



the reel

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FEBRUARY TO MAY 2003

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 20th June 2003

The AGM of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (London Branch) will be held at St Columba's Church (Lower Hall), Pont Street, London, SW1 on Friday 20th June 2003. Tea will be served at 6 p.m. and the meeting will commence at 7 p.m. There will be dancing after the meeting.

NOMINATIONS: Nominations for the offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer and eleven ordinary members of the Committee must reach the Hon Secretary by 1st April 2003. Nominations must be signed by the proposer and seconder and by the nominee, all of whom must be members of the Branch. If necessary, a postal ballot paper will be sent to Branch members with the May issue of *The Reel*.

The present office holders and Committee members, and the dates on which they joined or last rejoined the Committee, are as follows:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|------|
| Chairman | Owen Meyer | 1999 |
| Vice-Chairman | Rachel Wilton | 1993 |
| Treasurer | Helen Brown | 2002 |
| Secretary | Margaret Shaw | 1998 |

Daniel Capron 2000; David Hall 1994; Peter Knight 2001; Alexander McClintock 1997; Davinia Miln 2000; Pamela Ray 2000; Jeff Robertson 1999; Caroline Sloan 1996; Meryl Thomson 2002; Angela Young 2000.

All the above are eligible for re-election to the Committee, but David Hall does not wish to be nominated for re-election, and Helen Brown does not wish to be nominated for re-election as Treasurer.

MOTIONS: Motions for discussion at the AGM, which must be signed by the proposer and seconder, must reach the Hon Secretary by 1st April 2003.

AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes of the 2002 AGM.
2. Business arising from the minutes.
3. Report on year's working of the Branch.
4. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts.
5. Appointment of Honorary President and Honorary Vice-Presidents.
6. Appointment of Officers and Committee of Management.
7. Appointment of Auditors.
8. Motions submitted in advance.
9. Any other business.

Note: Nominations for the appointments at 5 and 7 above will be taken from the floor at the meeting.

All members are encouraged to attend and contribute to the work of the Branch.



Where are the Demonstration Team dancing? See page 6

A DAY IN THE LIFE AT HEADQUARTERS

One of my great pleasures in life is singing with a group of women friends. Some time ago we performed at a church event, and to create a little interest, told the audience before we started that among our number was a physiotherapist, an outdoor activities instructor, etc – and an administrator with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. They were invited to guess who was which while we were singing, and we then identified ourselves at the end. Over refreshments afterwards, a lady came up to tell me she had enjoyed working at Coates Crescent many years ago; apparently, each day started in a fairly leisurely fashion with the staff gathering in the Secretary's office, around the coal fire, over tea and biscuits, to go through the day's mail. I was able to tell her that it is still a lovely place to work, and that the fireplace is still here (if never lit), but that the pace is somewhat different these days!

It is not easy to describe a "typical" day at Headquarters, as no two days are the same for any of us – which is a great pleasure, but also a challenge, as it is difficult to maintain routines. I think that the routines we work to are monthly or annual, rather than daily! However, I will try to give you a feel for what goes on here at Coates Crescent.

Firstly, though, who are the Headquarters team? In addition to myself, there is *June Dick*, the Assistant Secretary, and very much my "right hand woman"; *Suzanne Pilley* is Finance & Membership Administrator; *Kate Lawrie* is Finance & Administrative Assistant; and finally, many of you will know *Eileen Watt*, both on and off the dance floor - Eileen is Office Manager. And what about the place we work in? RSCDS headquarters, in the centre of Edinburgh, comprises the ground floor and basement of a 4-storey building dating from approximately 1825. It is very handsome, with high ceilings, decorative cornices and mouldings. The basement area houses all of our stocks, the RSCDS archive, files, a high-volume copy

machine and paper storage. The basement is not in a very good state of repair, but plans are afoot to carry out work to create a second meeting room and rationalise the storage space. The ground floor is where we spend most of our time; I have my own office, Kate and Eileen share an office, as do Suzanne and June. There is a large meeting room, where committee and other meetings are held – with Miss Milligan's portrait keeping an eagle eye over activities!

Our working day starts at 9.00 a.m., and the first tasks for June are opening and distributing the mail, opening and forwarding or answering emails received at the info@rscdshq.freeserve.co.uk address, while Eileen takes any messages from the answering machine. For each of us then, the day is spent working on our own priorities:

In addition to being Assistant Secretary, June is committee secretary for the new Education & Training Committee, and also for the Schools Working Group (incorporating Summer, Winter and Easter Schools). Much of her time is taken up with the organisation of the Schools, and this goes on throughout the year. A typical day for her would probably include some of the following: processing Summer or Winter School applications and payments; talking to the Schools Director and other Schools staff about various aspects of administration; phone calls or emails to St Andrews University and other agencies about accommodation, hall bookings, and the like; confirming details of agreements with teachers and musicians; designing application forms or brochures and then liaising with printers; meeting with me to discuss any items of importance; writing letters or memos on my behalf; following up on action from "her" committees; and generally dealing with any queries or whatever comes her way.

Kate is probably the one person who has most routine daily tasks. A typical day for her would include: compiling orders (approximately 40 per

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week); producing invoices and processing payments; packaging orders for posting; balancing the till; keeping the cashbook up to date, as well as balancing it at the end of each week; preparing and sending out new members' packs; processing all the outgoing mail; keeping the "shop" stocked from the basement; photocopying papers for a meeting or a mailing.

Among Eileen's responsibilities is the control of stationery, stock, equipment etc. She is also committee secretary to the new Membership Services Committee, and will continue to be responsible for examination administration. For her, a typical day might include: helping with compiling orders if there is a backlog; placing orders for any stock or stationery that is needed; liaising with a Branch and with examiners about exam arrangements; making travel arrangements for examiners; typing up letters or making phone calls as part of the follow-up action from a committee meeting.

Suzanne is the person Branches have contact with regarding membership records and subscription payments. She is also committee secretary to the new General Purposes & Finance Committee, and provides support to Fiona Turnbull and youth-related activities and projects. Her day would probably include: processing subscription payments; issuing receipts and reminders; making any amendments to the database that have been notified to us; processing invoices on computer, and writing cheques; collating information for financial reports.

As for me, my role as Secretary/Administrator encompasses many responsibilities, and I find myself dealing with a huge range of issues and activities on any one day. After the first caffeine to boost the grey cells, I usually go through my own email and mail; there will be straightforward items that I can ask June to deal with, such as acknowledging grant applications from the JMMF, scroll nominations, or information that has arrived in response to a query. Some items will need to be discussed with the Chairman, a Convenor, or whoever; these are acknowledged and copied. And some can be responded to immediately – covering anything such as constitutions, insurance, website, confirmation of dates, etc. It is rare that more than a couple of days go by without a phone call to or from the Chairman, to discuss some of the many matters, and there are constant emails between us too. I may have to talk to the printers about a forthcoming publication, or check on distribution. There may be arrangements needed for a recording – with the band, committee representatives, the studio. Over the course of the last year, there have been many calls to and meetings with the Society's lawyers over a variety of issues. And then there's staff management, building management, and following up on committee work, and... much more than we have room for here!

Running alongside all of the above is, of course, the usual business of answering phone calls, and there are many. We also have callers to the office – people who want to buy books or CDs (there are around 40 "shop" transactions per week), or find out information, which can occasionally take some time, or simply visit. We stagger lunch breaks so that there is always someone here to speak to people.

There are times when none of the above applies! For example, when we have large mailings going out to Branches, it's all hands on deck to get copying, collating, filling of envelopes and posting done. There is practically a groove round the large table in the meeting room where we do our collating! We try to have

regular team meetings and better still we have an occasional meal out together when we put the world (and the RSCDS!) to rights.

Although there are five of us in the HQ team, because of annual leave, lieu time for weekend working and sick leave there are often only four of us in the office. Your Headquarters staff have a busy time – but I think I can speak for us all in saying that despite its occasional frustrations, we have a lot of fun (even without biscuits round the fire every morning).

Elsbeth Gray
Secretary/Administrator

ST. ANDREWS – THE MISSING YEARS



Demonstration by the Darnell young dancers at Ashford Scout Fayre

It's a common perception that the advent of children spells the end of normal life, including attendance at the Society Summer School in St Andrews. Well, the birth of Joshua in 1999 and Zoe last year have not prevented us from continuing to attend every year. In this article we would like to explain how.

Of course the Summer School itself is in no way geared towards children. To attend the course you must be a Society member and therefore over 16, and it is good to see that there are still a reasonable number taking up the preferential rates available to young adults and students. The first thing therefore is that one must attend as a non-resident – children cannot be accommodated in University Hall. David Russell Hall presents one alternative; we have gone for another – the self-catering option – and have found excellent flats to suit our growing family through information from the Fife Tourist Board. The Tourist Board's web-site at www.standrews.com/fife/index.html contains a wealth of information and even allows you to book accommodation online. They are also the people who sell the tickets for the Tuesday and Thursday dances in the Younger Hall.

As a member of the course one is obliged to attend all classes, so you have to find something for the children to do between 9.30 and 12.30, Monday to Saturday. Up to now the University Nursery has been our saviour here. They are set up to receive the children of visiting students and staff, some of whom are there over the Summer, and they cater for children from birth up to age 5. Simply by phoning in advance we have been able to book places for both children. The Rainbow Nursery number is 01334 470642.

Last year Joshua took advantage of courses of a more active nature run by the University Sports Centre. The main courses are for ages 5 to 11, with a variety of sports and mixed activity days. Some sessions are morning or afternoon and others run all day. This year's programme should be available in March and can be obtained from the Centre at St Leonards Road, St Andrews KY16 9DY, telephone: 01334 462160.

They now run introductory courses for ages 3 and 4 until 11.30, which leaves a gap for those attending classes. For 2003 the Society has made arrangements in the 4th week of the course (3rd to 10th August) to bridge this gap, through supervision, or possibly, if there is enough interest, a children's dance class.

There is also a gap on Saturday, as the Nursery and activities do not operate then. We have been fortunate that Grandma has been on hand (arriving early for her turn on the course) and keen to help out in looking after the children for a morning. On the other hand there are plenty of willing and qualified baby-sitters from the Nursery who could step in.

Again, in this trial year, it is hoped that there will be sufficient Society children to enable some sort of group arrangement on the Saturday.

The afternoons of course represent the chance to see St Andrews and the surroundings, and there is plenty to do with children. The beach remains a key attraction, though a wind-break can be a useful addition to the luggage unless you want your baby to end up covered in sand. We have also thoroughly enjoyed Craigtoun Park, near one of the large caravan sites, which has a whole range of activities at an all-inclusive price, including a miniature railway, boating, adventure playground, picnic area, bouncy castles and crazy golf.

Wet weather or the haar (sea mist to you and me) can be a problem, but the Sea Life centre, the swimming pool at the East Sands Leisure Centre and local indoor activity centres and museums provide diversions, and Dundee is not far away. The Fife Tourist Board has more information.

There are afternoon activities organised by the Summer School, which are more difficult to get to without somebody to look after the children, although last year there was a very successful open dance class for anybody from the course or the town, and children were most welcome. Dancing in the Streets, where the course demonstrates its skills in the town, is also worth joining in. We have found that attending all the social functions in University Hall does not always fit with the children's bath routine, so more often we have taken it in turns. In any case we haven't felt it appropriate to take them along to the adult parties!

A key part of attending Summer School is of course getting to the evening dances. Again, through the Nursery we have been able to find several baby-sitters, and chatting to local branch members has led to one or two of their children helping out. That way we have got to three or four events each week. On other evenings the chance to relax after a morning dancing and the rest running around after the children (not to mention the odd late night) has been most welcome.

As we have mentioned, this year as an experiment the Society and its Youth Committee is also getting involved in the fourth week, aiming to cover the gaps between sports activities and the classes on the course. We very much hope there will be sufficient interest to lead perhaps to some other activities, parties or opportunities for the children to get together. This should also lead to an influx of young parents, which can be no bad thing. We hope to publish this article on the Society web-site and pass it to Branch secretaries, to encourage more to attend.

We hope we have demonstrated that with a bit of preparation parents and their children can come to St Andrews for the Summer School, play an active part and all have a great holiday.

Hoping to see you and your children there!

Jeremy, Grace, Joshua and Zoe Hill
hilljgi@ntlworld.com

BRANCH MATTERS

I hope that you all enjoyed the Christmas and New Year festivities and are raring to go for the new dancing year.

We had two very enjoyable dances recently. There were over 150 enthusiastic dancers for the Christmas dance with music by the excellent David Hall and his Band; and our Burns' Supper and Ceilidh Dancing in early January took on a new lease of life. The band on this occasion was Frank Reid and the haggis supper was enjoyed by over 160 dancers.

We as a Committee are very worried by the falling attendances for the children's dances, and are currently reviewing the situation. There seems to be a reluctance to come into central London on a Saturday afternoon. If any teachers of children's classes have any ideas, we would be most grateful to consider them.

At this time of the year we are planning the activities for the coming season, classes, the day school and dances. Again suggestions on how to improve them will be appreciated. Remember that we are running the Branch for the enjoyment of the members.

The influence of the new Management Board is already being felt and we are fortunate in having some of our members on it.

During March David and Judy Hall are relocating to Brussels and we all wish them well for their future life on the continent. We must thank David in particular for his work with the Demonstration Class over the last few years and the innovative choreography he devised, and his contribution to the Committee. Judy was a tireless worker when on the Classes Subcommittee with particular emphasis on organising the Day School.

Owen Meyer

DEMONSTRATION CLASS

The team continues to be very busy, particularly with the large number of engagements around Burns Night. Before Christmas we performed at a number of our regular functions, the highlight being the Branch Christmas Dance. The display was very well received. It was especially appropriate that the demonstration included the dance 'The Dancing Master' written for Bill Ireland by John Drewry.

We have welcomed some new faces this term and would encourage enquiries from those interested in joining the team. This is all the more important as we will be losing two more members of the team in March. My wife, Judy, and I will be leaving London for a few years with my work. This will also mean that the class will have a new teacher. Joan Desborough has agreed to take over the teaching role until the summer, and I am very confident that this will be good for the team.

David Hall

RSCDS MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

The newly elected Board (members are listed below left) met for the first time on Saturday November 16th in the meeting room at Coates Crescent in an atmosphere of optimism and anticipation.

- it was agreed to adapt a Code of Conduct procedure devised by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, advising the Board members of their responsibility to conduct business in an appropriate manner and in the best interests of the Society.

- the importance of communication was agreed and decisions were taken on the most effective way of recording the Board meetings – decisions, actions, persons responsible and completion dates – and reporting using electronic mail wherever possible. Convenors' reports and Management Board reports will be sent to Branches.

- the Convenors of the three Management Committees presented their priorities:-

General Purposes and Finance – Minimise change; address problems with computer software; ensure work on basement is taken forward urgently; investigate Scottish Arts Council funding; clarify which Committee is responsible for which expenditure, budget-setting and monitoring procedures; establish with the Treasurer her role now that more accounting work is carried out in-house.

Membership Services Committee – production of Book 43, warm-up booklet, Manual, MacNab video; marketing of the Society; communication with members, including between Branches and their own members. Alan Mair to be approached to continue negotiations regarding online publication of dances.

Education and Training Committee – ensure smooth transition from old to new structure; review whole exam system; review process for creating examiners; consider how much money spent, especially re exam tours; complete youth medal scheme; instigate research that may interest teachers; consider how working groups can work together better. Appoint member of Committee to co-ordinate examinations.

Working parties were set up to look at –

- Constitution Review
- Membership Structure
- Website Policy and Development
- New Objectives for the Strategic Plan
- Arrangements for the AGM 2003

Reports were to be received at the next meeting on 18th January 2003.

Linda Gaul was elected as Schools Director Designate as this is Johan Maclean's final year in this post.

The reports from Convenors and the Management Board will be available at Branch events for you to read; there is also regularly updated information on the RSCDS website.

Rachel Wilton

Management Board Members

Jean Martin, *Chairman*
Stewart Adam, *Chairman Elect*
Richard Turnbull, *Convenor General Purposes & Finance Committee*

Irene Bennett, *Convenor Membership Services Committee*

Alex Gray, *Convenor Education & Training Committee*

Malcolm Brown, Peter Clark, Bruce Frazer, Linda Gaul, Ian Hall, Dorothy Hamilton, Jim Healy, Jimmie Hill, Andrew Kellett, Alastair MacFadyen, Susi Mayr, Anne McArthur, Wilson Nicol, Keith Oughton, Jerry Reinstein, Andrew Smith, Irene Whyte, Rachel Wilton.

Other Committee Members

General Purposes & Finance

John Douglas, Fiona Grant, Harry Hall, Roderick McLachlan, Margaret Ross, William Whyte.

Membership Services Committee

Sue Duckett, Anne Gordon, Rosemary Gordon Harvey, Peter Knight, Alastair Reid, Roz Scott Huxley.

Education & Training Committee

Pat Clark, David Hall, Elma McCausland, Lesley Martin, David Normand Harris, Sue Porter, Carol Smith, Moira Stacey, Anne Taylor.

BILL IRELAND

The following is a distillation not only of facts from my own memory but those from many of his friends who helped me to write it. We only looked at his dancing life but it will still not be complete.

William J Ireland was born in 1924, an only child, and spent his childhood and early adult years in Glasgow, attending the training college at Jordanhill to become a physical education teacher (not "PE instructor", as in the army, "I'm a teacher"). On the Jordanhill staff then was Jean Milligan, the co-founder of the RSCDS, as it became. He learnt Scottish Country Dancing in her classes, and she commended him to Mary Stoker (then living in Glasgow) as having "beautiful feet".

Around 1945 after qualifying, Bill moved to London to expand his horizons, and lived for the rest of his life south of the Thames. This move incurred the lasting displeasure of Jean Milligan who had other plans for his beautiful feet. He spent his working life at Wallington County Grammar School for Boys, teaching PE and games. He also taught some of the boys country and Highland dancing. This was known as "Rock with Jock" and is remembered with mixed feelings. During some evenings and most Saturdays he was available only for sport, coaching or refereeing rugby football; or playing it himself, this to be followed by ritual washing of his kit on the Sunday. He was a long-standing and loyal member of the London Scottish Rugby Club, and in later years was praised by the Rugby Football Union for his promotion of that sport. It was not unknown for him to turn up for dancing in the evening grievously wounded and suitably bandaged due to the events of the day.

In London, he soon became involved in Scottish dancing, where the London Branch was growing out of the tiny activities that had continued throughout the war. The Branch reached a membership of about 1,000 (and remained so ever since), and Bill can be credited with much of its popularity. He taught several classes a week for all grades of dancer and became a loyal and diligent member of the Branch Committee. He later did much unseen work, the distribution of *The Reel*, planning and running Branch dances and the Ball (which used to be annual) and the public summer dancing in London parks.

London found that it had an exceptionally gifted teacher on its hands. He understood body movement and had a great ability to analyse and simplify complex matters and teach them that way. He prepared himself thoroughly for every class. He particularly liked teaching beginners, with very rewarding results. This was not done entirely by kindness; Mary remembers his saying that beginners needed wooing, but with a twinkle, "rough wooing sometimes". He was impatient of people who did not try as hard as he expected (i.e. very hard) or who arrived late or missed a week. Iris Anderson has seen him take the arm of a particularly slow student and propel him through. There must by now be hundreds of dancers out there who remember him as their inspiring first teacher.

He will perhaps be best remembered in London for running the Demonstration Class, bringing it to a high standard of dancing which some people feel has not been equalled since. Originally, he danced in it himself under Isobel MacLennan (Mac), took it over about 1950, and stayed until he retired at 65, nearly 40 years later, which must be something of a record. The same rough handling that he visited on the beginners

(and everyone else) produced the desired results, along with his insistence on top technique, deportment and teamwork. On recruiting day, when candidates to join the dem. class were invited, Bill would work the class harder than usual, so that hopefuls who could not stand the pace would choose not to return. A slightly unfortunate result of his strong masculine personality was that while ensuring admirable uniformity among his male students, he tended also to produce women dancers in his own image, who danced like Bill.

He used a restricted repertoire for public performance, mainly of the traditional dances, and practised these every week: quality before quantity. Iris reminds us of Bill's final and invariable injunction to his team before a demonstration: "paralyse them!". After the show there would be no direct praise or criticism but they would be rewarded by one or two grunts. A two-grunt dem was quite good; one grunt might be followed by advice to keep moving because a moving target is more difficult to hit.

He applied the same high standards to himself in obsessive tidiness (tissue paper interleaving in his suitcase, until polythene bags were invented), his dress (every single item had a name-tab), his teaching, his self-imposed calligraphic handwriting, his meticulous attention to the meaning, grammar and use of the English language (it's "nothing at all", John, not "nothinga tall"), and in his work for the Branch Committee. Whatever he undertook he did properly according to those standards. This unswerving self-imposed ethic could be infuriating for those of us who would sometimes sacrifice perfection for practicality, but another attribute, his determination, some called it stubbornness, kept him up to his own ideals. His mock-macho brusqueness and apparently aggressive manner concealed a lively sense of humour. However, this unintentionally isolated him slightly and worked in some ways to his disadvantage; he alienated some who might have been his friends. At the same time, he could giggle (often inwardly, with a straight face) with friends.

The RSCDS Summer School in St Andrews was an annual trip, first as a student, later on the staff. For us Londoners, he was part of the scenery and the magic of that city. Most of us remember him less for the classes and evening dancing than for his involvement in other happenings; dancing barefoot on the beach in the afternoons (a 32-some and an eightsome on one occasion, to the pipes of Bill Clement who later became the Chairman of the Society), ceilidhs after dancing in the evenings (wine laced with sherry for the senior guests), and what he called "sociological anecdotes" about the dancers, all of whom he seemed to know personally. He had enduring nicknames for people and things; Elma Taylor was the Queen of the Pixies or QP; an older friend of short stature was the King of the Pixies (though no family connection was implied); a wholemeal breakfast roll was a hairy bap. (It has to be said that his stock of anecdotes and jokes suffered somewhat from annual repetition, and that the same stock was also recycled annually in his classes in London).

Apart from teaching in the Summer School, he served the Society at Headquarters level, both as a representative of the London Branch and as an appointed and well-respected member of the Executive. He represented the Society on the Central Council for Physical Recreation. He taught courses abroad in several countries, representing the Society, as well as on numerous occasions in UK. He taught Scottish dancing for



the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, and for the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Ron Smedley remembers him for introducing many English members to Scottish dancing and for providing high quality and meticulously planned demonstrations as part of the EFDSS festivals in the Royal Albert Hall. He once found Bill pacing out the Albert Hall arena beforehand and marking the floor with white tape; each couple had a number in Bill's plans.

One of his great prides for over 20 years was to teach Scottish dancing to the pupils of the Royal Ballet Junior School at White Lodge in Richmond Park. It was one of Ninette de Valois' principles to expose the pupils to a wide variety of dance, and she held him in high regard. He was skilled at teaching children and found them very receptive at that age, but according to Alison Ferguson the young adults in the ballet company itself were less interested, having their sights focussed on the footlights.

For a committed dancer, Bill was seen actually dancing less and less in his later years. When Mary asked him why this was, he replied that he once saw himself dancing and did not like what he saw. He never took part in demonstrations that he had arranged unless it was necessary to make up the numbers in emergency, or to inject some Highland dances, taking the view that he could not visualise and direct the overall effect of a team and simultaneously rehearse as one member of it. He did, of course, dance in public while he was a rank-and-file member of the dem. class, and in demonstrations arranged by others, and at the Branch social dances.

Bill was very knowledgeable about music and was one of the elite who get priority booking for Glyndebourne opera. He sang in the Wallington Old Boys' Operatic Society chorus (and did the makeup) but had played no instrument since childhood. He could coax what he wanted from wayward accompanists, if necessary by thumping on the lid of the piano. But the only way we heard him accompanying dancing himself was his puert-a-beul, Gaelic mouth music, for some demonstrations.

As Ian Anderson remembers, Bill's skills and po-faced humour extended to cooking. Even his tectotal relatives admired his gravy, made with red wine, and his "very good fruit drink" containing vodka.

There was never a dull moment with Bill. During the Festival of Britain in the new Royal Festival Hall, he missed three cues for a two-man sword dance with John Armstrong, leaving Peter Quinn to improvise a bagpipe recital. Afterwards it turned out that the Hebridean Weaving Lilt had left Bill's trousered legs a bit moist, and his dress stockings simply would not slide on.

Female companions, preferably slim ones,

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were a constant part of Bill's life, apart, that is, from his family in Glasgow, his dancing students and partners and the top teachers who influenced him. However, his marriage in the 1950s lasted fewer than four years. But for over 25 years until the day he died, Jenny Greene had been a great support and constant companion to him, while Lesley Martin, an Aberdeen girl whom he met at the Summer School in 1951 and repeatedly visited when he was in Scotland, was still a good friend in 2002. All these ladies were fine dancers, it need hardly be said.

Until comparatively recently, Bill was seldom ill, and would never admit it or vary his routine even when he was. This was part of his striving for perfection. So in the last few months his obvious and increasing disability was a difficult contradiction for him to accept, and he recently said to Alison that he hated being unable to do things that he wanted to do.

A few years ago he had a successful operation to remove a cancer of the bladder, but later suffered from considerable back pain caused by myeloma, a form of leukemia, which reduced him to relying on a walking stick. He also had diabetes but was able to control this by diet.

None of this stopped him from going as often as possible (several times a year) to his beloved cottage that he shared with Jenny at Scullomie, on the north coast of Scotland near Tongue, two days' drive away. The simplicity of a tiny, remote community seemed to satisfy him; nothing much there to fall short of perfection. He was about to set off there once again in October 2002 when his heart suddenly gave out.

The trite cliché that Bill will be "sadly missed" is only partly true. Bill was already being missed because his increasing frailness in the last few years deprived us of his expertise and his company. But everyone smiles when remembering Bill for one of his characteristic attributes, for a mischievous remark or a risible event, for a spectacular achievement, or for making a dancer out of some unpromising material. For making good dancing a matter of personal pride. For making dancing fun.

Bill Ireland will certainly be missed, but not in sadness.

Robert Ferguson

Other Memories

Bill taught the Demonstration Class for over 35 years and some of the repertoire he taught is still used by the Team. His influence and contribution to the Demonstration Team live on and we are grateful for that.

John Drewry wrote 'The Dancing Master' for Bill on his retirement from the Dem Class. It was first danced at Bill's retirement party at Wandsworth on 24th June 1989, McBain's being the band. The two Irish jigs used as originals are The Dancing Master and A Visit to Ireland. The dance 'The Dancing Master' was published in *The Reel* No. 189.

David Hall

I attended Bill's Branch demonstration classes weekly for over thirty years, often with trepidation, always with great concentration and determination, always with great physical and mental benefit, and almost always with very great enjoyment and satisfaction.

When we moved from Malvern to London in 1959 Bill was the only person we knew in the London 'scene' as he had taught two or three exceptionally successful day schools around Malvern. So we wrote to Bill and asked where to



Bill Ireland dancing with Jenny Greene

go to dance in London, and he replied "You come to the YWCA on Wednesday evenings." We did, and I found to my astonishment that I was in the Dem. Class! I learnt much later that various other watchers whom I did not know were members of the Branch Committee who had come to observe me, but I did not realise the full significance of my outrageously lucky back-door entry until a year later when the annual audition was held! This was a terrifying occasion (quite as frightening as any of my TV appearances with the Team!), conducted in front of the whole Branch committee and several other experts, with 80 or more dancers competing for 32 or 40 places! How things have changed! One vote against a lady and she was out for a year. Fortunately for me the competition was not quite so strong for men.

Certainly, the technical standard of the dancers in the class at that time, especially the ladies, was *exceptionally high*, and Bill had the potential to produce the best team in the world. However, I was led to believe that his direct style of teaching was curbed, on the instruction of the Branch Committee, in response to complaints (quite unjustified in my opinion) from one or two of the most senior members of the class when he took it over, that he had criticised them personally. Bill was an exceptionally observant teacher and a very good analyst of faults. He was also a brilliant mimic. His method of trying to correct technical aberrations, restricted as it was, became "Watch me - modelled from within these four walls." Whereupon he would proceed to give an often hilariously funny demonstration of some eccentricity which he had just spotted. Bill was not a totally RSCDS-orthodox teacher, but I have personally always believed that his divergences from the official line were improvements.

Almost every dancer in the class, because they had enormous respect for him, really loved him. He had the leadership qualities to mould us into a highly motivated and mutually supportive unit, with tremendous respect for one another, and therefore a great deal of social interaction (to use modern jargon, of which Bill would have disapproved!). Dem. Class was, as has been said of Parliament, the best club in the world to which to belong. Bill was the leader and the doyen.

Amongst the most abiding of my many memories of Bill are his beautiful 'Scotch measure', 'pas de deux' or 'twasome' which he used to dance with Elma Taylor, and the masterful way he would stand at EFDSS festivals in the middle of the arena at the Royal Albert Hall singing 'mouth music' for the weaving lilt, the foursome and tulloch, or many other dances (he knew dozens of tunes), whilst we danced around him under his critical eye. He never had a

microphone or any artificial means of amplification. The folk groups, many of them very well known, who appeared in the same programmes seemed to need masses of decibels 'gain' even to be heard.

Norris Haugh

In the interval of the very first dance I ever went to at Fetter Lane, a gentleman whom I did not then know handed me a plate of food, saying, "You look as though you'd like something to eat. Have this." Later I learned that it was Bill.

I joined the Demonstration Class in the '60s. His formidable reputation preceded him, and he could be daunting at first. His classes were extremely energetic, he worked us hard as befits a demonstration class, but there was always a thread of humour in his teaching and with the passing of the years the fiery temperament mellowed. In all my twenty years in the class I never remember a dull lesson, never felt a moment's boredom.

More than anything else I remember his insistence on dancing with the music, the flow, the phrasing, the cadence of the steps so that all danced as one, all heads moving together.

Pat Bawden

In Autumn of 1948 I was a raw beginner in a huge class taught by Bill in a school in central London, just south of the Strand near Aldwich. There was a high stage across the far end of the room from which Bill directed operations. We were an unruly lot, and those at the back were anything but dancers! Bill's voice got louder and louder as he induced order from the chaos. After a while those at the back noticed a policeman peering through the door. He told us he'd received a report that a drunk was shouting in the school and that he had come to arrest him!

Bill's authoritative teaching ensured that all his pupils received such a thorough grounding in steps and technique that no dance, whether traditional or modern, should present a problem! Tales of what his Granny said ("Hold, squeeze, smile and pass" for Rights and Lefts) and, to a lesser extent, what Miss Milligan had decreed, and no doubt being repeated by today's teachers - minus inappropriate attributions!

Bill's influence will live on for many years to come.

Barbara Start

Bill was one of the first people I met at St Andrews Summer School on my first visit in 1953. I was only a teenager and rather shy. Bill made me feel so welcome. I saw him many times after that. He taught at Summer School many times when I attended and also at Day Schools in Manchester. The last time I saw him was on the television in *This is Your Life*. I cannot remember whose life was being told, but I got quite a surprise when Bill made an appearance.

Doris McCutcheon

Castle-Douglas Branch, living in Preston

We had a lot of enjoyable weekends with Bill as teacher. But the one thing I will never forget is when I was dancing with him in St Andrews (probably in 1979) and, just after a lecture on the fact that we were dancing with a partner, he suddenly said "See you again in two bars time".

Gillian Wheadon

I was fortunate enough to be in Bill's class in Marlborough School for four years until his enforced retirement by ILEA. He was always quite a character with his dry sense of humour,

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

and his attempts to get the class to perform correctly.

Even if we thought we had done well, he was never satisfied but if he considered we had done quite well we might get the comment "Well, I am reasonably grunted with that effort".

I well remember one evening he arrived looking like the cat who had got the cream, to inform us that 'grunted' had made it into the OED.

Frank Bennett

Bill was the teacher of our first weekend school held at Beckford Manor in the early sixties. In the following years the dates for our weekend too often clashed with the International Rugby finals, which of course meant that Bill was not available! However, I well remember the class he taught us in the seventies, when he encouraged us to move on our pas-de-basque by being 'spring-heeled Jacquelines' – or 'Jacks' as the case might be!

David Vaughan

Many of us who were in the Demonstration Class taught by Bill acquired nicknames – some liked, others not so! They will always be a reminder of Bill.

HSV (Val Thorne in Falmouth and **Pete the Feet** (Reading)

Katie Rule was in the London Dem. Team under Bill Ireland's directorship until she left for New York and remembers Bill as a tremendously gifted Scottish Country Dance teacher as well as a great PE teacher. He was a good athlete and was known for his theatrics. Many will remember him dressed as the Queen Mum at St. Andrews.

RSCDS New York Branch, December 2002

In 1979 when Bill was Branch Chairman he was much involved in the selection of the dances which were published to celebrate the Branch's Golden Jubilee. Jim MacLeod's Band made a record which included these dances. Among the other dances was The Starry Eyed Lassie. Jim composed a second tune for that dance in Bill's honour. It is simply called 'Bill Ireland'.

John Laurie

Our teacher during the fourth week of Summer School at St Andrews in 2001 happened to be Mr Bill Ireland. With his sharp eyes he watched how his students danced. Slightly dropping his head, he almost appeared to be looking at the other end of the room while he observed us practising. He firmly gazed down at his students' feet when observing their dance steps, and yet he didn't overlook the movement of their hands and bodies. Some groups that didn't dance well were required to repeatedly practise in that manner until they were finally allowed to leave.

Mr Ireland was a very thoughtful and gentle man. When it came to dancing, though, he was very serious and strict. We regret that we, along with the French students, often complained that he was too strict. Sadly, we needlessly wasted the precious time that we spent with him with almost no interest of understanding of the famous, funny and satirical stories he told at Ceilidh, and with almost no appreciation for the value of our great teacher.

Now we realise how fortunate we were to have participated in the final lessons taught by Bill Ireland at St Andrews Summer School and Ceilidh.

Ken and Noko Kasuga
RSCDS Tokyo and Paris Branches

Jean Yeats - An Appreciation

Jean Yeats, whom many members knew as a teacher and examiner, died on 17th October 2002 aged 73.

Jean was the Society's longest serving Examiner, having been appointed in 1963 and she travelled widely in her capacity as an examiner – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and her most recent tour was to North America in 1999. Jean always made herself available for examining duty and in the last year alone conducted examinations in three UK centres including a three-day stint at the Summer School in St Andrews. Until her illness three years ago Jean regularly taught at the Summer School and many would-be teachers were put through their paces by her.

As well as being a Society examiner, Jean adjudicated at festivals and she was an examiner for the Imperial Dance Teachers' Association. In May this year she spent a very long Saturday testing 79 youngsters from the Aberdeen Branch Children's classes for their IDTA medals. She was always so encouraging of the younger members and perhaps one of her greatest delights this autumn was to see her two great nieces, Samantha and Rebecca, enrolled in one of the Aberdeen Branch Children's classes.

Jean spent over 15 years in Canada and kept up her links with the Ottawa Branch through being their representative to the Executive Council of the Society. From the number of e-mails and telephone messages flying across the Atlantic in the last weeks before Jean died it is obvious that Canadian members thought very highly of her.

It was in Canada that Bruce Frazer first encountered Jean. Bruce recalls a six-foot tall lady getting the whole class to "grow an extra inch". He was quite surprised to discover when standing next to Jean how small she really was.

Like Bruce, many have been encouraged by Jean to "grow that extra inch" in their dancing. She was a gifted teacher. Where criticism was needed it was always constructive and you were shown how to correct or improve your performance, not just what was wrong with it. While advocating good technique, Jean nonetheless ensured that her classes were fun and she had an ability to pass on her love of dancing to others.

Jean will be remembered for her unstinting work for the Aberdeen Branch and for the Society as a whole. She has given sterling service and she will be greatly missed.

Jean M Martin

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Oxford Ball

Oxford

Dear Daniel,

I should be grateful if you would allow me to use the pages of *The Reel* to apologise to those who attended the Oxford Ball in October and found difficulty in parking. One of the selling points of Oxford Brookes University, a venue we were using for the first time, was that secure manned parking was available. It turned out to be so secure that the attendant refused to admit some of those coming to the Ball and threatened to others that he would not let them out!

We have received a profound apology from the University authorities. They accept that the fault was on their side. While not actually agreeing to our suggestion that we should like to see the gatemans' head on a spike when next we arrive they have given an absolute assurance that the problem will not arise again.

We hope that those who came this year and as a result of what happened decided not to come again will accept this assurance and give us another chance, and that others, who may have heard these sorry tales, will not be put off. Parking apart, everyone felt that the venue was a very good one and that our Ball lived up to its usual high standard. So we look forward to receiving old friends, and new ones too, next year on October 25th.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Lloyd

'The Reel Goes Cuckoo'

Richmond

Dear Daniel,

Further to 'The Reel Goes Cuckoo' article in the last issue, the team of volunteer MCs also included Brian Pierson (Purley). As he was the first volunteer and, with his wife Marion, was such a boon to the week, it is inconceivable that he not be officially thanked. Thank you, Brian.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Cook

NEW RECORDINGS

ONE YEAR OLD AND GROWING FAST!

(The story of how a new dancing group was

Iain MacPhail and his Band - RSCDS Books 36 and 37 (2 CDs) (RSCDS 033 and 034)

Marian Anderson and her Band - Dancers' Choice (HRMCD 601)

The Bonnie Beauty Blooms, Nethy Bridge, Bellstane, Corrievrechan, Neko's Reel, Good Friends, Kirkmaiden Strathspey, The Wedding Link, The Craven Jig, Jessie Wiseman's Reel, Mid Fodderletter, Woodland Assembly, Haddington Assembly, Maggie Lauder, The Falls of Rogie.

Green Ginger - Miss Ogilvie's Fancy (KSCD 009)

The Starry-Eyed Lassie, Swiss Lassie, 5x32 Strathspeys, 6x32 Reels, Waltz, Lady Catherine Bruce's Reel, Captain McBride's Hornpipe, 3x32 Song Airs, The Plantation Reel, Slow Air, 3x32 Jigs, Miss Ogilvie's Fancy, The Clansman, 6x32 Jigs, General Stuart's Reel, Listening Medley.

Neil Barron and his Band - Music for the Scotia Centenary (RSCDS CD032)

Antarctica Bound, Scotia Sea, The Ice Cap, Coats Land, Bruce's Men, The Piper and the Penguin, Spiers Bruce, The Pole Star.

Iain MacPhail has to be commended on his delving into the fiddle music collections of the 18th and 19th centuries and selecting from them alternative tunes that go well with the originals. I am sure many of these tunes have never before been recorded. However, I must in all honesty say that these two CDs do not, I think, do Iain justice. I put it that way because the fault is not Iain's but in the production. There is far too much reverb and the rhythm section tends to overshadow Iain's own excellent playing. Having said that there are some very nice touches from the pianist (Ian MacPherson). Perhaps I am being over-critical. The CDs are adequate for use in the dance hall which is their raison d'être.

Marian Anderson's CD comes with a little booklet with the instructions for the first eight dances mentioned above and lists the sources of the other seven. Sadly, a few errors have crept in and if I do not point them out someone will, as always, take me to task. Nethy Bridge is a three couple strathspey and is played eight times instead of 6x32 listed. Good Friends should have two chords but has only one. Haddington Assembly was not composed by Muriel Johnstone but is trad – probably by Nathaniel Gow. There are, however, a number of Muriel's tunes here including a particularly nice strathspey – The Eyemouth Petronella. Marian's band make a fine sound despite the lack of fiddle on this recording. There are quite a few exciting flourishes and rhythmic breaks. No doubt some of the new dances will catch on. Highlander Music are to be congratulated on their initiative.

Green Ginger with Ian and Meryl on fiddles and Cas on piano are much in demand here in the South East. This, their second CD, will further enhance their popularity. They, too, have dug deep and come up with some great tunes by Mackintosh, Marshall and the Gows. As Pete Clark says in the liner notes "Country dancing evolved to the sound of ringing fiddle strings..." There are about 80 tunes in all and over 70 minutes playing time. An excellent effort by three fine musicians who are personal friends of many of us in London Branch. Indeed Cas and Meryl are both on the Branch Committee.

In her Executive Council Report in the last issue Rachel Wilton mentioned the Scotia Suite of Scottish Country Dances which commemorates the voyage of the Scotia with the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition of 1902-1904. The dances are by Roy Goldring with original tunes by Muriel Johnstone. The dances are played on the CD by Neil Barron and his Band. The playing is immaculate and tempo just right. This CD must replace another

one in my top ten favourites. Don't worry Neil, I will not remove one of your earlier recordings! Also on this CD there are some fine pipe tunes played by Ian MacInnes and a suite performed by the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland.

On a recent visit to Perth I came upon a Band in the open air market and thought they were pretty good. They were The Lomond Ceilidh Band and I without hesitation bought their latest CD entitled "Making Tracks". I wish now I had also bought their two earlier ones and that is surely praise enough. Only one small but important criticism and that is, why are so many bands on CD and Take the Floor saying that the track is for, say, Dashing White Sergeant or Circassian Circle and not playing the correct original?

Following the success of his much acclaimed CD The Birnam Oak, Pete Clark and the Niel Gow Ensemble now give us Sycamore (Inver 224). The Oak and the Sycamore are two magnificent trees on the banks of the river Tay downstream from Dunkeld Bridge. The ensemble here is larger than on the Birnam Oak with six violins, one viola, two cellos and one bass. No piano this time which is perhaps more in keeping with the Niel Gow era. All the tunes on this CD are by Pete himself and all in all make very pleasant listening.

Coming soon – a book of new dances to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Leicester Branch with a CD by David Cunningham.

Now available: Special requests Volume 5 by Colin Dewar. Review in the next issue.

John Laurie

Scottish Measure SCD Band - A First Dram

It is a great pleasure to write about the debut recording from the Scottish Measure SCD Band. The album features dances devised by David Queen, the fiddler in the band, and Alex Gray from South Wales Branch (who incidentally are sponsoring the CD). The leader of the band, Andrew Lyon, has been involved in the SCD business for over twenty years, both as a dancer and as a musician. The other band members are all dancers too. The music is lovely and crisp, providing plenty of impetus for dancers. There are several tunes by Andrew and also by David, with many of these the originals to his own dances. My particular favourite dances are Alex T. Queen (David's father and deviser of Angus MacLeod) and the Bridgwater Geordie (for Deb Lees who taught at the last Branch Day School).

David Hall

Scottish Dancing, like being able to ride a bicycle, is something you never forget. When I was trying to decide which form of exercise to take up, happy memories of Scottish Country Dancing on the lawns at my teacher training college came flooding back, and so the choice was made. But how does one go about finding a class or a group? The local library came up with nothing, so I tried the phone book and found an Ealing number who were kind enough to send me a copy of *The Reel*. Then fanaticism took a hold. It was Pont Street on Mondays, Balham on Tuesdays, Shene on Wednesdays, West Drayton on Thursdays, Hayes on Fridays, various dances on Saturdays — but nothing on Sundays!

I wondered if people in the Chiswick area would be interested in a Sunday night group. Notices were put in two church bulletins, in the local library and in Sainsbury's, and friends and neighbours were contacted. The response was tremendous; in no time at all I had over 40 names and felt brave enough to book the beautiful upper hall at St. Michael and All Angels in Bedford Park (on the corner of The Avenue and Bath Road W4 right by Turnham Green tube station) for one night only. There was a fantastic turnout for our first meeting. Between 50 and 60 people turned up, including a number of dancing friends dragged in from afar to help out on our first night! So the Chiswick Scottish Country Dance Club was up and running.

Denise Hora, who teaches at Shene, was kind enough to take on the teaching and on normal class nights we had a manageable two sets. Denise saw us through until May, but the enthusiasm of the dancers, which had them dancing in my conservatory on the Sundays when the hall wasn't available, was such that they wanted to carry on until at least July. But where could we find a teacher? I raced back one Wednesday from lecturing in Stratford-on-Avon because I knew that Owen Meyer was teaching for the RSCDS in Sloane Avenue. I got there just at the end of his class and had the temerity to ask if he would teach a class for us. He agreed and the rest is now history. Every teacher I approached agreed to help and we ended up being taught by some of the finest teachers in the land. Numbers have increased steadily as a result.

Before this marvellous injection of famous teaching talent, numbers were too low for financial comfort, so we set about advertising and fund raising. We had a banner made that is hung out every weekend when we are dancing, and two dedicated ladies printed leaflets at their own expense and distributed them around the area. Our details were put on the official London Branch website and the London Dem team were invited to dance on the green at the Bedford Park Festival (*see photo on page 1*). David Hall and his team were the talk of the Festival: 'best item on the programme' and 'boy, can they dance, they just floated!' were just two of the comments we heard. We distributed leaflets explaining how to get in touch with some local groups and had our own stall the following day. Numbers have been growing steadily: we have about 30 regulars but for most nights we have the ideal number of 24 (3x8 or 4x6).

The highlight of our year was the Christmas party entitled 'Kilts and Posh Frocks'. The hall was decorated with great swags of greenery stripped from many a garden. The effect was magical and the smell of fresh pine filled the hall as the mulled wine flowed. David Hall and his father played for us and Jim Cook was brave enough to M.C.

We celebrated our first birthday on Sunday 19th January 2003 with a Dundee cake made by one of our members and are looking forward to many more happy years of dancing. Come and join us one Sunday: we dance from 8-10 and are a very friendly bunch.

Kay Senior

ELLEN GARVIE

Dr Ellen Garvie has been a Vice-President of RSCDS London Branch for thirty years, apart from three years (1979-82) when she was President. But she is not known to many members as she left London twenty years ago. I therefore asked her to write about herself. Ed.

My roots are in Perthshire and Angus. My father was born and brought up only a few miles from Inver, Neil Gow's home village. The area had a tradition of Scottish Country Dancing and his love of dancing started in boyhood, so when we moved to live in Westminster seventy years ago, it was easy for him to attend a class organised by the London Perthshire Association and taught by Kitty Irving. Unfortunately my mother never danced, so at first Father took my elder sister, Margaret, to the class, but in a year or so I joined them. It was then that we met Irene Stewart who served on the Branch Committee for many years and was a Vice-President. There were no children's classes in those days and London Branch had not long started. Through Kitty and Irene we were introduced to the Branch and Father and Margaret went to classes, and I joined them for the dances and eventually for classes. The experience was daunting for a shy schoolgirl who looked young for her age but I had mastered the techniques and could keep up with the best of them. In 1936 an advanced class was started, taught by Hugh Foss, and from it the first demonstration team was found when needed. My first demonstration, however, had been at a London Perthshire meeting after only two or three years of dancing.

War came in 1939. I was an undergraduate and UCL was evacuated. I was away from London for some years but Father was keeping the Branch alive and was Secretary, so I was in touch with all that was happening. In the years away, I joined in if I was in London. By 1941 I was in Glasgow and for a couple of years joined with the Branch there and attended a class taught by Jean Milligan. At some point I was in Auchterhouse staying with an aunt and attended a class in dancing and deportment taught by the fiddler Daucie Reul of Neistyle. My memory is of Daucie demonstrating pas de basque while playing his fiddle and of the clumsy footwear worn by some of the ploughmen.

My next move was to Somerset and local dancing did not exist. It was days of petrol rationing and blackout so evening activities were kept to walking distance. However dancing was not forgotten and in 1945 Father, accompanied by his daughters, went to the Summer School of the Society held at St. Andrews. The school had not been held during the war and teachers were badly needed with the revival of activities. Those without certificates were placed in a Certificate Class and I passed both exams. You will be surprised to know that the school was a bare fortnight; my first certificate is dated 4th August and the second 10th August. There was no written exam. Margaret passed the first exam but had to leave early. She went abroad but took her second certificate when she returned some years later. Dancing had changed in her absence and

she faded from the dancing world. Other summer schools were more enjoyable when I did not have to sit on the beach swotting. It was at that first St Andrews that the Garvie clan first met Bill Ireland.

I moved east and nearer London, to Reading in 1947, and spent the rest of my working life in the Microbiology Department of the National Institute for Research in Dairying. Some of you may have noticed that I seldom spoke about work. In general company this subject is of little if any interest and can be classed as a conversation stopper. Little if any microbiology is taught in schools and only a small number of



Dr Ellen Garvie, Vice-President of London Branch. Photograph taken in December 1999 at the launch of her book *The Gaelic Names of Plants, Fungi*

nasties get into the media. Our dependence on bacteria for good health and the continual survival of life on planet Earth is seldom mentioned. The importance of bacteria in the food industry is overlooked. Life would be poorer without cheese and wine. Bacteria were the first forms of life and will be the last to go.

Shortly after my move to Reading Father gave up as Secretary and became Vice-President and then President which he remained until his death in 1972. My allegiance was to London and I did not take part to any extent in the Reading Country Dance Group. I knew the dancers and went to a number of dances over the years. I ran a small class of my own for a couple of years but found teaching a regular class was not to my liking; but I could and did manage an occasional class when the regular teacher was absent. So all in all I have made little use of those 1945 certificates.

The Reading area was not far from London but I was able to join activities only at weekends, so I went to Jack McConnachie's Highland Dance class and learnt other types of Scottish dancing, but I started too late in life and remained essentially a country dancer and only competent but non-competitive in other forms. Of course I was at Branch activities at weekends and holidays. By 1964 Highland dancing had stopped but I was able to organise work to leave in time to attend a Branch class in London at Sloane Avenue which I did from 1964 until I left England in 1982. I was never on the Committee and I never danced with the Demonstration Class. I considered I could not give the time and commitment necessary, living as I did in rural

Berkshire. When you get involved with research it has a habit of taking over.

I was elected a Vice-President in 1973 and apart from three years as President which ended when I retired and headed north, I have been a Vice-President ever since. These positions are supposed to be a reward for service to the Branch but all I have done is danced for a long time and on a regular basis. On looking back, while I was not aware of this at the time, I was supporting Father and enabled him to be involved in something that meant much to him. It is for Father, more than myself, that I am grateful to the Branch for continuing to elect me as one of your Vice-Presidents.

In the twenty years that I have been in the Highlands I have not lost touch with Scottish Country Dancing, at first in Skye where I found a welcome in the Skye Group, now the Isle of Skye Branch of the RSCDS. As you can imagine getting to halls and dancing is very different from in London. They run a weekend in May which I can recommend, but you have to book early, numbers are restricted and demand great, with dancers coming from far and wide. I went to Skye because I had taken an interest in Gaelic. Learning something of the language has meant that the O.S. map of Scotland means much more to me; also I have an idea of pronunciation of place names and of the names of geographical

locations. While in Skye I completed a dictionary of the Gaelic names of plants, fungi and animals which has now been published by Sabhol Mor, Ostaig. I wondered how I would cope with the weather. I knew it would be wet and stormy and I found it unpleasant trying to cope on my own. The people were great and I love the Island but I decided to move to somewhere with lower rainfall and less wind. I now live near Dingwall in the Black Isle. I knew dancers in the east and went to some classes. I did not go to many dances or rallies as they are called locally. The halls are often crowded and numbers unrestricted. It was all so different from London. Eventually age took over and I hung up my dancing shoes in 1998 after about 65 years. Through friends I keep in touch with the Dingwall group and the Inverness Branch.

I have a lifelong interest in the natural world and things biological, so I was never happy living in London. I now find plenty of interest in wildlife activities of various sorts. I have a large garden which keeps me busy and active. It is planted with shrubs but there is a huge lawn also. The birds are mostly sparrows and greenfinches but we have red kites, buzzards and ospreys in the neighbourhood. A large protected area of wet woodland is only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile up the road. If any of you venture to see the beauty of the Northern Highlands, a large sparsely populated area with, on average, only eight people per square mile, give me a phone call. The number is in the local telephone directory and the A9 less than two miles away (as the road goes).

Ellen Garvie