

# In Step

## Scottish Country Dance Newsletter of the Dublin Branch

Welcome to the winter edition of In Step. We've been busy as usual. Thanks to contributors for articles and pictures.

Leonie Lubbe joined us for most of the year while au-pairing here, from Germany. She returned home to study and work in June and we finished up her last Thursday with a new dance from Helen McGinley called Wunderbar. We received postcards from Leonie's various travels during the summer - nearby in Salzburg, Austria and further afield from the Europeade folk dance festival in Turku, Finland.



Also in June several of us travelled south to Cork and viewed Patrick's art exhibition, be joined the club there for some fine dances and tea and chat. Not long after the summer we were very sad to hear of Janet Nairn's sudden passing. Our continued

thoughts and prayers with her family and many friends.

Janet, Pam, Liam & Hazel



West towards Carrigaline from Crosshaven



Crosshaven from Janet's



Fountainstown Beach



Our brave swimmers ☐

### **The Teaching Course in St. Andrews 2017**

In September 2016, I attended a teaching skills workshop in Belfast, which they had organised mainly to refresh their teachers' knowledge and to encourage members to become teachers. It was a lot of fun, and I ended up staying with Lucy Mulholland, who kindly offered me a bed, instead of getting the bus home that evening. She used the opportunity to convince me to become a teacher, aided by Aileen and Lynn over dinner. With success, as I found myself signing up for the two week teaching course in St. Andrews the following summer. Some time later, I came to question my sanity.

July came closer and I barely had a chance to open the Manual, let alone practice much teaching. However, our tutor Graham Donald sent all of us on the course an email telling us to focus our preparation on learning the twelve dances for the dancing exam (Unit 2) by heart.

Everything else, we would learn on the course.

We were ten people on the course, two men and eight ladies, with some coming from as far as Hawaii and Australia. The only one I knew before was John Campbell from Belfast. The first week was all about dancing, with the Unit 2 exam on Friday

afternoon. After watching us dance for one day, Graham put us into pairs according to dancing style and height, and we were to dance with that person for the rest of the week. My "Unit 2 buddy" was John from Belfast (and Graham hadn't even realised we knew each other!) I was very happy to have a "real" man as a partner, and John is very nice to dance with.

We spent the whole week trying to bring everyone's dancing up to a high standard. Graham found lots of things to criticize in each of us. (It was actually a great class for personal critique.) We had classes every morning and every afternoon, and trying to dance to perfection all the time is quite exhausting. Fortunately, we were five couples, so there were always two people who could sit out and have a rest.

As well as being able to dance the twelve dances perfectly, we also had to be able to recap them in standard terminology, and as clear and concise as possible, without looking at our notes. During the exam itself, it was always the two dancing as first couple who were being examined, but we had to dance as supporting couple for the other candidates. Each couple had to dance in first place for three dances: one reel, one jig, one strathspey, and either first man or first lady had to give the recap. What we didn't know in advance was that we would have to "share" the recap of the third dance: one had to recap the first 16 bars, and the other the second 16 bars. John and I were examined on "Mrs. Hamilton of Wishaw" (generally regarded as the most complicated of the twelve dances), "The Starry Eyed Lassie", and "The Duke of Perth". The tricky bit about "The Duke of

Perth" was to dance it "properly", i.e. to set on the spot in "set to and turn corners", rather than starting to move into the turn while setting, and having the corners back in place at the end of the 2 bar turns. But no major mishaps happened during the exam, and we walked away mostly happy but utterly exhausted.

On Saturday morning, we met up for another class to continue our preparations for the teaching exam (Unit 3). We learned how to teach the different steps and transitions, and movement skills for the main formations that are examinable. (Some more complicated formations are only examinable in Unit 5.) We were each given three assignments, one for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Each assignment consisted of one lesson of 20-30 minutes of a given structure.

We had to teach a step, and if relevant a transition, a movement skill for our main formation, and then 16 bars of a dance. (Or rather 16 bars formations - we weren't told the dance they came from, if they came from one at all.) We were given very clear structures for each part, which made it easier in some ways, but there were also a lot of details to remember. We had to submit a lesson plan for each lesson and do exactly what was on it - not leave out or add anything. We were, however, allowed to look at it as long as it didn't disturb the flow of the lesson too much.

Overall, I felt it was really an exam in multitasking: remembering your lesson plan, saying all teaching points at each part of the lesson, the 16 bars, one's own dancing, watching the feet and movements of all students and correcting mistakes, and one was never allowed to



stop talking for the whole lesson. We had to count rhythmically during the walk throughs, and rhythmically coach the individual parts of each formation during the dancing parts. And all that loud enough to be heard by the class and the examiners at the other end of the room over the accordion music. It was very demanding.

In fact, it was so demanding, that my Monday of the second week, one person said she never wants to teach again in all her life. By Tuesday, several people said they are not enjoying it any more. By Wednesday, three if not more people had a breakdown and cried. By Thursday, everyone wanted it to be over no matter what.

On Thursday morning, we were given our assignment for the exam, and then had all day to prepare for it. We were not allowed to talk to Graham, but we were able to discuss our music requirements with our musician Judith Muir. She had been a wonderful support during the course, and was very knowledgeable musician, and also a dancer. My assignment involved strathspey travelling step, and by the end of the day, I had over-analysed it so much, that I wasn't able to dance any more. So I went down to the Common Room to join in the dancing that was going on there, to relax a bit and to remind myself that Scottish dancing is fun. (To save my feet and legs, I hadn't really participated in any of the evening dances of the summer school otherwise.)

During the exam, we had 16 or 18 students (mostly from the Intermediate Class), depending on our formations. My main formation was a two couple Allemande, preceded by turning

right hand. After the exam, I felt that any maths exam I had taken at university, had been easier than this one. So I walked into the town centre to buy some gin! We all met again on Saturday morning for another class, but two of us felt like never doing another Scottish Country Dance again. We discussed the requirements for Unit 4 and 5, and then leisurely danced through the Book 51 dances. Overall it was a very tough course. The first week was extremely demanding physically, while the second week was mentally demanding.

Back in Ireland on Sunday evening, I never felt so happy to come home. I don't want to see St. Andrews again for a long time. When we got our results via email a few days later, I was very relieved to learn I had passed both exams. I would never want to do this course again. I still have to do Unit 1, the written exam, before I get Teaching Certificate Part I, and I have two years to pass it from the time of passing Unit 2/3. Out of the ten people on the course, I only know of three others who had passed both Unit 2 and 3. Two people I haven't heard from, and the others either failed the dancing or the teaching exam, or both. It was sad to hear about others failing, because it was a very nice and supportive group, and Graham really was a great tutor who gave us lots of individual feedback. But the RSCDS certainly sets a very high standard for the exams. I would like to thank the club for its support and encouragement, and everyone for their good luck wishes.

*Daniela Mueller*

### **Other news:**

After  
some



recuperation time and adaptations at home, Alan Corsini visited again in November with his daughter. It was good to see him after some months and we wish him and Kathleen and their family a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

We've had several visitors on occasional Thursdays, from many corners of the world. It's always good to meet other dancers and here about their local groups.



Patrick's house from Janet's

*Above:* Dancing in Cork in February.

### **Portadown 60th**

11 of us (including 3 from Cork) travelled north on Nov 18th to Portadown for their 60th celebrations and very generous afternoon tea, along with over 80 others from all around the north. Their local Lord Mayor visited during the dancing and tried one or two of the easier ones.

### **A St. Andrew's Ball in Belfast**

Eight of our club member attended the R.S.C.D.S. Belfast Branch's St. Andrew's Ball on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December (2017): John, Daniela, Helen, Mike and Mari, Tony Graham and Mary Tan (and

Mary's sister and a friend both over from California), and myself.

We had a great welcome – one kilted and well muffled gentleman kindly stood out in the road to make sure that car drivers knew where to turn in to the car park of St. Nicholas' Parish Hall in the South Belfast suburb of Cadogan Park.

Once inside, we were greeted with a hot aromatic (non-alcoholic!) punch, and sat down to a definitely different dinner overseen by Lucy Mulholland – a choice of spicy sweet and sour chicken or peppery beef stew or salmon 'vegetarian' option, followed by a lovely selection of roulades and cheesecakes. All to be eaten with the most amazing 'light' silver cutlery, which somehow ensured that we did not feel over-full by the time we assembled for the Grand March! This commenced with climbing **up** the stairs to the ballroom, bringing back memories of coming **down** the Grand Staircase in the Titanic Centre last year, for the branch's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Forming up into square sets, the programme began with The Barmkin, an 88-bar reel by Roy Goulding, which had lots of chasing round and back to really warm us up, especially as it was immediately encored! Newburgh Jig and The Captain's House were then greatly enjoyed, and we soon realised that we were privileged to have a very fine band indeed playing for us, brought over from Scotland especially for the occasion

A few of these dances were walked-through beforehand, for the benefit of visitors and new dancers, but it was also hugely

appreciated that all the teachers and experienced dancers made great efforts to help ensure that the sets went smoothly by friendly and helpful gestures and encouragement.

Many of the dances were familiar to most people – The Westminster Reel, Wisp o' Thistle, Miss Gibson's Strathspey, and The Montgomeries Rant, for example – and St. Andrew's Fair, of course, which we had danced in Dublin only a week before. Jinty Anderson recapped her lovely and elegant Strathspey, The Orchards of Armagh, and Patrick Brunskill presented his recently composed dance, A Glint in the Eye, which had us all hovering with its three-quarters rights-and-lefts! Rainbow's End, The Haar on Skye and Peggy Dewar all proved very popular, and the dance floor was virtually full for every dance. (It has to be said that gentlemen were outnumbered by ladies by about ten to one!)

An all too short tea break in the middle of the evening soon gave strong evidence of Northern Ireland's reputation for friendliness and we couldn't have been made to feel more welcome. Towards the end of the programme, John Campbell introduced and recapped his own dance, a 32-bar reel called The Wardrobe, apparently inspired by C.S. Lewis's famous book, and much enjoyed, as was the final dance The Highland Rambler, both greatly enhanced by the soaring tunes and inspiring rhythms of David Oswald's band.

Chairman Aileen Patterson and all the Committee, organisers and helpers are to be congratulated on making their St. Andrew's Ball a truly enjoyable and memorable occasion, and it was a delight to be able to join them to join them.

*Patrick O'Hara.*

*Dorene Groocock*

**Dance weekend in Curia,  
Portugal  
Dec, 1-3 2017**

Situated in a luxurious hotel in a tiny town in northern Portugal, this course was a real treat and offered superb dancing and teaching. About 50 of us from many countries enjoyed good company, good dancing, good food, and warm sunshine! The programme comprised two evening balls, class sessions, and walk-throughs, and some free time to explore the beautiful surroundings. This was the third year and it is set to continue and grow under the leadership of Adriana Duarte.

I met some lovely people and learned new dances and figures such as the turbion, a 2-cpl figure, set & link for 3, and the Helix, a 2-cpl figure. Many of the dances were familiar, including some of our old favourites, plus new ones, making a good mix of easy and not-so-easy for the super-advanced.

Led by Jamie Bergin, (plus 6-month old baby) and a fantastic violin /piano duet, we hammered the floor. I was the only representative from Ireland, a situation which should be remedied. Next year is again end-November to early December, and I heartily recommend the weekend.



At the Christmas party on Dec 18th, dancers marked Blair and Florrie's 50th wedding anniversary. John Barnes presented the waltz he wrote for them. Judy made the cake, of course.



Tony and Mary were due to be dancing with the Scottish Blue Bell Club in Tokyo, no less, the same day of our Christmas Party in York Rd.

Thanks as always to our wonderful teachers and musicians all year, and we look forward to welcoming more dancers in 2018.

Jill and Frank Bonar (Helen's parents) send very best wishes for 2018 and Jill hopes to see everyone at the Annual Dance.

Reminder

**Dublin Annual Dance  
2018**

**Saturday 19th May**



Leonie's local dance group during the summer:



### Spring Fling 2017

I finally managed to attend Spring Fling this year in Bonn, Germany, after my failed attempt to go two years ago (I had to cancel last minute). An added bonus was visiting a friend who lives near Bonn. The weekend started with some “easy” dances on Friday evening. I counted about 250 dancers on the floor at some stage, both young dancers (under 35) attending Spring Fling, and older dancers attending the parallel Spring Fringe weekend. The atmosphere was fantastic – everyone was very keen to dance and demanded encores for almost all dances, with the band often speeding up the second time round.

For the classes on Saturday and Sunday, we were split into three different levels; our group was able to form seven 4 couple sets. Our first teacher was Fiona Brunk, and she started the class with a walking dance followed by warmup stretches in a big circle. After doing some step practice for skip change of step (and later strathspey travelling step), we focused on the more difficult formations that appeared in the evening dances, e.g. Circulating Allemande, Chaperoned Chain Progression, and Diamond Poussette. Our second teacher was Duncan Brown, and he really pushed us saying we were Spring Fling and should have lots of energy! We again started with a walking dance followed by stretches in a circle. Duncan then focused on teaching us Pas-de-basque setting in reel and jig time and made us do four or five 8 bar sessions of Pas-de-basque. It was hard work but an excellent class for learning

the difference between reel and jig time Pas-de-basque. We then moved on to practising Double Triangles, first ordinary, then with a variation; everyone getting their turn dancing them from each position. We finally put them into a dance and in total we must have done more than 100 bars of Pas-de-basque setting in 1.5 hours! Needless to say we were pretty exhausted after that!

After the lunch break, we had three different classes to choose from: Highland Dancing, Birling & Polka, and Feel the Flow – Technique for Transitions Made Easy. Pascal and I both chose the class on transitions, with Fiona as our teacher again. We learned smooth transitioning from Skip Change to Pas-de-basque, to Slip Step to the right, to Pas-de-basque, to Skip Change backwards, to Pas-de-basque, to Slip Step to the left, to Pas-de-basque. We then put it into practice in a dance that contained “set to right – circle right – set left – circle left”. It was a very good and useful class altogether.

Saturday evening was the Spring Fling Ball with some rather more challenging dances than on Friday. The highlights for me were the dances *Double Trouble Triangles* (a dance which does full justice to its name – watch a video of it if you don’t know it!), and *Schiehallion* (a medley and the first dance to contain Schiehallion reels, my favourite figure). As on Friday evening, the band had to play encores for almost all dances, but it was absolutely fantastic music! The last dance on the programme was *The Deil amang the Tailors* which I danced with Pascal leading down the middle for the full length of three sets.

On Sunday morning, most people could barely walk but our teacher Raphaëlle Orgeret was quite relaxed. Each class rehearsed a performance of one reel/jig and one strathspey but with the dances adapted so the sets are more integrated and everyone dances with everyone. We then met up with the other classes and performed our dances to each other. As a Grand Finale, everyone joined up in a gigantic set of 120 dancers to dance an adapted version of *The Deil amang the Tailors* that integrated everyone.

Sunday evening was an optional Ceilidh organised by Spring Fringe for which many people stayed so we were still around 200 dancers. My highlights of the evening were *The Eightsome Reel* (I even managed to remember some highland steps I learned a few years ago), *The Dashing White Sergeant* (the man in my line of three came up with a different embellishment each time through), and *The Flowers of Edinburgh* where the fourth couple joined in to do a 3 couple Poussette to change places.

Altogether it was a fun but very energetic weekend and I’m surprised I’m still alive. I hope I’ll be fitter for Spring Fling in Glasgow next year.

