



# the reel

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## A MUSICAL JOURNEY

David Hall talks about music and his Band...

FEBRUARY TO MAY 2002

was a very talented young accordionist at the first of those Summer Schools!

Despite going away to University in Nottingham in 1986, we kept the Band together, and I had to purchase a rusty old car to make the journey across the Peak District for gigs. It was around this time that Stuart Duff moved to Chester from Glasgow and he has contributed much to the Band's success and continues to play regularly with me.

A chance meeting with John Laurie at a wedding in Belgium in 1988 led to a lasting friendship and many a happy evening sharing our interest in Scottish music. John has been a great supporter of the Band and sponsored our first recording, which we made in 1990. Freeland Barbour produced this recording and it was released on LP! In the same year we went on our first overseas holiday, organised by BT International Travel, to Majorca and that has since been followed by many excursions overseas. We have enjoyed playing at dances all over the world and sharing in several special occasions, making many new friends and learning new dances and tunes. The Tenth Anniversary of the New Zealand Branch in Auckland, a dance in Tokyo attended by over 1000 dancers and regular trips to play for the Madrid Caledonian Society's St Andrew's Ball are among the favourite recollections from our travels.

I came to London in 1993 and have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, both dancing and playing. On arrival, I was made welcome by a Scottish Dance Music community full of talent and variety. Soon after I arrived, Ian Muir, Bill Farr and the Forbes' brothers all invited me to join with them in gigs or informal evenings of music playing and this was a very nice way of getting involved with the 'London Scene'. A notable occasion for the Band was when Judith Smith was introduced to us, again the work of John Laurie. I am a great fan of having a fiddle in a Scottish Dance Band and, indeed, of the great heritage of Scottish fiddle music in general. Judith has enhanced our playing, contributed much to the camaraderie of our group and injected some of her background in Scottish music into the selections we play. Soon after Judith joined the Band, we were pleased to welcome Gillian Cummins as our regular pianist and she too has contributed enormously to all that we have done. The Band is much more than just an ensemble of musicians for all of us; my parents continue to play on some occasions and all seven of us are close friends. This has been particularly evident in the two Band holidays on Mull (1995) and



The Band pictured on the west coast of Scotland in July 1998

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING and Scottish Music have been a significant part of my life; I started Highland Dancing when I was four and took piano lessons not long after that. I have travelled widely, played and danced with so many interesting and friendly people from so many different places and learnt so much along the way. There have been several people who have been a major influence on the way things have progressed for me but none more so than my parents, Ian and Heulwen. They have played with my Band from its inception and virtually all my dancing prior to coming to London was in teams run by my father.

The musical journey has been rich and involved many very talented musicians, with whom I feel privileged to have been able to play. My first 'proper' engagement was for an RSCDS Manchester Branch Dance in May 1983. We had just purchased a second accordion so that Dad and I could play simultaneously and also a small amplifier. As well as my parents, Tom Mullen played the drums that evening and has been doing so ever since (Ian McRae was on fiddle and John Kennedy played the double bass in those early days as well). Indeed, Tom has also been piping for me to Highland Dance now for nearly thirty years! More local engagements were to follow and soon we were going as far afield as Leeds and North

Wales, at which point I think we really felt we had made it. Many a journey home across the Pennines from Leeds in the snow, fog and high winds at the dead of night are recalled with nostalgia to this day. Also worthy of note are the great evenings at St Chads Hall in Headingley where the Leeds Scottish Dance Club ran outstandingly popular and lively dances; at 7.30 on the dot there would be nearly ten sets itching to get started.

Getting the sets of music together is always one of the most time-consuming but hugely interesting aspects of running a Band. I have been extremely fortunate with the generosity of many other band leaders. My uncle, Tom Hall who led the Rattray Band for over forty years allowed me unrestricted access to his well-researched sets of music, without which the early years of playing with the Band would have been almost impossible. I have greatly enjoyed playing with him since living close to him in the South-East, and it is sad that he now only plays infrequently. Others who shared music, playing sessions and friendly banter about tunes in those early years included Bobby Crowe, Sandy Nixon, Jimmy Boal (Maple Leaf Band) and Douglas Muir (John Ellis Band). Indeed, I attended a number of Summer Schools in Stirling run by Douglas who taught me a great deal at those sessions—David Hume, who has since become well-known in Iain MacPhail's Band

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(Continued from page 1)

Skye (1999). All seven of us have shared a week of music and dancing with our family, friends and local dancers and musicians. Hamish Johnston in Tobermory made us most welcome as did the local dance groups in Skye. We had informal dances in the village halls and many a stramash in the chalets late into the night.

Musically, one is always looking to develop. There are always new tunes being written and while more of these are being published there is still the need to listen to broadcasts and keep in touch with fellow musicians to stay abreast of the latest good tunes. It is interesting to construct new sets and also revise some of the old favourites. Gillian and Judith have been of particular help in developing the arrangements of the music, injecting new ideas for sets and keeping me on my toes. The music of the bagpipe is something I am particular keen on and like to use in my selections. Having a piper like Tom Mullen in the Band is invaluable in obtaining tunes and in checking authenticity of the pipe music we play. Finally, of course no trip up to Scotland to visit my parents is complete without mulling over recent finds from our respective repertoires..

We have made three CDs in the last six years, and they have been both very challenging and enjoyable. It is really quite demanding to put one's musicianship to the test in the recording studio. We have been lucky to have worked with two very fine Scottish musicians in our ventures and have learnt much from them. David Cunningham Snr in Cupar, Fife produced two of our CDs (Sound of Feolin is still available on CD and Cassette) and more recently Keith Smith produced Ann Dix's latest album, Reel Friends 2. We have also had the pleasure of Keith joining us to play on a number of occasions too.

I have tried to mention many of those who have influenced me over the years. There are several very important people that I haven't mentioned by name, including families of the members, others who have played with the Band over the years and friends who have helped us, accommodated us and encouraged us in all sorts of ways. Playing in a Band and making music together, sharing many miles on the road and spending numerous evenings on stages all over the world is a way of life. The music moves on, as does the whole dance and music world and we look forward to many more years of playing together.

**David Hall**

## SIR JIMMY SHAND SCULPTURE PROJECT

**THE SOCIETY** has been informed that a Working Group has been set up to raise funds for a permanent memorial to Sir Jimmy Shand, who sadly died on 23rd December 2000. The Group's plan is to raise sufficient funds to commission a life-sized bronze sculpture of Sir Jimmy to be erected, hopefully, in Auchtermuchty. It is hoped that the commission would be awarded to David Annand, one of Scotland's best sculptors, who lives in Fife. The approximate cost would be £25,000.

The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, who was a close friend of Sir Jimmy, has agreed to be Patron of the Group, and is joined by Chairman Dr Sandy Tulloch, MB, ChB, DOMS (retired eye consultant), Secretary John Thomson (retired police superintendent), Assistant Secretary John McDonald (retired police inspector) and Treasurer Ian Collie, MA, MED, FSA(Scot) (retired director of education). The Shand family has given the Project their full approval.

Throughout his playing career, Sir Jimmy Shand made a tremendous contribution to Scottish Country Dancing, and his music is loved and appreciated by Scottish country dancers throughout the world. The Working Group would be delighted if members of the RSCDS wished to organize Project fund-raising events, or simply make donations to the Project.

Please send any donations to: John Thomson, 'Samairi Cottage', Moor Road, Ceres, Cupar, Fife KY15 5LR. Please do not send donations either to the Branch or to the Society's HQ.

## ALEX WESTWOOD FUND

**THE COMMITTEE** has decided to use part of the Fund to purchase, for the demonstration team, new swords, and white dresses for student ladies, and also three travel bursaries for young dancers attending the RSCDS 18-30 Easter School at Stirling.

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## HANG IN THERE, BOY!

**The experiences of a male Scottish Country Dancer (who, for obvious reasons, wishes to remain anonymous)**

1. *Experienced partner during Dalkeith's Strathspey:* "You are allowed to smile, you know!"

*Personal aside:* "I was smiling before the start of this dance".

2. *Teacher during Summer School:* "You are in danger of doing a two beat pas de basque, which is the worst kind of pas de basque anyone can ever do!"

*Personal aside:* "What a pity I never learnt to count up to three".

3. *Friend to my wife during a dance:* "I've never seen anyone as rigid as your husband while dancing!"

*Personal aside:* "She doesn't know I'm auditioning for the part of the Tin Man in the Wizard of Oz!"

4. *Experienced dancer, after collapse of set during Macleod's Fancy:* "This is the worst experience I've ever had during a dance!"

*Personal aside:* "Jings! You're lucky!"



## BRANCH MATTERS

**SPRING** is round the corner again (although, writing this in a cold January, it sometimes seems hard to believe) and what better way to drive away those winter blues than to get your dancing shoes on and dance! We have some excellent dances lined up for dancers of all ages and abilities. So come up to St Columba's!

Talking of excellent dances, we had an absolutely fantastic Christmas Dance with Craiggellachie. We had our best attendance for some time—over 165 people witnessed an evening of great music and food and it was just before the Christmas holidays started!

Plans are starting to be made for next season's events—open air dancing, day school, Branch dances, etc. Any member of the Committee would be grateful to hear of any ideas and suggestions for events we can run, or to improve existing events. Also if you have ideas and are not averse to a bit of hard work, then how about helping out on the Branch Committee? There are likely to be a couple of vacancies to be filled on next year's committee, so please do consider it seriously.

In preparation for the new season, a couple of changes on the Committee have already been made. Rosalind Zuridis has been co-opted onto the Committee to shadow Jim Cook as editor of the Reel, as she will be taking over from him from issue 241. Peter Knight has assumed the Convenorship of the dances sub-committee as this post falls vacant when I leave the committee. Thanks to both of them for taking on these responsibilities.

Looking further ahead, the RSCDS will be 80 in 2003 and the Southeast Branches are planning to celebrate by having another Ball in Watford, on Saturday 5th April with Sound Company playing. The one complaint we had from the last Watford Ball was about the food service, and we are planning improvements in this, designed to cut down the queuing time. Tickets will be available from autumn 2002 to members of participating Branches in the first instance, as they will be underwriting the event and then subsequently to others. Get the date in your diaries now—it will be an event not to be missed!

Simon Wales

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## RSCDS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

17th November 2001

**107 REPRESENTATIVES** and six elected members met to ratify decisions taken by the standing committees during the last six months, aware that next year changes to the management structure will have taken place.

The General Purposes Committee is already working hard on the planned introduction and election of a new management board to be put to the Council in May. On the morning of the next AGM in November, the present Executive Council will meet for the last time to ratify the minutes of the Standing Committees. Then the AGM will amend the Constitution to allow the new Management Board to be elected.

The Finance Committee has set up a working party to resolve the matter of the presentation of the accounts. They will ensure that the accounts are presented to give the members a clear picture of the Society's finances and comply with the new recommended practice. These audited accounts will be presented to an EGM after the next Council meeting on

May 11th. Branches with charitable status were reminded that SORP 2000 (i.e. Statement of Recommended Practice on the reporting of, and accounting for, charities) also applies to them in England or Scotland. For the first time since the 1980s the fee for affiliated groups is to be raised from £20 to £25, effective from July 2002. The Society is exploring the possibility of including affiliated groups in the same PPL (Phonographic Performance Ltd) agreement as the RSCDS.

The Examinations Committee reported on the success of the teaching skills courses and plan to hold another one in autumn 2002. Overseas examination tours are planned for 2002 and 2003 and further suggestions have been accepted for candidates; verbal feedback will be an option and the Result Form will be more comprehensive. The Dancing Proficiency test was discussed extensively. The proposed changes include introducing a graded result to replace pass/fail and dispensing with the unseen dances. Examinations have been working with Publications Research to produce a warm-up booklet.

The Publications and Research Committee has been working on this year's new book 42. Arrangements continue to re-record or transfer the Society's music to CD and consideration is being given to updating the Manual and the Formations index and producing sheet music for the Miscellany dances with no given tune. The committee suggests that the SE Branches' sponsorship will be used to transfer nine of the Leaflet dances to CD.

The Youth Committee's DANCE SCOTTISH schools pack is selling well, and the committee is working on a range of ways of marketing it; the Times Educational Supplement is reviewing the pack and ideas are being sought on a media launch. Plans for the Easter School in Stirling for 18-30yr. olds are complete; there are plans to introduce an RSCDS children's test. The suggestion of a family week at Summer School, where non-resident parents could attend classes, while their children enjoyed activity courses run by the University, is being explored and discussion is taking place about a worldwide event for youth to take place in 2003.

The Summer School Committee is building on the success of last year's initiatives, but is aware that the self assessment system still needs attention, particularly at the Advanced level. The Highland class will now be open to men and women; the Committee is looking at the Summer School timetable layout. Preparations for Winter School are complete and the Director has issued an open invitation to anyone in the area to "drop in" and meet the dancers on the afternoon of Sunday 24th February 2002. [See item on page 4. Ed.]

Any Other Business. The Chairman informed the Council of an allocation of 16 tickets to the Society for a Royal Garden Party at Holyrood House in May as part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. Branches are being asked for nominees.

A group in Fife is hoping to raise money to commission a statue of Sir Jimmy Shand; Branches are being informed. [See item on page 4. Ed.]

Minutes of these meetings are available on the table at Branch events for you to read. Please see me if you have questions or comments.

Rachel Wilton

## THE SCOTTISH CLANS ASSOCIATION OF LONDON

**103 YEARS** young and dancing as much as ever, the Clans held a Grand Dance on Saturday 10th November 2001 at St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street. The dance celebrated the Golden Wedding Anniversary of the Clans' Chief, Tom Symington and his lovely lady Maryan, him frae Tomintoul in the Highland Region and herself frae Wales.

With superb music by Ian Muir and the Craiggellachie Band, and a fine programme well directed by the jolliest of MCs, Ron Watson, the large crowd had an excellent evening.

Long may Tom and Maryan prosper in promoting the Clans. Mainly under the leadership of our Secretary, Moira Strutt, do come and join us dancing at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesdays upstairs in the newly refurbished room at St. Columba's for a convivial Caed Mila Failte (A Hundred Thousand Welcomes).

**Alasdair Shearer**

*[For more information about the Clans, please contact their Secretary, Moira Strutt, Tel: 020 8748 6711. Ed.]*

## OBITUARY

### George Swirles 1909 – 2001

**MANY** dancers will be sorry to hear of the recent death of George Swirles, a well known person to many London Branch members because he danced regularly at St. Columba's. He was born in Arbroath where he first danced at school. So, he was Scottish Country Dancing before the SCDS was formed in 1923!

George moved to London in the 1930s and when war loomed he joined the London Scottish Regiment. Later, he was commissioned in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and saw active service in France in 1944 where he was wounded.

In later years he joined the Ruislip Caledonian Society where his love of Scottish Country Dancing was rekindled, leading him to dance regularly at St. Columba's and other venues during the 1970s and '80s. He moved away from London to live in Wittering where he continued dancing well into his eighties. George's friends will remember that when his strength was failing due to age he would considerably step back from the circles in the jigs and reels so as "not to spoil the fun for the other dancers".

As well as being a familiar figure at Pont Street, George devised more than one hundred dances, dedicating many of them to his friends. He was also a prolific writer of light verse and wrote several very apposite poems about Scottish Country Dancing which he would recite at ceilidhs.

George was tall with a commanding presence and his authoritative voice could bring a dance class to an abrupt halt if he noticed an error made by a teacher. He was a mine of information on Scottish Country Dancing and gave his time freely to help and advise other dancers. He was proud of being Scottish and, in the words of Sir Kenneth Clarke, he was, like many Scots, "a mixture of reckless romanticism and hard-headed realism".

In spite of his great age George was active and had a clear mind until the final illness that took him.

He leaves a wife, two sons and grandchildren.

**Barrie Sheldon**

## RECENTLY DEvised DANCES

*Thank you Rosalind Kaye and Iain Boyd for sending me the following dances – Wivenhoe Waves and The Nut Loaf. My apologies for the delay in printing them due to the perennial problem of waiting for the right amount of space to arise at the right time. Ed.*

### WIVENHOE WAVES

This dance has been written for the Colchester U3A (University of the 3rd Age) Scottish Dance group which meets at Wivenhoe, an old fishing village near the town. The picturesque waterfront is a popular meeting place for both tourists and locals. The title "Wivenhoe Waves" is suggested by the water lapping on the shore creating little waves and eddies.

A four couple, 32 bar strathspey.

#### Bars

- 1- 4 1s take near hands, dance down the middle of the set, dividing at the bottom to cast up into 4th place. 2s, 3s and 4s move up on bars 3-4.
- 5- 8 2s and 3s (at the top of the set) dance right hands across.
- 9-12 1s cast up outside the set on their own sides to 1st place. 2s, 3s and 4s move down on bars 11-12.
- 13-16 3s and 4s (at the bottom of the set) dance left hands across. On bar 16 the 1s and 2s join hands across the set, 1s facing down, 2s facing up.
- 17-18 1s and 2s set advancing, changing places; 2s end in 1st place. On bar 18 the 3s join hands across the set facing up.
- 19-20 1s and 3s similarly set and change places; 3s end in 2nd place. On bar 20 the 4s join hands across the set facing up.
- 21-22 1s and 4s similarly set and change places. 4s end in 3rd place.
- 23-24 1s divide and cast up into 4th place.
- 25-28 2s and 4s turn partners with both hands.
- 29-32 3s and 1s turn partners with both hands.

Repeat from new places three times.

Dance by Rosalind Kaye, music by Barbara Haslem.

*[Thank you, Rosalind, for sending me a cassette of Barbara's music. If anybody is interested in the cassette please contact me. Ed.]*

### THE NUT LOAF

Iain Boyd of Wellington, New Zealand, asks if London area dancers might be interested in the following dance, inspired by John Drewry's "The Fruit Cake" published in recent issues (230 and 237) of "The Reel". Ian Simmonds taught "The Fruit Cake" to the Redwood Class on Friday 24th March 2000 and Iain devised "The Nut Loaf" on Saturday 25th March and modified it on Monday 27th March 2000.

A 40 bar jig for three couples in a four couple set.

#### Bars

- 1- 4 1s set and cast off one place. 2s move up on bars 3-4.
- 5- 8 1W with 2s, and 1M with 3s, dance right hands across. 1s finish on the sidelines in second place while 2W and 3M finish facing out.
- 9-12 2s and 3s dance a circular chase, clockwise, round 1s to change places. 2W and 3M finish facing out.
- 13-16 1W and 3M, and 1M and 2W, turn with right hands once round.
- 17-20 1M dances a half figure of eight up round 3s (in first place) while 1W dances a half figure of eight down round 2s (in third place). 1s finish on opposite sides in second place.
- 21-24 1W with 3s, and 1M with 2s, dance left hands across. 1s finish on the sidelines in second place while 3W and 2M finish facing out.
- 25-28 3s and 2s dance a circular chase, counter clockwise, round 1s to change places. 3W and 2M finish facing out.
- 29-32 1W and 2M, and 1M and 3W, turn with left hands once round. 1s finish on the side-lines facing second corners.
- 33-38 1s dance reels of three on opposite sides with corners, passing second corners by right shoulders to begin.
- 39-40 1s cross over to own sides giving left hands.

Repeat having passed a couple.

On bars 39-40 of the second time through 1s lead down with left hands and cross over between fourth couple to finish in fourth place while 4s dance up the sidelines to finish in third place.

Recommended music: – Any suitable smooth flowing jig played ABABB.

Suitable recorded music – "Johnny McGill" recorded by Alastair Hunter and the Lorne Scottish Dance Band on "Music For Twelve Scottish Country Dances from Book 11" (RSCDS 29), side 1, track 3.

# NEW RECORDINGS

**IN FACT** there are no brand new country dance recordings which have come my way in recent months. There is, however, a new compilation CD entitled "A Fife Fairing" sponsored by members of the St. Andrew's Branch and issued by the Society. It has music for the 1973 Jubilee dances, Four for 1978 and Five for 1982, and is played by the bands of Bobby Crowe and the late Ron Gonnella. All the tracks were previously issued on LP/cassette. The liner notes do not say who is playing the individual tracks but aficionados will recognise the strong fiddle playing of Ron and Bobby's distinctive accordion style.

Deirdre Adamson's Scottish Quartet – Dance Time Volume I (DACD 1024) has full length tracks for Dashing White Sergeant, Hamilton House and the Reel of the 51st Division together with Gay Gordons, Canadian Barn Dance, Eva Three-Step and eleven other old time dances. This is Deirdre's fifteenth recording and I think her best yet. It has lots of swing and a great selection of tunes.

If you remember the days before the advent of the EP, LP, cassette and CD, you may recall the heyday of the 78 r.p.m. records being released by Scottish bands in the 1940s and '50s. You will, therefore, be thrilled to learn of a CD with 20 varied tracks culled from 78s played by the late Bobby MacLeod and his Band (KR CD010). The accompanying notes are extensive and contain flowing tributes to Bobby by a number of contemporary musicians. I must say that this

music brings a tear to my eye. The project was masterminded by Bobby's family and the records were transferred to CD by David Cunningham. Buy it, listen to it and you will surely enjoy it greatly.

A Shetland Dance by DA Fustra (HRM CD008) has some 20 tracks for old time dancing including all six figures of Shetland Quadrilles. The music is lively and has lots of 'bounce'.

The Gallivantors are from Perthshire (a fine county!) and the musicians include David Hall's cousin Katy on accordion and her husband Iain Stewart on fiddle. Their CD is titled Once Upon a Ceilidh (GALL 001), has a mixture of dance music and singing and is highly recommended.

Another fine recording from David Cunningham's studio is by Bruce Lindsay's Band featuring Hebbie Gray on fiddle (BLM CD001). Playing is immaculate and pays tribute to the late Sir Jimmy Shand with eleven of his compositions including some lesser known marches and reels.

Ottercops is a hilly ridge in the Northumberland Borderland. Crossing the Ottercops features Roddy Matthews and friends (RMR 1CD). Roddy is a very talented fiddler from Northumberland and his friends (on 2nd fiddle, accordion, piano, cello, *et al*) play with him on various tracks – but not all at once! Roddy as a child spent holidays on the west coast of Scotland and was much influenced by some of the players in that area. The selection of tunes on 25 tracks is wide ranging – from Gaelic songs

and Scottish jigs to Northumberland reels. There are a few tunes by Roddy himself and I am particularly fond of a slow air "Wild Ardnish" named after a peninsula near Lochailort. Clearly that lovely part of Scotland is still held dear by Roddy who says in the liner notes "... an azure blue sea and the view of the Islands hold something of my heart". This CD is certainly one of my all time favourites and I think a must for all lovers of Scottish music.

Norma Ritchie, a native of Aberdeen, is well known to many of us in London. She studied at the Royal College of Music and decided to stay here. Her debut CD – Land o' Hearts Desire – on which she sings 22 songs and plays the clarsach is a Stewart Forbes' Shielburn Label (SHIEL CD015). The CD opens with the evocative and hauntingly beautiful Eriskay Love Lilt sung with a degree of pathos. There are four songs with words by Burns including the ever popular Banks and Braes and a couple of Gaelic numbers. Modern songs are here too; e.g., The Northern Lights of Aberdeen and The Song of the Clyde, both sung with some gusto. Norma's voice is in the "operatic mould" but she certainly proves on this recording her ability to sing a variety of songs in different styles. Each and every one is exceedingly pleasing to the ear. To add a touch of variety to the accompaniments Dave Hall (accordion), Judith Smith (fiddle) and Gillian Cummins (Piano) are featured on some of the tracks and, as ever, their playing is first-rate.

**John Laurie**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Reading

Dear Jim,

On Saturday morning 17th November in 'Excess Baggage' on Radio 4, a joke with regard to Computer Programmers was told which made me think of Scottish Dancers. With reference to Scottish Dancing the joke explains that the difference between an Extrovert Scottish Dancer and an Introvert one is that the Extrovert looks at the other dancer's feet.

Could this joke give the answer to the question "Why do beginners not continue after the first couple of weeks?" Let us ask what do they see when they arrive:

- 90% of the dancers looking at the floor.
- 8% looking over, or under, their partner's shoulder.
- 1% whose gaze is shifting all over the place.
- 1% looking at their partner.

And in addition, hardly a smile in the place, just expressions of painful concentration.

Because we are doing Scottish Dancing the 90% are looking for a dropped bawbee, however, they don't stand a chance. The first 1%, the Aberdonians, saw it when they first came in and walked over, flicked it up with their toe and secreted it away while pretending to adjust a curtain or something. If someone pulled a coin out of their pocket during a dance, a long hand would have whipped across and caught it before it hit the floor and nobody would have noticed because they would be looking at the floor for other coins. (Apologies to any Aberdonian readers. I was in the Gordons and did my training at the Brig of Don.)

The 8% are looking at the walls for notices of a cheaper dance for next week.

The final 1% consist of the beginners who, when they realise that nobody returns their look, will be so embarrassed that they will either stop coming or looking.

Come on let us start looking and smiling at everyone, and not just furtively at our partners if at all. A Scottish dance is not a funeral, a place for bowed heads and grim faces or is it?

The only time most dancers seem to look at their partner and try to cover off them is in rotated reels, such as when the dancing couples are giving the same shoulder to their same corner to start. In these dances there is diagonal symmetry, the dancing couple pass through the centre at the same time and reach the opposite ends in the same manner together. To avoid a crash the 1st corners should pass through the centre at the same time as each other and likewise the 2nd corners. The covering should be on the diagonal but never is. Why?

By covering on the diagonal the set is dancing as a group together and not as separate couples. As I have already said, look at everyone and involve them in your dancing as appropriate. I do not like being ignored in a dance. So how do the beginners feel? If we started looking at and smiling at the beginners they might even feel welcome and not excluded.

One last thing, if you cannot stand your partner, look at their ears and smile at how funny they look. Another competition: trying to spot the smile, not a fixed grin, at a demonstration.

**Douglas Dean**

## JOHN & SHEENA STURROCK HAVE MOVED

*John and Sheena have long supported London Branch events and they will be greatly missed having now moved from Cambridge to Fife. This was marked by a special dance held in their honour in Cambridge on 8th December. Roderick McLachlan, Secretary of the Cambridge and District Branch, picks up the story...*

**WE SAID** a fond farewell to two friends, when 140 dancers from so many different areas gathered in Cambridge on the evening of 8th December to enjoy ourselves in such a manner as not seen in Cambridge for a long time. Both Sheena and John were amazed at the reception and gifts they received.

Green Ginger provided the music and their professionalism cannot be praised highly enough with the length they went to making sure the tunes were correct and with the full (albeit unwitting!) approval of Sheena! You had to see Sheena's face, to believe it, when Green Ginger invited her to join them after the interval.

Whilst John & Sheena enjoy the dancing and music, they seem to convey that little something extra. Could it be, that in their own individual ways, they carry on the work done by older members of their families? In John's case, his father did a great service to Scottish

dancing and music, when he cared for the late great Sir Jimmy Shand, and Sheena's grandfather was Herbert Wiseman, who did so much for Scottish Country Dance music, when working with Jean Milligan.

John and Sheena began their apprenticeships while still very young—John because all his schoolfellows in Dundee attended dancing classes; Sheena because she received much encouragement from her grandfather.

In the 1950s, the Dancing Master at Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh, was Iain Robertson, a leading member of Miss Milligan's early International Teams. Tuition from Iain certainly paid dividends with the many medals that John earned and gave him the skills, which he has used over the years to give enjoyment to so many. You only have to look at his face, when he is dancing, to realise there is a man who believes, as Jean Milligan did over the years, that Scottish Dancing is so much "Fun". The many who have attended his classes have been on the receiving end of his sense of humour and whilst John certainly believes in hard work, classes were never dull, with his store of anecdotes.

Sheena, too, attended dance classes, and played her violin throughout her schooldays, developing a wide range of musical interests. Although they attended St. Andrews University at the same time, their paths did not cross, Modern Languages then being read in St. Andrews, Engineering in Dundee.

John and Sheena met when, by chance, both families made reservations at the same hotel in Boat of Garten, for the same fortnight. In those days, it was customary for the whole hotel to take part in an activity, and one day it was decided that all would walk up Cairngorm,

traverse to Ben MacDhui, descend to the Lairig Ghru and finish at Coylumbridge. As so often happens, the weather played an important part. On the summit of Cairngorm the cloud base was low with very limited visibility, and so the traverse to Ben MacDhui



John and Sheena accepting their quich from Babs Wood (on the left), past President of Cambridge and District Branch

was abandoned and the whole party retraced their steps the nine miles to the waiting cars—this was before the days of the ski road. As happens when groups are out in the hills, the faster hotel guests were soon out of sight in front, the slower out of sight behind, and John and Sheena, the only two walking at normal pace, were left alone in the middle.... That appears to have been the start of "something big!"

Both have spent two periods in Cambridge, the first when John came in the early 60s, to be joined by Sheena, when they married, in 1964. Three years later, John's work took them to an enjoyable year in Munich, two years in Geneva, and—an 'Overseas Posting'—two years in Glenrothes! Needless to say they both found plenty of time to polish up their skills with a variety of Scottish Country Dance Clubs. All good things come to an end, however, and John returned to his old job and by 1973 the Sturrock household was firmly established again in Cambridge.

John saw the need, here in Cambridge, for more formal classes in Scottish Country Dancing, so he took the Teaching Certificate, and was enthusiastic in his involvement in the formation of the Society's Cambridge Branch in 1981, becoming the first Chairman. For most of the time since then, John has taught one of the classes.

In 1978, John—with Maureen Hamon—took over a Children's Class, and received much musical help from Norman and Jane Bett, who have given so much time over the years playing for classes, dances and demonstrations. It was at this time that Sheena's interest in Scottish dance music grew, and, encouraged by John, she played alongside Norman and Jane, before

subsequently "doing her own thing"—a process that was to lead to her playing with many well known bands and bandleaders, and to the music staff of the RSCDS Summer and Winter Schools. Sheena is the Leader of the Cambridge Fiddle & Accordion Society, founded by Norman and Jane

in the 70s.

All the time, John and Sheena have been enthusiastic members of the Cambridge Scottish Society, both as dancers and, in Sheena's case, as a fiddler too. John is a former President of the Society, while Sheena is a former Secretary. Since 1984, both have enjoyed the Exchange arrangements the Scottish Society has with a local group in Heidelberg, alternate Easters being spent in each other's homes. Sheena's fluency in German came into its own—though she would rather forget the two hours she once spent interpreting the subtle nuances of antler development, as propounded

by an over enthusiastic guide, at an Antler Museum...

John and Sheena are well known throughout London & the South East, travelling to Day Schools, Dances & Balls. With ghillie'n'fiddle they have also travelled extensively abroad. Among the more unusual experiences, while dancing in Bulgaria, the Balkan Folk Academy awarded John the "Order of the White Peony". There is Glory for you! And camcorder wielding tourists had their day made in the USA when John danced the Sword Dance over the four brass bars marking the junction of four states; Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. I wonder which Band was playing in John's head, or would it have been a piper?

We shall miss the regular sight of John on the Dance Floor in East Anglia also Sheena exhorting the Fiddle and Accordion Club to do better for the benefit of those on the Dance floor. The move to Fife gives both a wonderful opportunity to continue their enjoyment of both Scottish Dancing and the Music.

A final message from both John and Sheena to all who attended on the 8th December is to say "Thank you" for the flowers which they received in their new home and they hope the arrangement will last to become the centre piece on the Christmas Dinner Table.

John and Sheena, we wish you a long and happy retirement back in the "Old Country". We have thoroughly enjoyed your company here, we are sad to see you go, however, we look forward to seeing you again when you make return visits or we travel to Scotland.

**Roderick McLachlan**

*[Thank you, John, for your excellent contributions to "The Reel". I hope you both enjoy your new life. Ed.]*