisms governing the Society. What was suitable for a small (but growing) Scottish organisation in the '20s has grown to be too cumbersome for a large international organisation in the 21st century.

The second major issue confronting us is the declining membership numbers and predicted shortfalls in income in the future.

At present the main management board of the Society is the Executive Council which comprises over 160 members! That is one representative for each Branch plus the six members directly elected by the membership at the AGM, of whom Andrew Kellett is currently one. Not surprisingly it takes an age to get anything decided and in these times when things change so rapidly we need to be able to respond more swiftly.

It is broadly agreed, therefore, that in order to make decisions efficiently, the Executive Council should be reduced in size to about 15-20 members, including the office bearers with suitable standing committees, and with a Branch convention to work in much the same way as the current AGM to involve the membership at large.

Not so clear cut is the way forward on the financial issues. What is currently being floated, and was aired at the discussion group (which is not a binding part of the AGM) is a system whereby dancing members of the RSCDS join a Branch and a *small* capitation fee is paid to HQ, and those who wish to get involved in the management of the Society and stand for office at HQ would pay a substantially increased fee direct to HQ. This would inevitably lead to a much smaller membership, of more committed, active members, paying a more realistic fee to keep the Society afloat.

It is clear that either the activities of the Society will have to decrease, or the subscription will have to keep increasing to catch up with where it would have been in real terms if it had been increased regularly over the past 77 years.

As things stand at the moment, the current Executive Council, then the AGM, have to decide which of the two types of membership arrangement they want. This, given the nature of the current EC, will be no mean achievement. A further proposal made at the discussion group, was to reform the EC first, by asking it to elect a small management board, who would then progress the other issues through the AGM over the next two years.

All Branch members will have the opportunity to discuss these issues with Committee members and at our own AGM. If you have any comments, then please do take advantage of every opportunity you have.

The business part of the AGM was conducted admirably smoothly – Officers adopted, annual report and accounts accepted, and thanks to Ayr Branch for hosting this year. As ever, the fun was in meeting up with old friends from all over the world and dancing at the two dances – this is not limited to delegates or office bearers, so why not come along to Perth in 2001!

**Simon Wales**

## DANCE BOOK DONATION

A LONG standing Life Member who has now given up dancing, wishes to donate her collection of dance books particularly to those members or subscribers who live abroad. If anyone is interested please get in touch with Owen Meyer.

THE Southeast Branches Co-ordinating Committee met to discuss a possible follow up to the successful Hove Millennium Festival. We were keen not to repeat events on a regular basis otherwise they would lose their special appeal and plenty of room had to be left in the calendar for Branches to organize their own activities. However we had shown what could be achieved by Branches co-operating and we looked for an opportunity to do so again. The next suitable date seems to be the Society's 80th anniversary. We are making plans therefore to hold another Ball, hopefully to the north of London, in 2003, probably in April. More information will be available next year. Stand ready to put the date in your diary.

Meanwhile the Southeast Branches are co-sponsoring the transfer of one of the Society's recordings on to CD. Branches and individuals around the world are making financial donations to help the Society complete the task of digitally recording its published music. By supporting this project the Southeast Branches are showing that even in the fallow years between major events they can continue working together to further the Society's aims.

**Andrew Kellett**

## DONATIONS

AS A registered charity (No. 1067690), RSCDS London Branch is always grateful for donations to help it achieve its aims.

From April 2000 the tax rules on donations have been simplified. In the past, tax could only be reclaimed on a gift of £250 or more, or a covenant for at least four years. Now tax can be reclaimed for donations of any amount under Gift Aid, and covenants no longer apply, with existing undertakings forming part of Gift Aid.

Donations under Gift Aid must be from taxed money (income or capital gains tax) and the charity reclaims the tax paid, at present 28p for every £1 given. The donation must be accompanied by the donor's name and address (including postcode) and a signed declaration as on the enclosed membership subscription form.

It may be possible for subscriptions to be made under Gift Aid, thus increasing our income from subs by 28% at no extra cost to members. We have applied to Inland Revenue for the necessary permission, and will report the outcome in a future issue of The Reel. Meanwhile, although there is no obligation to sign the declaration, it may save time in future if those who would like to help us in this way would sign it and return it to Owen Meyer (address on page 2).

Peter Luke has contacted those members who have started covenants or standing orders in recent years as to how they are affected. Any new donations or queries should go to the present Treasurer, Daniel Capron (address on page 2).

**Daniel Capron**

## CREATING AND MANAGING THE BRANCH WEBSITE

WE were first asked to create a new web site for the London Branch about a year and a half ago after complaints that the original site had fallen into disuse. Famous last words!

It was felt that the site should be designed to appeal to all Scottish Country dancers, rather than being too strictly RSCDS. Also, it should provide publicity for the London Branch in a welcoming format. Our main aim was to provide a site containing as much useful information as possible but relatively easy to update. You don't need to spend long trawling on the Internet to find sites full of information but which are months, if not years, out of date. There is nothing which puts people off more returning to sites to find the same tired old information for dances which occurred last year. Another important aim was to create a site that was visually interesting but without loads of flashy pictures and images which take forever to download. You don't want to go to a site and wait for several minutes for an image to load which turns out not to be informative anyway.

We felt the best design was one of interlocking pages where the basic information remained the same (for people new to the site), information regarding Branch classes, membership details and the demonstration team could be updated perhaps once a year and the other pages of Branch dances, children's dances and diaries could be updated on a more frequent basis as required.

One major advantage of a website over paper information is that it can be updated far more often at relatively small cost. An example of this is dance information provided in the Southeast Dance Diary. This comes out once a year, but sometimes information is provided too late to be included or changes after it has been included. The website has a page dedicated to dances in the Southeast of England (information provided by John and Anne King) and any late information can be added into the web diary pages at any time during the year by contacting John and Anne (e-mail: [annejking@hotmail.com](mailto:annejking@hotmail.com)). The same goes for class information for the Southeast region as this can also be easily updated by contacting Alexander McClintock (Tel: 01582 841790).

An important resource which the site provides is to link to other sites about Scottish dancing throughout the world. There is a growing list of links to other dance societies around Great Britain and also links to sites providing information on dancing in Europe and Canada. If you plan to holiday in Europe, have a look to see what dances are on by viewing the links page. These sites also link back to the London Branch website which provides a reciprocal service to dancers from abroad. We welcome any new links to sites that contain Scottish dance material and ideas.

A recent addition to the website is a counter to keep a tally of how many hits the website is getting. So far it has had over 800 hits since February, with many repeated hits on the site – showing that hopefully the information it provides is proving useful! As more and more people join the Internet community, the Branch website will continue to flourish by publicising Branch activities and providing up to date information in a fun and stimulating way. If you haven't had a look yet, give it a try!

**Meryl and Ian Thomson**

Contact information:

Branch website: [www.scdlondon.freemove.co.uk](http://www.scdlondon.freemove.co.uk)  
Ian and Meryl Thomson: [feedback@scdlondon.freemove.co.uk](mailto:feedback@scdlondon.freemove.co.uk)

Southeast Dance Diary: [annejking@hotmail.com](mailto:annejking@hotmail.com)  
Southeast Classes: Alexander McClintock  
(Tel: 01582 841790).

# NEW RECORDINGS

**RSCDS: all the dances in Book 41** – David Cunningham and his Band (RSCDS CD016)

**Reel Friends, Book 2** by Ann Dix, 13 dances – David Hall and his Band (KS CD005)

**15 Social Dances and 3 others** by Roy Goldring – Muriel Johnstone and her Band (SS CD09)

**The Etive Selection of Country Dances** – Alastair Hunter and the Lorne Band (DA CD 0022)

Spiffin, Hamilton Welcome, Domino 5, Flight of the Falcon, Cradle Song, Highland Lass, Summer's End, Ian Powrie's Hornpipe, Elisabeth Hunter's Strathspey, Donald's awa tae the War, Celtic Cross, Cuillins of Skye, Tattie Bogle.

**Come Forth to the Scottish Country Dance** – The Deirdre Adamson Quartet (DA CD 0023)

Diamond Jubilee, Miss Nancy Arnott, Luck to Loyne, Airie Bennan, Perth Medley, A Dog's Breakfast, Garry Strathspey, Gannochy Reel, Miss Mary Douglas, Whistling Wind, Braw Braw Lads, Johnnie Cope, Hamilton Rant.

**Clashadin Volume One** – Nicol McLaren and the Glencaig Band (SHIEL CD 001)

Cadgers in the Canongate, Achnacarry House, Partans in his Creel, Whistling Wind, Jubilee Jig, Royal Deeside, Double Top Jig, Hamilton Rant, Airie Bennan, Up in the Air, Le Moulin Rouge + encore set, Langholm Fair, Trip to Windsor, Miss Hadden's Reel.

**Iain MacPhail's Band Celebrates in South America** (SHIEL CD 010)

Grand March, Eightsome Reel, Scottish Reform, Waltz Country Dance, Circassian Circle, Hamilton House, Glasgow Highlanders, Dashing White Sergeant, Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow, Petronella, Lamb Skinnet, Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, Circle Waltz.

**Celebrate Fifty Years with Boston Branch** – various USA ensembles. (BOS CD001)

15 new dances in the Boston Book.

I AM beginning to ask myself if I have been writing these reviews for too long – nearly 30 years! I must confess I am finding it difficult to write anything new or different about bands whose recordings I have reviewed over the years. But here goes!

David Cunningham's CD for Book 41 is as immaculate as ever. For my money David is in the top flight. I should mention that there is some local interest in Book 41 with Ann Dix's Culla Bay to a Frank Reid tune; there are also dances from Brighton and Borders Branches. Indeed only two of the ten dances are from branches in Scotland. Food for thought.

Our own David (Hall), known to his friends as Dave, is also flying high in the Scottish Dance charts with yet another fine recording. There is a strong melody line from accordion and fiddle backed by some fine harmonies. Nice selection of tunes. I particularly like the set for Welcome Aboard (64S+64R). Composers of originals include Dave himself, Gillian Cummins, Ian R. Muir and, from further afield, Neil Barron and Iain MacPhail.

In the past I have said that Muriel Johnstone's recordings have been excellent, superb and fantastic. There are as always a number of tunes by Muriel herself. On this recording, however, Alastair Hunter's tune "Balmedie Lassies" is a real stunner!

We have a couple of "best yet's" from Deeye Music. Alastair Hunter and the Lorne Band and Deirdre Adamson's have lots of verve and lift. There are some very "useful" tracks including some 5-times through dances.

Another best yet comes from Nicol McLaren; a nice clean sound recorded in David Cunningham's studio. It is by co-incidence that both he and Deirdre give us Airie Bennan and Hamilton Rant for the first time on CD. For Cadgers in the Canongate, Nicol plays the second tune in the RSCDS book rather than the original. This is a pity because *both* tunes are very good (perhaps unlike The Montgomeries' Rant where the second tune is much better than the first). His set of eight tunes for Up in the Air is in my view the best track. There is some local interest in this CD: there are two fine tunes by Brian Hamilton, and Ian Muir's tribute to the late Alan Humberstone – "Humberstone's Magic Piano".

Iain MacPhail's recording celebrates his visits in recent years to South America. Most of the dances will appeal to the Reelers. As ever, his playing is

exceedingly lively and perhaps a tad on the fast side. One of the two fiddlers is Stuart Forbes.

Boston Branch CD to accompany its book (see New Books review below) is played by 15 different ensembles/bands, although some of the musicians play in more than one. It is very much fiddle and piano orientated and they admit that the instrumentation and style currently heard in Scotland and Canada is unusual in Boston. I cannot quite put my finger on it but it is perhaps the style rather than the instruments that make these groups sound different to our UK-based bands. Maybe they are a bit more folksy. Please do not get me wrong, I am not condemning it. I enjoy listening to it. My favourite track has no fiddle or accordion but a lovely Strathspey played on two pianos.

Three Society recordings originally issued on tape/LP for Books 1, 19 and 39 are now available on CD. I have not been favoured with review copies so do not know if they have been re-mastered. Furthermore, I am loath to buy them, partly because two of the best/most popular dances from each of them are already on compilation CDs.

It is good when two leading classical musicians return to their Scottish roots. Operatic soprano Marie McLaughlin sings 33 Scottish songs (on CDA 67106) with, on most tracks, Edinburgh-born Malcolm Martineau accompanying on piano. Marie's singing is a delight. Malcolm is acknowledged as one of the world's finest accompanists. On a few of the tracks Isobel Frayling-Cook accompanies on clarsach.

I have recently acquired some good listening as opposed to dancing CDs. I hope to review them in the next issue.

John Laurie

which celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in April 1950. Boston was the first overseas Branch. I note there is no sign of a Tournée, a Rondel, or even a Poussette or Promenade. One or two of the dances are fairly basic but there is much here to delight the dancer. Set and link in JIG time, set and rotate in STRATHSPEY time (I like it), Red House reels, and "Petronella Quadruple Triangles". This last one is in a dance for 5 couples.

The music is well set out. About half of the tunes are by Boston musicians while the rest were born in Scotland. My only criticism here is that they do not use the tune of that name for the reel "Sprig of Ivy". Yes, I know it is a 2/4 pipe march but Stan Hamilton successfully played it as a reel. All in all the book and the CD (reviewed on this page) are a very useful addition to the repertoire. Well done Boston and a belated Happy 50th Birthday!

John Laurie

## Music Book – Any Good Tune,

Scottish Country Dance Music suitable for use in class. Arranged for piano by Muriel Johnstone.

**THIS** is an excellent book and a most useful addition to the library of music for class musicians. There is a super selection of tunes – waltzes, marches and schottisches as well as jig, strathspeys and reels – which does, indeed, provide a comprehensive starting repertoire for class use. The arrangements are relatively straightforward to play but interesting to listen to, and the selection of traditional tunes includes many great favourites. There are even a few more difficult tunes which might test the experienced musician.

In addition to the music, the introductory text provides plenty of valuable tips about tempo, harmony, and choice of tunes. It is very readable and seems to cover almost anything you might need to know, all in a very balanced way that leaves scope for individual taste and interpretation. My only, very tiny, reservation is on the metronome markings; I would suggest that the range might be extended to slightly quicker tempi, particularly for the strathspey, where I think some musicians might consider the quoted limits as slightly restrictive. Notwithstanding, I can't recommend this book strongly enough for the prospective class musician, and I believe that other musicians and class teachers may also find it very useful.

David Hall

## NEW BOOKS

**WHEN** I interviewed Ann Dix as reported in the last issue of "The Reel", we agreed that any new dances ought to have a good new figure or special feature. Having now taken time to look at the dances in Ann's new book – **Reel Friends 2** – in some detail I think she has achieved her aim. Perhaps, and I repeat, perhaps, this means that Ann's dances will appeal to dancers in the Intermediate to Advanced category rather than beginners.

I had all this in mind when surveying the new dances in the book kindly sent by **Boston Branch**,

# RSCDS LONDON BRANCH DEMONSTRATION TEAM



The Dem Team, September 2000 at Royal Albert Hall

## Introduction and history

**Demonstration Class Teacher and Convenor of Sub-Committee: Dave Hall; Sub-Committee members: Catriona Stewart, Mairi Scanlan, Judy Berry. With contributions from Simon Wales, Andrew Kellett and Bill Ireland**

**OVER MOST** of the history of the London Branch, its Demonstration Team has been actively publicising Scottish Country Dancing and the Society to as wide an audience as possible.

The Demonstration Team has been around for about fifty years. Occasional demonstrations were given by the Advanced class on a fairly ad hoc basis. This was taught by Isobel MacLennan, while the secretarial side was largely handled by Robert Ferguson. Robert's work was invaluable during the Festival of Britain in 1951, when the Branch provided dancing for a fortnight's programme in the newly built Festival Hall, with six performances a week (every evening)! There were also innumerable outdoor performances on the Festival site during the afternoons.

However, London was one of the first Branches to have a weekly class with the specific aim of training demonstration dancers. The first formal Class was taught in 1952 by Bill Ireland, who went on to teach the class successfully for 37 years. In the early days auditions for a place in the class, and therefore the team, were highly competitive. A dancer might find himself (or more likely herself, as it was always tougher for the ladies than the men) in the team one year, out the next and back in the following year. Conditions of team membership were strict. In 1960 dancers were required "to give an undertaking not to take part in a demonstration of Scottish Country Dancing other than for London Branch without the consent of the Committee".

1990. Perhaps the team's greatest strength has been in its participation in so many events in and around London. Here too we have participated in various high profile events, in the Royal Albert Hall on many occasions, at military pageants and tattoos, and at RSCDS Balls and dances.

The culture was different a few years ago and the dancers, in whatever grade of class, were

prepared to be treated in a way that would be regarded as unacceptable now. Since Bill's retirement from taking over the class over eleven years ago, Paul Plummer, Owen Meyer and Ann Dix have continued the good work in teaching the class. There have been a number of Class Secretaries (now called Convenor of the Sub-Committee) and a gradual turnover of personnel in the class. What has not changed over the years is our Demonstration Team's commitment to the promotion of Scottish Country Dancing and having fun with their friends in the process. The 1999/2000 season proved to be no exception to this record.

The team performed at a variety of events and venues. Epsom and Richmond Caledonian Societies, the Tradescant Trust Twelfth Night Celebrations and Edmonton PTA Burns Evening are firmly established as annual visits. Cabaret spots at West End Hotels are nicely complemented by some more informal evenings at Lee Abbey International Student Hostel and a great day out at Paddington Good Neighbours Day, close to where the weekly class is held.

It is a tribute to the class teachers over the years, and to the numerous dancers who have danced in the team, that it still thrives and continues the good work started over sixty years ago.

The team currently comprises 8 gentlemen and 15 ladies: Tom Davy, Dave Hall, Gareth Hobby, Phil McLachlan, Jeff Robertson, Mitch Scanlan, Chris Twinn, Simon Wales, Judy Berry, Maureen Campbell, Gillian Cummins, Gaynor Curtis, Heather Holmes, Helen Ives, Janet Rudge, Mairi Scanlan, Caroline Sloan, Catriona Stewart, Anna Twinn, Gillian Wales, Juliet Walker, Rachel Wilton, Angela Young.

We also appreciate the contribution by those unable to attend the class regularly but continue to participate in demonstrations, in particular Jeremy Hill, Andrew Kellett and Nick Plimmer.

Of course, we are also very grateful for the group of talented musicians who are associated with the team, particularly Sandra Smith (class pianist), Peter Jenkins, Sandy Walker, Neil Esslemont and Judith Smith.

This last year has been another busy year for the class and current members of the team now bring you their perspective of the year's events.

## Events of the year:

### **Southport Festival of Scottish Country Dancing – Gareth Hobby**

We were pleased to return to the Southport Festival run by Southport Branch in October 1999. A group of ten dancers made the trip up the M6.

After settling into our B&B, we proceeded to the Floral Hall where we were honoured to be placed in centre stage for the opening address from the Mayor. Then the festivities began. The afternoon was a combination of massed dances featuring all teams (20 or so), more select displays from a couple of teams and a number of individual team demonstrations where we were able to represent London Branch with pride. Other displays included a Rapper Sword Dance by the local youngsters and demonstrations from across the North of England. The Festival concluded with a social dance in the evenings where we expended the little energy we had left.

### **RSCDS London Branch Christmas Dance, Battersea, December 1999 – Gaynor Curtis**

Battling through the damp evening with the threat of snow, crawling up Lavender Hill in the pre Christmas traffic, mentally double checking that nothing had been forgotten; dress, shoes, sash, DANCE! Reciting the litany, circle, wheels in the corner, reel...Fiddich...circle over and over in your head. For most people this is an evening to enjoy, shake out the posh frock and look forward to an evening of good music, dancing with friends and a wonderful supper. It's at this moment that I wonder why I got involved in the dem team. The weeks of practice, the hard work, missing a favourite dance because you have to change. Then five minutes; smile, cover, am I the left hand or right hand lady this time? Oh heck, thank goodness it's over. I know why I do it of course – it's fun dancing with friends to good music and an appreciative audience.

### **Newcastle Festival of Scottish Country Dancing – Judy Berry**

Having a personal affinity with Newcastle from my dancing days at University, I was delighted to join the team in February for the Festival of Scottish Country Dancing run by the local Branch. Nine teams took part from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Manchester and Leicester, amongst other places.

The competition comprised a mixed team event, a ladies' event, children's event and finished with the "open" event where teams are invited to perform a display item of eight minutes duration with a theme of your choice. Past experience told us that anything goes in this final event; the previous year youngsters had danced on in football shirts with their kilts.

The team was pleased to achieve second place for London Branch in the mixed event, and we were amongst many participants who were delighted to watch the local team win the open event. The winners in this section perform again at the evening dance, this alone being worth the long journey – a tremendously spirited and fun event and certainly one of the highlights of the year.

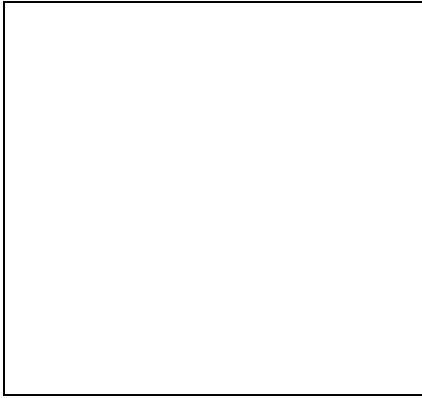
### **Mondial des Cultures de Drummondville, Quebec, Canada – Jeff Robertson.**

A party of 21 representing the London Branch Demonstration Team travelled to Drummondville, located some 40 miles north east of Montreal in the French-speaking province of Quebec. We were there at the request of Mondial des Cultures de Drummondville to take part in their 19th Annual Festival, the largest festival of music and dance in the whole of North America. We were one of 16 countries represented.

Thanks to the range of available talent, we were able to offer a full and varied programme, usually 50 minutes of continuous music, dance and singing (to audiences of up to several thousand people). Dancing, to either the pipes or band, was always well received and the band solos, piping and singing introduced a further element into the overall performance. As soloists, we were fortunate to have Judith Smith on fiddle, Neil Esslemont on pipes and Norma Ritchie who sang and played the Clarsach.

During the course of our visit, we appeared on live T.V., took part in radio interviews and featured in the local newspapers. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, and look forward to our return visit to Canada in the not too distant future. →

→ **Paris Branch Easter Weekend, Rouen April 2000 –Chris Twinn**



Paris Branch Easter Weekend, Rouen April 2000  
Dem Team plus David Hall and his Band

Over the Easter 2000 holiday Paris Branch held their weekend school in Rouen and kindly invited the team to put on a display during their formal Saturday evening ball. Most of the team made it into a long weekend with detours that included Paris, Dieppe and other treats, as well as some participation in the classes.

We travelled down in pouring rain but this by no means dampened our spirits with the weekend providing a great feeling of companionship. Paris Branch were excellent hosts and really know how to foster friendship and fun through dancing both for the youngsters as well their adult visitors. The weather dried out and we enjoyed discovering the delights of historic Rouen, both by way of the official tours and the more ad hoc detours! The demonstration went well from the participants' perspective and was well received, providing a real buzz given the appreciation of such an audience.

From our family perspective it is always difficult to find activities that all the family, including teenagers, can enjoy together. Rouen provided such an opportunity, particularly helped by the open appreciation of everyone towards the youngsters' participation.

So a sincere thank you to Paris Branch.

**South East Branches Millennium Festival, Hove July 2000 – Angela Young**

The South East of England Branches joined for a Millennium weekend of dancing in Hove and the Dem Class went en masse to the Saturday afternoon outdoor dancing on the Lawns.

Having enjoyed the great weather – some of us sunburnt, others more sensible with sun protection – while dancing in the semi massed dancing, we were the last team to dance our dem, "Auchindoun Castle", a dance for 8 women and 4 men. Apart from slightly underestimating the distance from off stage to the centre of the lawns. It went well – no women ending up dancing men or vice versa, and it was a great feeling dancing with plenty of space in beautiful sunshine.

Then it was off for a meal before attending the evening dance. Food and drink always play a large part in dem class events (with no particular emphasis on which is more important!) and it's the ideal time to catch up with each other, and discuss how well or otherwise the dancing went. Most of us stayed for the dance having a chance to dance socially with members of other Branches and then to stay on for classes the next day.



**Dem Team at the Southeast Branches Festival**

**Perspective from a new member – Heather Holmes**

The most daunting thing about joining the Dem Class was discovering the vast array of dances

that form the repertoire. Even those I do know have been subtly mutated so that they can be linked to another with which I am sometimes less familiar. Each week I seem to learn a new dance as I do it. However, everyone has been very patient, friendly and helpful. I thoroughly enjoyed my first official appearance in the team at Hove and am now looking forward to many more.

**Appearances at the Royal Albert Hall, April and September 2000**

The Demonstration Team has performed twice this year at the Royal Albert Hall. The two events were quite different but it is always a privilege to have the opportunity to perform at such a venue. In April, we joined a number of other teams from the South of England in the Scottish Tattoo. This event included piping, singing, Highland Dancing and Scottish Country Dancing amongst others. The Scottish Country Dancing programme was ably directed by Marilyn Watson and London Branch was one of several in a massed display. Our second appearance was as part of the CCPR (Central Council for Physical Recreation) concert in September, a series of displays by groups representing different sorts of dance in a performance entitled DanceFest 2000. The quality of the displays was excellent and the whole day was most worthwhile and rewarding.

These, then, are some of this year's highlights. We hope it has shed some light onto the varied and enjoyable activities in which we are involved. This group combines a dancing class, an active demonstration team and close-knit group of friends socialising together all into one entity. Newcomers are always welcome, though the membership of the class remains by invitation only and I would be delighted to hear from anyone interested. The team is always available to perform at functions and full details are available below or on the Branch web-page (address on page 2).

**Dave Hall** – Tel: 020 8390 7829 (eve)  
Email: [hallscdb@aol.com](mailto:hallscdb@aol.com)

**Judy Berry** – Tel: 07968 692684 (daytime)  
Email: [berry\\_judith@hotmail.com](mailto:berry_judith@hotmail.com)

## OBITUARIES

### IVY HAYES

**OLDER** members of the Branch will be saddened to learn of the death of Ivy Kennedy – better known as Ivy Hayes – on 7th August. She was 92 years of age.

Ivy, the youngest member of the Sedgewick family, was born and brought up in Kirkby Stephen, and she never forgot her Cumbrian roots. Married to Jim Hayes, she lived in Woodford, Essex and taught music in local schools and gave numerous recitals. Her milieu was classical. She first came on the London Branch scene in a sudden and dramatic manner. Dileas Short, a Branch member, who taught a class in the Woodford area, contacted Ivy to see if she was willing to play for her. Ivy, always ready for a new experience, agreed but admitted that she had no knowledge of the Scottish dance medium. However, Dileas brought Ivy to the London Advanced class, taught by Isobel MacLennan at the St. Martin's School of Art, to hear Mrs Allen-Smith, the current pianist playing. It was hoped that Ivy would acquire some of the necessary techniques for Scottish dance music and for class playing. That very evening Mrs Allen-Smith was not at the class. She had suffered a broken arm earlier in the day and was not fit to play. Ivy's arrival was providential. She was placed on the piano stool, and asked to play. The year was 1949. The Gates of Edinburgh was the hot favourite, and the music for that dance was the first Ivy played for the Branch. The rest is history. Ivy became number one pianist for the Branch, and played for the Advanced class, and later the Demonstration class for many years. Her classical style did not meet with universal approval with some of the dyed-in-the-wool followers of traditional Scottish music, but she was a joy to have as class pianist. She certainly could turn "native" as can be borne out by those who were present during a remarkable rendition of Sleepy Maggie played by Jim Coleman and Ivy one evening at Bisham Abbey.

She was plump, good looking, of a happy disposition, and good company. She was always nicely dressed (complete with hat) in a manner not dissimilar to that of the Queen Mother. The hat tended to be worn at a more rakish angle, after occasional post-class convivial evenings. One of the highlights of her time with the London Branch occurred when travelling from Woodford to London to play for a demonstration. There she was in evening dress, on a Green Line 'bus, the only passenger by the time it reached central London. By some means she persuaded the driver to drop her, not at a scheduled stop, but at her destination – the Dorchester Hotel!

On retirement, Ivy and her husband Jim moved to Woodingdean on the South coast. They became friends with another retired couple, Joe and May Kennedy. In time, May died, and Jim died. Joe and Ivy married. This was a most happy union, particularly as Joe was a fellow Cumbrian. After Joe's death, Ivy moved into a Rest Home in Rottingdean. Soon her eyesight started to fail, but this did not prevent her playing the piano and keeping her fellow residents in good spirits. More recently, a fall incapacitated her and she spent the last year of her life in a Nursing Home.

Until a few years ago, Ivy made the occasional trip to Jim and Joyce Winn's ex-Demonstration dancers' re-union parties where she was always welcomed by her old friends.

She was a valued member of the Branch and her death is a great loss to us.

**Bill Ireland**

### BRYAN BREDIN

1938-2000



**Bryan Bredin, piper for the Hampstead and District Scots' Association's Burns Night**

**PIPE MAJOR** Bryan Bredin died on 19th September following a brief illness. He died peacefully only a short while after entering a Hospice near his home in Harlow.

Bryan was introduced to Hampstead & District Scots' Association by Pipe Major Jimmy Caution around 1967/68. We little realised then that he would still be piping for our Association some 30 years later. He played for all our dances, including President's Night, Annual Ball and, of course, Burns' Night. Being a dancer as well as a piper made Bryan's music all the more enjoyable for dancing. He also came and played at weddings, anniversaries and funerals, all of which we have had our fair share. Some of the children's Highland Class entered competitions and Highland Gatherings – and there you would find Bryan. He became HDSA's Honorary Piper and later he and his wife Freddie (Win) became Honorary Members of HDSA.

Bryan had a wonderful commitment to life. His pipe band was his special interest, and young pipers are still a major part of the band, having had his son Simon as their Pipe Major for the past five years.

Bryan will be sorely missed by everyone, and Freddie and family will always be welcome at Hampstead Scots Association. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

**Sheena W. Dallas**  
Past President, HDSA

[Bryan also piped regularly for the London Branch Dem. Team and, in 1979, was a founder member of the MacLennan Scottish Group, a unique collaborative venture of dancers and pipers still thriving today. His sense of humour and ability to liven a ceilidh will be sorely missed. **Simon Wales**]

### PEGGY NOLAN

1927 – 2000



**PEGGY** Nolan died at home on Sunday 1st October after a short illness.

Peggy had been a member of Hampstead and District Scot's Association for longer than Bryan Bredin. She was a Committee Member for many years, and after retiring from the Committee, she continued to be one of our most reliable and hardworking Club Members. She was always helpful when newcomers arrived at the Club and could be relied upon to get the beginners through the dances.

HDSA will miss Peggy and we offer our condolences to her family and friends.

**Sheena W. Dallas**  
Past President, HDSA

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### KIT DUVAL

A **VERY** long standing Life Member Mrs Kit Duval who lived on Norfolk Island in the South Pacific passed away on 2nd October 2000. She took a lively interest in London Branch. Activities.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On the subject of warming up ....

London

Dear Jim,

I write to support the views about "warming up" expressed by two of our respected members – Jean and Wilson Nicol – in issue 233.

Back in the late 1960s and early '70s I attended an advanced class taught by one of the Society's best and most experienced teachers. Never a warm up and, as far as I can remember, never a serious injury.

A few years ago I sat in on the discussion part of a musicians' day school. Wilson was also there. The pianist conducting the school, a lady of some standing in the Society, brought up the subject of "warming up". She said that it was unheard of until recent years but had now become an obsession with some teachers. She lamented the fact that most of them insisted on what she felt was quite unsuitable (usually not Scottish) music for warm ups.

As the Nicols have said, we do not warm up at dances. If the first dance of the evening is, say, the Duke of Atholl's Reel the first couple dance three times through 32 bars. They are then well and truly warm without any "warming up"!

While writing, can I add that I abhor the practice of teaching pas de basque in slow time to non-Scottish tunes.

Yours sincerely,

**John Laurie**

Reading

Dear Jim,

When I go to the gym my programme requires me to spend three minutes on either rowing or cycling before I start any stretching exercises. I am sure that the same should apply to classes; as Bill Ireland says 'get the blood squirting through your veins'!

Yours sincerely,

**Peter Luke**

Dulwich

Dear Jim,

The letter in issue 233 regarding "warming up" raises many interesting points. "Warm ups" are not just a current fashion. They are now acknowledged as being essential before a class and a safeguard against injury. Teachers cannot be too careful these days. Should an injury occur (and they frequently do) the teacher cannot be blamed, criticised or sued if the dancer has completed a proper "warm-up". It is now a recognised fact that it is imperative to prepare the body correctly before any physical activity. It is dangerous to do otherwise.

Most teaching qualifications contain an in-depth study on warm up, health, safety, etc. The dancers in a class are the teacher's responsibility. Warm ups can be great fun for children and interesting for adults. It is up to the teacher to motivate the class. A "cool down" session at the end of a class is just as important. The Eastbourne Council have placed a large notice for those walking along the promenade, on which both "warming up" and "cooling down" are stressed. A gradual build up before striding out and a "cool down" at the finish of the walk! Interesting, and they are not doing Scottish Dancing.

Yours sincerely,

**Robert Harrold**

Chairman, National-Scottish Faculty  
Imperial Society of Teachers of *Dancing*

A selection of further correspondence about Pilling, the dancing of the Birks of Invermay, and the comparison with the Duke of Atholl's Reel. (I am sorry if your letter, albeit gratefully received, has been omitted).

Pinner, Middlesex

Dear Jim,

Further to your letter (issue 232) and Ellen Garvie's letter (issue 233), I wish to say that I agree that the 8 bars referred to are not the same in the Birks of Invermay and the Duke of Atholl's Reel, even though their pictorial representations in Pilling are the same.

May I point out that Pilling is *not* a teaching manual but only an aide-memoire for those who have already been taught the correct figures; it is unable to point out the finer points of the dance. Teachers please note!

Yours sincerely,

**Mary Stoker**

Worcester Park, Surrey

Dear Jim,

I would agree to a certain extent with your remarks about Pilling in issue 232. I fell foul of it myself earlier this year. You have to look at the diagrams very carefully. On the other hand the format allows a large number of dances to be fitted into a book small enough to be carried in a sporran and I find it much quicker and easier to read than written instructions, especially given the size of the print in RSCDS pocket editions.

Yours sincerely,

**Elizabeth Bennett**

Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

Dear Jim,

Whilst dancing recently at the splendidly organised and greatly successful Millennium Festival in Hove, both you and your letter to yourself in issue 232 were in my mind when I came to dance The Birks of Invermay. Should my partner and I move up on 3-4 I thought, or 7-8? Pilling was of no help, but frankly I wouldn't have expected it to be, as Pilling only ever describes dances with a broad brush. Whereas *moving up*, as important as it is in being done correctly, is simply a point of detail.

In the set of dancers I was in, two couples *stepped up* on 3-4 and two on 7-8. One diagram tries to show all eight bars at once! Thus, within those eight bars 2C do of course move up, but when?

The convention is followed in the book as far as order of description in that 1C movements are described and *then* 2C. The fact that this order of description exists does not in my opinion necessarily mean that 2C move up on bars 7-8 just because it is written last! Take The Wild Geese for instance: like the Birks... 2C are described as moving up at the end of the 8 bar description. It is dance etiquette to step up in good time for the dancing couple to see the space they are to dance into and adjust their step accordingly. Nobody therefore would suggest stepping up here was anything other than 3-4 but it is not stated! Similarly, in The New Rigged Ship bars 33-36, although written at the end of this 4 bar phrase, 2C moves up. It would generally be done on bars 33-34 *not* 35-36!

How do these examples help us? – they don't really other than to show that a description should not be used literally, but interpreted. We should feel the dance, its flow, its light and shade and dance accordingly. Generally, if it feels right it is right. Thus, it is my opinion in the Birks... that to both feel the lead up (it doesn't say up the middle)

it is helpful if 2C have moved up already. By stepping up on 3-4 the dancing couple can also phrase the last cast off to curve around (especially in the case of the 1M) to *flow* into the circle that follows.

RSCDS 1 ---- PILLING 0

I leave you with a question. What is the difference between *move up* and *step up*? And can *move up* be *dance up*?

Yours sincerely,

**Stephen Webb**

Chalfont St Peter, Bucks

Dear Jim,

Your comments on The Birks of Invermay have probably struck a chord with many readers. Another example is Baldovan Reel in which bars 1 and 2 are rarely danced according to the instructions. The deviser, Douglas Henderson, probably realised that the entry into crown triangles is more easily accomplished if first couple merely pass right shoulders but, as first man, I can hardly ignore my partner's hand if it is offered.

Why does it happen? Well, it is not just the dancers who do not refer to the original publications. There are a lot of clubs and societies in the London area where even the teachers rely on cribs (and even Pilling itself). Perhaps this has something to do with it.

Does it matter? On the whole, probably not, but take Bonnie Anne for example. I am quite happy to finish the dance with an ordinary poussette if my partner or the adjacent couple prefer to do so, but why should it be regarded as foolhardy to embark on an all-round poussette without first consulting the other members of the set? Even then, it is quite likely that first couple will cause further disruption by trying to poussette to fourth place!

What can we do about it? Returning to my first point, perhaps the Branch could organise a workshop for all the dedicated teachers who encourage the members of their local clubs, but do not aspire to RSCDS certification. This would provide the teachers with an opportunity to share their experiences and exchange ideas, but might also be used by the Branch to underline the essentials of good teaching practice.

Regards,

**Andy Patterson**

Bovingdon, Herts

Dear Jim,

The RSCDS has published 44 dances which end with first couple dancing reels of three with their corners, and crossing to their own sides. Only from 1957, some of the descriptions have specified that right hands are to be given in crossing. This is repeated as a general rule in *Won't You Join the Dance?* and the *Manual*. It seems an unfortunate choice.

In eight of these dances, first couple begin their second round by giving right hands. It is surely objectionable to give hands, and immediately the same hands again. More generally at the end of the second round, by a widespread and very neat method, the bottom couple in these dances continue the reels by casting up, while the first couple cross down. This crossing certainly calls for left hands. *Won't You Join the Dance* and the *Manual* avoid the decision by specifying (for all three-couple dances in four-couple sets) that the first couple should end their second round one place from the bottom, and go to the bottom outside the set. However, as Douglas Dean –

→ pointed out (Reel 232), *Won't You Join the Dance* allows that the first couple may cross over to the bottom, while the *Manual* merely says that the first method is usual.

New RSCDS teachers seem to be taught that the first couple should end in third place, face and acknowledge each other, and then move down outside the set. For dances ending in 'reels and cross', this is a clumsy alternative. In all the appropriate dances, it is also impolite to the set, the late first couple pretending to be still active. It is positively rude to the third couple, who are prevented from moving up at the proper time (vital in those dances in which they begin on the first bar). And it is rude to one's partner, since there is only time for a hasty smirk. This is a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance. We do not need to be told to acknowledge our partners, but we do so at the bottom of the set, where we have plenty of time.

Yours sincerely,

**Ian Galbraith**

Worcester Park, Surrey

Dear Jim,

Further to my remarks at the last London Branch AGM about keeping the interest of young people, apart from trying to raise the profile of Scottish Dancing it would help if parents took their children to dances with them. SCD should be a family occasion except for very formal functions. If children are only sent to children's classes there is bound to be a huge leap when going to dances. Even adults cannot acquire a large repertoire just from going to classes, although they are very important for learning to dance correctly.

Yours sincerely,

**Elizabeth Bennett**

London

Dear Jim,

I am pleasantly surprised by the interest generated by San Diego's claim to the world's highest altitude record for Scottish Country Dancing. You might be interested to know that the San Diego Branch also claims the world's lowest altitude record. A few days after dancing at the top of Mt. Whitney, a team, of which I was not a member, danced at the bottom of Death Valley – in August! In order to beat this one, dancers would have to go to the Dead Sea.

Yours sincerely,

**Cy Chadley**

West Wickham, Kent

Dear Jim,

I am writing in response to Elizabeth Bennett's letter in the last Reel concerning the playing of the National Anthem at the end of Branch dances.

The Branch Committee has often discussed this and has left the decision on how to end the dance to the second half MC. This includes whether to have Auld Lang Syne, the National Anthem and/or a polka.

Those who are still present at the end of Branch dances would be aware that we have not had the Anthem for quite some time as most MCs have decided against it and Auld Lang Syne, preferring to finish simply with a rousing polka instead.

If I recall correctly, the last occasion it was played at a Branch dance was the occasion when we held a two minute silence in memory of the late Princess of Wales.

Yours sincerely,

**Simon Wales**

Convenor, Dances Committee

*[This letter was written before the 11th November Dance which did end with the National Anthem. Ed.]*