

In Step

The newsletter of

DUBLIN



Scottish Country Dance Club

September 2012

Welcome back to the new season of Scottish Country Dancing. I hope you have all had a good summer, despite the weather, and are fit and raring to go once again. We are delighted to hear that Amrita is staying in Dublin, at least until December. ☺

I'm sure you all join me in offering our deepest sympathy to Ruth Hughes and her family on the very sudden and unexpected passing of her father in July. Our thoughts are with you all, Ruth.

Dates for your diary:

2012

Thursday 6 th September	Dancing starts
Saturday 15 th September	Ceilidh in aid of the LauraLynn Hospice
Tuesday 18 th September	Demonstration at 100 th birthday party at Altadore Nursing Home
Saturday 29 th September	John and Margaret Brown's farewell in Cork
Saturday 20 th October	Demonstration at Fitzpatrick's Hotel

2013

Saturday 13 th April	Dublin SCD Club Annual Dance
17 th -20 th May	International Branch weekend in Killarney (see back page)

Summer School 2012

Week 3, Very Advanced High Impact Class

I set off early on a cold Sunday morning for the journey to St. Andrews, telling myself that a week's dancing was definitely worth getting up earlier than I usually do for work. At Edinburgh airport I befriended an American couple as it turned out the bus fare was cheaper if we travelled together! Linda was attending for the 27th year and Steve for the 25th time. It was only my third visit but I will definitely be back. Everyone is to keep their fingers crossed that Ireland qualify for the World Cup in 2014 because if Jack is using some of his leave for a football trip I don't mind using some of mine for dancing.

The week began with tea and some 'fine pieces' (Aberdonian for 'very nice cakes') as people arrived and greeted friends, then after dinner came a wine reception and some ceilidh dancing to get us in the mood. Everyone attends two classes every morning, Monday-Saturday, and I had opted for the Very Advanced High Impact class – well, it seemed like a good idea at the time! My first class each day was in the Younger Hall, which has a beautiful sprung floor. Our teacher was Angela Young and the musician was pianist Muriel Johnstone. What a great start. Then, with a stop at a church hall en route for coffee, it was on to the Boys' Brigade Hall for the second class. This was taught by Muriel's husband, Bill Zobel and accompanied by the wonderful Jim Lindsay on accordion. Both Angela and Bill worked us very hard during the week, but always with good humour and helpful comments. We did wonder whether Bill was trying to kill us off on Thursday morning when he announced we were going to dance *Bonnie Anne*. It's 96 bars, only danced once through, but it's almost entirely pas de basque and everyone is moving for most of the time. When I was a student it used to be on ball programmes regularly and we'd always dance it twice, swapping places with our partner for the encore. It's rarely danced nowadays and not many of the class knew it.

There were optional classes in the afternoons as well as the chance to walk through some of the dances on that night's programme. On Tuesday and Wednesday I went to Anne Smyth's excellent workshop entitled Basic Teaching Skills. There were just seven of us so we were each given the chance to practise teaching a formation and recapping a dance. George Meikle, the accordionist, gave us some helpful hints on the use of recorded music and how to communicate with musicians. The other afternoons I did my own thing – book shopping, stocking up on Marmite, enjoying Luvian's wonderful ice-cream, paddling or, one day, sitting reading on a rock with my feet in the sea and, on Friday, having lunch with Jenni and Maggie and Jen's parents in their garden.

In the evenings there was social dancing in the Younger Hall (or less strenuous programmes in the Common Room), with a different MC and musician every night. It was great to dance with all abilities and ages– this year, for the first time, 12-16 year-olds were able to attend and, although there were only a few, they all seemed to enjoy themselves and they fitted in well. On Friday night there was a ceilidh in the Common Room, with one of the best pieces being a hilarious skit on an Olympic theme by the Belfast Branch.

I thoroughly enjoyed the week and look forward to the next time. Besides renewing existing friendships I have met folk from Germany, Italy, Japan, Holland and all over the UK. I have, I hope, improved my dancing and learned from the experience. It would be hard to pick out the highlight of the week, but maybe it was dancing *Jean Martin of Aberdeen* with Jean Martin of Aberdeen on the last night.

~ Helen Beaney

Week 4, Advanced Class

This year's Summer School was based at McIntosh Hall which, although it has more limited facilities, is more central than either New Hall or University Hall (undergoing refurbishment this year). Free on-street car parking was available (a credit to St. Andrews Borough Council which has both long stay public parking served by shuttle bus on the town's perimeter and free parking off the main thoroughfares in the town centre).

Following registration and dinner an 'ice breaker' reception and ceilidh dancing took place on the Sunday evening where newcomers could be welcomed and older acquaintances renewed.

The main courses on offer were:

- Intermediate (27 attendees)
- Advanced (18 attendees)
- Technically skilled (low impact and high impact)
- Teachers (unit 5 level and fully certificated)
- Highland (13 attendees)
- Ladies' step dance

Because of the small number of applicants for the Beginners class, this was initially amalgamated with the Intermediate class. This was unfortunate for all concerned as the genuine beginners were quite out of their depth. After 2 days the error was rectified and 7 beginners were assigned to experienced teachers Janet Johnston and Patrick Chemoin which eased the situation.

The Advanced level course (taught by Alastair Brown and Helen Russell) emphasised technique but still managed to work through 3-4 new dances each morning. Some of these might appear in the afternoon walk-through programme in preparation for the evening social dancing. Much attention was given to warm up exercises (10-15 mins) and cool down (5 mins). The Advanced class provided most of the 'stooges' for the level 5 teachers' test which was quite a rewarding experience.

Due to the limited (Common Room) area available in McIntosh Hall, virtually all of the evening social dances took place in Younger Hall this year, with the Common Room being retained for ceilidh dances on 4 nights of the week. Impromptu ceilidh dances associated with after hours parties took place as usual. These were strictly for the robust as a mixture of bare feet, leather shoes and old ladies being whirled into orbit could prove to be quite hazardous!

The social country dance programme was generally confined to 12 dances each night apart from the 'big' Thursday and Saturday events in Younger Hall for which 15 dances were listed.

Friday night was reserved for the traditional ceilidh performance of comedy, music, song, etc. put on by the various talented participants from the many nationalities who attend Summer School. A touching feature this year was a special dance by Japanese ladies, in full traditional costume, to commemorate the spirits of tsunami victims in that country.

There were a total of 49 different dances on the evening programmes, of which 20 (41%) have been danced by the Dublin Group in recent years and 29 (59%) were new to the writer. Within the week a total of 33.25 hours of tuition in dance technique, walk throughs and evening social country dancing was available. This would equate to about 4 months of Dublin Group experience. As noted, much attention was given to warm up/ cool down exercises but there were still a few casualties with muscle and ligament problems.

In conversations with other participants there was widespread concern that Society numbers continue to fall. In Scotland this is attributed to both age levels and the fact that SCD is now only an optional subject on school teachers' P.E. curricula. The number of non-Scottish attendees at Summer School appeared to exceed these from the home country. At this rate it may have to become the International Summer School. There was also a consensus (in conversation) that without specific beginners' classes most groups and branches will attract few future beginners.

Finally, Week 4 saw the end of Margo Priestley's term as Director and the introduction of her successor Ruby Wilkinson for the next three year term. Few would gainsay the hearty votes of thanks accorded to these ladies, to Depute Director Jim Stott and to the talented teachers and musicians who made the programme possible.

~ Pat McCullen



PRICES:

- Workshop: 182€ (IB members) - 192€ (Non IB members) - 130€ Non dancers
- Accommodation: 144€ Double Room - 219€ Single Room

Every two years, the International Branch of the RSCDS holds a dance weekend in a different place. In 2013, the weekend will be in Killarney and I would encourage as many of you as possible to attend. It is a great opportunity to dance with people of all ages, nationalities and abilities. On the Friday evening there is dinner and a dance. On Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings there are classes. Saturday and Sunday afternoons are free, or you can opt in to a trip on Saturday or an Irish dance class on Sunday. There will be ceilidh dancing on Saturday night and an informal ball on Sunday night. We will have the Friday and Sunday programmes in plenty of time to try out the dances in class. The weekend will end with lunch on Monday (the cost of all meals is included in the price) unless you have opted to stay on for the week's holiday. Further details and the application form are on the Branch website or I can print them for you. <http://www.rscds-ib.org>

~ Helen Beaney