



the reel

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MEMORY HOLD THE DOOR (John Buchan) OLD MEN FORGET (Duff Cooper)

Bill Ireland, with his long membership of the London Branch, writes about the Branch's history covered by the period of "The Reel"....

TO WRITE an account of the past 50 years of the London Branch is a challenge. Foolishly, I accepted the challenge, and to my horror, found that I was covering not 50 years, but 56. It was my forlorn belief that I could write this account in the third person, avoiding all use of "I" and "me", but of course this proved to be impossible.

My first contact with the London Branch was at the 1945 Summer School at St Andrews, when I met James Garvie. Here he was, this old man—at least 90 years of age—who nearly always managed to be accompanied by two young ladies! Later I discovered that he was not an elderly roué, but in fact a man of fifty-eight, in the company of his two daughters. During my first year in London I had very little contact with the Branch other than to attend a few dances at the Royal Scottish Corporation Hall in Fetter Lane. However after meeting Isobel MacLennan and Marjory Sandison at the next Summer School, I began to take an active part in the Branch's activities.

Picture London in these early post-war days. Many buildings bore the scars of intensive bombing, and in many areas, including the vicinity of Fetter Lane, there were vast spaces where once had been sub-basements of office blocks, surrounded by temporary brick walls about chest height to prevent the unwary falling in. Weeds abounded, and colonies of near feral cats fought and prospered. The RSC Hall was in a sad state, with patched walls, and a heating system of dubious efficiency. Nevertheless, dances were held there, presided over by the redoubtable James Garvie. The dances were well attended, and music was provided by an assortment of bands with differing abilities. Mr Garvie kept the bands in order, and his well known signal of two hand claps advised the musicians of the last eight bars, and time to stop. This signal became confused from time to time, when overenthusiastic dancers were inspired to beat time manually. Mrs Baillie-Hamilton, the Branch President, Mrs Thomson, Treasurer, Tom Bazalgette, Vice-President, Edward Chaplin, always in trousers and wearing patent leather hard soled shoes, and Captain Amphlet with his speed of light footwork were all regular attenders, as was the mysterious Mr White. Very little was known of Mr White. He seemed to have been what in Scotland would have been known as "well connected", but living in reduced circumstances. He had very large feet, encased in brown hard soled buttoned shoes and, believe it or not, his favourite dance was Miss Murray of Ochertyre. It was largely because of Mr Garvie's efforts that the Branch continued to exist through the war. Classes of some sort had been held in the YWCA in Great Russell Street on Saturday

afternoons, and later in a school in South Lambeth. The latter was associated with a *Women's Institute*. In those days all of what we now know as Evening Institutes, run by the LCC, were styled *Women's Institutes*. Isobel MacLennan and Marjory Sandison did most of the teaching. Branch members were thought to number about 80, although many records of membership had been lost during the wartime bombing.

By the late forties the Branch was running a few weekly classes, some of them in the smaller unheated Royal Scottish Corporation Halls, even in the bitter weather of early 1947. However, about this time, through Isobel MacLennan's contacts, classes were opened in a *Women's Institute*, the Branch being in cahoots with the LCC. This initiated the growth of the Branch. By 1949, six weekly classes were being run, and membership had risen to 250. We had the use of the large hall of the St Martin's School of Art, 107 Charing Cross Road, two or three nights a week.

Can you imagine Beginners classes, with a hundred on the roll, and most attending regularly? A class with the sole purpose of practising for demonstrations was initiated.

The Branch continued to expand and flourish. By 1951, membership was 450, by 1952, 800, and by 1954 reached 1,000. Membership has been steady about the thousand mark ever since, on the odd occasion dipping to 950, but never for long. Even the formation of the East Surrey/West Kent Branch in 1954 had little or no lasting effect on our numbers.

From 1946, regular dances were being held at the RSC Hall (price 4/- or 20p including refreshments), and soon these had to be restricted to members only with an upper limit of 120 placed on ticket sales. Ticket application had to be made by post a fortnight in advance, and there were always disappointed applicants. In 1950, the hall closed for a prolonged period to allow essential war damage repairs to take place and further venues had to be sought, the Victory Hall, Leicester Square being one of the favourites. When the RSC Hall reopened, the normal format was resumed with no diminution of numbers. The hall continued to be the home of members' dances until the building was sold to developers in 1972. The Branch's last dance there was in November 1972 (Ticket 38p or 30p in advance). It was a memorable evening. A formidable supper with wine was served. The event was a considerable social success—but a financial loss to the Branch! Since then, regular dances have taken place at St Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a serious decline in the numbers

attending. In 1953, the Branch ran its first Jimmy Shand dance at the Seymour Hall, with an attendance of 700 plus a fair number of spectators. Similar Shand events took place for a number of years with attendances always between five and six hundred.

Some years later, the first of the Guest Dances was mounted at the Porchester Hall. Several bands from Scotland played at these dances. The success of these ventures may be gauged from the fact that after one bumper attendance of some 470, it was decided to limit numbers to 300 for the comfort of dancers, and dances continued there for more than 20 years, when the increased costs of hiring the hall became prohibitive. The Branch has always been enterprising, and Guest Dances were held in a variety of venues including Tagg's Island on the Thames. In 1950, the first Ball was held in the Hyde Park Hotel (Ticket 25/- or £1.25). 240 attended, and there was a waiting list for tickets. The "Tatler" photographer was there, and a two-page spread appeared a week later. "The Evening Standard" reported on the event and even reported the fact that one dancer had put his foot through a ballroom floorboard. I always had the firm belief that Hugh Foss had been the responsible party, but this he denied many years later when he told me that he "had no aspirations to being the Branch's Rumpelstiltskin". The Ball continued annually at the Hyde Park Hotel until 1964 when it took place at Quaglino's (Ticket £2). 1966 brought a return to the Hyde Park but, by this time regrettably numbers were on the decrease. 1970 saw a return to Quaglino's but, in 1972, the death knell was sounded at the Bourne Hall, u u Ewell. There was, of course, the Jubilee Ball of June 1980, to celebrate the Branch's 50 years of existence, an event well supported!

Open air dancing has figured strongly in the Branch's activities. In 1980, the first Garden Dance was arranged at Polesden Lacey. Unfortunately it rained, and activities had to take place in a nearby school. The Polesden Lacey dance has become a fixture in the calendar of Branch events, although with the vagaries of British weather it has been forced indoors on several occasions. In cooperation with local authorities the Branch has run open air dancing for those who care to join in, firstly in 1975 on the Yucca Lawn at Holland Park. In 1978, a stint at the Japanese Lawn at Peckham was added. Thereafter many other venues followed—Parliament Hill Fields, Jubilee Gardens on the South Bank, Battersea Park, Eltham Well Hall, Kensington Gardens, Finsbury Square, and this year London Garden Squares.

Annual Day Schools are run by most Branches

nowadays, and London is no exception. Over the years, many school premises have been used ranging from Hampstead to Wimbledon, and even one year based on St Columba's Church Halls. Dancers have been able to have tuition from well known teachers from all parts of Britain, and had the musical stimulus of many well known players. The first Weekend School was held at Bisham Abbey over Whitsun in 1955. This was the brainchild of Alastair Ross, at that time an aficionado of the Branch. Due to his connection with Bisham he acquired the unofficial title of the Abbot of Bisham. A few Bisham weekends followed, but Alastair had bigger ideas. In 1958 and 1959, he organised week long courses at Lodge Hill, Pulborough. These were well attended. Another of Alastair's successful ventures was to arrange a holiday week at the Whiting Bay Hotel on the Isle of Arran. The first was held during the last week in May 1959, and was such a success that it continued for a number of years after Alastair had retired to Nethy Bridge.

Lodge Hill proved to be a happy hunting ground for the Branch and, from 1966, a number of Hogmanay weekends were held there.

The Branch has provided other forms of entertainment. The first was a miscellany of dance, verse and music held at Rutherford School in 1973. In subsequent years, similar entertainments were produced at Hampstead School, the Middlesex Hospital, and at the Stanhope Theatre. The greater part of the programme was provided by the Demonstration class, but many artists not closely associated with the Branch were involved.

In the late forties, the Branch initiated a class designated to provide demonstrations, and was probably the first Branch to institute such a class. It was tutored by Isobel MacLennan in the hall at 107 Charing Cross Road. I have never liked the nomenclature "Demonstration". In my mind it conjures up images of Emily Pankhurst—"Votes for Women". Could a better title not have been contrived? Show? - Exhibition? - Display? - or something better? Performances, in the main, took place in fairly modest situations, although there was some association with a TV production of "Marigold". Perhaps the earliest prestigious performances for our dancers took place during the Festival of Britain in 1951. This involved a daily performance in the brand new Festival Hall, every weekday evening for a fortnight, plus many outdoor performances on the South Bank. Some of our members had been part of a Scottish Country Dance Team which visited France pre-war, but that was not an exclusively London Branch team. However, the Branch team's overseas programme began at Whitsun 1954 when a small group visited Sainte-Mère-Eglise to take part in the official tenth anniversary of the Allies' landing in Normandy. What an enjoyable and exhausting weekend this was! Two years later, 24 dancers took part in the Fête de Paris, and gave a performance at Rouen. In the early fifties, we obtained the services of Peter Quinn, the piper. He more than proved his worth in Paris, when he played more or less non-stop in a street parade, which lasted for more than three

hours. Yes! The team danced the Scotch Measure down the Champs-Élysées. Peter played for numerous performances through the years until his departure in 1964 to a permanent appointment to train police pipe bands in Nigeria. Trips to Sardinia, San Remo, Annemasse, and many other places in Europe followed, although it is doubtful if any trip produced the excitement of that first venture to Normandy, when two de Havilland Rapide aeroplanes (eight seaters) were chartered to fly the team from Lympne to Cherbourg. 1958 proved to be an important year, as the team was brought in as a standby to a festival run by the EFDSS at the Albert Hall. The occasion was a



Hugh Foss (dancing, left) who produced the first copy of "The Reel"

visit of a South African group from Pretoria. Rather late in the arrangements, a Headquarters team from Scotland found it was unable to fulfil the engagement. By a stroke of luck London was given the opportunity to fill the space.

After the performance, the EFDSS issued an invitation to take part in their prestigious Albert Hall Festival the following year, and for many years to come thereafter. These festivals involved four performances over a weekend—Friday evening, Saturday morning, afternoon, and evening. Our dancers took part in many memorable performances including a "Hogmanay" Sixteensome Reel, and our own special performance of Rothesay at the Fair. This latter dance, when performed at the Albert Hall during a Festival of Scotland Concert almost caused Jimmy Shand to stop playing because, by his own account, he was laughing so much. Praise indeed from the arch-deadpan performer of all time! In those times, competition for inclusion in the Demonstration was keen. Auditions were held every Summer. In 1960, there were so many aspirants that two auditions were held. The class was normally restricted to 20 men, and 20 women, and 80 dancers attended the largest audition. It was always possible to put 32 dancers on the floor for a big performance. In later years, when fewer people expressed interest, it became the practice to invite those, who hoped to be included in the class, to attend for three weeks in the Summer term, so that they could be assessed. The days of a class with 40 members were past. A one-off demonstration took place in 1987, when the Branch arranged for a team of 48 dancers to take part in a performance for Age Concern at the Albert Hall. All dancers were over 50 years of age, and many had no experience of a performance on this scale.

However, they did themselves proud, and for many it was a day to remember. A small, but by no means lesser, attraction at this event was the image of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Vera Lynn, and Mary Stoker linking arms, singing and swinging beer garden style in one of the boxes.

Classes have always been of great importance to the Branch. As membership rose, class numbers rose. By 1952, thirteen weekly classes were being run Monday to Thursday. They were centred on three Evening Institutes—Central, Chelsea/Westminster and Marylebone. In 1964, a Ladies' Solo class was held, and applications to join the Certificate class were so high that entry had to be restricted. Sadly, in the late sixties,

numbers started to wane. By 1970, there were nine weekly classes, and in 1973 only six. Since then, what with the increased cost of public transport, and political junketings between education authorities regarding Evening Institute fees, running classes has become more difficult. To date, it has been possible to maintain seven or eight weekly classes, plus occasional Men's Highland, and Ladies' Step classes.

The Branch's constitution was somewhat sketchy until about 1955. However a draft document was produced for discussion, and this was ultimately passed after two Extraordinary General Meetings held on two weekdays on two consecutive weeks, and a very good

constitution it proved to be. In many ways it was a tribute to Hugh Foss, James Garvie, and Tony Lindsell-Stewart, who framed it. They formed a good amalgam of the intellectual, the man of common sense, and the hardheaded businessman. It is significant, that for many years, when new Branches were being formed and advice sought from HQ regarding the formation of a constitution, frequently a copy of the London constitution was sent as a model. This constitution served us well until the 1980s, when changes were made and, of course, later it had to be revised when the Society became a Charity. Since 1955, we have had few Presidents, and Vice-Presidents. There have been five Presidents. James Garvie tops the league with seventeen years in office. Alex Westwood held the office for fourteen years. Mary Stoker is incumbent number six. Vice-Presidents list nineteen, with nine (the most so far) currently holding the position. There have been two family connections. The late Mrs. Ferguson, and her husband Robert have both been Vice-Presidents. Robert was President for a few years. The late James Garvie, and his daughter Ellen both held the office of Vice-President and President. One record breaker in the Branch Officers was the late Harry Draper, who was Secretary for 24 years.

It would be invidious to single out our aficionados for particular mention, but in this 50th Anniversary issue of "The Reel" exception must be made in the case of Hugh Foss, who was such an influence within the Branch. Hugh was a pre-war member, and he emerged from his hush-hush war work in the late forties.

He was an unusual man, and he had held an unusual job at Bletchley Park. It was he who cracked the Japanese code using a device of his own design, the components of which were a

manila file holder, a collar stud, and a piece of string. Much of this was reported in a recent newspaper article regarding men who had worked at Bletchley Park. But, in common with most of Britain's national press, "The Daily Telegraph" was wrong in detail concerning Hugh. Yes, he wore the kilt. He *had* a beard, but it was never red. He was *not* a Scot. He always emphasised the latter point, and eschewed the wearing of a clan tartan contenting himself with the distinctive Shepherd tartan. Hugh despite his great height—well over six feet—was a remarkably neat dancer. He became a member of the Branch committee in the late forties, and soon became President. In those days, this really meant Chairman. He was highly intellectual, and innovative. In 1951, he produced the first copy of "The Reel".

This journal is now so well known that it is difficult to realise that initially it comprised two sides of one sheet, but it was, and always has been, professionally printed. Hugh wrote many articles for "The Reel" including the various arguments between the two mythical dancers—Mr Dark and Mr Light—in which, in a typically humorous style, various points regarding figures, formations, and phrasing were discussed. Later came his fictitious Heilan' Toe Club, in which he described the vicissitudes of a small group of people in a small English village trying to figure out dances with the aid of an incomplete RSCDS instruction book, and a musician with definite but eccentric ideas. These articles showed Hugh's acute sense of humour, a quality unknown to many of his acquaintances. In the Scottish Dance world, Hugh's chief claim to fame was his remarkable ability in composing dances. Hugh never wrote a dance, then looked for a tune. His brain worked the other way round. He would take a tune, find suitable compatible alternatives, and then write the dance. And, of course, this is one of the reasons that his compositions are so good. If anyone has doubts regarding the marriage of music and movement, he should try three of his dances in particular – "Caller Herring", "Lovat Scouts", and "Mr. Morison". Hugh attended St Andrews Summer School quite regularly, ultimately, when the condition of his legs deteriorated, observing a class seated in a high backed professorial chair, looking like a Grand Seigneur, and meticulously taking notes in his small neat handwriting. Before suffering this degree of immobility, he was always ready to join in the fun of the Summer School ceilidhs. It is difficult to forget his performance as one of a troupe of suspiciously male Bunny Girls, and later as a somewhat awkward lady with a very small partner in a team of formation ballroom dancers. Hugh's memorable contribution to the Branch was "The Reel". The format has remained the same since its inception. It is now much longer than the original (this issue is 16 pages). A logo thistle was registered in 1957—it's ours, don't try to steal it! "The Reel" is distributed to all London Branch members, but there are also more than two hundred non-branch subscribers, most in the UK, but it is also sent to fifteen overseas countries. For the 100th issue, Hugh composed a dance "The London Reel" which will be danced again at the special Branch Dance celebrating the 50th Anniversary of "The Reel" on Saturday 22nd September. [See page 8. Ed.] He spent his retirement years in the Stewartry of Kirkcud-bright, but he never forgot the London Branch and was always interested in our activities.

The Branch has shown interest in publications. In 1979 and 1989 books of dances with music

were published. In 1998 a book of "Fifty-one Tunes for SCD" was produced.

I hope this account presents more than just a catalogue of dates. This is what I have experienced in my association with the London Branch. As a Branch, we have attempted many things, and in most cases succeeded. Membership keeps turning over, though many of us seem to have been around for ever. The message for the future must surely be the valedictory cry of the long lamented radio programme "In Town Tonight".

CARRY ON LONDON!

Bill Ireland

THE HUGH FOSS / NEW ZEALAND CONNECTION

GREETINGS have been received from the New Zealand Branch and, in particular, from Marjorie Crawford, editor of the NZ Branch Magazine.

In their new issue, "The Reel's" 50th Anniversary is noted in a piece about Hugh Foss based on Andrew Kellett's article in issue 200 of "The Reel". To this the following PS has been appended about Hugh's NZ connection....

Following the publication of Hugh Foss's first collection of dances, Iain Boyd contacted Hugh; and, due to Hugh's encouragement, Iain's first collection of dances was published in 1963.

The meeting which resulted in the founding (also in 1963) of the Glendaroch Club, was held at the home of Iain's parents in Wanganui, and was named after Hugh's house in Scotland. Iain's suggestion that Hugh be approached to become the club's first Patron was agreed to; and Hugh Foss was delighted to accept the invitation—a position he held until his death in 1971.

Hugh devised "The River City Strathspey" for the Glendaroch Club. Those of us lucky enough to have a copy of "The Galloway Album" will find the instructions there.

Iain devised "Glendaroch Gathering" to celebrate the club's formation and, following Hugh's untimely death, composed the dance "Glendaroch" in his memory. Glendaroch Club has a most interesting background!

[Thanks Marjorie for sending this and thanks to Ian Boyd (Wellington) and Murray Corps (Wanganui) who provided the information to

SOCIETY AGM

Saturday 3rd November 2001

THIS will take place at 14.30 in the Coaching Hall of the Gannochy Trust Sports Complex, Hay Street, Perth. All members are welcome.

To partake in the associated Friday night Ball, and the Saturday Class and evening Dance, please contact the Branch Secretary, Margaret Shaw, for an application form. (Please send stamped s.a.e.).

BRANCH MATTERS

WITH the start of a new season, we welcome Peter Knight to the Committee and also bid farewell to Jenny Greene and Judy Berry—the former after nearly 30 years of dedicated service to the Branch. Jenny will still be helping us out as a Vice-President. Also congratulations and thank you to Owen Meyer who has retired from teaching after 30 years.

Unfortunately, for a fourth year in a row, Polesden Lacey took place indoors due to rain, but our venue could not have been more welcoming. Perhaps we should advertise it as an indoor dance and outside if fine!

The final outdoor events are still to come with dancing in Kensington Gardens on 8th and 15th September. So pack up a picnic and bring your friends to these fun afternoons.

All the Branch activities will shortly be getting underway—children's events, classes, the Day School and dances at St. Columba's. We welcome Robert Whitehead and the Danelaw Band to the 50th birthday celebrations of "The Reel" on 22nd September. We plan to have a haggis supper at our January dance and ceilidh dancing in November. A lot of effort is put into these events by committee members and others, so please come along and support us.

We have a busy and varied programme for the year, so dust off your shoes and get dancing!

Simon Wales

RSCDS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

Edinburgh, 12th May 2001

IT WAS expected to be a momentous meeting with six officials, six elected members and 105 Branch representatives voting on the Management and Membership Working Party's proposals for the Society's future structure. But firstly came the reports from the Society's standing committees.

Numbers applying for Summer School were down, and some courses had been cancelled. Over 60 dances are being considered for next year's new book celebrating 70 years of Summer School. Anita MacKenzie was named as the Director of the 2002 Winter School. The Youth Committee are organising an Easter School in 2002 with James Gray as Director. The "Dance Scottish" pack for schools is to be launched in September 2001. The syllabus for the new Dancing Proficiency Test is available from Headquarters (It looks pretty difficult to me). The Finance Committee forecast a deficit of £14,000 this year and will propose to the AGM that subscriptions are increased to £15 a year. The transfer or re-recording of the Society's music on to CD is moving ahead, helped in part by a donation from the Southeast Branches. A further volume of Muriel Johnstone's "Any Good Tune" is being planned.

Then Linda Gaul spoke about the need for change: how the Society's structure had been based on a relatively small number of largely Scottish Branches. Elspeth Gray reported on the extensive consultation process that had taken place over the last year or so. Wilson Nicol, on behalf of the General Purposes Committee, encouraged the meeting to adopt a radical course. The debate was opened up to the floor. The creation of a smaller Executive or Management Committee was not at issue. Discussion focused on the three options for electing that Management Committee: Option A was minimum change with Branch delegates voting at the AGM; Option B was closest to the Strategic Plan with one member one vote; and Option C was the radical choice with two tiers of members and only those paying the higher rate

having the right to vote.

Many present spoke and the meeting was fairly evenly divided. On the first ballot Option A received 48 votes, Option B 21 and Option C 46. Under the rules agreed in advance Option B was eliminated. On a second ballot Option A received 59 votes and Option C 55. The amended management structure coupled with the minor changes included in option A (London and the other "big" Branches will get more delegates at the Society's AGM) will now be put to the AGM for approval. Given the closeness of the vote it is as well that the more conservative option was chosen as the AGM would have been likely to reject Option C and with it the chance of reforming the current unwieldy Executive.

It was cheering to learn that two new Branches had been formed in Derbysire and Japan. That was the ideal antidote to the talk of declining membership which had been the backdrop to the management and membership debate. Now we move on to the AGM and another momentous meeting.

Andrew Kellett

GOODBYES FROM THE COMMITTEE, AND HELLO!

AT THE London Branch AGM on Friday 22nd June, Judy Berry and Jenny Greene stepped down from the Committee and Peter Knight jumped aboard. Thank you Judy and Jenny for all your hard work and "Welcome" to Peter Knight.



Jenny at the 1973 Jubilee Concert

Jenny Greene:

Admission to Branch Dances cost 40p in advance, 50p on the door when Jenny stood for the London Branch Committee in 1973. She was taken onto the sub-committees for the Demonstration Class and Weekend and Day Schools, where her organisational skills were put to good use. She represented London Branch on the Festival of Scotland in London—the group which was responsible for the Richmond Gathering.

Those with long memories will recall the May event with pipers, dancers and Scottish athletes held at the London Scottish Rugby Ground.

When Stella and Howard Booth moved north to the Lake District, Jenny seemed the right person to take on the mantle of the Open Air Garden Dance. She became the unlucky person who had to make the annual decision—is it raining at Polesden Lacey? What a difficulty when the English weather can vary hourly, and the Band are wanting to know where they should set up their equipment. No doubt Jenny and Jim are considering the options for 14/7/01 even as I write this! [Unfortunately, yes; see page 11. Ed.]

From 1977, Jenny was convener for many of the Branch Day Schools, handling bookings of venues, teachers and musicians, ably assisted by other committee members who between them ensured that the events ran smoothly.

All this time, she was dancing with the Demonstration Class, taking her Teaching Certificate, attending Day and Weekend Schools and dances, as well as making her annual trip to St. Andrews Summer School. Her expertise in

Ladies' Step Dancing means that she is in demand there as well as at home for classes, and she has been able to tutor Certificated Teachers in the delights and pitfalls of the "New Book" on several occasions.

Although Jenny is retiring from the Committee after almost 30 years, she has not retired from the dancing scene. She is in demand as a teacher for Day and Weekend Schools in many areas, and her precise and direct style of teaching will hopefully be available for years to come. As a Vice-President, she will also be able to be "on duty" at branch events. She has a good many interests to fill her time, not all connected with Scottish Dancing. Apart from frequent trips to Scotland, there are games of golf, and dancing with the Pennyroyal Clog Dancers. Just imagine the surprise when a promised step dance for a ceilidh item turned out to be not the gentle soft shoe elegance of the expected solo, but an item delivered in her usual confident manner—but wearing clogs!

Our grateful thanks for all your efforts over the years.

Rita Marlow

Peter Knight: Although I was born and bred in



Kent, my Great Grandmother (Emily Duncan) came from Aberdeen. I went to a school in Hemel Hempstead where ballroom dancing was part of the curriculum—this included the Gay Gordons, Dashing White Sergeant and the Eightsome Reel. Although my schooling was in England, I had one summer term at a primary school in Braemar in

1946, but do not recall any dancing! At my next school, I joined the Reel Club and learned a few more dances. In the winter holidays a local woman had classes for a few friends.

In 1958 I worked on a large motor yacht, going out to Izmir in Turkey and then Naples. On the way out, one of our ports of calls was Malta. One night in a bar with some fellow crew members, an accordionist struck up the Gay Gordons; I did a few steps to much applause, and was given a bottle of whisky by a burly sailor—luckily I had some friends with me! In Izmir I danced occasionally with the small British community; eight service families with NATO, a few teachers on contract, and two tobacco buyers.

I had a gap from dancing until the early seventies, when a Reel Club started up in Oxted, Surrey. I progressed through the club to be on the committee; as this included helping to run the evenings, I went to "Summer Tuesdays" to learn new dances. I also joined the local (Tunbridge Wells) branch of the RSCDS and took my Teacher's Certificate in 1982 in London with Mary Stoker.

I started the Little Ship Club Group in 1972, another in Blackheath which later moved to Dulwich in 1983, and in about 1985 I was asked to teach at the Hurlingham Club. These still keep me busy.

I represented Tunbridge Wells Branch and then Vancouver on the Executive for about 10 years, serving on the Publications and Research Committee for 6 years. It was whilst on this Committee that I suggested and then took on what was to become the Harper Collins Pocket Reference Scottish Country Dancing Book.

Peter Knight

[Congratulations on your imminent award of the Scroll of Honour at the Society's AGM at Perth on Saturday 3rd November. Ed.]

“THE REEL” GOES CUCKOO!
CELEBRATE “THE REEL’S” 51ST YEAR AT THE KUCKUCKSNEST,
SCHLÜCHTERN-VOLLMERZ, GERMANY, 18th TO 25th AUGUST 2002

INSPIRED by feedback to the article on page 4 of issue 235, “The Reel” is collaborating with Carola Tress to offer a week’s holiday at the Kuckucksnest, encompassing dancing and local German culture. Dancers should have a good knowledge of basic steps and formations as it is hoped that our teacher, Ken Martlew (Hemel Hempstead), will stretch us to the full! Our musicians will be Sue Bollans (Munich), Rik De Vroome (Eindhoven), Marijcke Visscher (Amsterdam), and Ken when not teaching.

The package includes three full day trips to Fulda (with its Baroque palaces, towers, cathedral and churches), Frankfurt (with its old town, cathedral, churches and museums) and Steinau (where the Brothers Grimm grew up and with its marionette theatre and old buildings), and utilises public transport where possible. These will alternate with three days of morning classes and afternoon local excursions on foot to Ramholz, Burg Brandenstein and the ruins of Steckelsburg Castle. There will be social dancing in the evenings.

The week starts with dinner on Sunday 18th August. Those arriving by public transport should aim to arrive at Schlüchtern railway station in time for the 16.35* bus to Vollmerz. You will be met and helped at the station. Connecting trains arrive from the Fulda and Frankfurt directions. The connection from Frankfurt Airport currently leaves at 14.48*.

The week ends after a late breakfast on 25th August. For those departing by public transport, special transport (at extra cost) will be arranged back to Schlüchtern station for train departures circa 11.30 in both the Fulda and Frankfurt directions. At Frankfurt, connections are available to the Airport (arriving at 12.57*) and to London Waterloo (arriving 20.39*). (NB. *All the above transport times are to be confirmed in 2002.)

Numbers are limited. Depending on how participants are arranged to share the accommo-

modation, there will only be up to 30 places! So why not get a little group together? Accommodation is in up to four-bedded basic rooms. The meals are wholesome and mainly vegetarian. We also hope to enhance the numbers at our dances with local dancers.

The maximum package cost is expected to be: 398 Euros per person in twin-bedded rooms (about £239), 358 Euros per person in 3-4 bedded rooms (about £215) These prices will cover everything from dinner Sunday 18th until breakfast Sunday 25th EXCEPT FOR lunch drinks during the full day excursions, and bottled drinks at the Kuckucksnest.

You will be responsible for your travel costs/ from the Kuckucksnest at the start and end.

Planning a year in advance, perhaps certain aspects (including the price) may change but we trust everything will be as detailed here.

To register interest, please complete the form below (a photocopy will be fine if you do not want to cut the page) and send it to me. A stamped s.a.e, or postage reply coupon from abroad, if possible, would be appreciated. If applying on behalf of a number of people then (in case there are personal differences), please complete one copy per person.

If room is available at the time of your application, I shall reserve it and invite you to either send a £90 deposit to me, or transfer 150 Euros to Carola Tress’s German bank account, as confirmation within 3 weeks. Deposits less 20% will be refunded if you cancel before 18/5/02. Thereafter, refunds will only be available if your place can be filled. (1 Euro is roughly 60p.)

Do sample the homely charm and friendliness of the Kuckucksnest!
Jim Cook

“THE REEL” GOES CUCKOO! Sunday 18th to Sunday 25th August 2002

APPLICATION FORM — Send to Jim Cook, 59 Larkfield Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2PG, UK.

1. I wish to register interest in this event. My contact details are:

NAME:ADDRESS:

PHONE NO: EMAIL:

2. Please indicate your preferences with regard to accommodation.

CHOICE A: A place in a twin-bedded room costing 398 Euros.

CHOICE B: A place in a three-bedded room costing 358 Euros.

CHOICE C: A place in a four-bedded room costing 358 Euros.

My first/second/third choices (in order) are CHOICES

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I would like to share with (If you do not express a preference then places will be allocated sensibly.)

3. Please specify (up to 3) dances which you would like to be considered for the evening dance programmes. (If you are proposing an “unusual” dance not contained in a commonly available book, please forward a copy of the full instructions.)

4. This only applies if you are applying on behalf of more than one person. (Please complete one copy of this form for each member of the group in case there are personal differences within the group) . To minimise administration, please may all correspondence for the group be sent to you? (YES/NO)

I understand that the details given in issue 237 of “The Reel”, a year in advance, may be subject to alteration if unexpected circumstances arise. This may possibly affect the final price although 2002 prices have been allowed for throughout.

New recordings

The Bobby Brown Collection - Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent (BRG021CD)

The Island Fling, Dalkeith's Strathspey, The Happy Meeting, The Birks of Abergeldie, Haste To The Wedding, Mary Hamilton, The Baldovan Reel, The Northern Meeting, The Irish Rover, The Maid of the Mill, Sir James Baird's Strathspey, Wedderburn's Reel, Bothkennar, The Sutters of Selkirk, The Village Reel, The Hunting Horn, The Twa Meenit Reel, Tarry A While, The Duchess of Atholl's Slipper, Falconer Hall, Glasgow Country Dance, Dumbarton's Drums, There's Nae Luck About The Hoose, The Scots Bonnet, Bobby Brown's Canadian Breakdown.

Memories of Fife, Dances Devised by Mary Brandon - Muriel Johnstone's S.C.D. Band (SICD01)

Balgeddie Reel, Bull Stane, Cellandyke, Ceres Games, Leslie House, Mamie's Jig, Lundin Links Strathspey, Murray's Jig, Pittenweem, Rodgers' Five-o Reel, Willie's Girl, Wedding in St. Monans,

BOBBY Brown's collection is on 2 CDs and is a re-issue of 3 LPs first issued some 20 years ago. When reviewing one of the LPs back in 1980 I said that it was a pity the band did not have a fiddle. As I listen again to the CDs which have a goodly selection of tunes by Marshall and Scott Skinner my view has not changed. The Strathspeys are thus a bit on the dreary side. The jigs and reels are nice and lively and, perhaps, a tad faster than current vogue dictates. (I am still waiting for someone to tell me why we now dance slower than we did some 20 - 30 years ago!)

A new recording by Muriel Johnstone's Band is always a delight and I believe there is another on the way. This one is for a selection of Mary Brandon's dances with previously unrecorded tunes by Mary, her brother Murray and by Muriel. Instructions for four of the dances not included in the book "Memories of Fife" are in the CD booklet. For this recording, accordion is in the capable hands of Jim Lindsay who plays 1st and 2nd. It is hardly necessary to say that Muriel's "dancing fingers" are as good as ever and Keith Smith gives that bit of extra oomph which only a fiddler can. Gordon Smith's drumming is as always steady as a rock. However, several tracks are played by just Muriel and Keith. I have not heard them yet but I know that Muriel's "Dancing Fingers", Vols 1 to 3 are now available on CD. Vol 1 has sets of tunes, airs and marches. Vol 2 is for the Allanton Collection of dances and Vol 3 for the Whiteadder Collection.

We look forward to hearing Keith Smith and Hoogie playing for the Ceilidh Dance on 24th November. Meanwhile have a taster and listen to their latest CD (KSCD007) with the intriguing title "Just for the Halibut". Rumour has it that it was chosen because accordionist Dougie Hunter works for a fish farm/factory but other thoughts might come to mind! Don't ask why K.B. Smith has composed a tune called "I'm too sexy for my fiddle". In their latest listing Highlander Music describe Hoogie as "a folk/ceilidh band in the contemporary style ... stomping jigs, thrilling reels and sad airs." Thanks William and Mairi; saves me thinking up a few words. It is great listening music; but just a wee health warning. The jigs and reels are not suited for country dancing.

Another CD of Scottish music in contemporary style is the debut album of "Kilter", titled "Gie it Caldie" (HBCD101). Kilter are Ross and Evan Gardiner (accordion and piano), Fiona Leggat (fiddle) and Brett-Hogan (percussion). To quote from the liner notes: "a fine balance of celtic melodies laced with multi-cultural rhythms". Although they say celtic, most of the tunes are Scottish and many will be familiar to country dancers. Although

Ross plays accordion on most tracks I am particularly attracted to his piano playing on a couple of waltz tracks. An excellent debut and we are promised more.

The very mention of a new recording by fiddler Alasdair Fraser will make his many fans leap for joy. Little need be said because all of Alasdair's albums are of the highest quality. On the legacy of the Scottish Fiddle Vol 1 (CUL118D) he is accompanied on piano by his friend and kindred spirit Paul Machlis whom he first met in California in 1983.

Alasdair claims that "this is the music dearest to my heart. My own passionate involvement in the fiddle reflects a family legacy". He mentions the encouragement given by his grandfather and his parents. We have the music of some of the all-time greats including the Gows, Marshall, Simor Fraser and Scott-Skinner. The liner notes give biographical details of all the composers and a few words about most of the tunes. In the last edition of "The Reel" I applauded, with a few superlatives, several excellent fiddlers. I now stick my neck out and say that Alasdair has the edge on all of them. Having said that I have a CD Northlins (IRCD027) which has been out for a few years but not previously mentioned by me. It is by Iain Fraser on fiddle and Freeland Barbour on accordion and keyboards. Beautiful music including some lovely airs composed by Freeland. Perhaps Alasdair is only marginally ahead of his brother Iain.

Let us finish with something quite different. Scottish Sounds for Flute (SSAA003) by Andrew Allen from Callander with keyboard accompaniment by Robert Gillman. Unusual in this era but the flute was very much to the fore in Scotland in the days of the fiddle players of the 18th and 19th centuries. When I saw this CD I hesitated, but I am now very glad that I finally decided to buy it. Andrew lives in the town where I went to school so maybe "I kent his faither". There are some 25 tunes including favourites such as Afton Water, Dark Island, Uist Tramping Song, Wee Cooper of Fife, Annie Laurie and Road to the Isles.

John Laurie

THE END OF AN ERA

**SIR JIMMY SHAND DIED ON 22nd
DECEMBER 2000 AT THE AGE OF 92.**

ONE striking point in David Phillip's excellent biography of Sir Jimmy Shand, is that, during the great man's lifetime, scarcely a year went by without some occurrence of great moment. Bearing his name are several pubs, a railway engine and at least one racehorse.

For services to Scottish Culture, in 1962 he was awarded the MBE, in 1984, the University of Dundee conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts, and in 1999 he was knighted.

From 1933 until 1945, when he formed his

Scottish Dance Band immediately after the war, Jimmy made several early recordings for Regal-Zonophone and Beltona. These were mostly solo performances which many folkdance enthusiasts and critics believe to be his most creative, individual, interesting and musically productive pieces! These purists consider that his unique, original style of playing was stifled by his later habit of playing mainly for Scottish Country Dances of a set length.

Nevertheless, it was his Dance Band which earned him the accolades, winning a Carl Allan Award in the early sixties for being the Best Old-Time Dance Band in the UK, and his special contribution to Britain's Entertainment Industry was marked with the award of a BASCA GOLD BADGE in 1996. A different tribute came more recently when the Rolling Stones' drummer, Charlie Watts, revealed to Q MUSIC MAGAZINE his fondness for Jimmy's album "Scottish Country Dances". Some years earlier, the Rock/Folk musician and singer/songwriter, Richard Thompson, admitted that he had composed the song, "Don't Step on my Jimmy Shands" in his honour, and the late northern comedian Les Dawson paid his own tribute in a joke containing Jimmy's name in the punch line.

My personal memories of the man go back to the late 1940s and '50s when, after hearing his records frequently on Radio Eireann, I began collecting the 10 inch 78 rpm shellac records by EMI Parlophone in the series "Scottish Country Dances in Strict Tempo". These were extremely popular at that time, each selling in excess of 50,000 copies. It was the 1955 hit single "The Bluebell Polka", produced under the influence of George Martin, which introduced Jimmy to a wider audience. I believe that the disc eventually sold well over a million copies. In the mid 1980s Shand even made his mark on the Album Charts with the L.P. "Fifty Years on with Jimmy Shand"—a very significant and appropriate title since, for over half a century, Jimmy's name had been inextricably linked with the best of Scottish Dance music. In the 1960s, no New Year's Eve Party was considered complete without Shand's Jigs, Reels, Polkas and Waltzes in the setting of the BBC Television's popular Hogmanay programmes and the White Heather Club Show which featured the late Andy Stewart as host.

At about that time, Mary and I danced to the Jimmy Shand Band at the now demolished Coronation Ballroom in the Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, when Jimmy came to play for the Manchester Caledonian Society Annual Ball every spring. In the late 1960s, we saw him twice when he toured the Music-hall circuit with comedian Dick Emery.

In 1988, a second biography was written by Ian Cameron, published by the Scottish Cultural Press in Edinburgh. Few artistes have their biographies published in their own lifetime.

Today there are many excellent SCD bands in Scotland and around the world. All owe a great deal to Jimmy. His influence stretches well beyond the Scottish Borders geographically and into all aspects of folk music generally. Since Jimmy was a pioneer in his own field, it is unlikely we shall see his like again.

I end by quoting from a paragraph at the end of an article that appeared in the "Accordion Times" in January 1986:

"Few men, if any, have done so MUCH for so MANY and so QUIETLY, in this funny old Accordion and Scottish Dancing World of ours, and, although we may disagree over many things, our respect for this man will always unite us."

Bill Derry

[A big thankyou to the Carswellian, the SCD Magazine for SW England, for allowing this article to be reproduced. Ed.]

BRANCH DANCES

London Reel

Devised by Hugh Foss and first appeared in issue 100 of "The Reel" in December 1967. Copyright.

Bars 8x32
Reel

- 1-4 1C cross to below 2nd place and cast off into 3rd place, opposite sides (2C and 3C move up on 3-4).
- 5-8 2C do the same (3C & 1C move up on 7-8)
- 9-16 Reels of three on the sides; to begin, 3C cross over to 2nd place opposite sides, 1C dance up and out, 2C up and in. At the end of the reels all will be on the "wrong" sides in order 3,1,2.
- 17-20 1C, continuing, dance up outside top place and cross back down to own sides, 2nd place.
- 21-24 1C & 2C dance half a double figure of eight: to begin, 1C dance down and out, 2C cross up. Women have precedence in crossing.
- 25-28 Half reels of three on the sides: to begin, 3C cross back down to 2nd place own sides, 1C dance up and out, 2C up and in. On 27-28 1C cross back down and start turning each other by the left hand.
- 29-32 1C continue turning by the left hand moving down the dance and making 1½ turns in all, and cast up around 3C on

own sides into 2nd place.

Repeat having passed a couple

The Fruit Cake

Devised by John Drewry and first appeared in issue 230 of "The Reel" in December 1999. (It is now included in John's new book The Greenburn Book Volume III). Copyright.

Bars 8x32 Jig

- 1-4 1C and 2W dance right hands across; at the end, 1W stays facing out. 2M and 3C dance right hands across; at the end 3M stays facing out.
- 5-8 1W dances down behind 2W and then crosses to 3rd place on the men's side. 1M follows her to finish in third place on the women's side. 3M dances up behind 2M and then crosses to 1st place on the women's side. 3W follows him to finish in 1st place on the men's side.
- 9-12 3C and 2M dance left hands across; at the end 3W stays facing out. 2W and 1C dance left hands across; at the end 1M stays facing out.
- 13-16 3W dances down behind 2M and then crosses to her original place. 3M follows her to finish in his original place. 1M dances up behind 2W and then crosses to his original place, where he stays facing out. 1W follows him to finish in her original place.
- 17-20 1M and 2M, 1W and 2W, turn with the left hand 1½ times to change places.
- 21-24 1M and 3M, 1W and 3W turn with the right hand once round.
- 25-32 2C, 1C, 3C dance six hands round and back.

Repeat, having passed a couple.

Note: When 1st couple are repeating the dance, during bars 21-24, 1st and original 4th couples can turn with the right hand one and a half times, before dancing the circle. This is a convenient

RSCDS EASTER SCHOOL

Stirling Youth Hostel
3rd - 7th April 2002

This event is organised by the Youth Committee and is aimed at 18-30 year olds. Details from the RSCDS, 12 Coates Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7AF. Tel: 0131 225 3854, email: info@rscdshq.freemove.co.uk.

CLASSES

Join a class, make new friends, meet old friends, improve your dancing and enjoy yourself.

Class	Day	Time	Location	Teacher/Musician
ELEMENTARY	Weds	6.30 – 8.00	Malborough School, Sloane Av. SW3	Gaynor Curtis/Jean Harrison
POPULAR S C DANCES	Weds	8.15 – 9.45	Malborough School, Sloane Av. SW3	Peter Knight
ADVANCED	Weds	7.30 – 9.30	St. Barnabas' & St. Phillip's School, Pembroke Mews, W8	Ann Dix/ Angela Young
DEMONSTRATION	Tues	7.15 – 9.15	For details contact David Hall, 020 8390 7829	David Hall/ Sandra Smith
GENERAL (Central)	Weds	2.30 – 4.30	St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont St. SW1	Clare Cox
GENERAL (Greenwich)	Thurs	7.30 – 9.30	Halstow School, Kemsing Road, SE10	Rachel Wilton/ Catherine Lowe

The GENERAL (Central) class starts 5th September 2001. For all other classes, the autumn term commences in the week beginning 24th September 2001. The half term break is in the week beginning 22nd October 2001. The term ends in the week beginning 3rd

CLASSES

WELCOME to a new season. Gaynor Curtis will be teaching the Elementary Class at Marlborough School now that Owen Meyer has retired. Immediately following that is a new class entitled 'Popular Scottish Country Dances' which will be launched by Peter Knight. Clare Cox has agreed to do a second year with the Wednesday afternoon class at Pont Street. Highland and Ladies' Step Dancing classes will be offered again; the annual Teachers' Workshop will take place in September, and the Day School has a new structure. Our teachers and musicians are poised for another year so take advantage of these opportunities to make new friends, improve your dancing and enjoy yourself!

The Classes Sub-Committee

LADIES' STEP DANCING CLASS

Saturday 17th November 2001

11.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 2.00 - 3.30 p.m.
Trinity Church Hall, Hill Road, Sutton, Surrey.

Teacher: **Jenny Greene**
Musician: **Marion Walsh**

Further details from Jenny Greene,
Tel: 020 8642 5008.

TEACHERS' WORKSHOP

Sunday 16th September 2001

10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, NW1

Tutor: **Ian Hall**
Musician: **Heulwen Hall**

This workshop will include: technique by stealth, class management, music for teachers, Highland steps for country dancers, and is open to anyone who teaches or who has a preliminary certificate.

For an application form send a stamped s.a.e. to Rachel Wilton, 31 Kemsing Road, London SE10 0LL, Tel: 020 8858 7729; email: wiltonrachel@hotmail.com.

HIGHLAND CLASSES

Thursdays 11th October, 8th November,

6th December 2001, 7.00—9.00 p.m.

NOTE NEW VENUE:

Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2

Teacher: **David Hall**
Musician: **Judith Smith**

£5.00 per class or £12 for all three classes.
Further details: David Hall, Tel: 020 8390 7829 or email hallscdb@aol.com.

CERTIFICATE CLASS

THE BRANCH is considering organising a class for the Preliminary and Full RSCDS teaching certificates in 2001/2, probably on Sunday afternoons in South East London. Please contact Rachel Wilton on 020 8858 7729 or by email: wiltonrachel@hotmail.com if you are interested.

SUNDAY TECHNIQUE CLASSES

(DANCING PROFICIENCY)

IF YOU are interested in the Sunday Technique Classes, or in working towards the RSCDS Dancing Proficiency Test, please contact Rachel Wilton, Tel: 020 8858 7729 or email:

RSCDS London Branch Day School

Saturday 13th October 2001

Sutton High School, Cheam Road, Sutton, Surrey. Registration from 10.00 a.m.

In a break from tradition, classes this year will be themed, encouraging the enjoyment of Scottish Country Dancing through the understanding of movement and interaction. Classes will be divided as follows:

Morning: 10.30 - 12.30

"Rhythm, Movement and Steps"

Teacher: **David Hall** Musician: **Gillian Cummins**

The emphasis of this class will be fundamentals of dancing with and to the stimulus of the music. This class will be suitable for a wide range of abilities.

Or: "Steps, Accuracy and Beyond"

Teacher: **Margo Priestley** Musician: **James Gray**

The aim of this class is to add polish to the performance of Scottish Country Dance Steps. Likely to appeal to the more advanced dancer, it will cover changes of tempo, steps and other details.

Afternoon: 14.00 - 16.00

"Formations: Phrasing, Performance and Projection"

Teacher: **David Hall** Musician: **James Gray**

This class will break down and analyse in depth a number of formations used within dances. A good working knowledge of standard formations will be assumed.

Or: "Dancing: Achieving Fluency"

Teacher: **Margo Priestley** Musician: **Gillian Cummins**

Suitable once more for a wide range of ability, the aim of this class is to improve fluency of dancing and thereby improve the social interaction in the dance.

Musician's Workshop

Led by **Ian Muir of Prestwick**, this will take place in both the morning and afternoon sessions. It will have a largely practical emphasis and is aimed principally at pianists, violinists and accordionists who have a good general knowledge of their instrument, but would like to develop more experience in playing music from the Scottish tradition. Please bring your instrument and a music stand. For more details and application form contact:

Caroline Sloan, 16 Broomfield Park, Westcott, Surrey RH4 5TU.

Tel: 01306 885331. Email: cazsloan@aol.com

Lunch: 12.30 - 14.00

Unfortunately the school cannot provide a cooked lunch this year. However, there are facilities inside and outside the school for people who wish to bring packed lunches. Alternatively, pubs, cafes and restaurants can be found within 15 minutes walk from the school.

Optional Extras: 17.30 - 18.30

After tea, served from 16.00, free time is available during which a Music Session, Extra Class and a Video Session will be arranged.

Evening Ceilidh: 18.30 - 21.30

This will follow the Day School and we anticipate much entertainment and fun. Dancing will be to the music of **David Hall and his Band**. Tickets are available in advance and on the door.

APPLICATION

Obtain application forms, containing further details, from Rachel Wilton, 31 Kemsing Road, London SE10 0LL, enclosing a stamped s.a.e. (Tel: 020 8858 7729; Email: c). Application forms are also

ROUND AND ABOUT

(NOT) POLESDEN LACEY

Saturday 14th July 2001

P.S. IT'S A BOY!

MORNING rain again caused the open air dance at Polesden Lacey to be transferred to the splendid sports hall of the nearby Howard of Effingham School. Afternoon thunder and more rain pressed home the point.

This was Jenny Greene's last time as organiser, having just stepped down from the Branch Committee. The occasion was marked by a presentation. Well done and thank you, Jenny.

Picnics took place in a nearby hall and 168 people enjoyed dancing to the Craigellachie Band albeit without their drummer Graham Hamilton. A notice on the wall behind the band proclaiming "It's A Boy" hinted at the reason: Caroline Hamilton had given birth to James Edward at 4.30 a.m. that morning—a complicated way of avoiding a wet afternoon! Congratulations to the Hamiltons on behalf of our readers.

Jim Cook

LONDON SQUARES DAY

Sunday 10th June 2001

THE gates of over 60 of London's most beautiful private gardens were unlocked to the public, many squares hosting special entertainments, two in particular hosting Scottish Country Dancing:

In the morning, for the second year, a group danced in Edwardes Square, SW7. Peter Knight MC'd and fun was had asking visitors "Won't you join the dance?" in spite of the rain. As well as dancing, there was a 3-acre garden to view, with Pimms and teas on sale.

In the afternoon, the London Branch descended on Queens Gate Gardens, SW8 waiting for breaks in the rain to dance. Judy Berry MC'd, whilst David Hall provided the music, and simple dances were enjoyed by visitors from as far away as France and Russia,

as well as Demonstration Team displays.

Davinia Miln and Jim Cook

DANCING DOWN THE DANUBE

[Or: "If this is Friday, it must be Bratislava". Ed.]

FOR many dancers, from many corners of the world, mention of 2001 will bring back glowing memories of two beautiful cities on the Danube, and the welcome they received there. In May, Vienna and Budapest Scottish Dance Clubs combined to provide back-to-back Weekend Schools, with an extensive holiday programme before, between and after the Schools. The logistics of transporting, housing, feeding and watering large numbers of dancers—180 took the floor in Vienna and 130 in Budapest—for two whole weeks, from Vienna to Salzburg, back to Vienna, on to Budapest, and back to Vienna again, were absolutely mind-boggling. Susi Mayr and Gabor Turi and their respective committees are to be congratulated on as near faultless organisation as these things can ever be. In among a host of guided tours there were two formal Balls, four Dances, 20 Classes (including one in 'Viennese Waltz'), a Ceilidh and many other events culminating in the most perfect river cruise through moonlit, floodlit Budapest, to the strains of the local band Dagda, that most participants are likely to experience. The teachers in Vienna were Ron Wallace and Marjorie McLaughlin, both from California, while in Budapest Christine Mair was equally successful. She was accompanied by her husband, the Society Chairman, who was both MC for the final Ball and took part in a specially arranged SCD recreation of Playford's 1690 English Country Dance, "The Siege of Buda", on the hill where the original siege took place in 1686. Muriel Johnstone and Keith Smith accompanied the dancers every step of the way, reaching new heights of inspiration. I fear the fortnight may have been almost too successful. SCD may forever be divided into those who were there, and those who were not! And the organisers may be expected to do it over and

OBITUARY

Cynthia Grant

DANCERS will be saddened to hear of the death of Cynthia Grant. Cynthia started dancing with her husband Malcolm at Goldsmith College after many fishing trips to Scotland where they attended ceilidhs but could not join in. Scottish dancing was only one of Cynthia's many interests—horticulture, botanical painting, weaving, embroidery, jewellery making, theatre, music—she was an expert tier of fishing flies, passed exams in line dancing—these were only some of her activities. Her quiet, smiling interest and enthusiasm will be missed by the Branch, the Argyll SD Group and dancers everywhere.

Rachel Wilton

CONGRATULATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS to London Branch members George Ferrier and Ian Stewart on passing their Preliminary Test, and to Kathryn Price and Emma Stewart on passing their Teacher's Certificate, after the recent course organised by the RSCDS Berks/Hants/Surrey Border Branch.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you, Owen

Chiswick

Dear Jim,

I was delighted to read the well deserved recognition of Owen Meyer's service to the Branch in "The Reel" and would like to add a postscript.

During my own term in the Chair, we had appointed a new teacher for the Dem class. As time drew on, it became uncomfortably apparent that our appointee's health would not permit him to take up the post.

At very short notice Owen agreed to take on the challenge—as an extension to all his other teaching experience for the Branch—and we left the class in his safe hands for two years.

I, personally, will always be grateful to him for helping us out at a very difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Cockett

On the new topic of counting out sets

High Wycombe

Dear Jim,

Regarding the various methods of counting out the sets at the start of each dance, there appear to be three main methods. The one that I find most helpful is when the "counter" (usually the man in first place) walks down between the lines of ladies and gentlemen, making it quite clear to each and every person which couple they are. As well as diplomatically ensuring that people are in line, it also means that if one member of a couple is temporarily absent, the counter can still count a "couple", and at least one member of each couple knows their number. It also means that a lady does not have to step into her gentleman's position, a practice rather insulting to the lady. I remember Anna Holden mentioning this method some years ago at St. Andrews Summer School.

The two other methods, wherein the counter only counts on the man's side, or counts behind the men's line, I find often leads to people not knowing their number, or to couples not being counted. It is also rather an insult to the ladies.

Please can I appeal to people to adopt (if they do not already) the clearest counting method.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Wilson

Regarding Wilson Nicol's article on the Poussette in the last issue

Staines, Middlesex

Dear Jim,

Regarding starting the reel/jig poussette on the left foot, this topic is like a whale that periodically rises to the surface, spouts and sinks. I believe that the standard explanation for the start-on-the-left (SOL) rule is based on a false analogy. When you dance the waltz-round or polka-round figure, it is natural for the man to SOL because that is the way he is going. But you must not turn too soon in the poussette—you

must go straight forwards or backwards.

The real problem is that if you SOL, then on bars 2, 4 and 6 you must step to the left on the right foot. Hardly anybody can do this. Most men who SOL merely pivot on the spot, leaving their partner to do all the work. If anybody disagrees, please will you try the experiment of dancing a poussette with *both* partners SOL!

Ladies: if ever you find yourself thinking that dancing with Mr X is normally delightful, but somehow the poussette is awfully clumsy; well, now you know why.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Damerell
Reading, Berkshire

Dear Jim

At the commencement of the SCDS (later the RSCDS) the official Poussette was a push-pull version of Waltzing or Polkaing round with no detail, see the 1924 edition of Book 1. By the 1930 edition of Book 4 a rectangular figure with 4 quarter turns, each taking 2 bars of music, was the official means of Poussetting. By the 1932 edition of Book 1 this was superseded by the modern Poussette although an intermediate version with 4 half turns was allowed.

Could it be that the 1925 Duthie version referred to by Wilson was the 4 quarter turn figure and not the modern version? As it took the SCDS a further 9 years to introduce the modern version of the figure this seems to me to be more likely. Maybe Wilson can cast some light on this possibility.

On the subject of feet the 4 quarter turn version required the Man to start with the Left foot, whereas the 1932 description of the modern version does not mention feet. Until I read the 'Complete Guide to Scottish Country Dancing' I had not heard of, nor have I ever seen danced, the 'Border Poussette'.

As I said in my letter, in the last issue, when I started dancing in 1947 many groups in my area were still doing the 4 quarter turn Poussette and I wondered if there was any interest in the detail. As in the modern figure all rotations are clockwise and also, as now, the dancers commence in the centre of the dance.

The figure commences with a quarter turn with the 1st Man and 2nd Lady acting as the swivel points. This quarter turn drifts to the sides of the dance, the 1st couple, as now, to the Men's side and the 2nd to the Ladies side. All then set. The next quarter turn takes the 1st Man and 2nd Lady into the centre, back to back, their partners acting as the swivel points. All then set. Again with the 1st Lady and the 2nd Man acting as the swivels the couples turn back to the side lines and set. With the 1st Man and 2nd Lady now acting as the swivel points the next turn drifts back into the centre where the dancers again set.

The next figure is commenced with the 2nd and 1st couples dancing from a central position.

As an aside, in my early days it became common to change feet at a more convenient place than at the start of the 'Strathspey Poussette'. For example, immediately after setting to corners in 'Peggy's Love' and nowadays at the start of the reels across in 'The Gentleman'.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

Regarding the size of print in "The Reel" ...

Dingwall, Ross-shire

Dear Jim,

As one of the older regular readers of "The Reel" I would like to comment on Elizabeth Bennett's letter in the last issue.

Looking back, I find that the size of print and general layout used in "The Reel" have not changed since September 1951 (issue no. 1). In December 1957 (issue 40) the blue ink used in earlier numbers was changed to black. There can have been little complaint over 50 years when no other changes have been made. I find the style and quality excellent. I know of other people well past their 3-score years and 10 who had no difficulties reading "The Reel". Comparing the print with that in the RSCDS Bulletin which arrived with issue No. 236 I find "The Reel" is easier to read although the Bulletin has larger print. It is a style I do not like. The print is faint and uses blue ink in contrast to the strong black print used in "The Reel".

Many people need glasses for reading before the age of 45. I have worn them since I was at school. Today, large lenses, particularly designed for people who need to magnify print for reading, are on the market. These would be cheaper than a photocopier.

Yours sincerely,

Ellen I Garvie

[This is a difficult subject. Although, from feedback received, there is much sympathy with those finding "The Reel", and indeed dictionaries and telephone directories with small print, difficult to read, there is a preference to including more content even

Yours in dancing

Douglas Dean

Further thoughts on the pre-booking of dances ...

Hampton Hill, Middlesex

Dear Jim,

Regarding pre-booking dancing partners, the etiquette for choosing a partner is a minefield which I enter with trepidation. Many is the time when the MC announces the next dance, I start to walk towards a lady to ask her to dance, only to see her take the floor with another lady. I expect most readers have seen occasions when the MC is calling for one or two more couples to complete the sets and the only dancers remaining are men, when there are many ladies on the gentlemen's side in the sets. It is for these reasons that I book some of my dances.

Many club balls are held in schools and the organizers put out tables round the edge of the hall. The result is that dancers remain in parties of six or eight around these tables and in many cases they partner each other in their group for the whole programme. A number of my friends have mentioned that at St. Columba's Hall, Pont Street, where there are no such tables, there is far more social mixing. I agree with Julian Mason that dancers should keep about half of the dances un-booked. At balls the social mixing could be helped along by the MC suggesting that for some named dances everyone seeks a partner at a different table.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard R. Bligh

The last word goes to George Bernard Shaw ...

Plumtree, Nottingham

Dear Jim,

Regarding comments on the burgeoning weight of material for "The Reel", I was put in mind of George Bernard Shaw who was wont to apologise for sending a letter, explaining that he hadn't been able to find the time to write a postcard.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Hastings