

# In Step



## Spring 2014

RSCDS Conference Weekend

1-3 November 2013

My weekend in Scotland started in excellent fashion when a good friend met me at Edinburgh airport, drove me into town and treated me to lunch. Then I had time to visit my favourite bookshop, which I never leave empty-handed, before getting the train to Inverkeithing to meet Margaret and travel with her to Perth.

On our arrival there we phoned the B&B and the owner set off to fetch us. After minor confusion when we tried to get into the wrong silver Golf, he collected us and drove us to the house, informing us en route that all the rooms were occupied by dancers. We unpacked swiftly and walked down the road to a nearby diner, where the first people we saw were Aad, Kaoru and Cathy. They send best wishes to all their friends in Dublin.

After a quick change, we walked the short distance to Bell's Sports Centre where all the events of the weekend were to be held. We joined over 500 other dancers

for a programme of twenty dances, of which two had to be cut but I danced all the others. Until you have taken part in an event like that, you cannot imagine what a wonderful atmosphere there is. For me, this time, it was heightened by the number of people wishing me good luck in the following day's election. On the way back to the B&B, Anselm announced that he had a bottle of wine, so he, Marie and Martina joined us in our room to share it and chat until well into the wee small hours. Margaret and I used tooth glasses, but the next day wine glasses miraculously appeared beside our tea-making materials!

On Saturday morning, Margaret and I played truant to explore the town before the International Branch lunch. I had to make a hasty exit from this as I had volunteered to steward before the AGM. The meeting itself went on far too long and I was glad when it was time for the voting as I was chief teller and could stand up and walk around. Finally, item 9 on an agenda of 11 came around and it was announced that I had been elected to the Membership Services Committee, so this means regular trips to Scotland for the next three years. Yippee!!

John was in Musselburgh visiting family that weekend and had bought a ticket for the Ball, so he arrived some time during the meeting. He and I headed into the town for a quick dinner then he dropped me at the B&B. Margaret arrived back with Pia in tow and the three of us dressed in record time (talking constantly!) then returned to the Sports Centre for a drinks reception before the Ball began. Again there were twenty dances on the programme and I danced eighteen of them – even the strathspey no-one in my set had seen before was a success. His first major RSCDS Ball had John hooked and, even before the evening ended, he was talking about the possibility of a group of us travelling next year to join the large number of folk from Northern Ireland and the International Branch as well as about 500 others. So, what do you think? You don't have to be a member (or attend the AGM!) but bear in mind that there are no walk-throughs.

The same five of us shared a bottle of wine in Margaret's and my room that night but we all still managed to be up in time for the class on Sunday morning. Taught by Janet Johnstone and played for by George Meikle on accordion, it was both instructive and great fun. We cadged a lift back to Edinburgh, giving Margaret and me time to enjoy the sunshine in Princes Street Gardens before heading to the airport, tired but very happy.

### **St. Andrew's Night 2013**

On the evening of

### **Scottish Irish Ceilidh, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

Once again, courtesy of Jonny Tennant and the Grand Social Centre, it was all systems go for an early St. Valentine's ceilidh on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Despite the best efforts of storm force winds to sabotage the event, a good attendance of about 70 young people turned up to learn the tricks of Irish ceili dancing and watch demonstrations of simple Scottish country dances by members of our club, led

by Hazel. The music, by Jonny Tennant's group, set a cracking pace (The Dashing White Sergeant really had to!) and a raffle for hampers of good cheer rounded off the evening. Understandably, numbers were down somewhat on last year's event but this allowed more room, particularly for the Irish dances. All proceeds were earmarked by the St. Andrew's Benevolent Society for named charities active in the Dublin area. The society extends grateful thanks to Jonny, Hazel, Grand Social Management and the dancers who took part.

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## **Cork Burns Supper Dance 2014**

forthcoming visit of the International Group to Killarney in May.



## **Joint Ceilidh**

February 14<sup>th</sup> (St. Valentine's Night) saw

*Pat McCullen*

### Membership Services second time around

I was elected to the RSCDS Membership Services committee for the second time in November 2013 and, less than six months later, I've already been back to Scotland for four mostly working but very enjoyable weekends.

I spent St. Andrew's Day (a Saturday) dancing nearly all day. This was the final 'test drive' to decide which dances will be included in the forthcoming Book 48. They were all carefully kept anonymous, but I was delighted to recognise *City of Belfast*, especially when it was unanimously voted in. My brain had to work at least as hard as my feet, as we often danced three dances together then commented on all three at once and Robert Mackay played the same tune for each so that the music didn't cause any bias. After a while it was very hard to remember which formations had occurred in which dance. Sunday was spent in a day-long committee meeting, during the course of which I agreed to lead the project to produce a third Graded Book.

The following week I was back in Headquarters on the Friday afternoon for a meeting of the *Scottish Country Dancer* Editorial Board and on Saturday there was a training day for the members of all the committees. The highlight of this weekend was the East Lothian Branch dance at Longniddry. I didn't know a soul there (apart from the bandleader, Luke Brady) but I was made extremely welcome and invited back any time. I knew all the dances on the programme so didn't have to tax my brain too hard.

In mid-January Linda, Jim and I spent a day working on putting a number of dances into standard terminology for another combined book – these have all been published by the Society already but some not for many years so we are revising the wording to make the instructions clearer. This is something I enjoy doing and am good at (although you may not think so sometimes on Thursday nights!). That night I went to the Trinity SCD Club Annual Ball, having swithered for a while as there was a table plan for the meal and I wasn't sure whether I'd know anyone there. Eventually I decided it didn't matter: I knew, and liked, most of the dances on the programme and would take a chance on knowing a few people. As it turned out, I sat with the two ladies who had given me a lift home from Longniddry and danced every dance, mostly with folk I at least recognised. One of the joys, for me, of Scottish Country Dancing is that I can go anywhere in the world and join in, even if I'm on my own, because it is standardised, thanks to the work of the RSCDS.

Sunday of that weekend was the dance-through to select the dances for 'my' Graded Book 3. There were just eight of us dancing – five men and three women – with Sue instructing. The men took turns dancing as a lady (in fact I danced with Ruby on one occasion as there were two pairs of men!) but as Mervyn is probably



the tallest man I've ever met no-one wanted to dance an allemande with 'her'! I was the only one there without a teaching qualification so, as a dance deviser, I found it very useful to hear the others' comments on what works or doesn't, especially as this will be predominantly a teaching book.

My most recent trip was a weekend at Linda's house in Pitlochry for more work on the combined book. In the airport on the way over I had bought her a bottle of Longue Dog wine (the picture of the dachshund reaching all the way round the label had made me laugh) so four of us demolished that on the Friday night. We worked very hard all day Saturday and on Sunday morning but took Saturday evening off for a complete change of scene - dinner at Pitlochry Festival Theatre followed by a wonderful performance of *Swan Lake* by Ballet West Scotland.

My next visit is just a day-trip so there won't be any dancing involved, but I've plans for future weekends. And I'm very honoured and excited to be one of four RSCDS members who will attend a royal garden party at Holyrood in July. Watch this space!