



RSCDS Bristol

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY IN BRISTOL

Chairman's Challenge

Not just a new season, but a new century to look forward to over the coming winter. And change is in the air for the coming dancing season.

The Thursday evening class will now start 15 minutes earlier at 7.15, with Barbara de Winton returning to teach the beginners until 8p.m. Then, until 10pm, Peter Wright will instruct the general class, introducing easy dances to start with so that beginners may be encouraged to stay either to watch or take part as they feel comfortable. After the interval, members can expect more taxing dances to be introduced.

Over the last year the Branch Committee has been much exercised by the question of how to encourage new members. One of the objects of the Society is the spreading of knowledge about the practice of Scottish Country Dancing, and the future of our Branch depends on getting new blood in from time to time. In his recent letter to members, Branch Chairman, Stuart Grant urges us all to spread the word at every opportunity.



Across the Swords on Redland Green

Anyone interested in following in Andrew's footsteps above might like to join Caberfeidh at their Highland Class on Mondays. Telephone Julian Steed on 0117 982 9034 for details.

Figures Make Dances

Exploring how a knowledge of basic figures can help the dancer, and how figures link together to form pleasing dances, is the topic for the morning session at the 1999 Bristol Day School. This all day event will be held in the New Friends Hall in Stapleton on Saturday 13 November.

You don't need to know all the figures, but some knowledge of Scottish dancing would be useful. If your stamina lasts, there is the opportunity to aspire towards *Flow and Flight* in the afternoon session, where other aspects making for spirited and confident dancing will be explored with the help of Alice Murphy, who has taught across the world from St Andrews to Australia via Carlisle and USA. Book now!

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From the Teacher's End

Teaching the Bristol class is a rewarding experience, admits Peter Wright, who has taught the class for over 10 years. Here he lets us in on his view from the front, back to the music and facing up to the class. He writes:

It is a very flexible and willing class, which usually takes most dances in its stride. More often than not, the left is known from the right, and up is understood from down, and formations can be turned on at will.

Every now and again I utter the wrong words and even then, most dancers attempt to follow these (curious) instructions. Visiting dancers find the class interesting and, they tell me, challengingly lively. All very GOOD! So why am I writing this article?

Well, firstly to say thank you for this rewarding response and to let you know that it is appreciated and helps toward a relaxed class atmosphere. So "Thank YOU". Secondly, to try to build on this to become even more fluent at the dancing. And thirdly, to try to get more constructive feedback about your likes and dislikes. I'm pleased that one thing is increasing - more of you are telling me after a dance that you do or don't like it. Good!

Now, about the better dancing. One puzzle I have is the bottom set, I think that you should make strenuous efforts to get up to the top of the hall more often - perhaps I will become more active here. The thing is that I don't much like telling people where to dance or who to dance with in order to share

out the competent dancers among the less secure ones. But I'll work on that.

I wonder if you could work on listening more carefully and chatting less? The chatting in any set during instruction is distracting to others in the set and to the teacher. Sometimes we're quite active at it and it seems from up here to be quite lively! I much prefer people to help other dancers by hand or eye signals rather than calling out, or giving a parallel set of instructions while we walk through. Well, so much for two problems. Next?



Challenging and lively Bristol class make for the hills after dance class at Selworthy

This dancing is a social event where people cooperate and enjoy others' company. It really is amazing how many are seen to be absorbed by the texture of the floor or the architectural features of the walls (seldom the ceiling, which might help the posture).

Now you might have heard me use the word "smile". This is an attempt to get you to look as if you are dancing *with* the person on the end of your arm. The eyes are one of

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your more valuable dancing tools, and you might find that they can connect with the other eyes at vital times. They can smile too. Words similar to smiling are grinning, happy, welcoming, and greeting. Try them out sometime and watch the result. You might especially use this skill in Reels (especially of four), hands across, and surprisingly, in allemande patterns.

Hay Tor! W'end Away!

After three successful weekends at Selworthy, we move on to the new HF Holidays Hotel at Haytor for the Year 2000 week-end. This hotel has been recently taken over by HF and has been completely refurbished. It is near Bovey Tracey and on the edge of Dartmoor. All the rooms are in the main house and all are en-suite, hence the higher price of the accommodation this year.

We have planned a change of programme for this weekend. Whilst Hugh and Martin are again providing the music for us throughout the weekend, they have also been booked to play at the Exeter Ball on the Saturday night. It was therefore decided that we should go with them. The organisers at Exeter say that they will be very pleased to see 45 of us at the Ball! The all-inclusive price of the weekend (£97 approx) includes a Ball ticket and transport to and from Exeter on the night.

We hope that it will be possible to have a party on the return to Haytor after the Ball. I am sure that Hugh and Martin will be happy to provide the music but it will be up to us to provide the entertainment!

There are just a few places left so if you would like to join us do please ask Marcus Ashman for an application form as soon as you can so that you are not disappointed.

Help Please?

The Branch depends on the willingness of members to serve on the Committee from time to time. Those of you who have done so in the past will know that the commitment in terms of time is not huge and can be very rewarding.

This October, Caroline Dunn's brilliantly effective and efficient term as branch secretary comes to an end, and we need suggestions and offers to take on her role. A Chairman-Elect is also sought, as well as two Committee members happy to help out with other duties.

Please mention if you are interested in joining the Committee to any one of its current members.

Vision Aid Overseas

Over a few weeks last season, the absence from class of our dedicated treasurer was a cause for comment. Here Ruth shares with you what took her away from the dancing:

In November 1998 I travelled to Uganda in a group of 8. We were 7 optometrists and one dispensing optician working for Vision Aid Overseas, a charity which supplies spectacles to the developing world.



After the Optometric Visit

Old glasses are donations. They are sorted by inmates at various prisons, Horfield in Bristol included, and then transported to where they are needed.

In our 10 working days we saw about 2000 people. We examined their eyes and presented spectacles where needed from the stock we

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had with us. We fitted spectacles so that people could see to study, work or just get around. In some cases a pair of spectacles can transform a "blind" person into a sighted person or enable someone to earn their living.

We worked in hospitals, clinics and schools. We blacked out the windows with bin liners, attempted to communicate in 3 or 4 different African languages and learnt how generous and patient are the Ugandans. They would walk 30 miles to see us, queue all day and offer us hospitality.

Uganda is a fertile, colourful country, "the pearl of Africa". The wildlife is wonderful, the birds beautiful, and the mountain gorillas amazing. I would love to return to Uganda or another needy country. A pair of spectacles can transform so many people's lives. Keep handing in your old pairs!

New Season New Energy?

Let Jimmy Coleman's magic fiddle, with Peter and Edna Russell's repertoire of fine dance tunes get you on your toes at Westbury Village Hall on 9 October.

An interesting programme features many favourite dances, which will be walked through to avoid crib cramming and other nervous pursuits of dancers who think they may have done this before but can't remember how.

Put the date in your diary and order your ticket from Margaret Pinder when you get to the first class of the season on 9 September. Only 4 weeks to practice!

Winter Class Season Dates Announced

Classes will be held each Thursday evening from 9 September, at 7.15pm in the Sts Peter and Paul School Hall, in Aberdeen Road, Redland, Bristol.

Beginners: 7.15 - 8.00pm
Improvers: 8.00 - 10.00pm

Term Dates:

Autumn: 9 Sept 99 – 16 Dec 99

Winter: 6 Jan 00 – 13 Apr 00

Summer: 4 May 00 – 15 June 00

Committee 99/00

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
Catering

Mike Jackson: 0117 973 4914
Catering

Joan Ferguson: 01934 852091
Publicity

Class Teachers 99/00

Peter Wright: 01761 462874
General Class

Barbara de Winton: 0117 962 2724
Beginners class

Executive Council Representative

Fiona Grant: 0117 924 3595

More Activity Planned

Kee your dance shoes at the ready to follow:

The Dalriada Band on 13 Nov 99.
Sound Company on 29 Jan 00.
Scottish Measure on 20 May 00.



May Day Holiday Frolics at Redland Fair

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Members of the branch are invited to the AGM of RSCDS Bristol, to be held on Thursday 21 October 1999 in the main hall of Sts Peter and Paul School, Aberdeen Road, Redland, Bristol at 8.30 p.m .

Short and concise AGMs are the custom in Bristol and there is still time for a couple of hours dancing. As a special incentive no charge is made to members attending the dancing on the AGM evening.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of RSCDS-Bristol AGM held on 29th October 1998.
3. Matters arising therefrom and not otherwise on the agenda.

4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts
6. Committee:
 - 1) Election of Chairman-Elect.
 - 2) Election of Treasurer Ruth Davies standing for re-election.
 - 3) Election of Secretary Caroline Dunn retiring
 - 4) Election of two members of the committee – Ruth Illston and Margaret Pinder retiring by rotation
7. Any other Business
(Items to the Hon. Secretary before the meeting please.)