



RSCDS Bristol

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY IN BRISTOL

Revealing Views

After introducing a new class format in the autumn the newly elected committee were keen to discover the opinions of the participants. Feedback forms were offered and thanks are due to everyone who responded: indeed this was everyone who took a form. Mori Polls would be flabbergasted by such total commitment to improving our dancing experience.

The results of the poll were meticulously analysed by our doughty secretary, Lesley. On the face of things, most people were in favour of the current arrangement, but faces have a habit of not telling the whole story, and the analysis threw up some interesting views, giving a deeper insight into the bald response of OK.

Most of you supported the notion of separate classes for beginners, although preference was expressed for this to be under one roof. Many of you have nothing to compare our set up with, and candidly said so.

Those who have been dancing a bit longer were more inclined to favour the old format, and to wish for the tricky bits to be at the beginning of the evening before the



Dancing all through the New Year,
Turning into the New Decade,
Advancing into the New Century, in
Good Measure for the Millennium!

grey cells give out as the hour grows late.

Dance evenings with live music during the term are thought to be a good idea, but some of you said that there were too many walk-throughs.

There were other comments, all of them helpful, and none of you were

in the least unfriendly. All make interesting reading and prove just what a wide constituency the class covers.

Millennium Dance Book

We know that a number of you have devised dances, some of which have been tried out on Thursdays. Or it may be that there are dances waiting to escape from their deviser's imagination.

If you are not sure about bars 25-32, or find the dining room chairs not very helpful in working out your upside down knot for three couples followed by a reel of three, we can supply able bodies to sort out any problems.

Please speak to Hugh Ferguson or Barbara de Winton, if you have dance ideas for Our Dance Book.

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Tilting at Kilts

There's a wind of change blowing through the kilt industry, as reported in the respected pages of The Financial Times no less.... And if anyone should doubt it, they should ask William Law, formerly the Ministry of Defence's Inspector of Kilts.

For 100 years, the only regulatory body covering kilt-makers was the MoD. Each Highland regiment had to wear dress of the highest quality and it was left to the ministry to ensure standards were maintained. But Law has now been recruited by a newly formed kilt watchdog: the Scottish Kilt Makers Association says people's kilts have been falling apart too often and a drive for higher standards is under way.

Law will employ his skills part-time and any of the estimated 100 kilt-makers in Scotland wishing to join the association will have to get past him. A good kilt can cost up to £400, and a master kilt-maker can be five years in the training.

Association co-founder Duncan Chisholm, who makes kilts in Inverness, says there's been a resurgence in kilt wearing, especially amongst the young. He's not unduly worried that they're being commercialised – with businesses such as Spar, American Express and IrnBru registering tartan patterns.

Says Chisholm: "The important thing is to ensure they are made well with the best materials. Without the sort of quality code we will be introducing, people simply don't know what's inside their kilt."



Accordianist Peter Russell and Fan Club at the Children's Xmas Dance

Party Time!

Young dancers from Bristol, Warminster, Chippenham made their way through wind rain and shoppers to join the Junior Section of RSCDS Bath at their Christmas Party. Mums, Dads, brothers and sisters and dancers of all ages enjoyed a very sociable and energetic morning led by Irene Wilkie, to the lively accordion music of Peter Russell.

RSCDS Bristol

Kid's Class?

Junior Scottish Dancing is thriving at Clifton High School, where Barbara teaches an enthusiastic and energetic group of pupils at the end of the school day. She and other members of the branch often have enquiries about a children's class in Bristol.

If you have any ideas about a suitable time and venue, and know of children who are keen to attend regularly, please let Barbara know.

So many folk who turn up at adult classes remember starting dancing as children at school, and often much to their surprise, the dancing patterns seem to re-emerge from the long lost recesses of memory to make learning as an adult much easier than they anticipate.

Let's add Scottish Dancing to the after school activities of lots more children in Bristol!



Clifton High School Display Group team up with Geoff Pegler on accordion to entertain parents and friends at their Open Day.

Entertaining the Elderly

The 8th December at the end of '99 was a miserably wet and windy night, writes Andrew Smith, but it saw some branch members entertaining the residents at an elderly people's home at Oakhill, near Shepton Mallet.

Invited to the depths of Somerset by Frederick Cook, the energetic eightsome stepping it out were Hugh and Joan Ferguson, Brian and Greta Cooper, Barbara de Winton, Sue Drew, Stuart Grant and Andrew Smith. As he himself had recorded the accompaniment, Hugh had the novel experience of dancing to his own music!

It was very interesting to see the residents' reaction to the dancing. We were one part of a whole evening of entertainment, and it was not only the dancers who came alive with the music. In fact, as someone remarked, some of us were beginning to run some of the residents a close second!

The two-part programme included Bonnie Anne, the Robertson's Rant and Shepherd's Crook. Space was very limited, and we had to watch out for feet sticking out from wheelchairs. But all had a grand time, even if the dance technique suffered from the claustrophobic size of the dance floor.

Unfortunately, it is feared that this enjoyable event will not result in any recruits to the Branch! Towards the end of January, we have been invited to provide some dancing at a Burns' Supper, which might inspire some new recruits to the class. Let's get practising then!



Ilona, our Russian protégé, and her international friends at summer school in St Andrews

Dreaming of Summertime

The applications forms for this coming RSCDS summer school in St Andrews are sitting waiting in the folder by the class notice board for all us keen energetic sorts who dream of the long daylight of midsummer in the northlands, when the dreich drizzle of a Bristol winter makes us shiver and look for any dancing opportunity to lift our spirits.

For those who have never been to summer school before, Keith, Lesley, Andrew, Jan and Fiona will tell you how much fun it was last year; and how Ilona made spectacular progress over the two weeks, from elementary to advanced level. Most of us will recall from her time here in Bristol, her graceful talent for dancing and how we were all thrilled when she was awarded an RSCDS scholarship from Miss Milligan's Fund to attend the summer course.

The View From the Chair

First of all, writes Stuart, a big thank you to the Committee, both past and present, for all the work you do to keep the Branch running smoothly. It is a measure of the enthusiasm with which all topics are embraced that I have yet to repeat, in my current term of office, the feat of finishing committee business within one hour. There is however yet time!

The main topic exercising us over this term has been the format of the class, and members' comments through the survey. By the time you read this, you will have sampled the revised arrangements for this term, and all comments should preferably be confined to paeans of praise for the wonderful work done on your behalf. If there are any brickbats to be hurled however, hurl them at me and I will try to collect them all together and make a whole brick out of them, to the greater good of all. Sometimes it seems that some of us forget that the class is just that, a class, designed to teach not only dances but also technique. Of course it is meant to be fun, but the fun is much enhanced by the feeling of making progress, and of doing the dances properly.

Finally, I had the pleasure of attending the AGM of the Society in Edinburgh at the beginning of November, the formality of the meeting itself being preceded by a Ball on the Friday evening. Bristol and the South West were well represented, and it was a pleasure to see John and Frances Hindley there. The event was held in the vast complex of the Meadowbank

Sports Centre not far from Holyrood House. As there was something like 700 dancers attending, we had to be divided between two halls with two bands. It was of course unthinkable, being Edinburgh, and a Ball, that any gentleman would want to doff his coat should the heat of the evening become too much, so there was much mopping of brows and many shiny pates come not so very long into the proceedings. Curiously enough, one of the first questions raised at the Open Forum meeting the next morning was why it was so difficult to attract more young people into the Society.

Anyway, the Society has realised that navel-gazing only makes you sneeze, and has formed a working party to address this and other questions of importance to the Society's future. The Bristol Branch is privileged to have its Executive Council representative, Fiona, on this committee, and she would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you any views you might have on the management of the Society, and the relationship between branches and the office in Edinburgh.

Winter Class Season Dates Announced

Classes will be held each Thursday evening, from 7.30 to 10.00pm in the Sts Peter and Paul School Hall, in Aberdeen Road, Redland, Bristol.

Term Dates:

Winter: 6 Jan 00 – 13 Apr 00

Summer: 4 May 00 – 15 June 00

Dance Evenings: 27 Jan, 24 Feb, 13 April, 25 May, 15 June 00.



Best wishes for a Happy New Dancing Year 2000 from Kuban Scottish Dancers. With 5 performances last December alone, Ilona's university group in Krasnodar in Russia is expanding rapidly in numbers, popularity, energy and enthusiasm.

Dance 2000 Diary Dates

K eep your dance shoes at the ready for:

Newcomers' Dance on 29 Jan 00 at Monks Park School, with musically stunning Sound Company from 7.30 – 11.00pm. Bring a beginner. Only 20 tickets left. Be one of the 100 dancers at our first dance of the new Century.

Spring ahead to 20 May 00, and get ready to step it out with Scottish Measure at the Bristol Ball in Clifton College.

Peter and Edna Russell on 7 Oct 00 at St Peter's in Henleaze are all set to start the New Season if you are.

Day School 2000

Keep in time to the music with brilliant teacher Bill Zobel, and accompanist Muriel Johnstone, now the RSCDS Director of Music. An all day school at the Newman Hall on 11 Nov 00.

Bristol Branch Committee 99/00

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