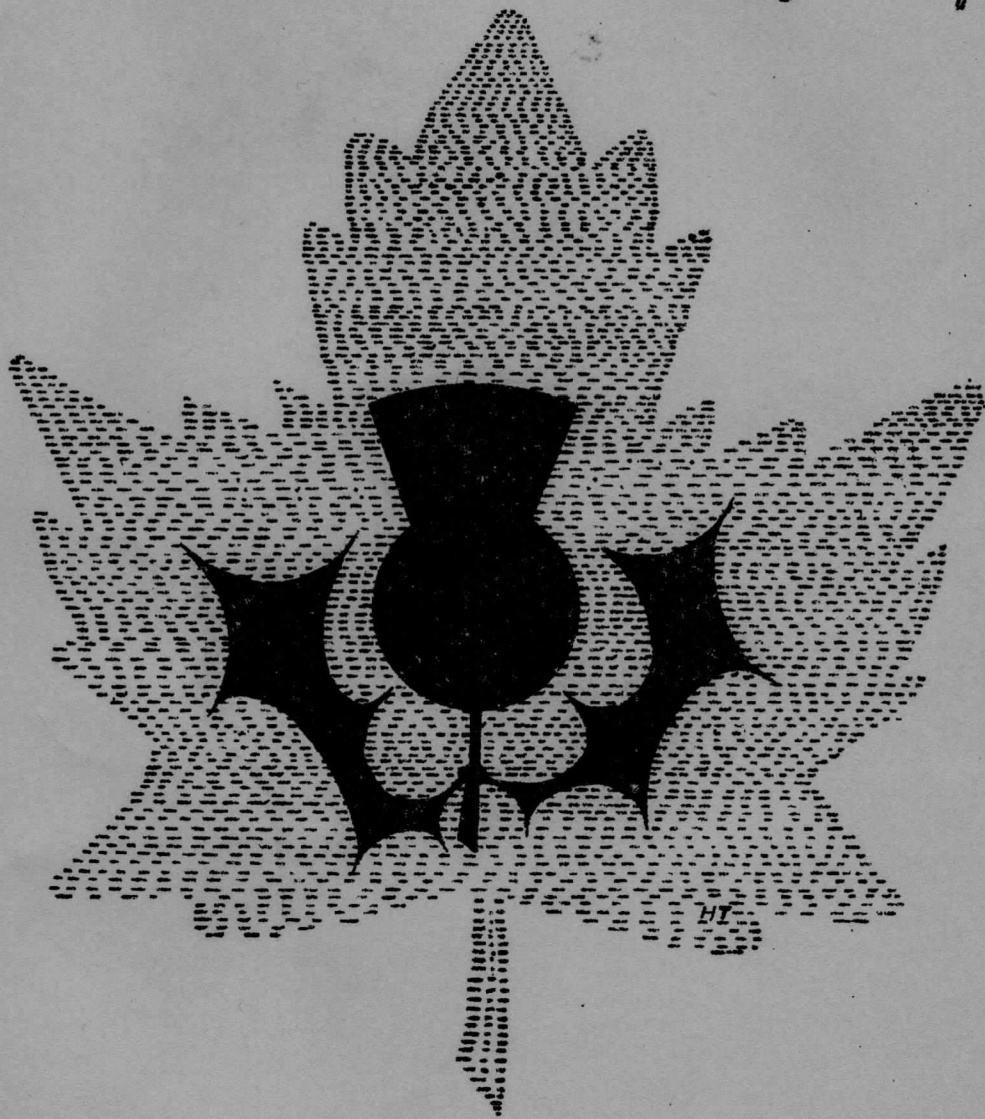


THE THISTLE

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EDITORIAL.

It is with very deep sadness that we report the death of Mrs. Allan MacNab. She is best-known in Vancouver as the leading teacher of highland dancing; she is known to country-dancers for her magnificent collection of set-dances; to the general public she is known for the outstanding performances by her group of highland dancers, at the tattoo both here and in Edinburgh. Her kind-heartedness and her dry sense of humour endeared her to everyone; she inspired her pupils with loyalty and affection. She will be sorely missed by many.

OUR DANCES, NO. 35 : LADIES' FANCY.

OUR DANCES, NO. 36 : LA FLORA.

These two dances, which follow our usual pattern of being alternately familiar to most dancers (Ladies' Fancy is in S.C.D. Book No.13) and not so familiar, are fully described in the article by Tom and Joan Flett in this issue (page 6 and page 8 respectively).

LOCAL NEWS.

Everyone present enjoyed the ceilidh given by the St. Andrews and Caledonian Society: dancing, music, and singing. (Live music, too!) Ceilidhs will be held on the second Tuesday of every month in the Scottish Auditorium.

Two extremely interesting workshops have been held in the past month. The first, in Vancouver, was by Tom and Joan Flett, teaching traditional type Scottish social dancing. The dances they taught included a quadrille (the New Caledonian quadrille), several reels (Hands across from Orkney, Sixsome reel from Shetland, Cath nan coileach from Barra, and Four-hand reel from, of all places, Dorset - a real "export version") and some country dances (some, in fact, of those described in their article in this issue).

The whole session was most enjoyable. The material is interesting, authentic, and a joy to dance; Tom has a wide and deep knowledge of it, and teaches pleasantly and effectively.

The workshop was followed by an informal lecture on the history and background of the dances.

The other workshop was at Calgary, with Hugh and Nina Thurston teaching; what made this workshop memorable was not the teachers but the dancers. The Calgary S.C.D.S. has an excellent philosophy which generates a very pleasant atmosphere. Part of this is shown in their demonstration team (who perform at hospitals and so forth, rather than on the stage to a paying audience), part in their attitude to beginners, and part in their attitude to various details in the dancing. They like to have beginners dancing with experienced dancers right from the start (it is amazing how soon they then cease to be beginners), so they divided the dancers at the workshop into a small advanced and large general class (not a small beginners and a large intermediate/advanced class), and requested that both classes should learn the same dances. They rather adventurously requested two dances which were a little out of the ordinary - the Foursome reel and The Lassie with the yellow coatie (from the Border book), both of which went over extremely well.

NEWS FROM SCOTLAND.

ST. ANDREWS, 1966 (by Hugh Foss).

Each year the fortunate regular "scholars" at St. Andrews find many things the same, but always something new. In 1966 Miss Milligan was in her usual good form, urging us forward in the travelling step, emphasising the social spirit, particularly at balls, where the inclusion of difficult dances, possible only to experts, cheated the ordinary dancers of their admission money.

At her class Miss Milligan taught the dances from the 9th MacNab Set, The Lerwick Reel, Miss Fiona Macrae of Conchra and John Drewry's strathspey, The Silver Tassie, with its new progression called the Rondel. Among the other dances she taught were Bob Campbell's Geneva Park, Bolt Court (a two-couple dance made into once-and-to-the-bottom by three successive rondels), Lord Beaverbrook's Mirror Reel (not for ball programmes, said Miss Milligan), The Bonspiel (with an 8-bar reel of three for bars 5-12, a very good dance when the music fits), and The Kirn (very energetic).

Of the other teachers I can only speak of those whose classes I attended: Duncan MacLeod, with his emphasis on 'flow' (go through a place, not to a place) and his theme that anyone who has learnt to do simple dances really well will have no trouble with difficult ones; Mrs. Mina Corson, with her illuminating advice on every aspect of teaching; and Miss Margaret Rae, with her lucid explanations of really tricky dances like Sodger Laddie.

Bobby Watson was back again and his solos at the Younger Hall dances were, as ever, exhilarating to watch. His men's Highland class gave impressive displays, including one of his Double Foursome and of another dance devised by him, an eightensome reel (6 men, 12 women), which looked wonderful from the gallery.

Nan Main gave a talk on aspects of music and dancing and how each should fit the other. Her talk was illustrated by a team showing us

both the right and wrong way of doing things. She ended with some hints on the prevention of cruelty to pianists.

One Sunday evening there was a projector-showing of pictures of Scotland. Does that suggest a yawn? There were no yawns at this performance. The pictures were John Drewry's and he showed them to the accompaniment of Scottish songs on a tape-recorder. The pictures, exceptionally beautiful, matched the songs with such art that the audience sat enthralled from beginning to end.

Then on Fridays there were Ceilidhs, with items serious and comic. Among the latter was a dance by four automata controlled by defective computer-tape, (their reel of four went under and over), a learned lecture on laughter in S.C.D., a mini-dance (one pas-de-basque), and six "bunnies" (male) dancing something that started like Miss Fiona Macrae, but broke into a chorus-girl routine.

RECORD LIST (ctd.)

J. Nicholson (Waverley)

ELP 130 Hooper's jig, Marquis of Lorne

ELP 117 Fireside reel, White heather jig, Janet's delight.

Johnnie Hastings (Waverley)

ELP 134 Heart of Midlothian, Just as I was in the morning, Robertson's rant, Gaelic Waltz.

Peter White (Waverley)

SNB 7101 College Hornpipe, Marchioness of Blandford's reel.

Perhaps even top of the poll : the hornpipe is a stormer.

Jimmy Shand junior (Parlophone)

R5219 Dumbarton's drums, The Duke of Atholl's reel.

Ian Holmes (Waverley)

ELP 139 Dashing white sergeant, Gay Gordons, Highland Schottische.

Jimmy McIntosh (Scottish records)

SR 3370 Braes of Breadalbane, Kingussie flower

SR 3371 Lea rig, Loch Leven castle.

Jimmy McIntosh has more sound and more volume than the earlier discs from this company, but there is still a considerable air of tension, even a tentative sound at times.

Alistair Downie (Beltona)

SEP 89 Inch of Perth, La Tempête, Blue bonnets, Retreat airs.

Additions.

Jimmy Shand (Parlophone)

R 5188 Holyrood house, Balmoral strathspey

GEP 8884 Jimmy's fancy, The express.

Jim McLeod (Parlophone)

GEP 8842 Eightsome reel, Robertson rant, Waltz country dance.

GEP 8897 Legend of Scotland, Roxburgh castle, Ladies' fancy, Mairi's Wedding.

Jim McLeod is well-known now in London, and his playing is satisfying in every way to dancer and listener alike. Roxburgh castle is scintillating. The first record has hooching dancers. Who is teaching the young to hooch every four bars?

Lindsay Ross (Parlophone)

R 5001 Linton ploughman, Foursome and Tulloch.

R 5037 Sleepy Maggy, Leven Lassies, (Boston two-step).

Useless. For dancing, that is. What is the use of a foursome record which plays two slow, two quick, and three-eighths of a Reel of Tulloch? When will Parlophone learn not to browbeat the bandleaders into technical restrictions? Jimmy Shand got his way after some excruciating records like two-and-a-half times Monymusk, but they don't seem to remember. Yet the recordings, it must be said, are excellent, and also some of the performances.

Jimmy Blair (Fontana)

TFE 17573 Maxwell's rant, White heather jig, Jimmy's fancy.

TFE 17379 Loch Katrine jig, Triumph New Scotland strathspey.

TE 17454 Balmoral strathspey, Jimmy Shand's delight, McLeod of Harris.

TE 17456 Minard castle, Argyll's farewell to Stirling, Deanston House

TE 17458 Stanley reel, Alyth Burn, Bonnie Shira Glen.

TE 17459 The isle, Queen's Argylls, Imperial strathspey.

TFE 17201 Lad o' Kyle, Winding road, Road to the isles, Gentle shepherd

TFE 17315 Middling thank you, Baldovan strathspey, Angus reel.

TFE 17374 Ladies' fancy, Red house, Highland reel.

Some more general remarks (by the record reviewer of The Reel).

Many little bands are getting their chance on record, but in one or two cases one finds the records much less satisfactory than the band in the flesh. There is something very depressing, even eerie, about a recording studio, or rather in the thought that one's actions are being preserved for ever. No band gets a record made unless it gives satisfaction on the dance-floor, but in several instances the record would never sell the band. But the titles offered should sell the records to dancers hungry for variety.

Stan Hamilton's seems to be the leading band in Canada, and no wonder. He would put a number of Scottish bands in the shade, though his strathspeys are a trifle leaden-footed. (This is probably a worse fault than the commoner one of playing strathspeys too fast .. at least this gets more notes on the disc and is lively and dancy rather than depressing).

DAVID ANDERSON OF DUNDEE AND HIS BALLROOM GUIDES. II.

by J.F. and T.M. Flett.

In our first article under this title, we dealt with David Anderson as a teacher and dancer, and described briefly the various editions of his ballroom guides. We turn now to the Country Dances described by Anderson in his guides. As before, we use the term 'country dance' with its traditional Scottish meaning of a longways progressive dance.

Of the 74 Country Dances described by Anderson in his various guides, 23 are his own compositions. Two of these, Ladies' Fancy and Kingussie Flower, have been republished by the R.S.C.D.S. in Books 13 and 21, and another, Dundee Royal Arch, has been republished by the Ling Society. A further five, Abernethy Lasses, Brechin Fancy, Inverness (under the title Inverness Reel), Monifieth Star, and Royal Visit, have been republished recently by Miss Milligan in her 101 Scottish Country Dances and 99 More Scottish Country Dances.

Of the 51 Country Dances described by Anderson which were not his own compositions, most appear to have been taken from earlier ballroom guides published by other dancing-teachers. These 51 dances naturally included all those most common in Anderson's day, such as Petronella, Flowers of Edinburgh, Triumph, Haymakers Jig and Strip the Willow. They also included a number of dances which were in current use in various parts of Scotland in his time, but which were more locally distributed, such as Meg Merrilees, Queen Victoria, Glasgow Highlanders, Duke of Perth (Anderson gives this under its Angus name of Brown's Reel), and Quadrille Country Dance.* However, over half of these 51 dances seem already to have dropped out of current use by Anderson's day. Of the dances which were not Anderson's own compositions, 26 are included in the Scottish Country Dance Books, another ten are reproduced by Professor Thurston in his Scotland's Dances (Professor Thurston also lists those in the Country Dance Books), and a further five are given in Miss Milligan's two collections.**

Mrs. C.F. Stewart, David Anderson's daughter, described to us what he taught concerning the style of performance of Country Dances. All the Country Dances included in his lessons were in quick tempo, and his normal setting step was the usual traditional form of the pas de Basque, with no extension of the front foot following the 'beat behind'. For travelling figures, the usual step (e.g. in 'hands round') was the chassé, which was similar to the skip-change-of-step, but with a lilt in place of the hop. When top couple went down the centre and back as in Petronella, they joined nearer hands and danced down with four

* The traditional versions of Duke of Perth and Quadrille Country Dance are described in our Traditional Dancing in Scotland. The reader will find there also further details of steps and figures mentioned later in this article.

** These five dances are Queen Victoria, Long Live the Queen, Quadrille Country Dance, British Grenadiers, and Tarry Awhile.

chassé steps, and then took ballroom hold and galoped back with the galop (i.e. slip-step). When three or four dancers went down the centre in a line, as in Ladies' Fancy and Inverness, the dancers went down arm-in-arm, released arms, turned, and then came up arm-in-arm as before, using the chassé step throughout. Anderson's pousette was the usual traditional figure, in which the two couples took ballroom hold with partners and circled round each other in a counter-clockwise direction, using a lazy waltz-type step.

With Mrs. Stewart's aid we reconstructed Ladies' Fancy from the original instructions given in David Anderson's Ball-Room Guide, which are as follows:

"LADIES' FANCY. Time, 6-8.

Top gent. turn a measure with first and second ladies.

Down centre arm in arm with the two ladies, and back.

Hands across with second gent., and pousette".

The first figure here is a 'basket' of three, performed with the pivot step, as in the baskets of four in the visitation figure of Lancers. The other figures were performed as indicated above.

The style of performance taught by David Anderson is very different from that taught today by the R.S.C.D.S. In many ways it is similar to the ordinary ballroom style in which Lancers and Quadrilles were performed, and David Anderson was not alone in teaching this style; indeed within living memory it was the usual traditional style for Country Dances over most of Lowland Scotland.

The origins of this style are easily explained. Between about 1775 and 1830 there were introduced into Country Dances a number of new figures which incorporated ideas from the Cotillion, the Quadrilles, and the Waltz. In consequence, Country Dances tended to lose their distinctive national (i.e. English, and, to a lesser extent, Scottish) characteristics, and to acquire instead the more international flavour of the contemporary polite ballroom. This international style was in fact the basis for the traditional style in Scotland, but it has largely disappeared, as a result of the policy adopted by the R.S.C.D.S. of attempting to go back to the earliest known style. Thus the R.S.C.D.S. has replaced 'arm-in-arm' by 'hand-in-hand', which died out traditionally about 1830. They have also replaced the ballroom hold of the pousette by the two-hand-hold, which died out in the early days of the Waltz c.1820, and have replaced the waltz-type circling movement of the pousette by a modification of the square pousette invented by John Duthie about 1925.*

The traditional nineteenth century ballroom style, which has disappeared from present-day Scottish dancing, has been preserved to some extent by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and the dance Ladies' Fancy, performed in the traditional Scottish manner, has become popular

* John Duthie's pousette is described in A. Anderson and J. Duthie, Complete Guide to Scottish Country Dancing, Edinburgh, c.1930.

in some English groups, where it is regarded as characteristically English!

Of the dances composed by David Anderson which have not been republished, the following are the most varied. We reproduce the original instructions, and amplify where necessary, inserting our explanations in square brackets. In interpreting these instructions, the reader should remember that in the traditional waltz-type pousette the two couples concerned can begin the figure from virtually any position, so that this figure is much more flexible than the modern square pousette. BROUGHTY FERRY CASTLE. Anderson's guides, all editions. Reel time. Top couple turn in centre by right arms (4 bars of music). Then turn by left arms (4 bars of music).

Down the centre and back [i.e. top couple; on returning to the top they cross to contrary sides and face down; 8 bars].

Top gent. set and turn second lady to right hand. Top lady set and turn second gent. to left hand [presumably 8 bars. 1st couple end in second place improper, and 2nd couple in top place].

Half ladies' chain, which brings the ladies to right of their own partners. Then half rights and lefts this brings 1st couple to the men's side, 2nd couple to the ladies' side; [8 bars].

First and second couples pousette.

The half rights and lefts here was probably the Quadrilles-type figure, i.e. the 1st and 2nd couples change places, each lady passing between the opposite lady and gentleman, while each man passes outside the opposite lady.*

PERTH INCH. [All editions]. Time 6-8.

Top couple down the centre and back. Top gent. leave partner at right of second gent. and join second lady, having her on right [i.e. 2nd couple move up to top place, and 1st couple end in second place improper.] First and second couples half rights and lefts, and turn opposite partners by right hand.

Half rights and lefts again, and turn opposite partners, catch own partners smartly, and pousette.

TAYPORT BEAUTY. All editions. Time 6-8.

Top gent. down the centre and back with second lady, leave her at right of partner and join own partner, having her on right [i.e. 1st couple on ladies' side, 2nd couple on men's side].

Two top couples advance and retire [4 bars]. Re-advance, and turn opposite partners to right hand [4 bars. 1st couple end in second place improper, 2nd couple in top place].

Advance and retire. Re-advance, and turn own partners [ending with 1st couple on ladies' side, 2nd couple on men's side].

Two top couples pousette.

THE RECORD REIGN. [1899 and subsequent editions]. Common time.

Top gent. swing first and second ladies 8 bars [i.e. a basket of three]**
Reel three with same ladies 8 bars.

* See our Traditional Dancing in Scotland, p.238.

** In the new dances in the 1899 edition the word "swing" is used where "turn" was used earlier.

Top gent. present right and left arm to first and second ladies. Down the centre. Turn round keeping same places. Lead the ladies back. 8 bars.

Pousette with partners. 8 bars.

THE PRINCESS' C.D. [1899 and subsequent editions]. Reel time.

Top couple swing a measure in centre [8 bars].

Balance across the dance [4 bars, as in bars 1-4 of Scottish Reform].

Turn opposite partners to right hand side [4 bars. 1st couple end in 2nd place improper, 2nd couple in top place].

Half ladies chain. Half rights and lefts [8 bars, as in Broughty Ferry Castle].

Pousette first and second couples.

Of the dances described by David Anderson which are not his own compositions, the only one not republished in recent years which seems to us deserving of revival is La Flora. This dance is also given in the Lowes' Ball-Conductor, Edinburgh, c.1830. Anderson's description of La Flora, again with our explanations in square brackets, is as follows. The phrasing is that given by the Lowes.

LA FLORA. [Anderson's guides; all editions]. Reel time.

First two couples hands across, half round and turn partners [4 bars].

Hands across the other half, and again turn partners [4 bars. Each 'turn partners' is presumably a half turn with left hands, so that partners simply change places in the hands across. Thus 1st man dances round in the hands across to 2nd lady's place, then changes places with his partner, going to 2nd man's place, then dances round in the hands across to his partner's place, then changes places with his partner and end in his own place].

The first lady and gentleman chasse round to the right, and set opposite to each other in the middle of the dance. Chasse round again, and set at the sides, the lady between the second and third gentlemen, and the gentleman between the second and third ladies [8 bars].

Six hands round and back again [8 bars].

Pousette first and second couples [8 bars].

The second 8-bar figure here is similar to the first half of the Petronella 'diamond' figure, and Anderson's description is taken directly from that of the Lowes. One method of performing the diamond figure using a chassé step for the turns, was shown to us by the late Mr. D.G. MacLennan, and is as follows:

Bar 1. Dance diagonally forward to the right with a chassé, beginning with the right foot.

Bar 2. Count 1. Cross left foot over right, and pirouette, making three-quarters of a turn to the right.

Count 2. Step on right foot in 5th position.

This step is also described by Orr Robertson in Kerr's Collection, c.1900.

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