



RSCDS Bristol

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY IN BRISTOL

Scottish Dance in Russia

After her year as guest lecturer at the University of Bristol, Ilona has returned to her home city of Krasnodar, taking with her not just memories of her experiences here but enthusiasm and determination to set up a Scottish country dance group for her students in her own university.

In her recent e-mail she has described how she has a regular weekly class of around thirty students, who were practising hard for a display as part of the university end-of-term show. They were searching everywhere for some checkered tartan-looking material to make sashes, and she will try to send us a photo of the event. Her next aim is to get her class recognised as an official affiliated RSCDS group so that she can get official funding from the university.

In the meantime, Bristol branch have been very pleased to pay her annual membership subscription to the Society, and have applied on her behalf for a scholarship to send her to the St Andrews Summer School.

Krasnodar is situated in southern Russia near the seaside resorts on



Piping in 186 folk for the Grand March in the City of Bristol Council House at the 75th Anniversary Ball last October

the Black Sea. If an unusual holiday appeals, Ilona would be thrilled to see dancing friends, especially if you are willing to pass on some dancing hints, tips and suggestions to her class.

Newcomers' Dance 1999

This year's Newcomers' Dance, where we invite branch members to bring along any friends or family to participate in an evening of easy dances, is already a sell-out.

Hugh Ferguson and the Dalriada Band will play with renowned exuberance, and our class teacher Peter Wright will make sure uncertainty evaporates by walking us through all the dances.

Seasonal ailments sometimes take their toll at the end of January, so if you are ticketless, let Margaret Pinder know, and she will put you on the waiting list. For lucky ticket holders, don't forget to bring a contribution to the supper table as well as your dancing shoes, on Saturday 30th January at Monks Park School.

Inside This Issue

- ◆ 1998 Dancing Memories
- ◆ Corryvreckan in Hungary
- ◆ Glasgow's smiles away
- ◆ Selworthy Sonnet
- ◆ RSCDS Bristol News & Local Events

1998 Dancing Remembered

Sometimes looking back over all the dancing opportunities of the last year can be exhausting in itself. Not just the thirty or so classes we attended, but the annual branch week-end away, the day school, anniversary ball, and all the other events our dancing friends in other local groups entice us to attend.

Do you remember.....



circling at the Anniversary Ball?

Remember too the day of trying hard to put a skip in your step and keep those toes pointed on a very wet afternoon, and turning unnaturally left in "Widdershins" on the evening of Hallowe'en after an exacting day of instruction at the Day School with Jim Rae.

Further back in the summer, there are memories for those who attended Summer School in St Andrews: dancing in the grounds of Scone Palace; garden parties; celebratory dinners; parties and



Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Royal Scottish County Dance Society in Bristol

aching feet after a week of strenuous but excellent instruction with a class of students from all over the world. Why not go yourself this year?

The St Andrew's Summer School runs for 4 weeks every July and August with classes for all levels of ability. Both residential and non-residential places are available. Courses run for one or two weeks. Application forms are available now from Edinburgh, and need to be completed speedily as there is great demand for the most popular weeks.

RSCDS Bristol

Glasgow's Miles Away

November saw Keith Henry and Fiona Grant travelling northwards to Glasgow, to attend the Society's AGM as delegates from the Bristol Branch.

The Kelvin Hall, outwardly of fine Victorian red sandstone construction, turns out to hide a huge sports hall big enough to allow over 700 hundred dancers to enjoy probably the biggest Ball either of us have attended. After such an exhilarating experience on the Friday night, we were fortified by a fine breakfast to participate in the biggest dance class we have ever worked through on Saturday morning. Time then to pass a sociable lunchtime before the AGM itself took place in the afternoon, which finished in good time to get ready for the informal, and splendid dance in the evening.

Next year's meeting will be the first week-end in November in Edinburgh, with dancing in the gorgeous Assembly Rooms in George Street. Any members who would like to attend as delegates should speak to our secretary Caroline before the end of the summer.

Comments?

Innovation of the season was the committee's decision to introduce live music to the class once a month. A short social programme of dances would be introduced over intervening weeks, with minimal instruction given on the night. Please let the Committee know whether you liked this idea!

Corryvreckan Steps Out

The editor of this newsletter drives a hard bargain, writes Erica Archer of Corryvreckan, a dance display team attached to RSCDS Bath, which draws some of its members from the Bristol branch. In return for a *small* favour she wrote the following article on Corryvreckan's visit to the International Folk Dance Festival in Nyiregyhaza in Eastern Hungary.

An international trip for the team is an enormous project. Apart from the rehearsals that take place on Sundays, there are costumes to make/alter/buy, the sales stall to stock, the travel arrangements to make for 28 people with 150 costumes and instruments for a five piece band. All have to get to the far eastern end of Hungary in one piece and on the right day, coincidentally the same week-end that the European Athletic Championships and the Grand Prix were being held in Budapest.

The UK national delegate for CIOFF (the international organisation under whose auspices festivals are run) is involved in initial negotiations but all detailed arrangements, contracts with the festival etc., are the responsibility of the Team. Corryvreckan have been abroad for the last six years: to Canada, USA, Slovenia, Germany, Spain and Hungary: each trip has been different and exciting.

The programme of dances we take is governed by the demands of the festival. CIOFF expect all the teams to be capable of giving at least a one hour concert, perhaps more. We usually take between 1¼ and 1¾ hours of material. This will be divided into 3 or 4 sections all with their own *Finales* and the consequent flexibility to fit in with

whatever performance times are allocated to us. The programme is a masterpiece of planning: a spreadsheet worthy of a lecturer in mathematics, one Andrew Paterson, who does the first draft and then I have some input (complaints as he would say!) We have to concentrate totally on what looks good on stage, what will be interesting to the



audience: different shapes, tempos, costumes. On the international festival circuit in Europe many teams are what we would call professionals, most having state funding of some kind, and most are extremely good.

We flew to Budapest; queued to fill in the inevitable forms; boarded the bus for the 5-hour drive to Nyiregyhaza. The hostel accommodated 400 dancers from 11 countries. A grey concrete block, there were 4 beds per room and just about enough space to walk down the middle; washrooms providing constant hot water but no shower heads and plenty bare concrete.

Our week started with a couple of short performances: one at the Festival night club where the band was perched on precipice-like steps

RSCDS Bristol

behind a small round dance floor. It was absolutely packed with dancers from many countries: the participation session was an enormous success with an incredible number of nationalities dancing a quite amazingly good Highland fling and the onlookers roaring encouragement.

We danced mainly on large outdoor

stages in a number of towns, within a radius of about 80 miles as well as in the centre of Nyiregyhaza itself. Every performance was watched by literally thousands of people, packed into the squares, perched on window sills, on top of walls, statues and steps. The Hungarians came complete with their children and gave us a wonderful reception.

There were Hungarian dance teams practically everywhere we went: all of a good standard and full of young dancers. The host team of the festival was outstanding; competition to get into the team and then to be chosen for performances is unbelievable. One mistake and a dancer was out of the team for the whole week. In Hungary, as in Spain, the young male dancers receive adulation similar to football players in this country. What a pity

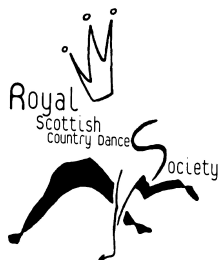
there is not the same enthusiasm for our heritage of national dance in these islands.

Time for getting to know the other dance teams was fairly limited but we tried on the Estonians' costumes, wore the amazing starched bonnets of the Dutch team, and gasped in admiration as the Georgians danced on the points of their toes with no blocks in their shoes. We stood and watched 14 swarthy male Turks rehearsing a fabulous energetic routine that appeared to destroy the stage with its ferocity.

What makes all the hard work, lack of sleep and physical exhaustion worth while? For many of us it is the experience of dancing for so many people whose enthusiasm is so very apparent. We have watched and learnt from some of the best folk dance teams in the world, but the compliments I appreciate most are when other teams mention the Corryvreckan team spirit.

Summer Dance 99

Green Ginger make their first visit to play in Bristol for us on Saturday 15 May 1999, at the New Friends Hall, Stapleton, Bristol.



Winter Class Season Dates Announced

Classes will be held each Thursday evening from 10 September, at 7.30pm in the Sts Peter and Paul School Hall, in Aberdeen Road, Redland, Bristol.

Term Dates:

Winter: 7 Jan 99 – 25 Mar 99

Summer: 15 Apr 99 – 10 June 99

Committee 98/99

Stuart Grant: 0117 924 7800
Chairman

Caroline Dunn: 0117 924 9226
Secretary

Ruth Davies: 0117 968 3057
Treasurer

Margaret Pinder: 0117 962 2520
Ticket Secretary

Ruth Illston: 0117 973 7833

Joan Ferguson: 01934 852091

Mike Jackson: 0117 973 4914

Class Teachers 98/99

Peter Wright: 01761 462874
General Class

Peter Collins: 01454 312655
Beginners class

Executive Council Representative

Fiona Grant: 0117 924 3595

New Year Snippet

As we all look forward to the branch week-end away in Selworthy in March this year, here by request is the poem Marcus recited for us last year, composed by **Hylton Dawson**, titled:

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A Family Affair

For years I was too timid to approach her.

It seemed her charms would never be for me.

She radiated grace and flawless beauty,
The sweetest thing a man could ever see.

My father told she was over thirty
And that her gifts could drive a crofter wild,
Which seemed unlikely judged by her appearance,
For outwardly she looked so pale and mild.

He warned that should I fall into her clutches
I'd end up with my mind and body blown
For she would steal my wits and cloud my judgement
Then leave me to my misery alone.

Last Christmas tide when snow lay round the shieling,
I found myself alone with her one night.
So heedless of the old man's direst warnings,
I schemed to spend long hours in true delight.

Her touch upon my lips aroused my passion.
Willing me on to share her silky fire,
I grasped the wild enjoyment that she offered
Then sated, sank exhausted by the fire.

The sweetest rest is that which follows passion.
She'd given what I wanted and much more.
Bemused, in her embrace I lay exhausted,
Uncaring when my Dad burst through the door.

My old man set about me with his claymore
The Provost ruled *not proven* and no fault,
For no true Scot should face such provocation
As have his son consume his favourite malt.