

In Step



50th Anniversary edition newsletter of the Dublin Scottish County Dance Club December 2016

The Mansion House, Dublin — 2016

More than thirty members of our club and visitors who were in Dublin for our Annual Dance converged on the Mansion House in Dawson Street. Dawson Street has been undergoing major road works for Luas Cross City extension. It was great to see so many venturing into the city on a busy Saturday afternoon.

The Lord Mayor Miriam Ní Chléirigh was unavailable to show us around the House but her deputy Councillor Vincent Jackson, accompanied by two small boys, gave us a great tour showing us the shields containing the Coat of Arms of previous Lord Mayors. The Grand Stairs with their historic significance and the majestic paintings of notable persons from the city. After the address by Councillor Jackson, we were served refreshments.

The visit to the Mansion House was enjoyed by all that attended; it also gave us, the members of the club, the opportunity to meet many of those that had journeyed from all parts of the country and chat over a cup of tea.

Meeting in an easy-going situation was a great start to our 50th Anniversary Celebration, a relaxed start to a fairly hectic two days; with Dance later that evening, and Service in York Road Presbyterian Church, followed by a lunch in the National Yacht Club. It was the start of a truly memorable weekend.

~Blair Halliday

50th Anniversary Annual Dance Celebration

Taney Village Hall, Dublin - Saturday 28th May, 2016

This Annual Dance proved to be a great gathering of dancers from all over the island of Ireland, from Scotland, from England as well as from Wales, who went on a trip to Bavaria to meet up with Andrew Carnegie – and to watch a performance of the Bees (of Maggieknockater Festival fame), during which they flung the minister on the loch, much to Emmie's delight.

Slipping away from the others, the Hoopers' and the Quarries' teenagers jogged through Caddam Wood, and the kissing under the Duchess tree naturally led in due course to Mairi's wedding, which was held in the City of Belfast, with music provided by the Orpington Caledonians, including the lovely tunes "The Dreamcatcher" and "Joie de Vivre", chosen by Mairi herself.

On return from that beautiful state of Germany, the dancers went to Taney Hall, where they were led and entertained by the always stimulating music played by John and Judy Barnes, with their usual amazing variety of tunes – many of which written by John himself.

Many of us thought it was one of the best Annual Dances ever, with nearly everyone on the floor for each dance. Hazel Convery, John Gibson and Helen McGinley took turns as M.C., and what a lovely programme of dances it was. They were kindness itself in the way that they did quick talk-throughs, and even a few walk-throughs (invaluable to those in less regular practice or new to Scottish Country dancing). Amongst the favourites were dances actually written by each of the three M.C.s: "Mrs McGinley's Strathspey" written by John Gibson; "Rosalie's Birthday Reel" by Hazel Convery, and "The Campbells of Crannagh" by Helen McGinley. As, very sadly, Forbes Campbell himself had died just a few weeks before, it was an opportunity to join dear Pam in remembering a former valued member of the Club.

The Dublin Scottish Country Dance Club has long had the great benefit of having its own live band – not only for its Annual Dance, but also for its weekly dance sessions, held in the hall under the Presbyterian Church, halfway up York Road in Dun Laoghaire, at eight o'clock on Thursday evenings.

John and Judy Barnes not only dedicate themselves to working the most enjoyable tunes into their Scottish dance music, but are kind enough to play and replay phrases of dance music through the weekly practices. And, as if this was not commitment enough, John has been Chairman of the Club for many years. Not only that, but the two of them, with some help from the family, I gather, produce the whole, amazing and delicious buffet supper at each Annual Dance – with wonderful rolls, sandwiches, quiches, crudities and dips of all kinds – not to mention scrumptious cakes and mouth-watering tidbits!

No Annual Dance could function without the support and planning of a very able, long-serving and experienced Committee, nor could the provision of both hot and cold drinks from the kitchen work so well without the perennial organising genius of Florrie Halliday, ably assisted by her husband, Blair.

As usual, the standard of dancing was greatly helped by the cheerful contingent from Northern Ireland – their teachers also helping to ensure that the less experienced dancers in the sets managed to get into the right places at the right time!

Several visitors from overseas included Helen McGinley's mother, Jill. Numbers from Cork were sadly rather down this year, mainly because of a shortage of hotel accommodation due to competition from the vast numbers of Bruce Springstein fans descending on Dublin for his concerts that same weekend. However, Maureen and Pat Chevens and I were joined by our distinguished "Cork Overseas Members", John and Margaret Brown who flew over from Edinburgh. One thing all visiting Scottish dancers can be sure of is a very warm welcome from all the members of the Dublin club at any time of year.

Someone even said that I looked fifty years younger dancing the final dance, one of my favourites, Mairi's Wedding – but I think the credit should really belong to my lovely young partner! Really, we all thought it was a truly amazing night for everyone, and wish the Club well for the next 50 years!

~Patrick O'Hara (Member of both Cork and Dublin clubs)

50th Anniversary Weekend

When the sub-committee first discussed the type of celebrations we might incorporate into our Anniversary Weekend it seemed appropriate to try to include the Church in the celebrations.

We have been dancing in the hall of Dun Laoghaire Presbyterian Church, York Road, since the mid-eighties, and many of our founding members were members of the York Road Church.

We had a precedent in that the Club took part in a Service on St Andrew's Day in 1999 when Rev. David Caskie was Minister. (It is sad to note that David passed away last month at the age of 82.) When I spoke to the Minister, Rev. Chris Kennedy, he was very enthusiastic and agreed that he would build the morning service on Sunday 29th May around our anniversary.

I didn't discuss it again with Chris until a few weeks before the event. After agreeing the input we would have – the call to worship, bible reading and prayers – he surprised me by asking that we dance The Gay Gordons to three different, indeed very different, tunes. He chose the first one – Wannabe by the Spice Girls, while we chose the other two – a more traditional pipe march The 51st Highland Division, and Nellie the Elephant. So for the Children's Address, two couples danced in each aisle to each tune. Chris then spoke of how the Word of God may be heard in different times and contexts, but, like the dance, it remained the same although the tunes were different. I'm sure it was the first time there had been Scottish Dancing during a service in the Church, and also that it was the first time The Gay Gordons had been danced to Wannabe – and probably the last!

~ John Gibson

After the service at Dun Laoghaire Presbyterian Church, a celebratory lunch was held at the National Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire. About 40 former and current members, dancers from Cork and Northern Ireland, and other guests attended. The proceedings were ably presided over by John Gibson, and Gordon Pate (the son of Founder Members Sandy and Eleanor Pate), spoke interestingly of his memories of the Club when he was a child and a young man, and showed slides of his parents' photographs. The lovely flower arrangement that had been in Church had been brought to the Yacht Club for all to enjoy, and this was presented to Pam Campbell.

A delicious lunch in good company, with interesting and amusing conversations in a lovely setting, brought a memorable weekend to a thoroughly enjoyable close. I am delighted that I was one of the invited guests, and wholeheartedly thank the Club for their hospitality and friendship.

~ Jill Bonar

Dublin Scottish Dancing Group Spring Ceili 2016

On June 18th we gathered as usual in St. Thomas' Hall, Fosters Avenue for our Spring Ceili, which we all enjoy each year. We had a good crowd of dancers, members of other groups, and friends and relations including some children, always eager to join in the fun. Hazel took charge leading the dances in her inimitable way, while John, unfortunately not dancing, called several dances. Starting with our old favourite Gay Gordons, young and old progressed through many others, such as Haymakers Jig, Denedin festival, Dashing White Sargeant, and the Snowball, which gets everyone moving. A generous and varied supper was provided by all and sundry contributing their favourite specialities.

~Dorene Grocock

Summer School, St. Andrew's

Tony and I went to the Week 1 of Summer School. I had been before by myself, but wanted to go again with Tony and to dance with new people. Tony wanted to go to brush up on his footwork because we haven't regularly been to a footwork class in the last 15 years. We could go that week because our son Mark – who you see at the Annual Dance sprawled on a chair reading or lining up for thirds of Judy's excellent supper – was still in Australia visiting his Aussie relatives. We both wanted to get loads of dancing and to have a great time dancing with new people.

Getting to St. Andrews was straightforward. It was a short flight to Edinburgh then we had to wait only moments for each of the two buses that we took to get to St. Andrews. The trains were on strike so the bus was the best option. When we arrived at St. Andrews bus station, we took the sensible approach for finding our accommodation and just followed some people who looked like they were dancers. I had an inkling where I was going and I

was trying to remember my way around St. Andrews since the last time I was there. It was reassuring to find that they hadn't moved New Hall. Check-in was extremely well organised then, after meeting Linda from Belfast in the hallway, we went to our room to unpack. We had a quiet dinner in the dining room and met a few people from different classes. The hot topic during many of the meals was the 'quality' of the food, or lack thereof, and many said that it wasn't as good as in previous years.

We went to the Sunday reception and dance in the Common Room, which was particularly hot and humid. Many went to cool off outside in-between dances. It was a great way to meet old and new friends. We started classes early on Monday and Tony and I signed up for the Intermediate class. Tony wanted to concentrate on footwork and we thought they'd do more technique in that class. As it turned out, there was no Beginner's class this year, so many of the dancers were either beginners or had only some dancing, and many weren't confident in their ability. Tony and I were given the opportunity to move to a different class but we decided to stay with our group.

The first three days were taught by Alana Creighton from Perth accompanied by Adam Brady from St. Andrews on piano. We started each class with warm ups dancing to ceilidh dances and did some stretches as well. Alana had to do her best with a bunch of people that sometimes struggled with basic formations and insisted on walking every dance from every position but also hadn't yet gelled as a group. I'm sure that we didn't get through nearly as much as Alana had initially planned for her three days.

We saw a sign for a local ceilidh on Tuesday night sponsored by the local St. Andrews Branch, so we decided to go to the local dance instead of the one in the Common Room. It was a really fun and lovely evening dancing to Marian Anderson and her band. Many of the students from the Summer School were there as well, including several trainee teachers who'd come because one of the dances they were being tested on was on the programme. The local group was very welcoming and we even got to dance the local favourite, 'The Tabletmaker's Reel', composed by Luke Brady as a thank you to the lady who makes a Tablet, the local delicacy a bit like fudge, of legendary quality. We heard a whisper that there was a secret stash of her Tablet in the RSCDS shop for the RSCDS Summer School volunteers only. We begged a taste when we were at the RSCDS shop the next day, and it was good.

The last three days were taught by Raphaëlle Ogeret from Lyon. She did warm ups dancing to the Charleston and all kinds of other crazy moves. It was a crowd pleaser and Adam, who had continued playing for the class, was inspired to play to his heart's content. Raphaëlle was a very popular teacher and we often had dancers doing their teacher's certificate look in on us to get pointers from Raphaëlle. She also reaffirms Tony's theory – formed after Angela Young's great class at Enniskillen last year – that being a primary school teacher is good training for being able to teach Scottish dancing to adults. Raphaëlle mainly focused on covering and on dancing with your partner as well as giving individual constructive criticism. She had some fun ways of making us practice covering such as weaving through packets of biscuits lined up across the floor.

A rare and unusual thing happened at the Younger Hall dances. For the first time ever, SOME dances were walked through, and the dancers were really grateful for them. It was surprising to lot of dancers who have been to previous summer schools, because dances were NEVER walked through at Younger Hall. Many people from different classes usually got together in the afternoons to walk through the evening programs because there were traditionally NO walk-throughs.

We joined one of the impromptu groups most afternoons, but we took it easy one afternoon and went to explore the town and eat ice cream at a few ice cream shops. We also skipped part of the ceilidh on the Friday night and instead had a nice, quiet dinner for two of takeaway fish and chips from the award-winning Comar's. We went to the Harbour Festival on the Saturday and met a local dancer we'd met at the Tuesday evening dance.

Despite starting each day with sore legs and feet from the day before, Summer School was both fun and a great way to meet new and old friends and dance every day. Dunking my feet in ice water after the evening dance helped take the soreness away and cooled my feet. We won't be at Summer School next year, but we expect to make it again some year.

~ Mary Tan

Kintail Ceili and Country Dance Group

It was a week and a half into my holiday in the Glenelg / Letterfreen area of the West Highlands of Scotland when I realised that the postman could possible help me. I had asked lots of local people if they knew of a Scottish County Dance Group in the area, but to no avail. But the "postie" knew, and immediately gave me directions as to where I could find Fiona McDonald.

Next day I headed for Dornie and the start of Glen Affric and met up with Fiona. I was given a wonderful welcome and over cups of coffee we exchanged our Scottish Country Dance background. Fiona, it transpired, had come to live in the area just over 20 years ago. She immediately set about gathering together a group of County Dance enthusiasts. To get the group off the ground and encourage more people to join, she included some Ceili dancing also. Hence the "Kintail Ceili and Country Dance Group" was formed. It was a great success.

Fiona is a lovely, enthusiastic person with lots of energy and has a very supportive committee. Together they have kept the group on its toes for almost 20 years. As Fiona explained to me, it is hard going sometimes, as membership numbers fluctuate for all sorts of reasons – people moving on to new jobs, seasonal work-loads when members don't have enough time, or in winter, if there's snow. Having said that, there is always a really enthusiastic core of people who just love dancing. The Kintail Ceili and County Dance Group meet on a Monday night in the Dornie Community Hall (which has terrific facilities). The members phone each other beforehand to make sure there are enough dancers.

I duly arrived on time – a little apprehensive in case I let my own side down, and soon enough realised it was just like home! Chatting over cups of tea at half-time, I learned that one member in particular, Pat Burnett, taught Scottish Country Dance on Skye for years. Since her retirement, Pat now makes her way from Skye to dance with Fiona's Group in Dornie. I understand Pat also wrote the "Lockalsh Reel", and that's only one story.

They are a lovely, friendly, enthusiastic bunch of dancers – I had a wonderful evening and, as I said goodnight to everyone and walked away, the lights from Eileann Dornan Castle twinkled on Lough Duich as if to say "Will ye no come back again?" The Kintail Ceili and Country Dance Group are celebrating their 20th Anniversary in January 2017. I wish them every success for the future.

~ Ingrid McIlwaine

Our feet had two busy weekends in September, dancing in Altamount on the 10th, the Royal Hospital Donnybrook on the 11th and Margaretholme on the 17th.

We were very saddened to hear of the sudden death of Alan French on Monday 12th Sept. Our continued sympathies to Sarah and all his family and friends. His sense of humour is greatly missed on Thursdays.

Judy Barnes would like to thank all who contributed towards the Hospice Coffee Evening. Between dancers and her choir friends a total of €420 was raised.

On the 29th October a number of us travelled to the Waterfront in Belfast for a fantastic concert by the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra.

Irish Tartans

To place this subject in context it is helpful to review the development of the Scottish tartan, which predates those developed for Ireland.

Scotland:

The origins of tartan even in Scotland are lost in the mists of time and have been the subject of much debate among numerous experts. The Romans recorded that both the Celts and the Picts were competent weavers and that the latter wore multicoloured clothing, so a basis for tartan may have existed prior to the arrival of later Celtic Irish incomers to western Scotland in post-Roman times.

Population redistribution and settlement resulting from the power struggles between the Picts, Celts, Angles and Britons, and later Vikings and Normans, tended to coalesce into feudal and clan land occupancy in the Middle Ages (under an independent monarchy re-established by Robert Bruce). This stabilisation largely reinforced the links between Clan and District.

Colour for clothing was originally produced using such naturally occurring plant and animal derived dyes as were available. Thus a link between a district and its inhabitants could be established, as it was later said that the location from which persons came could be identified from the colour of their clothing. This, in turn, formed the basis for the evolution of different tartans. Evidence of these can be found in the paintings of Scottish mercenaries abroad and writings of various foreign travellers in Scotland. Tartan was being exported to London during the reign of Elizabeth 1st where it became something of a fashion novelty. Tartan also figured in the events of the civil wars of the seventeenth century and about this period the "small kilt" became a garment separate from the all-embracing plaid.

Clearly, tartans were so well established in the Highlands that, in a bid to undermine clan identity, the British Government found it expedient to outlaw its use for a generation after the Stuart Rising of 1745. During this period only about a dozen regiments, raised for the Crown, were permitted to wear tartan, although this law may have been flouted in isolated regions. These were augmented by numerous Fencible (local) units raised during the Napoleonic period. Ironically, the continuity provided by regimental demands may well have kept alive mills, such as Wilson of Bannockburn, and provided the basis for the flood of tartans that emerged when they became fashionable with later royal patronage.

The carefully orchestrated visit of King George IV to Scotland in 1822 precipitated a rush to rediscover (or reinvent) "clan" tartans of all kinds. When the originals had been lost to memory the mills were happy to oblige with new creations. That this momentum has continued to the present day may be indicated by the following figures:

Date: 1831 – 55 patterns

Date: 1906 – 200 patterns

Date: 2000 – 3000 patterns

Thus we are now favoured with a bewildering array of tartans that may represent clan, district, military, event, club, charity or commercial interests.

Further, the colouring in many of these may be classified as Ancient, Modern, Hunting, Dress or Muted and a range of weights (typically six) also applies. Small wonder that some suppliers of Scottish Highland wear can offer up to 6000 tartans when type, colour, weight are taken into account. Ladies' and children's clothing is usually based on one of the lightweight woollen tartans, silk or on one of the man-made fibre materials developed during the 20th century.

Scottish tartan has had, at times, a somewhat bloodstained past and been a matter of life and death for the wearer. For some, tartan may serve as a reminder of a heroic or tragic

past but for others it has now developed into a multifaceted global product. Scottish tartan enjoys a high profile associated with its regular appearance at key public and social events throughout the year.

Ireland

Viewed against the evolution of tartan in Scotland, its position in Ireland appears to be much more modest. Scottish tartan of some kind may have been used by followers of Edward Bruce in the 14th Century and, more likely, by the Gallowglasses (Young Foreigners) who were Scottish mercenaries employed by the Irish chiefs in their inter-clan wars and uprisings against the Crown during the 16th and 17th centuries. Scottish tartan may also have been used by settlers during the Ulster Plantation of the early 17th Century. The earliest specimen of tartan found in Ireland was discovered in a Co. Derry bog and has been dated to circa 1600 and could be of Irish or Plantation origin. It has been designated as "Ulster" tartan.

Apart from its use by Scottish regiments posted to Ireland over the years and possibly by descendants of settlers in the North-East, the use of tartan was not, as far as can be ascertained, widespread or inherently Irish during the period 1700-1900.

By the end of the 19th Century the establishment of a number of pipe bands and other organisations introduced the kilt to a wider circle in Ireland.

Its adoption by the Gaelic League enthusiasts (possibly under the influence of the Pan-Celtic Movement) or as an antidote to the stage/cartoon "Irishman" mirrored its use by bandsmen of the newly gazetted Irish Guards Regiment and other Irish units in the British Army. The tradition has been continued in the Irish Army.

However, in Ireland saffron monocolour was chosen instead of tartan. This appears to have been based on the probably erroneous assumption that the Ulster chieftain, Shane O'Neill, and his bodyguard wore saffron kilts during a visit to Elizabeth I in 1562. It is far more likely that they would have worn the long shirt (or leine) common in Gaelic Ireland at that time.

Monocoloured kilts were gradually adopted by local pipe bands, scouting organisations and Irish dance groups in the years following 1908-1910 and this trend continued after the founding of the new state (1922). Production of tartan demands a market. One factor that militated against its use at the time was that dance costumes had to be of Irish manufacture and it is understood that the Irish woollen industry focussed on tweed and blanket production which targeted a different market.

By about the 1970-1980 period several new factors had begun to emerge. Irish clans, as such, had ceased to exist in the 17th Century. Among the Irish Diaspora were private individuals, various emigrant groups, emerald societies, family groups, county associations etc. some of whom had been influential in establishing pipe bands in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, with the adoption of tartan uniforms. Some of these had commissioned particular tartans from Scottish suppliers.

Coincidentally, the prospect of marketing tartan on a “District” instead of a “Clan” basis appeared attractive enough for a major Scottish woollen mill (House of Edgar) to commission a series of Irish county tartans. These are now available for all 32 counties. The designs are intended to reflect the countryside colours and patterns of each particular county. However, some other producers appear to have placed different tartans on the market for the same counties. This may only be a feature of pictorial reproduction but could be a source of great confusion and loss of credibility.

Within the dance world (already administratively divided) anti-kilt sentiments had been building on the basis that its mandatory use was turning many boys away from this form of dance. Ultimately this coincided with the Riverdance phenomenon, which introduced a whole new dimension to Irish dance internationally, but de-emphasised kilts.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above that Irish tartan does not enjoy anything approaching the pedigree of the more mature Scottish tartans. Given that 20 years have passed since their introduction there is as yet relatively little evidence that these Irish District tartans are being widely adopted. To date, even newly formed or reformed bands appear to favour Hollywood-inspired creations such as “Braveheart” or established Scottish tartans. This is probably also the case with schools, where hundreds of young Irish ladies sport Blackwatch, Royal Stewart or other tartan school uniforms, possibly without knowing what the particular tartan is!

Only time will tell whether Irish tartans are here to stay. Perhaps their adoption by County Councils as official District tartans, as has been done by some cities and counties in the United States, would provide the necessary shot in the arm! The different tartans can be viewed on www.kiltmakers.com

~ P. McCullen

Belfast 70th

The Royal Scottish Dance Society Belfast Branch 70th Anniversary Weekend.

Round the back streets of Newtownards set back just off the road was Queens Hall. The entrance was silent and poorly lit – but inside were over 300 Scottish country Dancers invited by the hosts, The Royal Scottish Dance Society Belfast Branch to celebrate their 70th anniversary. Dancers came from far and wide including several Northern Irish Clubs, Southern Ireland represented by Dublin in the persons of John, Helen, Pat and Mary, Doreen, Ruth, Daniela and Leonie and Cork by Patrick, John and Margaret, as well as dancers from England, Scotland and even from New Zealand.

Entering through the doorway Marian Anderson’s Scottish Dance Band was warming up in the magnificent Queens Hall. Chairman Aileen Patterson welcomed members and friends inviting them to have a good time at their 70th Anniversary St Andrews Ball. It started off with three lines of dancers but early on the three lines became four. Just before the break

Elizabeth Cameron MBE and Hon President read out a letter from the Queen. She then cut the 70th Anniversary Birthday cake. There were 8 dances before the interval. During the Interval a magnificent buffet was served efficiently.

After the interval the dancing continued with a packed floor for all the dances. What a wonderful night of music and dancing in the Queens Hall Newtownards.

On Saturday night it was into Belfast Titanic Centre then up on the lift to the 5th floor for the 70th Anniversary Gala evening. It commenced with a drinks reception. Guests were then lined up for The Grand Parade entering down the Titanic Staircase to the skirl of the pipes. Chairman Aileen Patterson welcomed guests and John Campbell said Grace. A delicious three-course meal was served in the Titanic Suite. During deserts and coffee a video was projected onto the big screens where Aileen Patterson interviewed some members of the Belfast Branch who related stories of their love of Scottish Country Dancing. It also included a hilarious excerpt of the Synchronized Swimmers from the St Andrews Ceilidh. This concluded with a short break before the compere told a few stories and introduced Marian Anderson's Scottish Dance Band. As part of the 70th Anniversary there was a competition for members to submit new dances to mark the occasion. The winners presented their dances on the dance floor with their demonstration team. Amazingly one of the teams featured dancers who had only started dancing less than a year ago. The guests were not left out being able to take part in a few simple ceilidh dances including the Gay Gordon's. The evening finished with a large circle snaking through the tables for Auld Lang Syne. What an end to a wonderful weekend of Music, Dancing, Entertainment and Food.

~ John Brown

History of Dublin Scottish Country Dance Club

Personal Experience

In April 1967, Liam and myself with 2 week old Maire came to live in Ireland from The United States. My first time in the Republic of Ireland. In spite of help and kindness from Liam's family I found it pretty tough. Suddenly, I was at home all day with a very good baby who only slept and ate. Liam was struggling with a new job and we lived in flat land where everybody headed off on the bus at 8.30am and returned at 6 or 7pm. I was the only one pushing a pram around!

Then I was told about the Scottish Dancing group. This didn't start till September but then, here I was in a group of 20 mostly Scottish people some of whom had even been at the same school as me. This was a life saver. At this time we met in Tullow Church in Foxrock, as Sandy and Eleanor Pate who organised the group were members there. We called ourselves the Foxrock Scottish Country Dancers. At this time only couples were accepted with the exception of Phoebe Sothern who beat the rule to it! I think June and Ron Berry, Alan Corsini, Helen Allen and Liam and myself are the only survivors from this time. I was lucky, as Liam had always enjoyed folk dancing and we had gone to a couple of Scottish

Dancing events in the States. (Very Strict. We were even told when to smile!) Here in Dublin we danced from September till Easter using Sandy's large collection of records. Sandy was a neurosurgeon in the Richmond Hospital but practically never did he miss a Thursday night of dancing. Most of the group had danced either in Scotland or overseas so we were able to manage a fairly difficult programme with 3 or 4 sets most nights. People left but new people came and we always managed a few sets. We had a summer party. I remember car treasure hunts, silly games in the Pate's garden in Foxrock aided by the Pate's four sons always referred to as "wee" boys although they all ended over 6 feet tall. This was followed by a barbeque with fresh strawberries for desert. We could even manage one set for dancing in an extension on the Pate house. Another thing I remember is the Christmas party. Michael Brodie produced a tape or tapes with music for all the dances, in order, with a suitable delay between for everyone to find a partner and take their place. No rests were allowed. We had visits from the RSCDS to "inspect" our standard of dancing. Robert McKay who is still very involved with the RSCDS was the pianist for one of these trips and the teacher we christened Hettie. I don't remember her real name. Hettie did not approve of Ron's 2 beat pas de basque! Both Sandy and Eleanor developed health problems. Sandy required back surgery and he was left with a dropped foot. He had to dance on his toes all the time after that. Eleanor was diagnosed with MS which advanced very slowly but this did not deter either of them from organising Thursday night dancing. We had to move to York Road Church Hall once or twice when refurbishment was going on in Tullow and we even went to a school hall in Killiney for a while. Finally we had to leave Tullow as they had church groups wanting to use the hall and made our new home in York Road where we have been ever since.

In the late 80's, Sandy and Eleanor retired to Scotland, and John Gibson took over the class. At this time we enjoyed doing demonstrations to entertain various ICA Groups, Community Groups Old Peoples' homes and once even in the British Ambassador's residence. Our most serious effort was when we danced on the stage in the Concert hall as part of a Scottish programme featuring Kenneth McKellar. We also danced in 8 venues including Grafton Street, The Hibernian Way and the Merrion Centre in aid of People in Need one Friday afternoon . Dancing at the ferry terminal was another fun event where we shared the stage with the Dublin Morris Dancers - Alan Corsini having to change from one style of dancing to the other all the time! John and Judy Barnes joined the group at this time (autumn 1993) giving us the benefit of "live" music, and they have been with us ever since. The first "In Step" was produced by John on 12th December 1996 so we are celebrating 20 years this year, (with a few gaps!) Daniela has put many of these old "In Steps" on the web site.

In 2000, John headed off to Edinburgh to do a theology degree and Aad Boode an experienced teacher who was working for KLM in Dublin stepped into the breach with his wife Kaoru. Once again, Aad and his wife left to go and live in Scotland (around 2005) so Helen Beaney (as she was then) and myself took over for a spell. Then John was back so the three of us now share the teaching doing a month at a time.

~ Hazel Convery

With very special thanks to all contributors to this edition. I learnt so much reading the articles and I hope all our readers enjoy them too.

Continued thanks as always to our committee, teachers, musicians 🎵 and dancers during this busy celebration year.

Here's to plenty more in 2017.

~ Ruth Hughes.