



the reel

Published by the LONDON BRANCH of THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY
Registered Charity number 1067690

No. 246

DECEMBER 2003 TO FEBRUARY 2004

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

DANCING BY THE BLACK SEA 5th - 14th September 2003

The tremendous enthusiasm and hospitality of the Kuban Scottish Dancers culminated in an amazing ten-day Scottish Dance holiday in Russia, as anticipated in issue 240 of *The Reel*.

Over forty of the total of 53 participants assembled at Heathrow on Thursday 4th September ready for the four-hour Aeroflot night flight to Moscow. The airline meal kicked off what was to be a feature of our Russian experience – food to excess! A coach took us into Moscow for breakfast and a tour, with our guide continually instructing us to “pay attention to the left or right”. The highlight was a visit to the Kremlin with its icon-filled churches, followed by more food (lunch). An impressive traffic jam delayed our return to the airport but, after a mobile phone call, Aeroflot delayed our flight by an hour. After all, our party did fill half the plane. A meal on the Krasnodar flight was followed by yet another upon arrival at the Intourist Hotel where we met the other participants, coming from Europe (Eire, France, Germany, Spain, UK) and also Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the USA.

Many thanks to those who responded to the appeals for equipment (shoes, kilts, etc.) in both issue 240 and the last RSCDS Bulletin. Much was delivered last year. The rest was shared amongst the participants of our trip. It was pleasing to recognise the collected kilts being worn with aplomb by the Kuban dancers. I was glad the Russian authorities did not search my luggage. Could I have explained carrying twelve pairs of ghillies and a ladies’ dress?

Our two weekends were spent in Krasnodar, enabling as many Kuban Dancers as possible to join us. Coaches shuttled us between the Intourist Hotel and the Palace of Culture where the dancing took place in a main hall and in a smaller mirrored room on wooden floors. Regional and national TV got wind of these exceptional proceedings. Now the whole country is aware of the dancing in Krasnodar.

Krasnodar, in southern Russia near the Black Sea, is the home of the Kuban Scottish Dancers, lead by Ilona Gumenyuk. Read her story in issue 240. Collaborating with Fiona Grant (RSCDS Bristol Branch) who set up the DanceTour Company to ease the way through the Russian bureaucracy, they spent over a year planning the event.

During the intervening week, we moved on to the Yamal Hotel at Nebug near Tuapse, overlooking the Black Sea, near the Caucasus Mountains. Here we danced in a large sports hall, again on a wooden floor.

Our classes had an international flavour, our teachers being Malcolm Brown (York), Shirley Butterfield (Christchurch NZ), Fiona Grant (Bristol), Cate Gray (Cardiff), David Queen

(Preston) and Alan Twigg (San Francisco). Our musicians were members of Scottish Measure – James Gray (Edinburgh), Andrew Lyon (Glossop) and David Queen (Preston).

In particular, at the Yamal, Alan, Cate, Malcolm and Shirley taught classes featuring dances from their respective countries. Alan featured dances from USA’s West and East coasts, ending with “Tomalena”, a five couple dance which readers in many parts of Germany, where this dance is popular, will know. It was devised for the retirement of Thomas (Toma-) and Helena (-lena) Garvie who were instrumental in keeping SCD alive on the Monterey Peninsula, California.

The Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrob-wlllantysiliogogoch Rant has yet to be written but Cate featured, in particular, dances devised in South Wales by husband Alex in the Tweeddale Collection of SCD Books. The music is available on Scottish Measure’s “A First Dram” CD, and also the “Host Of The Air” CD on which James Gray (piano) plays with Susie Petrov (Accordion) and Laura Risk (Fiddle). Cate also taught “Alison’s Round Reel” which, afterwards, was probably the first dance to be actually danced by participants in the Black Sea but apparently it was difficult completing the reel in time due to deficient breast strokes.

Malcolm taught a challenging selection of dances devised in England and chosen with the group’s experience in mind. The Brown family were represented: wife Helen’s “Threave Castle” was included, as was son Duncan’s “Dunnington Strathspey” following on from the success of his popular dance “The Chequered Court” in Book 42. (Malcolm’s own dance “The Flirtation Chase”, devised for Bulth Wells 10th Anniversary, was taught later in Krasnodar.)

Shirley taught dances from the 1998 “Canterbury Tales” book devised by members of the Canterbury Region of the RSCDS NZ Branch. In particular, the well received “Worcester Boulevard” and “Ferrymead” were featured.

During our first weekend in Krasnodar, on the Saturday David and Fiona took Country Dance technique classes for the assembly which was split into two groups. I was pleased to meet Sasha Strelakova (age 11) and Veronika Kovaleva (age 13), members of Ilona’s children’s class, competently dancing with the adults. Perhaps SCD’s future is in the hands of these youngsters far from Scotland?

On the Sunday, optionally, Cate taught Irene Fidler’s (Newcastle Branch) step dance “The Thistle”, with two strathspey and two reel steps, at a Ladies’ Step Dance class, featuring a softer and more balletic style of setting step. Also David took a Highland Class. His original plan was to conduct an elementary class until he met some of the Kuban dancers at St. Andrews and viewed a video

of them dancing. David’s plans changed to conducting a more advanced class featuring, in particular, the “Reel Of Tulloch” and the finer points of Highland Fling steps. David was struck by the speed that the Kuban Dancers assimilated steps in spite of occasional language problems.

In parallel with these classes, Alan Twigg led two sessions on Performance and Demonstration Dancing, illustrating how best to choose and choreograph medleys of dances for display purposes. For example, we learned a variation of the strathspey “Dundee Whaler” which flowed into a variation of the “Linton Ploughman”, whose orientation moved through a right angle after each repetition. This in turn flowed into a square set in readiness for “The Highlandman’s Umbrella”. (It is hoped that Alan will write for *The Reel* on this topic in a future issue.)

Optional afternoon and evening classes in Scottish Quadrilles, Orkney and Shetland Reels, conducted by Fiona, and Cape Breton Step Dancing, conducted by Alan, also took place at the Yamal.

On the last day of classes back in Krasnodar, Alan, Fiona, Malcolm and Shirley previewed dances on the evening Ball programme. Kate Zakharova and her friend Mario Nizhegorodova joined my particular class. Kate, now 18, started dancing when three years old and enjoyed ballroom dancing, specifically mentioning the cha-cha and tango. She has danced Scottish for a year and attends two classes a week, Country and Highland. She also plays the piano.

At the interval, it sounded as if our class pianist, James Gray, was playing “Miss Gibson’s Strathspey” to himself until we noticed a lower head next to him. It was Mario expertly playing. She started dancing Scottish a year ago when she was twenty, having heard about the Kuban dancers on the Internet. (See www.kuban.ru). Ten years ago she started playing the piano and has been playing Scottish for only a month! Ilona is currently trying to assemble a Scottish band. Clearly this will not be a problem with the local talent! Indeed Scottish Measure were enhanced by local musicians at the final Ball.

Our free time was occupied by activities in Krasnodar, around the Black Sea and in the Caucasus Mountains... and eating lots of food. For example, our eyes popped out at the vast array of food displayed at our Sunday lunch tables in a Cossack restaurant in Krasnodar, complete with accompanying music and dancing. Cossack costumes were also viewed in a Krasnodar museum. Can one forget the sweet chestnut honey with nuts served at a tea tasting at the Yamal?

One excursion to the Kisilov Rock, a strange geological feature overlooking the Black Sea, involved a longish walk from the coach. The good

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

news was that there was a short-cut back. The bad news was that it involved an unexpected vertical ten metre rock climb up from the beach. Needless to say, the fearless individual wearing a kilt (could it have been me?) manoeuvred himself to the rear, ensuring that those with cameras were in front.

Another trip took us to a camp, Terziyan, in the Caucasus where miles of trees covered its steep slopes. Here one could walk in the mountains, swim in the ponds, try a Russian Bath, stroke the cats and eat a never-ending barbecue featuring shashlik. The Russian bath involved a group sauna (towels and sheets provided), in which there were clumps of branches for beating each other. That day we started collecting for a thank-you present for the Kuban dancers, thus giving the idea of a whip-round a special significance. This was followed by an optional plunge into a cold pool outside. Shall we dance "Strip The Willow" again with a straight face?

We also danced on the grass, the first three dances being "The Reel Of The 51st Division", "White Heather Jig" and "Gang The Same Gate". As far as I could ascertain, these were the very first Scottish Country Dances to be danced in the Caucasus. Or do you know better? The sound of Bob Harman's bagpipes was also heard when we danced the "Gay Gordons" and a "Barn Dance".

During our return from the Yamal to Krasnodar we enjoyed a visit to a space centre which combined a museum dedicated to Russia's exploits in space, with its sputniks and space suits, with the opportunity for children to try out various machines to see if they would literally like to give becoming a cosmonaut a spin.

The Hotel Yamal provided picnic lunches for us. When a carrier bag appeared we assumed that, within, there would be a sandwich each. However the other 50 bags (one each) soon followed! The typical participant took three days to consume the whole picnic, litre cartons of fruit juice cropping up at various gatherings thereafter until our return home.

We also enjoyed special events. In Krasnodar, the first Saturday saw an introductory dance MC'd by yours truly. Two dances on the programme were dedicated to the dancers in Russia: "An Glas Eilean", a jig in a square set devised by Dorothy Bell (Bristol), and also "From The Black Isle To The Black Sea" devised by John Drewry (see page 7). This was already familiar to the Kuban dancers who could help the rest of us.

The second Saturday saw a Highland Ball MC'd by Malcolm Brown. It started in fine form with Bob Harman playing the pipes for a Grand March. When recapping "Major Ian Stewart", Malcolm helpfully reminded us of the "zdrastvuyte (hello) and do svidaniya (goodbye) setting".

In between these dances, one evening we were the guests of the Kuban Dancers for a Russian Evening. At the door, we were invited to take a welcome pinch of bread from a large loaf, dip it in salt and eat it, before being escorted arm in arm by one of the dancers attired in Russian dress to our tables, liberally covered with vodka, wine and food. We were then treated to an amazing display of Russian song, dance and music as learned by the various groups based in the Palace Of Culture.

Amongst the three hours of entertainment, the local Cossack dancing was included. Another dance featured a girl dressed up as a Samovar, an allusion to SCD's "Tea Pots" formation? We were also treated to a solo Russian dance by Sasha Strekalova, one of the children I met at the class above.

Iлона, together with Kuban dancer Sveta Kostina, danced Russian dances and attempted to teach them to us at an evening class at the Yamal, with mixed success. Like Iлона, Sveta is a natural dancer and I was amazed to be told that they learned their Russian routines together in just a

couple of hours, routines that have to be seen to be believed. Sveta started Russian Folk Dancing at school between the ages of 10 and 17. Hearing about it from friends, she started Scottish Dancing as she wished to speak English. Now she just wants to do more SCD rather than speak English! She dances Scottish 4-5 times a week in Krasnodar, the Kuban dancers having four basic sessions a week – normal Children's and Adult's Classes (Sunday), Demonstration Class (Thursday), Highland Class (Friday) with an additional class (Wednesday). After our evening of Shetland and Orkney dances and videos, Sveta said she was surprised to find these other traditions under the Scottish dance umbrella. She likes the fact that SCD is danced socially and is not just for demonstration.

Under the auspices of the Palace of Culture, different groups of singers, musicians and dancers (now including the Kuban Scottish dancers) meet. From an early age people pursue their specific interest perhaps being tempted to diversify and also try the class next door. The result is a collection of talented people of all ages.

Iлона is spreading the word in other ways. Between Krasnodar and the Yamal, we passed a Pioneers' Camp where, last summer, Iлона taught SCD to their young team leaders, also giving a performance for the children. Hopefully the team leaders will now spread the word teaching simple dances to their groups of children in the future.

In response to the Russian Evening, we reciprocated and entertained the Russians with an informal Ceilidh mixed with Country Dancing for all, an event graced by the head of the Palace of Culture. Amongst our talent, Ken Martlew supervised the choral and communal singing. Our teachers, plus others, treated us to "Schiehallion". Malcolm Brown, Penny Fee and Alan Twigg respectively entertained us with "The Highland Fling" accompanied by Cate Gray's singing, "The Scottish Lilt", and the solo hard shoe dance "The Flowers Of Edinburgh". Cate's Ladies' Step Class demonstrated "The Thistle". Fiona's Shetland Class demonstrated "The Shetland Reel". Iлона's dancers presented in dance an interpretation of the works of Burns in the tango style. One cannot forget Fiona and Iлона's Flamenco dance. But perhaps the most amazing sight was David Queen dancing "Seann Truibhas" whilst simultaneously accompanying himself on the fiddle.

A dress rehearsal for the Ceilidh took place the previous evening at a formal dinner in the 7th floor restaurant at the Yamal, graced by local dignitaries. Beforehand, whilst walking outside, I heard Bob Harman tuning his pipes. I was able to see many bedroom windows open as Russian residents leaned out, looking everywhere for the origin of this strange noise.

The holiday was a true cultural exchange. The hospitality, enthusiasm, keenness and sheer talent of the Kuban dancers was enormous. The experience of dancing in Russia exemplifies that dancing is a means of communication. If you and your partner knew the next dance, then you could dance together even if there were language problems sometimes.

Fiona and Iлона's hard work was supported by that of the other Kuban dancers. Sasha Velichko, Iлона's right hand man, stayed in the background managing all the technical and many organisational aspects of our stay in Krasnodar – arranging the coaches, managing the table arrangements, the printing, the sound equipment et al. Sasha heard of SCD from his brother one and a half years ago. He likes both Country and Highland and goes to all 4-5 of the Kuban Dancers' weekly classes. A hobby has now become a passion and his second job. Sasha likes the atmosphere, the liveliness at ceilidhs. Whereas other forms of dance are for demonstration only, he likes the social side of SCD. Sasha said that people need SCD. After their work, which is grey

and ordinary, SCD gives them life! Sasha has a wish to go to St. Andrews Summer School and has aspirations to teach. We wish him, and all the other Kuban dancers, well.

It was sad to say "Farewell". To lighten the occasion, at Krasnodar Airport those travelling in kilts were surrounded by children wishing to be photographed with them and asking for autographs!

This will surely not be the last time that the Palace Of Culture's stage is decorated with the St. Andrew's flag and the Scottish Royal Standard alongside the Russian and Kuban flags.

Jim Cook

FROM THE BLACK ISLE TO THE BLACK SEA

A new dance devised by John Drewry

Bars 8x32 Reel

1-4: 1M and 2W cross the dance, passing their partners by the right. Then 1M casts off to 2nd place on the women's side while 2W casts up to 1st place on the men's side.

5-8: 1C and 2C dance right hands across one and a quarter times round to finish with 2C in 1st place and 1C in 2nd place on own sides. 1M and 2W stay facing out.

9-16: 2C, 1C and 3C dance reels of three on own sides. To begin, 2C and 1C pass by the right. At the end, 1M stays facing out and 1W pulls her left shoulder back to finish facing out.

17-20: 1M dances up behind 2M and then dances down crossing over to 2nd place on the women's side, where he stays facing out. Meanwhile, 1W dances down behind 3W and then dances up crossing over to 2nd place on the men's side, where she stays facing out.

21-24: 1M dances down behind 3W and then dances up crossing over to 2nd place on his own side. Meanwhile, 1W dances up behind 2M and then dances down crossing over to 2nd place on her own side.

25-32: 2C, 1C and 3C dance six hands round and back.

Repeat having passed a couple.

John devised the dance after reading issue 240 which mentioned our Summer School on the shores of the BLACK SEA. John explains the background for the title. The BLACK ISLE is not an island but the peninsula which lies between the Beaulieu Firth and the Cromarty Firth north-east of Inverness. A very fertile area, it got its name as it is seldom covered by snow, unlike most parts of Russia! John has kindly given permission for the dance, recently published in The Stoneywood Collection, to be printed here. Thank you, John. — Jim Cook

BRANCH MATTERS

The season is now well under way, with two of the regular functions giving momentum to the coming year.

Our season started with Neil Copland and his Band coming down from Scotland. The dance was well attended, but the beautiful late summer evening made some dancers want to enjoy, as we thought, the last of the summer.

The Day School at Parsons Green was very well attended, well up on previous years. The new location is very central. The themed classes are again proving that different aspects of Scottish Country Dancing can be emphasised. Our teachers Johan MacLean and Ian Hall were ably supported by Heulwen Hall and Barbara Manning. The Musicians' Course, though with fewer participants, was well received and under David Hall's guidance the enhanced sound of their music gave the dance that extra lift when they played at the ceilidh later in the evening. Many thanks to Margaret Catchick (dancing) and Rachel Wilton (musicians) who masterminded the whole day.

Do make the 20th December, our Christmas Dance, a good start to the festivities and then round off the jollifications with the Burns' Supper and Ceilidh on the 17th January. We found that combining these last two made a very enjoyable and different evening.

Please encourage your friends and colleagues to come to our dances and classes. There are lots of people who have not yet discovered the joys of Scottish Country Dancing.

Arrangements are well in hand to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Branch in the 2004-5 season (see the front page). We are extremely fortunate to have been offered the Hurlingham Club as the venue for the Ball next October. This prestigious Club is usually only enjoyed by their members.

I would like to wish all our members and readers a Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year.

Owen Meyer

SOCIETY AGM WEEKEND

Perth, 31st October – 1st November 2003

The AGM weekend as usual began with a formal Ball on the Friday evening (*see photo*) and ended with a less formal Ball on the Saturday evening. Several hundred dancers filled a vast sports centre on each occasion. The programme for the Friday Ball was written by Teachers' Association (Canada) and all the dances had a Canadian connection. On Saturday the programme was by London Branch and the MCs were Andrew Kellett and Simon Wales.

On the Saturday morning there were two informal discussion meetings. The first was a Branch Forum, which Bruce Fraser and Marjorie Hume of Border Branch chaired. Each Branch was invited to send one delegate to this meeting and while others could attend as observers, only Branch delegates could speak. Contributions were constructive and to the point, and many good ideas were raised.

Four topics were discussed. First, **communication**: Ways of improving timeliness and content of the Society's communications were discussed. Ideas for making greater use of the internet were considered, and the Society urged to set up an e-forum to supplement the strathspey server. Second, **Branch interaction**: the value of Branch networks was discussed. It was felt they needed to focus on promoting good practice in particular areas. Branch twinning was also considered. Then Simon Wales for London Branch introduced a discussion of **Society publications**, querying the desirability of the Society producing a book of new dances each year. Would it not be better to republish earlier books in a more useable form, as in the admirable publication consolidating Society leaflets? An Australian survey showed that 40% of members had no use for the new dance book. Other alternatives suggested were a book of dances for beginners, and crib cards. Finally, could the Society make a **film of Scottish Country Dancing for TV**, showing it to be fun and popularising it, as 'Riverdance' had done for Irish dancing?

The second discussion meeting, called 'The Floor is Yours', was open to all. It focussed on just one subject: whether only Branch delegates should vote at AGMs, as at present, or whether each member should have a vote. Jimmy Hill and Andrew Smith gave very skilful presentations on each side of the argument. We hope to circulate

notes of the debate, but meanwhile here is a brief summary. *For the status quo*: Branches are essential to promote SCD. Only if Branches flourish can the Society flourish and grow. The present voting system encourages participation in the Society's work – witness the attendance at AGMs – and prevents a few individuals having too much influence. One member one vote would necessitate HQ having a complete list of members' names and addresses, and sending each member the information needed to vote wisely. This would be expensive, necessitating a big increase in subscription, and much of the information would end up in the bin. *For one member one vote*: members are the Society and should be able to express their views directly. They feel disenfranchised if they receive information only through the Branch and can express their opinions only through the Branch. They are often not consulted on who represents the Branch at AGMs or how the representatives speak and vote. Although it is said that many members 'only want to dance', Andrew Smith said that many Bristol Branch members would like to be more involved in running the Society and would be prepared to pay more for membership.

The meeting did not reach a consensus, although many relevant points were made.

After these interesting discussions the AGM itself on Saturday afternoon was to me disappointingly dull. It was however packed: some 500 people, half delegates and half observers, attended and few left before the meeting ended after one and three quarter hours. As well as the necessary annual business, seven members received the Society's scroll and the Chairman read out long citations detailing their contributions over many years. It was good to see among them Robert Mackay, whom many readers of *The Reel* will know as an expert pianist accompanying classes and dances.

Many thanks are due to HQ for organising the weekend, helped by Perth and Perthshire Branch and a number of stewards from many Branches including London. Like many others I greatly enjoyed meeting old and new friends from other parts of the world and briefly visiting the fair city of Perth.

Daniel Capron

BRANCH DANCES

CHRISTMAS DANCE

Saturday 20th December 2003

7.00 for 7.15 - 11.00 p.m.

St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street, SW1.

Craigellachie

The Machine without Horses	12-12
Maxwell's Rant.....	18-10
The Braes of Breadalbane	21-7
Ladies' Fancy	13-12
Bratach Bana.....	Drewry
Culla Bay	41-2
Miss Nancy Frowns	14-5
Dancing in the Streets	42-4
Margaret Parker's Strathspey	31-3
Cramond Bridge.....	London 1979
Tribute to the Borders	Leaflet 31
The Hamilton Rant.....	22-2
The Corian Strathspey.....	43-8
Follow Me Home	38-3
Earlstoun Loch.....	Foss
Neidpath Castle.....	22-9
The Hollin Buss	24-8
The Royal Yacht Britannia	43-3
Autumn in Appin	31-5
Argyll's Fancy	Graded 23

Admission £9.50 members, £10.50 non-members, £2 children, but members' children admitted free. Refreshments and a glass of wine included in the price.

BURNS' SUPPER and Ceilidh Dance

Saturday 17th January 2004

7.00 - 11.00 p.m.

St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street, SW1.

Frank Reid

Come and enjoy a traditional Burns' Supper with haggis (including a splash of whisky), neaps and tatties, piped in and addressed in the immortal way.

There will be ceilidh dancing to Frank Reid's music. All the dances will be from the Collins Book and will be called. This is a great chance to bring your friends to experience the fun of Scottish music and dancing.

Admission: £9.50 for RSCDS members, £10.50 non-members, including a glass of wine and supper.

BEGINNERS' DANCE

Saturday 20th March 2004

7.00 - 10.30 p.m.

St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street, SW1.

Green Ginger

The Happy Meeting	19-9
Nice to See You	40-3
Grant's Reel	14-2
Middling Thank You.....	15-8
Miss Flora's Favourite	Graded
Rakes of Glasgow	11-11
Espie McNab.....	MMM 1-14
Sleepie Maggie	11-5
Joe MacDairmid's Jig	5 SCDS 1982-3
The Laird of Milton's Daughter	22-10
Round Reel of Eight.....	27-7
Monymusk	11-2
St. Andrew's Fair.....	5 SCDS 1982-2
The Reverend John MacFarlane.....	37-1
She's Ower Young to Marry Yet	14-8
The White Cockade.....	5-11
EH3 7AF	40-6
The De'il Amang the Tailors	14-7

Admission £7 members, £8 non-members, £2 children, but members' children admitted free.

Children's Corner

CHILDREN'S DAY

Saturday 20th March 2004

St. Columba's Church, Pont St. SW1.

11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. Children's Class £1
2.00 - 4.30 p.m. Children's Dance £2

After the success of last year's class the Branch will hold children's classes for children and young people before the afternoon dance. Please come and join us. Lunch will be provided between the class and the dance for all those attending.

Dancing to the music of Green Ginger

Nice to See You	R	40-3
Leap Year	J	Graded 1
Johnny Groat's House.....	R	18-1
Kendall's Hornpipe.....	J	Graded 22
Highland Fair.....	J	Graded 6
Long Live the Queen	R	MMM 1
A Jig for Mrs Dunn.....	J ...	Children's 8
Round Reel of Eight	R	27-7
The Dhoon	J ...	Children's 1
Le Papillon.....	J ...	Children's 2
The British Grenadiers.....	R	MMM 1
Lady C. Bruce's Reel.....	R	MMM 1
Cumberland Reel	J	1-11
Kelso Races	R	MMM 1
Espie McNab	J	MMM 1
The Dashing White Sergeant ..R.....		3-2

CHILDREN'S IDTA EXAMS

Saturday 6th March 2004

St. Columba's Church, Pont Street, SW1.

Further details will be sent to all Children's Class teachers. Please contact Rachel Wilton if you are not on the list and would like to enter candidates for the exams.

Tel: 020 8858 7729,

e-mail: wiltonrachel@hotmail.com.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Branch Dances 2004

at St. Columba's unless otherwise stated

Saturday 22nd May

David Hall

Saturday 12th June

Craigellachie

Polesden Lacey

Saturday 18th September

Green Ginger

Saturday 30th October

Craigellachie

Hurlingham Ball (see page 1)

WOULD YOU BUY IT?

The Marketing subcommittee are looking for ideas for worthwhile accessories to be sold by the RSCDS. Please send any ideas to HQ or speak to me (contact details next column).

Rachel Wilton

CLASSES

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

Class	Day	Time	Location	Teacher / Musician
ELEMENTARY	Wednesday	6.30 - 8.00	Marlborough School, Sloane Avenue, SW3	Gaynor Curtis / Jean Harrison
POPULAR S.C. DANCES	Wednesday	8.15 - 9.45	Marlborough School, Sloane Avenue, SW3	Lindsey Rousseau / Ian Cutts
TECHNIQUE	Wednesday	7.30 - 9.30	St. Barnabas' & St. Phillip's School, Pembroke Mews, W8	Angela Young / Ken Martlew
DEMONSTRATION	Tuesday	7.15 - 9.15	<i>For details contact Gaynor Curtis, 01483 721989.</i>	Ann Dix / Sandra Smith
GENERAL (Central)	Wednesday	2.30 - 4.30	St. Columba's Church Hall, Pont Street, SW1	Jeni Rutherford

**This term ends in the week beginning 1st December 2003. Next term starts week beginning 12th January 2004.
Half term break is the week beginning 16th February 2004. All enquiries about classes to Margaret Shaw, 020 7329 2847.**

HIGHLAND CLASSES

Thursdays 4th December 2003, 15th January 2004, 5th February and 4th March.

7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.

Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2.

Teacher: **Malcolm Ferris Lay**

Musician: **Judith Smith**

£6 per class.

Further details from Malcolm, tel: 01279 425081
or e-mail malcolm@williamsonmagor.com.

DANCING PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT / SUNDAY TECHNIQUE CLASSES

The Band Hall, Coram's Fields,
93 Guilford Street, London WC1

7th December 2003, 11th January, 1st February,
7th March and 4th April 2004.

11.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

During the winter the Sunday Technique Classes will continue to run monthly as usual but each one will emphasise a section of the Dancing Proficiency Assessment so that in April anyone who wishes to may take part in an assessment day. We must emphasise that the assessment is VOLUNTARY – you may attend the classes without being assessed.

Teachers: **Jenny Greene, Joan Desborough,
Philippe Rousseau, Angela Young**

Musicians: **Judith Smith, Peter Jenkins,
Barbara Manning, Ken Martlew**

Further details from: Margaret Shaw,
tel 020 7329 2847,

or email peterknight@queensquay.co.uk.

WEEKEND SCHOOL

10th - 12th September 2004

The Royal Agricultural College,
Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

A dancing weekend to celebrate the start of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of London Branch.

Teacher: **Mary Murray**
(replacing Graham Donald, who is not now available)

Pianist: **Robert Mackay**

Saturday night dance: **Green Ginger**
Cost £165 en suite.

Further information and application forms from
Helen Brown, 6 Wells Drive,
London NW9 8DD, tel: 020 8205 0958.

RSCDS LONDON BRANCH DAY SCHOOL

18th October 2003

Comments on a Day School can be a very dry and somewhat tedious read – especially if the Day School went that way too! Luckily for me, the one run at Parsons Green by the London Branch turned out to be anything but dull.

The more experienced dancers were taught by Johan MacLean on the Dynamics within the Dance. We were progressing nicely through the first dance, “Miss Cahoon’s Reel” when one couple bravely announced they were in the wrong class and disappeared stage left. The rest of us crossed our fingers and carried on regardless. Much the same group had Ian Hall proving that Dancing was indeed Fun (and laughter certainly echoed around the hall) whilst teaching us dances from the new book as well.

I asked Ian MacGillivray how he had got on at his first ever day school and he told me he had looked forward to it with eager anticipation and had arrived in the morning to find a buzz of excitement. He went on: “ ‘Is dancing Fun?’ was the question posed by Ian Hall in the morning and by the end of it, we felt it certainly was. Johan MacLean taught us *The Elements of Dance* most expertly in the afternoon. Dances included *Monymusk* and *Jimmy’s Fancy*. Barbara Manning provided wonderful accompaniment on her fiddle”. Ian said he had had a thoroughly enjoyable day and would indeed seriously consider attending more!

During the free time after tea there were several options to be considered – a musicians’ session or a Lancers class, or simply catch up with friends. A pile of Bill Ireland’s copies of RSCDS dance books were on a table with a note that if anyone wanted one, to take their selection and leave a donation. I was among those that did and filled a gap in my own collection.

David Hall and his Band came over from Belgium to play for the Ceilidh in the evening. It was very nice to burl without causing too many horrified glances from the stricter members of the Society. Among the Ceilidh items were Jenny Greene’s jolly display of clog dancing (last time I saw something as clever as that it was on the stage at Covent Garden in *La Fille Mal Gardée!*); the dem team danced *Royal Salute*, which was first performed in front of Queen Victoria; and Simon Wales taught us an Estonian dance called *Kaerajaan*, which involved a lot of hopping and clapping. He had danced it in Estonia with a large number of seven-year olds!

Having learned to reel when I was 12 (my mother had said all young ladies should know how to dance and had sent me off to the nearest class which turned out to be Scottish Country Dancing), and to dance ‘properly’ about 15 years later when I discovered there was more to it than the dozen or so dances I knew, I have been to a fair number of Day Schools, and would be prepared to give this one the prize for the best so far. Congratulations are definitely due to Margaret Catchick for organising her first Day School so brilliantly.

Caroline Allcock

MUSICIANS’ DAY SCHOOL

David Hall’s teaching is excellent. It ranks with his Highland Dancing. Absolutely first class. “Put lightness into your playing. Let it breathe. Dancers like playing to be interesting.” They may not be aware of their musical need. They will tell you which bands are good. They probably don’t know why.

David’s harmony session was brilliant. He made his comments so clear and easily understood. He must be one of the best musicians’ instructors. He knows the dances. He knows the dance floor.

I would catch a Eurostar to Brussels like a shot for more, please.

John Nicholson

MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Board has met twice since the report in the last *Reel*. Some of the projects are reaching fruition: the new procedures for appointing examiners, the Children’s Medal Tests, planning improvements to Headquarters’ basement — these include meeting rooms, an archive room, storage and improved toilet facilities.

The updated Strategic Plan has been sent to Branches and put on the website, together with the self-evaluation section for Branches. The changes in the examinations structure are being given a great deal of attention and were to be discussed in detail at the next Board meeting on 15th November. Investigations are continuing into finding an alternative website provider with the required additional capacity to extend the amount of information available to members and non-members through the RSCDS website. The Board recorded its thanks to Johan MacLean for her superb contribution as Director of Summer School. Summer School plans for next year include a change to four one week courses; dancers may attend any 1, 2, 3 or 4 weeks! The Board spent time reflecting on the work of the past year and deciding on priorities for the coming year.

Reports of Board meetings appear on the website one week after they have been circulated to Branches; they are also all available at Branch functions for members to read. We look forward to *The Reel* readers’ contributions to the Great Debate, started at the AGM in Perth, about whether the Society should be a members’ organisation or an organisation of Branches (see page 3).

Rachel Wilton

DEMONSTRATIONS

The demonstration class started the season with its usual busy programme of events including the Epsom Caledonian Club Garden Party in August and two appearances at Kensington Gardens in September.

Teams were also out for the Canadian Thanksgiving and the Dance around the World event at Cecil Sharp House, and the Royal Salute was performed to much acclaim at the Branch Ceilidh. Our thanks to Dave Hall for providing the accompaniment.

We provided a Piper and MC for the Regent’s College Student Induction and the team has been involved in the recording of some of the MacNab Dances at Herringham Hall.

Future engagements include performances at Lee Abbey, Earls Court at the end of October, the National Trust for Scotland Party at the beginning of December and of course the Branch Christmas Dance at Pont Street.

Congratulations to Mairi and Mitch Scanlan on the birth of their daughter Iona Bethan, a sister for Hamish and Finlay. We look forward to seeing them all when they next visit us from their new home in Edinburgh.

We are pleased to offer a warm welcome to Sam Schad, a new member of the class and a welcome back to Jeremy Hill and Dave Massie. Our sincere thanks go to our teacher Ann Dix assisted by Joan Desborough.

Publicity material for the class is presently under review. Consequently we would be delighted to hear from anyone who has good quality recent pictures showing the team in action.

We are always keen to welcome dancers of an advanced standard so anyone interested in joining the team please get in touch with Jeff Robertson on 01903 530750, 020 7730 9633 or email jtr@ctg.co.uk.

Jeff Robertson

UNVEILING OF THE SCULPTURE OF SIR JIMMY SHAND

As soon as we turned in to Burnside in Auchtermuchty just after 10 o’clock, we realised this was going to be a well-attended event – there were three policemen directing the traffic and more on duty at the field which served as a car park, which was already half full. The waiting crowds were kept entertained by Sir Jimmy’s recordings relayed over a loudspeaker and not a few feet were tapping in time to the music.

Promptly at 11 am, the official party arrived: four generations of the Shand family, led by Lady Shand; the Earl and Countess of Elgin; the Convener of Fife Council; Menzies Campbell, MP for North East Fife; the Project Chairman; and other distinguished guests. The Project Chairman, Dr Sandy Tulloch, introduced the proceedings, recalling that when he and the rest of the committee announced tentative plans for a memorial sculpture, the response was so enthusiastic that they immediately realised the project was going to be possible. Other speakers, including Jimmy Shand Jnr, paid tribute to Sir Jimmy’s humanity, his good humour, his modesty, and above all his musicianship.

Born in East Wemyss, Sir Jimmy started his working life as a miner, but soon – as one speaker put it – “moved from the coal pit to the orchestra pit” (perhaps not a very accurate description of the venues where he played, but one saw what was meant). He later became identified with Auchtermuchty “to the extent that no one ever mentioned ‘Muchty without mentioning Jimmy Shand, and vice versa!’”, so this was the obvious place to erect the statue. The site was chosen by the Shand family, who also decided that the statue should portray Sir Jimmy as he was in the fifties and sixties when he and his band were touring the world playing to huge audiences.

Thanks to the generosity of Scottish and Irish dance bands, Branches of the RSCDS, Accordion and Fiddle Clubs and various other organisations, the project committee was able to commission the Fife sculptor, David Annand, to create a 110% size bronze sculpture of Sir Jimmy. This was duly unveiled by the Earl of Elgin, the Patron of the Project.

As soon as the formalities were over, the crowd surged forward, cameras at the ready, to have a closer look at the fine and life-like sculpture, and to read the inscription at the base:

SIR JIMMY SHAND MBE MA

BORN 28TH JANUARY 1908

DIED 23RD DECEMBER 2000

HAPPY TO MEET

SORRY TO PART

HAPPY TO MEET AGAIN

Rena Stewart

NEW RECORDINGS

Ian MacPhail and his Band. — RSCDS Book 43 (CD 041).

Kenny Thomson and the Wardlaw Band — Quick Here's Anither Yin (BRCD 034)

Nice to See You, The Chequered Court, S-Locomotion, Beeswing, Pelorus Jack, Anna Holden's Strathspey, Waltz Country Dance, Ways in New Hall, Summer School Peregrinations, Castle Douglas, The Highland Rambler. The Byron Strathspey, Mrs Stewart's Jig, Angus MacLeod.

David Cunningham and his Band — The Silver Collection (TRCD 0302)

Ten dances from The Leicester Branch Book to celebrate its 25th Anniversary, and five more leaflet dances published by Leicester in recent years. Instructions for these five are included in the CD booklet.

Iain MacPhail has clearly put a lot of work and thought into the music on this CD. Three of the originals are by him and he has included a further 19 of his own compositions.

The recording quality here is much better than in Iain's CDs for Books 36 and 37. His own accordion is much more prominent, there is less verb and the rhythm section is not so obtrusive. All in all a fine CD with lots of lift and swing. I particularly like a set of four Irish song tunes played for a strathspey.

Kenny Thomson is a very experienced and competent accordionist who runs a tight ship with a good solid sound and tempo which is just spot on. His brother Stewart plays second accordion and Jim Clark is a first-rate pianist.

What can I say about David Cunningham's band that I have not said before? His band is in the top flight and this CD certainly proves that fact once again. David — it is brilliant; it is fantastic.

Now to three CDs aimed at the old time/ceilidh dancer: In Full Swing by Graeme Mitchell's Band (CD GAR 001); The Top of Ben Lomond by Donald MacLeod's Band (SHIEL CD 018); and Industrial Strength by West Telferton Caledonian Band (SHIEL CD 019).

The musicianship on all three is, again, of very high quality and all have a nice tight sound. But, I have a few pertinent questions. Why does Graeme play John MacNeil's Reel instead of the correct original for Dashing White Sergeant and New High level for Circassion Circle? Likewise he uses the original for Miss Hadden's Reel for Strip the Willow.

Donald MacLeod plays Corn Riggs for D.W.S. and Roxburgh Castle for Circassion. Why? I do know that many other bands do the same sort of thing. Am I too much of a "Society purist"? Perhaps non-RSCDS dancers do not care what is played.

West Telferton has a fine fiddle lead in Andrew Knight. They play four full length country dances but they are far too fast for comfortable dancing. This is a pity because the selections of tunes are good.

.....
CDs of vintage music continue to be released. Just one to mention in detail is by the late Lindsay Ross and his Band (LEGACY 18 CD), with 18 tracks originally recorded by EMI between 1960 and 1963. The only full length country dances are Argyll's Fancy and The Earl of Errol's Reel. We also hear probably the best ever recordings for The Montgomeries' Rant and General Stuart's Reel but they are only 6x32 and 5x32 respectively.

There are lots more on the market; music from Jimmy Blue, Will Starr, Adam Rennie *et al* and songs from Father Sydney MacEwan, Robert Wilson, Calvin Kennedy and the Glasgow Orpheus Choir.

Anyone seeking further details can phone me on 020 7286 1923.

.....
The CD for the Leeds Book is not yet available but with Keith on the fiddle and Muriel on piano it is worth waiting for.

John Laurie

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING: FUN OR LIFE-THREATENING?

This article is intended to encourage and stimulate discussion. It is an abridgment from an article which first appeared in TACTalk and we thank the Teachers' Association (Canada) for permission to reprint it. The author's description of current practice presumably relates to Canada, and may not always be true of south-east England.

Two years ago, I took a class in how to teach scuba diving. Run by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), and called the Instructor Development Course (IDC), it was a many-month training session of classroom work, practice teaching, and interning during real classes, culminating in a set of theory, diving, and teaching exams administered by personnel from the PADI headquarters. Sounds familiar?

I realized that what we were trying to do for our candidates was exactly what my IDC instructor was trying to do for us divers: simultaneously get us ready to pass an exam, and get us started down the road of being quality instructors. These are conflicting goals for the tutor, and confusing to the candidate; this is true for both SCD and scuba diving.

I learned a lot from the IDC that has helped me be a better teacher of SCD, and a better tutor of SCD teachers. Let me explain some aspects, provide some conjectures on how we might improve the teaching of SCD and tutoring of candidates, and offer some suggestions. None of this is meant to disparage our SCD or tutoring; it is intended to relate some "lessons learned" that have made a difference to me, and which might help you. Ideas for candidate classes and ideas for our regular weekly classes and monthly socials are mingled.

Positive Teaching

Scuba diving is fundamentally life-threatening. There are several things you can do that will injure you, or even kill you. But the instruction of it almost never mentions these things, because they are negative statements. The entire training regime for scuba diving is positive: "We are here to have fun, and we will have fun in such a way that we are safe while doing it." The attitude taught in the IDC is that these are adults, spending real money and precious time, and if they aren't having fun then they won't come back. They have lots of things they can do with their time and money; scuba diving must compete for their attention, or they will go elsewhere.

Scottish Country Dancing is NOT fundamentally life-threatening, but it often seems to be taught as if it were! And it is too often taught that you must do it the right way, with an implied "or else." It is, frankly, negative teaching, and we wonder why adults make decisions not to come back. Some have argued that this is simply a difference between traditional British school approaches and the more "user-friendly" approaches common (for example) in the U.S. I want only to raise the issue of being positive, emphasising the fun, and not being negative and obsessive about a lack of correctness.

Here's an example of that, from the diving training. We are taught to demonstrate something (underwater or at the surface), then ask the student to repeat what's been demonstrated. Sounds familiar? Then we're taught to say – using these words until we can find our own equivalent – "Good job! I particularly liked the way you(fill in the blank). It might work even better if you(fill in the blank)." I must find something positive to say, before I offer a

suggestion for improvement! Wow! Try that in your next SCD class! Watch the response!

Demonstrating Skills

In scuba we must demonstrate something before asking the student to do it. In the IDC training, we are graded on the ability to demonstrate something so a student can see it clearly. The grading is a score from 1 to 5:

- 1 means I was barely able to do it;
- 2 means it was tolerable; and
- 3 means it was done competently.

(Here's the important part...)

- 4 means I did it well, and slowly enough that it would be easy to follow it and mimic it; and
- 5 means a 4, plus I made it look simple.

Scores of 4 and 5 are what an instructor must have; one is trying to teach after all, not just be competent.

There are 20 fundamental skills one must master well enough to get at least a 3 on all of them, and a total of at least 68 points. The peer pressure among the IDC candidates is to get at least 4s, and 5s on a third of them. I am still proud that during my IDC I scored 4s on a third of the skills and 5s on two-thirds, and during my Instructor Exam in front of the PADI examiners, I got 5s on all four skills that were pulled out randomly for me to demonstrate.

Our equivalent in SCD teacher-training is to look at the footwork and dancing in our Candidate Class, and demand 3s at best; we might even tolerate a few 2s. It is hardly mentioned that the point is to demonstrate a skill to the student; we focus mostly on showing that we can dance. And we have no equivalent list of 20 fundamental skills. We have 5 steps and a longish list of figures, but no clear feedback system (like 3s minimum and 68 points) to tell our candidates how well they are doing, and where they need to spend time with each other or in front of a mirror self helping. Such rigor might be a bit much in our regular classes, but it might be very useful in our teacher training classes.

The 20 fundamental skills in the diving training also allow a natural sequencing of a class, and provide a basis for building up the class content from session to session.

How do we do the equivalent in SCD? We do talk about it, and try and do it – for example, we teach pas de basque before teaching poussette – but I'm not sure most teachers have thought through which are the fundamental skills and which are the derivative skills – the things that can be added on later. We assume that the footwork comes first and then we'll add on the geography. This works for people with a lot of body awareness (women?) and less natural spatial orientation, but what about the people who have great spatial orientation (men?) but not much body awareness?

In scuba diving, we demonstrate the skill to the class, and then one at a time the students demonstrate it back to us. If it is OK, we go to the next student. If it is not OK, we work with that student before going on. If remediation can't be done relatively quickly, then an "assistant instructor" in the class takes over with the student while the instructor goes on to the next. Assistant Instructor is an actual rating, for which one takes exams and gets certificated, like a Preliminary Pass in SCD; more on this later. In SCD, we demonstrate (probably not enough), we request performance, and we then say to the group at large, "Some of you were not —", and expect the offenders to know it was them and magically correct it!

In diving, if the student can't, for example, get

water out of their masks, we don't say "Do it again." We say (or demonstrate) the element of the performance that they need to correct to do it right. That is, we tell/show them what they need to do – what action to take – rather than give them the objective and expect them to figure out how to achieve it. In golf, the pro doesn't say, "Hit the ball further and straighter:" but rather, "Take more back swing and keep your head down." In SCD we say, "Phrase it better." Perhaps we should say, "Take shorter steps so you don't get there so soon."

Instructional Syllabus

The scuba diving instruction is done in a very methodical way, constrained by a syllabus that has almost no freedom in it. The build-up of skills and what happens in the second versus third class is not at the instructor's discretion. There are a set of specific skills that I must demonstrate and get sufficient student performance on in each class. There are also a set of "dive flexible skills" that I can throw into any class because they do not need to be in sequence after or before some other skill. So I have freedom to adjust the class to the students, to toss in something fun at the moment they need it, etc. However, the benefit of the constrained syllabus is that another instructor can take over my class, or the student can go to some other instructor's class, and fit right in.

If our basic SCD classes were equally constrained, they would possibly be more efficient, could be tuned up very tightly over time, we could address the individual students, and the students coming out of each basic class would have an identified set of skills for the next phase of their dancing.

Assistant Instructors

In scuba, the professional ranks comprise three levels, A *Divemaster*, at the lowest rung, is trained to be helpful, to do certain things independently and others things only under the watchful eye of an instructor, to be able to demonstrate those 20 skills with lots of 4s and some 5s, and to work with certificated divers more than with beginning student divers. At the upper rungs are various levels of *Instructors*, who have been trained to work with beginners and to offer various speciality courses. In between, on the middle rung, is the *Assistant Instructor*, who has taken all the training to be an instructor but has not yet taken the instructor exam given by visiting examiners from Headquarters. The "AIs" can do everything the Divemasters can do, and a few of the things the Instructors can do.

Most classes have an Instructor and either a Divemaster or AI helping. If the instructor demonstrates a skill, and one of the students cannot show competence in it, then the helper works with the student to improve the performance, and later the Instructor evaluates the performance. The Divemaster and AI often become Instructors, but usually only after a period of working in the classes (and leading fun dives in open water) and apprenticing to more experienced Instructors.

We have something quite similar to this in SCD, of course, with one enormous difference. Our "Prelims" are like a combination of the Divemasters and the Assistant Instructors; they have much of the training, but not all of it. In today's version of the examinations, their dancing competence is supposed to be complete, so the full Certificate class can focus on teaching. The big difference is in scuba Instructors can

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

train and certify Divemasters locally and more experienced Instructors (Master Instructors, on yet a higher rung of the ladder) can train and certify Assistant Instructors too. Only those on the highest run of the ladder – Course Directors – can train Instructors, but they cannot certify them; that must be done by visiting examiners from Headquarters.

How might this work in SCD? Our Candidate Class Tutors would be able to train and certify against a very clear set of standards “Teaching Assistants,” who would be just like our current Full Certificate dancers but without the examination in front of examiners from Headquarters. The Teaching Assistants could work with individuals to get that pas de basque tuned up, or give feedback on posture and arms, etc, but they would not be entitled to say that an individual has passed the “John Drewry Class” and is ready for the Challenging Dances Friday night party. The advantage of this scheme is that we could get more people into teaching, with less stress from having to go through full-scale exams. When they are ready and the logistics are convenient, they could sit their exam in front of examiners from Headquarters and get fully credentialed. Another advantage is that this would allow visiting examiners to deal only with the final stages of preparation to be a teacher; they would leave the early stages to existing teachers and tutors.

There are a lot of possible variants on this, but the main idea is to delegate to existing teachers – or maybe only to those who take some extra training and receive some additional credentials – the responsibility to certify the beginning states of new teachers. Headquarters would only focus on that final stage. The simplest version would be to say that Candidate Class tutors can “certify” Prelims, and train Full Certificate Teachers, but only Headquarters can certify Teachers.

What brings the students to a particular class, or drives them away? Several obvious things, well-documented and not controversial: 1) location and timing, 2) quality and comfort of facilities, especially the dance floor, and 3) use of music (with decreasing desirability: live music, good CDs and sound system, tapes and poor sound, old records). Then there are less well-documented things, 4) quality of the teacher(s) knowledge, experience, attitude, commitment and 5) attitude of the class (its *culture*, is it welcoming to new dancers, fun versus obsessive).

Numbers (4) and (5) are the tough ones. Most groups can't change their teacher(s), and changing the culture of a class is difficult, slow, and rarely successful. All of us have had the comparative experiences of being in a class that has had stimulating, challenging, positive, fun teaching, and those that are less so. Which would you choose to go to week after week? And if only the latter were available, would you still choose to go at all? There is demonstrable evidence in our shrinking SCD community that the five criteria above are not being tuned up so that people are attracted to the activity. It could be any of the criteria that are working against us, but we need to look inward to understand how to make needed changes.

Rethinking our fundamental structures

In scuba, one takes classes in order to get better at diving, but the main point is to go diving. Training and diving are separated. In SCD, we mingle the learning/teaching in classes with the sociability of dancing, and occasionally have pure social events.

Dive centres that offer classes at places and

times that students don't want to take them go out of business. Dirty, unhealthy swimming pools drive people away, as does poorly maintained equipment. All surviving dive centres have tuned up items (1) and (2) above as well as they can, so it makes little difference to student choice. Surveys have shown that students often choose a dive centre based on their interactions with the instructors; if the “chemistry” is not there, if the student doesn't like the attitudes or approach, they go elsewhere. Sounds familiar?

But here is one of the biggest things I've learned from scuba, and one that we should think about as a dancing community: dive centres speak of the three “E's,” namely Education (initial and continuing training), Equipment, and Entertainment (including travel, scuba clubs, and other social events). People become divers mainly for the Entertainment; dive centres survive by selling Equipment; and the purpose of Education is to get new divers into the system. This separation of the enterprise into its constituent parts, with clarity of the role of each part, is extremely useful in helping dive centres decide where to focus and determine how they are doing.

Some people, of course, find fun in continual self-improvement. They take scuba class after scuba class and collect certification cards for identifying fish or underwater photography; their fun is in continual learning, as well as in diving. In SCD we merge Education and Entertainment so that those who want to be Entertained are constantly involved in Education, whether they want to be or not. Groups sometimes try to separate these things, for example, by having the Class early in the evening and then having social dancing. However, if we were to follow the scuba strategy, we'd have 1) a Basic class with a specified set of skills that people can show mastery of, and then graduate. This class would be run at frequent intervals over a short period. 2) a choice of continuing education activities to the various interests (dem classes, difficult dances, advanced technique), with each having specified skills and graduations. 3) lots of opportunities to use all these skills in weekly social dancing (NOT classes), monthly parties, away-weekends, and week-long adventures involving travel and dancing for vacations.

What's different about this? The focus of the community would be on the Entertainment, and all the Educational activities would be ways to get more people into SCD and to get into some of the more difficult or challenging kinds of Entertainment. For example, you wouldn't be able to come to the Friday night challenging dance/party unless you had completed the challenging dances class. More importantly, it puts the focus back on the fun, with the classes having continuously evolving membership as people join and complete them. One might still have occasional large workshops, because that is a special event and fun in its own right. It's time to get back to the entertainment aspects of SCD.

The analogy to those divers who want to keep on learning, and take class after class is those dancers who are always testing their own competence, and want to take lots of instruction from different teachers so they can get better and *do it right*. For these people, who I would estimate are at most a quarter of the dancing population, blending classes and dancing works well... if the class is constantly challenging them and giving them new material and new feedback. Mostly, of course, our one-size-fits-all classes do not work for these dancers.

So we have our weekly class that might make a quarter of our dancers happy with the continual learning and improvement, and we pitch its level at the others, who aren't really interested. Are we

surprised people drop out?

I recently chatted with dancers from an area that has several classes. One of the classes was taught as pure fun; footwork and technique were not part of the evenings, but social interactions and fun were. This class was large and growing. A few dancers wanted more, so they would also go to another class where technique was emphasised. Perhaps those groups have got it right: don't make everybody keep learning and improving, but make sure that is available.

The SCD community is shrinking in many places, and evidently shrinking worldwide, so we need to look carefully at how we run our activities, and what our objectives are. There may be some lessons in other leisure-time activities that will help us. What lessons can you draw from your activities outside SCD?

Melbourne G. Briscoe

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

White Dresses

Christchurch, Dorset.

Dear Daniel,

I would like to comment on Susanna Hawkins' letter in the issue 244 of *The Reel*, in which she suggests that the London Dem Team ladies should discard the white dresses for demonstrations as she thinks they are outmoded.

I strongly disagree – white dresses are traditional and white suits everybody, whatever their age. However, more importantly, it is the men in their splendid attire who are the main focus of attention in Scottish Country Dancing and the ladies in simple white dresses complement the men's image and the tartan sashes.

Susanna suggests, as a substitute, a free choice of ball gowns in various colours – oh dear, this could be ghastly! Another of her suggestions is – all the ladies dressed similarly but in a colour chosen by the team. Again, this would be difficult, as whatever colour be chosen this would not necessarily complement all the ladies, or all the tartans.

Please London Team ladies, retain your white dresses, you look lovely.

White dresses not sexy enough you say Susannah – surely sexiness radiates from the person, not their attire.

Yours sincerely,

Ecco Price

Hove, Sussex

Dear Daniel,

Originally everyday clothes were worn for Country Dancing. Photographs of Society members dancing at Jordanhill in the formative years of the Society show the ladies wearing white dresses and the men wearing white shirts and white trousers. This was probably the result of commencing at a Teacher's Training College at a time when such dress would have been compulsory for physical activities. It is not fully clear when the kilt became the accepted dress for male participants.

When I started Scottish Dancing in 1947, in Scotland, no men wore kilts and ladies wore any dress which they fancied, but this may have been the result of clothes rationing. Some fifteen years later, all the men wore kilts with white shirts, and all the ladies wore white dresses at every dance they attended.

After another fifteen years it was beginning to be accepted that men could wear coloured shirts and ladies anything they pleased.

However, for some reason most demonstration teams have been caught in a time warp and continue to require white shirts for men and white dresses for the ladies. One of the more successful teams broke the mould with the men wearing coloured shirts and their partners wearing dresses the same colour as their partner's shirts. Ladies in other teams have worn cream or even blue dresses, and in one case white blouses with skirts in different colours.

It must be remembered that a certain amount of uniformity in appearance is required for a team. There are two ways in which this can be achieved by the ladies: uniformity of style or of colour. Is it really necessary for all the ladies to wear identical dresses? If it is desirable, why not choose a flattering style? It is difficult to choose one style that will suit every lady, but not completely impossible. Too often the ladies are dressed in a tight waisted, full skirted dress that makes some of them look like a sack of potatoes tied round with a piece of rope, when something looser and flowing might give a better appearance. If all are wearing the same style, there is scope for each to wear a different colour.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

John Mitchell

Dear Editor,

I was interested to read Susanna Hawkins' letter to you in issue 244, and I agree with her in part; but almost any garment, be it a simple summer dress, or a full-length ball gown, will be unflattering unless chosen with care. I have recently come back to the dancing scene after a lapse of over forty years, and decided to have a go at taking some medals. I was delighted to see that in the group I entered, the ladies wore white dresses with tartan sashes. They looked so cool and elegant. I know that obtaining white dresses off the peg is not easy these days, and often the white dresses available to dancers have come from charity shops and the unfortunate ladies can choose only one size, not the style, but in most areas there is someone handy enough with cutting-out shears and sewing machine to enable anyone to get a white dress of a cut and style that flatters her.

Regarding ball gowns, is your correspondent talking about the full-length ones, and has she tried dancing in one? (I have not, but my wife in her younger dancing days made some pungent comments about bodies that organised dances with a very energetic programme and specified ball gowns). The main question however is of colour. At most dances, even so-called Balls, ladies can choose to wear whatever they like, and for the most part select a colour flattering to their colouring and of a shade that complements the sash they wear. However in a demonstration team, if the ladies wear ball gowns, how can you see the skill of the dancer if you cannot see her feet? Most clubs and societies prefer uniformity, and then a problem becomes apparent. If one opts for any other colour than white the colour chosen will not suit all the ladies equally well (in some cases may clash hideously with their hair colour or skin tones), and may not fit with their particular tartan. Have you ever seen a lady wearing a lavender ball-gown and a Buchanan sash? It's not a positive fashion statement! As to trying to find a colour that flatters and at the same time doesn't clash violently with say the Jacobite or Strathearn tartans – well the mind boggles. White has the advantage that if it doesn't flatter, never looks really hideous on anyone, and there is no possibility of a clash with any tartan.

Let us not deny the ladies in demonstration teams, or any other lady who wishes to present a clean, elegant appearance from wearing a white dress if that is what they wish.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Stone
(by email)

Black Dresses

Hampton Hill, Middlesex.

Dear Daniel,

For demonstration dances Susanna Hawkins makes a case against ladies wearing white dresses (*The Reel* No.244). An even stronger case can be made against ladies wearing **black** at dances and balls. The *whole point* of men wearing a black evening suit is that the ladies can then wear any colour that they wish without that colour clashing with their menfolk. I know that this argument loses some of its force when the men are wearing colourful kilts but I maintain my view that a black dress is unattractive on the dance floor (or anywhere else).

The reason why "the little black dress" came into fashion was that during the Second World War clothes and dress material were rationed, but black fabric could be bought off the ration because it was required for the black-out curtains. So naturally women bought black-out

material for dress-making. Once the black dress became a 'fashion', women deluded themselves that they looked elegant in it.

It is said that Chanel designed "the little black dress" in 1925 but at the time it did not catch on. I possess a fashion magazine for 1935 and no black dresses appear in it.

So please ladies, use some more imagination in selecting attractive colours or combinations of colours for your dance dresses.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard Bligh

Krasnodar dancers

Bristol

Dear Daniel,

Following the Black Sea dancing holiday (*see page 1*), our next plan is to raise funds to enable members of the Kuban Scottish Dancers of Krasnodar to attend the RSCDS summer school in St Andrews next year. Any ideas on this topic are eagerly sought. Please let me know what you think by letter or email.

With all best wishes, and an open invitation to join the dance to anyone adventurous enough to visit Krasnodar.

Fiona Grant

fiona@dancetour.co.uk (Dance Tour)
7 Maurice Rd, St Andrews Park, Bristol BS6 5BZ.

(There is one more letter on page 12)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

Reel of the 51st Division

Tokyo, Japan

Dear Daniel,

The Reel of the 51st Division was the first Scottish Dance which I learned. When I was young, I was enjoying international folk dancing in the west of Tokyo. One day, when we were dancing various dances of Eastern and Western Europe, Russia, Israel, America and other countries, our leader introduced us to The Reel of the 51st Division as one of folk dances to express correctness in dancing. At that time, we were unable to dance on the ball of our feet.

The leader told us this dance was devised by the Scottish Army Officers at the POW camp in Germany. My curiosity wanted to know further details about the 51st Highland Division and its reel. Why, when and where were they captured by the German Army? Who was the commander of German Army — General H. Guderian, von Manstein or E. Rommel? How many numbers were Scottish POWs? Where was place of the POW camp? Why, when and who devised the dance?

After reading the Japanese edition of The Second World War, the abridged one-volume edition by Sir Winston Churchill, I knew a brief situation of the 51st Division in June 1940. A long time later in 1998, at Tokyo, Mr Bill Clement, the Society Chairman at that time, told me the devising of the reel and sent me a photocopy of the article written by Mr Michael Young on the London Branch's Newsletter. Later, I obtained the original copy of *The Reel* No.165 (1983) from Mr Andrew Kellett. I knew the name of the two towns, and wanted to visit St. Valery-en-Caux and Laufen.

I visited both towns, St Valery-en-Caux last August and Laufen last June. Both are quiet and small places. I had just a short time in St Valery so that I couldn't visit the cemetery where the 218 French and 208 Scottish soldiers lie, but my long-cherished desire to visit the towns was fulfilled, so I am very happy.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Toriyama

[To summarise very briefly the article in The Reel No. 165, the 51st Highland Division surrendered to superior German forces under Rommel at St. Valery-en-Caux in Normandy on 12th June 1940. Some officers of the Division were taken as prisoners of war to Laufen in Bavaria where they devised The Reel of the 51st Division. — Ed.]

PRAGUE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE WEEK

10th to 17th August 2003

After thoroughly enjoying the Budapest Dance Course in early May and the sightseeing programme preceding it, which Michael Copeman's article in *The Reel* No. 245 summarised, I decided to book for a dance holiday in Prague in August which was advertised in a leaflet I picked up at my local group in Northallerton, North Yorkshire.

This was the 5th such event organised by Dvorana, a Travel Agency based in Prague and given the credentials of our musician Muriel Johnstone and teacher Ron Wallace from California, a wonderful week was in prospect. My initial expectations were in no way dashed. Some 63 dancers attended from the UK, USA, Canada, France, The Netherlands, Japan, Austria, Germany and Spain.

The holiday was based at the Hotel Pyramid in the Castle district of Prague, classes being held in a sports hall less than five minutes' walk away. After checking in at the hotel on Sunday 10th August and meeting the charming Jitka Bonusová of Dvorana and her friendly team, our first evening was spent on a boat trip with dinner to the accompaniment of Czech dance music, cruising along the Vltava river to see the sights of Prague.

Dance classes were held every morning from Monday to Saturday. Ron proved to be an inspirational teacher and he and Muriel a wonderful team. As well as dances familiar to us in the UK, Ron introduced us to several from the *Dunsmuir Book of San Francisco*, one being his own composition 'Crowcombe and Stogumber', arising from place names near the holiday venue at Halsway Manor in Somerset! Emphasis was placed on all aspects of dance technique, in particular eye contact with one's partner and a proper bow and curtsy *on* the final chord.

Some dance classes extended into the afternoon before activities such as a concert by the Jupiter String Quartet in the Strahov Monastery followed by dinner in a restaurant in the Castle area; a walking tour of the Castle area and Old Town including Charles Bridge, an excellent optional evening folklore concert in a theatre forming part of the Hotel complex; dinner in Baráčnícká Rychta followed by an evening with local Irish and Scottish dancers; a quiz and refreshments in the Masaryk lounge at the main railway station prior to our own special *train* through the 'Prague Semmering' to Zákolany. Then by coach to Okoř Castle for dinner in a

local restaurant followed by an outdoor performance of historical fencing, dancing and fire-eating (!) in the Castle, after which we did a couple of impromptu Scottish dances on the stage ourselves.

The Friday afternoon coach trip to Květuš, a small village in Southern Bohemia some 65 miles from Prague, took us to Jitka's beautifully restored farmhouse in delightful surroundings where we were welcomed by a performance of the Kovářovan folk ensemble, also enjoying an excellent barbecue while entertained by the local brass band, sang a Czech song and even tried our hand at pastry making. Jitka showed us the barn next to the farmhouse, a potential dancing venue — a wonderful holiday spot now and in the future.

On Saturday, our last full day, after Ron's final class three square sets formed for a final performance of Česká Beseda, a Czech quadrille which Jitka had been patiently teaching us since Wednesday. It comprised four main figures in varying tempos and lasted no less than 14 minutes 4 seconds. After much practice it was a great sense of achievement to complete the dance and my thanks here to Cheryl from Bristol, my long-suffering dance partner throughout all the practices and four full 'performances'. For our farewell dance we used the Hotel Ballroom and danced to a local band Skotske Hry plus Muriel either as accompanist or solo. Three kilned pipers performing Auld Lang Syne rounded off a memorable week and provided a final surprise.

Quite apart from friendships made and renewed with fellow dancers, the week contained many special moments for me, and I particularly recall Ron's recorder solo accompanied by Muriel one afternoon, our gathering round the piano at the end of each day's class to listen to Muriel's hauntingly beautiful compositions such as Shibumi, the neck and shoulder massages in which we all participated (!), meeting fellow Scottish dancers from the Czech Republic, the impromptu waltz lesson for those of us with 'two left feet' when not dancing Scottish Country, and finally dancing for 5 hours on the Wednesday when Prague reached a temperature of 36.8°C (98°F), the highest since local records began in 1775!

As Jitka said in her gracious reply to the letter I sent thanking her for a wonderful holiday — "how will we last those two years?" (until next time). How indeed?

John Buckle

THE HIGHLAND BALL

The Highland Ball Committee was formed in 1994 under the auspices of the Highland Scottish Country Dance Group. The group is made up of dancers who come from areas within easy reach of Inverness. This allows us when selecting programmes for the Ball to get a varied approach to current popular dances.

The initial concept was to give as many dancers as possible the opportunity to have an easy programme where everybody could dance without too much concentration, but with enjoyment. Memory loss comes to us all: we have found it much easier to remember the old favourites than some newer dances. However we try to cater for all tastes.

The first two Balls each attracted about 450 dancers, but we found it difficult to handle that number during the supper break. After careful consideration we decided to limit the numbers to 300 and this has improved the catering tremendously. We also had difficulties in finding suitable accommodation for 300 but we decided on the Bught Park Sports Centre in Inverness. The centre has air conditioning, ample room and the floor is quite acceptable for dancing.

One problem we had with such a large hall was the acoustics. However this has been overcome by bands having more up-to-date speakers. The bands we have used in the past are Drummond Cook (a local band), John Renton and Colin Dewar. In 2002 I wanted to hear that old fashioned sound again with a piano and double bass, so I asked Colin if he would supply a 6-piece band. It was superb, so we have gone again for a 6-piece. Last year we had a job finishing at one in the morning, still with nearly a full hall.

We have employed the same caterers as last year, as everybody agreed that the food was excellent. This was a sit-down supper with a silver service and also catered for special dietary needs.

We insist that this is a formal occasion, but it usually ends up with the shedding of various items of clothing, especially by the men, throughout the course of the evening.

When we started the Ball we were constantly asked to make it an Annual event but we decided against this as we wanted dancers to have something special to look forward to. However, we decided to hold an in-between dance in Nairn. The programme is the next year's Ball programme. This has worked out very well. We make a point of quickly calling the dances at this

dance and the Ball; this is much appreciated. At the three dances we have held we have had in the region of 175 dancers. The bands for this event have been Ian Cruickshank and George Meikle: both bands performed extremely well. This year we and Ian Cruickshank had a guest of honour, Bill Farr, leader of McBain's Scottish Country Dance Band. The tunes were many of the ones that McBains played in their heyday. Ian, being a great fan of the band and its sound, played them magnificently and for me this brought back many happy memories. Apart from Balls held in Edinburgh and Glasgow and the Society's AGM dances, our function is the biggest held in Scotland. We attract dancers from Ireland, Germany and France as well as good numbers from the south, and they come back year after year so we must be doing something right.

One area that we are very conscious of is the price of tickets. We believe that if you give the best you will have satisfied dancers who will come back again, but it comes at a price. At our committee meetings we have long discussions about whether the price should be an extra £2 or £2.50, bearing in mind that with many dancers on pensions there is a limit to how much they can spend. We hold lengthy meetings with all the people engaged for the night and achieve the best price possible. In the past we have donated profits to organisations such as McMillan nurses', Crossroads and more recently the Highland Wheelchair Dancers. However, by keeping the Ball costs down, we have managed for the next year to keep the ticket price to £17.50.

The hall costs being £1,200, the band costs £900, hire of a piano £100, a piano tuner £50 and the food £9 per head, it is difficult to keep the price down to £17.50, but dancers appreciate that having the best comes at a price. By advertising the event well, such as on the internet, we reach a bigger audience. In our 1st year we attracted a coach load of dancers from the E. Lancs RSCDS. Coming with a group or with a few friends makes the evening; however there are always plenty of people to dance with. We have found that many new friends are made and that is what it is about.

Our Ball usually falls on the first Saturday after Easter — ideal for those spending Easter in the Highlands.

Robbie Sargent
01808 521 338,

or mobile during the day: 07770 615056

BANDS

THE FOREST DUO

North London Band: Accordion / Fiddle / Piano / Drums. Versatile, experienced, affordable, references. Availability check: Peter Boyce, tel: 020 8360 4287.

BARBARA MANNING (Violin/Piano) KEN MARTLEW (Piano)

Two-piece band for Scottish Country Dancing. Have piano/amplification. Tel: 01442 261525, e-mail: KenMartlew@aol.com.

SCOTCH MIST CEILIDH BAND

Internationally acclaimed 5-piece Scottish Ceilidh Band with a suitable line-up for Scottish Ceilidhs, Reeling and Highland Balls for Clubs. M.C./caller available if required. See us, hear us and contact us on our website www.scotchmist.co.uk or telephone Bandleader Chris Ransom on 01843 821446 for further details.

THE HIGHLANDERS

Scottish Ceilidh and Reeling band consisting of professional musicians; includes PA sound system with monitors, etc. Musical line-ups: From 3-piece to 8-piece, with MC/Caller available whenever required. Recommended for Reeling, Balls and Ceilidh Events such as weddings, private and corporate parties, etc. Excellent client references. Please contact Bandleader: Donald Ross. Tel: 020 8203 0626 or 020 8203 5076. E-mail: info@LawsonRoss.co.uk. www.thehighlanders.co.uk.

KAFOOZALUM COUNTRY DANCE BAND

Music for Scottish Country Dancing anywhere, anytime. For further details and availability, please telephone Peter Jenkins. Phone/fax: 020 8581 0359, e-mail: peter@kafoozalum.co.uk or visit our Ceilidh website at www.kafoozalum.co.uk.

THE FRANK REID SCOTTISH DANCE BAND

Broadcasting band for Scottish Country Dances, Reeling, Ceilidhs and Weddings. Any size of band from one to seven with PA to match from 100 to 2000 watts. Particularly interested in any ideas for expansion of ceilidh market. The Granary, Park Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4QL, email: reel@frankreid.com. Tel/Fax: 0118 932 8983.

THE INVERCAULD SCOTTISH DANCE BAND

3-piece Scottish Dance Band for Dances, Balls, Ceilidhs, Reels, Weddings and Parties. Please contact **Lilian Linden** on Tel: 01252 629178. Mobile 07879 633766. e-mail: lilian.linden@virgin.net. CDs £12 each (+ £1.00 p&p in UK).

M C Scottish N S
Country B A I N Dance
M C B A I N S
Band

Contact: Mike McGuinness Tel: 020 8398 6799
or Tel/Fax: 020 8546 0075 (business hours)

SOLOIST: PETER JENKINS

Solo accordion for workshops, classes, day schools and 'smaller functions'.
Please phone 020 8581 0359
e-mail peter@kafoozalum.co.uk.

SOLOIST: KEN MARTLEW

Solo pianist for Dances, Day Schools, etc.
Have piano/amplification if needed.
Tel: 01442 261525. e-mail: KenMartlew@aol.com.