

SAPPHIRE SO GOOD!! BRISTOL BRANCH IS 45 YEARS OLD

On a blustery Saturday evening around eighty dancers from Bristol, Bath, Bournemouth, Cheltenham, Dorset, Borders' branch, Scotland, South Wales, Germany, Poland and Uganda gathered at Clifton High School for the Sapphire Ball. Behind the scenes Barbara, Margaret and their band of helpers had been very busy preparing a sumptuous feast in very difficult circumstances, whilst Andrew and helpers had decorated the hall with flags and blue balloons. The stage was set for a great occasion, in attractive surroundings.

The ladies arrived sporting a wondrous array of beautiful ball gowns, many made from exotic silks, and the men were in full evening dress which of course looked splendid – a real treat for the eyes as you looked down the lines of dancers.



No re-caps meant that all the hard work in the preceding weeks paid dividends as most dancers managed the majority of the dances without a hitch, and were even able to help those less sure of themselves, with a smile-challenging fun!

The evening flew by and after a delicious supper, came the formal proceedings. Marcus Ashman paid tribute to Peter Wright and invited Irene Bennett, the Chairman of The Society, to present Peter with a Bristol Branch Award in recognition

of all his hard work for the Branch in many fields, including being the MC, running the web site, putting together the music each week, teaching, and of course keeping in touch with a geographically wide spread group of clubs by attending their dances. Peter then cut the cake, which was distributed with coffee to round off the interval.



In true Bristol fashion teams appeared and everyone pulled together to clear up before resuming the second half. The only slight blot on the landscape was the band that lost count on a couple of occasions causing us to dance across the bars. Their tempo also increased after supper, which one or two people found disconcerting, but they played in a lively, light-hearted way inspiring fun on the dance floor. There was a warm, friendly atmosphere pervading the whole evening and, as usual, Bristol made everyone feel welcome by making sure no one sat out. A true tribute was the fact that there were as many on the floor for the last dance as there was for the first!

Patsy and Gordon Patterson

Peter's Potted History

Our branch was formally 'delivered' at a meeting in 13 Orchard Street on **10th March 1962**. The driving force for its formation appears to have come from several members of the Westbury Scottish Club together with some other enthusiasts not belonging to that Club. The 'Why' behind the formation is not recorded and would be interesting to know. No.13 is still there, although it has become subsumed into No.14 and is not used for dancing now. This meeting formed a committee "of those who had set up the meeting" (Minutes) and they were Mr. G. Bates (Secretary),



This issue:
Sapphire Ball, Branch events etc, Newcomers' Dance Burns Night, Haytor, Peter's Potted History, Chairman's Letter.

Mrs. D. Bates, **Mrs. J. Hood, Miss N. Jenkins, Miss D. Lear**, Miss K. Lewis (Treasurer), **Mrs. J. Morris**, Mr. K. Porter, Mrs. R. Porter, Mr. C.P. Wadsworth (Chairman) and three "nominees" Dr Barbour (Westbury S.C.), Mr .A. Dunn (Br. Teachers Group), Mr J. Morton (Br. Caledonian). Those in bold are still known to us with Nan becoming Mrs Steward and Dorothy Mrs Bell. The early Committee was an annually elected one with the Officers giving long and valuable service over some ten years – David Turbitt (Chairman) Blanche Patient (Secretary) Kay Lewis (Treasurer).

THE FIRST CLASS was called "beginners", taken by Mrs Bates and helped by Mrs Morris and Mrs Hood, and held weekly in No.13 Orchard St. It had Mrs Porter at the piano. By October the membership is recorded to have risen to 93 - impressive - and the Branch was setting its sights on a range of classes and expanding to places like Thornbury, Long Ashton, and Patchway. Only one of these survived and became a separate entity at Thornbury, transferring years later to Wotton under Edge where Peter Collins now teaches.

Things settled down for several years with five classes - Advanced, General, New Dances, Beginners' and a Children's class. A notable teacher at this time and later, was Andy Dunn. From the very beginning there has been a Demonstration Group, an Annual Ball, and a two-day Weekend School.

THE FIRST BALL was held April 1963 with **Miss Milligan** invited. She accepted but there is no record of her attendance. **Jimmy Blair** was the band and 'Westbury Drill Hall' the venue. Jimmy played for these Balls for 10 years, and they moved to the Victoria Rooms and then the Union Anson Room. The numbers attending the Ball reached over 200 by the end of the 60's! **The Weekend Schools** had teachers such as Mary Stoker, Innes Russell, Bill Hamilton, Derek Haynes, Bill Hamilton, Jackie Johnston, and Anna Holden, usually invited for two years running. The

Branch also held "Social Dances" monthly, using LPs or tapes for the music.

From 1975, for a variety of reasons, things changed to look much more like our present structure - committee members with limited terms of office, one main class with intermittent Beginners' Classes, and, from 1972 the teachers appointed annually by Committee. Still we held the Annual Ball (now not at the Anson rooms but a moveable feast), and still the Weekend Course. This was also the time when we moved away from monthly Socials to 'Named' dances with live Bands - notably at first Peter and Edna Russell giving us happy and enthusiastic music. 1972 saw the first **Newcomers' Dance**, a great innovation at the time pioneered by David Jeffery and Peter Wright. In the 1980s, the Weekend School became the Day School, but it still continued to use first class teachers and musicians every year. The four named Dances have always used live bands, often staging the first appearance down this way of nationally known bands - examples are Frank Reid, Green Ginger, Alastair Wood, and recently George Meikle.

Our latest innovation, started in 2001 is the **Burns Supper Dance**, suggested by Lesley Terry and very much assisted by Andrew Smith and Joan & Hugh Ferguson. A little earlier, in 1994 our current Chairman, Marcus Ashman, when in the role of Secretary, introduced the brilliant idea of a **Weekend Break** for Branch members only. The members-only rule still applies, it is still fully booked each year, and happy times have been enjoyed in Holiday Fellowship Houses first at Brecon, then Selworthy, and now Haytor.

This pattern of organisation has continued for some thirty years and has given the Branch a sound and flexible development up to the present. We now have membership about back to that which it was in the 1960's and our Charitable functions and Dances are successful. Anyone can now

discover our activities through the web site.

The Branch is really about people, and this concept has led us to have one of the most friendly and helpful atmospheres around, with smiling, competent, and fun dancing. Long may it continue?

This review has been compiled from the early minutes of the committee meetings and from my personal memory of the Branch since 1966. Should any reader have additional, or differing, insights about the Branch events please let me know and I will compile a more complete document.

Peter Wright

Burns Night

It will come as no surprise to you to know that ideas for this year's Burns Supper began to flow two weeks before the Supper of 2006, such was the enthusiasm Lesley and Andrew brought to the task of making each event memorable.



Lesley wanted autumn colours of gold russet and burgundy and the theme of 'Autumn in Ayrshire' was born. It had been the intention that a trip to Scotland in September or October would produce suitable photographs for use as part of the overall theme. Sadly that was not to be. However, young Mr Henry came to the rescue and volunteered his cousin in Ayrshire to go out into the highways and byways to snap appropriate places associated with Burns including trees and hedgerows, and Andrew made visits to Westonbirt and the Promenade (Clifton, not Clevedon). As a result, some splendid montages emerged.



The usual crew of helpers turned up on the afternoon of the Supper and made relatively short work of turning Redland High School Hall into a veritable feast for the eyes. Some fun was had in deciding whether the double helices should emulate DNA or, as turned out, go in parallel. It turned out to be, like the *Falls of Rogie*, quite a dizzying experience. There were the usual minor adjustments of a centimetre here or there in the hangings on the curtains, and of course the inevitable escape of at least one of the balloons, but by about 4.30 all was complete.

Caroline Dunn took on the role of co-ordinator and Sara Jackson gave sterling support. As usual tickets, also managed by Sara, had sold well and, fortified by a welcome glass of wine, the assembly was soon in full voice. Mr Chairman Ashman had to call the hall to order and after taking our seats we were introduced to the guests on the top table, in particular to Gill Day the Chairman of Westbury Scots, and her husband Steven and to Eric Finley from Ayrshire who was to give the Immortal Memory.

Proceedings got underway in the traditional manner with the Selkirk Grace given by Mike Innes. The Haggis, borne with aplomb by Clive Robinson, was piped in by Bill Gass to the tune *Highland Cathedral* in tribute to Lesley, and was addressed splendidly by Mike Innes.



The Immortal Memory is probably the most difficult speech to give in the whole proceedings, but Eric achieved a happy medium between the serious and the humorous and was well received. Alan Cottle gave the Toast to the Lassies, his research having revealed what a wealth of talent there is when you know where to look for it! The reply

was given, in her usual calm and understated way, by Tacey Bain.



After the usual toasts and thanks to the guests and the catering staff, Marcus brought the formal proceedings to an end and the dancing, compèred by Joan Ferguson, got under way, with much enthusiasm being shown for that rarest of all treasures the Dalriada Band led as ever by the redoubtable Mr Hugh Ferguson.



Thanks largely to the efforts of two dedicated people the Burns supper of Bristol RSCDS has become a "must-attend" event in the local calendar, and I am authorised to report that the 2008 Supper planning is already well under way.

Stuart Grant



Haytor

The Haytor weekend (16-18 March 2007) again proved very successful this year. People arrived on the Friday afternoon in time for afternoon tea. This was served in the lounge/bar – a large room tastefully decorated in black damask wallpaper, brightened by an enormous chandelier, originally made for the QE II, a picture of Agatha Christie, taking pride of place above the fireplace. The room gives off a surprisingly relaxed atmosphere. Comfy chairs are randomly placed around coffee tables encouraging groups of friends to congregate and we soon fell into conversation, laughing and joking and catching up with 'the news'.



Dinner was served at 7:30 – a three-course meal, the main course of which was a lavish hot and cold buffet. This was beautifully presented and as usual everyone ate far too much! Dancing started at approximately 8.30. Dalriada (our resident band) played for the evening dance, which was led by Barbara de Winton. A programme of popular, well-known, dances had been put together for the occasion, which everyone could easily dance after a quick recap and a fun evening was had by all. After the dance, we adjourned to the lounge for a nightcap (in my case a cup of tea), taking the opportunity to wind down before going to bed.

The sound of bagpipes summoned us from our sleep early Saturday morning as Stuart walked the grounds.

After an ample cooked breakfast, the serious work of the day began. Peter, in his usual style, did us proud. He must have spent many a happy hour sorting through interesting and testing dances to

stretch not only our legs and feet but also our minds. His theme this year was 'dances with an element of the unexpected' and he certainly found a few of those! One dance, in particular, was very disorientating – not only did the 'top' of the set keep changing but so did the direction of the set as we moved round 90 degrees each time through the dance!

After lunch Andrew led the traditional walk on the moor. The day we arrived, bracken and gorse had been burned on the moor towards Bovey Tracy and looking down the hill the moor was quite blackened. As a result, as we set out on our walk, an unusually large number of ponies could be seen grazing on the slopes. We walked to Rippon Tor (to a height of 3450 feet, according to the trig point at the top), over to Saddle Tor and then made our way back to Moorlands for afternoon tea, glad to escape the increasingly blustery weather. Those who did not go on the walk either, stayed at the hotel and read, watched the rugby, played rummicub or went in to Bovey Tracy to do some shopping (mainly for props for the evening entertainment!).

Afternoon tea over, the remainder of afternoon had an air of mystery about it. One newcomer to 'the weekend' commented on the number of small groups of people who kept disappearing into 'quiet corners of the hotel'. She was also surprised to see Keith wearing purple nail varnish! Another person reported seeing six people squeezed into a rather small car, singing at the tops of their voices – the car swaying violently from side to side! This was, of course, practice for the Saturday evening ceilidh and judging from the laughter and the smiling faces was a lot of fun!

Stuart Grant was MC for the evening ceilidh. The programme was made up of unusual dances (little known by me) but easy enough to pick up after a brief walk through. In between the dances 'volunteers' performed their spots - Haytor madrigal choir delighted us with three well rehearsed songs; we had a sneak preview of the first 'all singing, all dancing' bagpipes to

come out of Japan; Papa Stour sword dance was performed (far better than the usual Rapper side!); Graham and Lorna played some intricate melodies on the saxophone and clarinet, Peter read tales from the building site, while John and Katherine read tales from the cockpit and Keith, accompanied by some real loose women, made his debut in drag! Another, great evening of entertainment was enjoyed by everyone.



After the dance, we again adjourned to the lounge/bar. Out came bottles of wine and whisky, crisps and other nibbles as we prepared ourselves for the 'fringe' ceilidh - impromptu group singing interspersed with the odd ceilidh dance and 'spot'. This went on until approximately 4am – people sloping off to bed in ones and twos as their stamina gave out and they became overcome with fatigue. The usual band of party revellers – Hugh, Joan, Elizabeth, Roger and Clive - stayed the course What is more, they were up bright and early ready (a few hours later) for another day of strenuous activity and brain ache.



Sunday morning began in much the same way as Saturday, with Stuart playing the bagpipes as he walked the grounds. After breakfast, Peter continued to teach his dances with an 'unexpected' twist but people were not quite as enthusiastic as they had been on Saturday morning, lacking in concentration and finding the dancing a little more taxing. This, of course, had nothing to do with the volumes of whisky and wine consumed the night before! As the morning progressed, the number of people injured and sitting out grew. Peter, however, battled on and got us through another morning of interesting dances, which we all enjoyed immensely.



The weekend was officially over after Sunday lunch. We said our goodbyes and headed for the motorway and home. It is always sad when a 'good time' comes to an end – but there is always next year! Mike has already fixed the date, so make sure you book your place for what promises to be yet another weekend not to be missed!

L Robinson

Newcomers' Dance

Change of venue was expected.
Change of band was not!

Ian Muir and band were unable to fly from Glasgow due to hiccoughs with British Airways. Peter came to the rescue and with his never ending contacts he organised John Dudley on fiddle, Martin Cairns on keyboards and Ian Robertson on squeeze box to play for us with a few hours notice. Well-done Peter! The band was fabulous and much appreciated by all.

In the splendid hall at St. Monica's, designed by George Oatley in Gothic style like the Wills Memorial; dancing on a sprung, seasoned hardwood floor; the evening opened with an adjusted Cumberland Reel to accommodate the 100+ dancers, 25% of whom were newcomers.

The pace was set for the evening: Peter was the excellent MC for the night, walking us through each dance, just saying the right amount; not too much and not too little and always with his encouraging smile. Hands up indicated where the newcomers were standing and we all happily mixed up and put names to some lovely new faces.

A wonderful spread created the American supper – the best Marcus has ever seen – which provided an opportunity to catch up with dancers from quite far a field.

Henry Herbert Wills and Mary Monica Cuncliffe Wills looked approvingly down on us from their portraits painted in 1922; Henry with his ominous double-barrelled shotgun and Mary with her studious looking book. We also had 16 residents from St. Monica's watching from the gallery, some of whom were new to Scottish Country Dancing and enjoyed the experience. One lady used to dance as a Wren during the war and loved her trip down Memory Lane, "One of the best entertainments we have" and "Didn't spot any boxer shorts tonight"!

Thanks to all those who organised such a fun evening and we're all

looking forward to seeing lots of newcomers at forthcoming dances.
Caroline Yuill



Chairman's Letter

As we come to the end of our dancing year and look forward to summer holidays, I believe that we can look back on a successful year for the Branch. I would like to thank everyone for their support and hard work through the year in making it so.

The year culminated in the Sapphire Ball at Clifton High School celebrating 45 years since the formation of the Branch and I hope that all who attended enjoyed themselves as much as I did. I believe that all the hard work put in by Peter and Barbara in teaching us the dances enabled us all to relax and not to be constantly looking at crib sheets before each dance, thus enabling us to enjoy the dances and to socialise. We were pleased that Edinburgh agreed with our proposal that Peter should receive the Branch Award for his services to the Branch. Peter has contributed in so many ways to the success of the branch, in addition to his weekly teaching. It was with great pleasure that we welcomed Irene Bennett, the Chairman of RSCDS, who joined us for the weekend and presented Peter with his award.

Looking ahead, the weekly classes will move to the hall at St Monica's Trust, just next door to Badminton School next term and I look forward to seeing you all there after the Summer break. There will be more information about next season in the letter to be sent out during August.

Marcus Ashman

Monday Demonstration Class

The monthly Monday class is well supported and everyone is welcome. We are moving to The Church of the Good Shepherd hall in June, and after a summer break, will meet there at the end of September. At present we are working towards the Festival of Scottish Country Dancing at Caerleon, with the available team of 4 men and 8 women.

We have been looking at steps, figures and choreography, discussing different ideas and considering opinions. A consensus is usually reached and we have put together a few medleys in preparation for next season. I hope that everyone who would like to take part in displays or is just interested will come along.

For more information please contact Barbara de Winton.



Lesley Terry In Memoriam

It was thought that members might like to know the total value of the contributions made in memory of Lesley.

To the ICU Relatives Fund, Southmead Hospital: £752.50.

To the National Trust for Scotland: £1,111; her name will be recorded in their "In Memoriam" book.

Andrew would like to record his deep gratitude and that of Lesley's whole family not only for this wonderful generosity, but also for the tremendous kindness and support that has been, and is being, given by members.

RSCDS HQ Events

RSCDS Summer School
July 2007 – August 2007
St Andrews

Dance Scottish Week
10th-15th September
Various locations see their website

Bristol Branch Events

New Season Dance
13 October 2007
St Monica's Trust, W-O-T
Band: Green Ginger

Branch AGM
October 18th 2007

Day School & Dance
17 November 2007
St Peter's Church Hall, Henleaze
Teacher: David Hall
Musician: Angela Young
Evening: Hugh Ferguson & Dalriada

Burns Supper & Dance
19th January 2008
Band: Hugh Ferguson & Dalriada

Newcomers Dance
9th February 2008
Band: Scottish Measure TBC

Summer Dance
10th May 2008
St Monica's Trust W-O-T
Band: Ian Robertson

Thursday Evening Class

Join us for fun nights of Scottish Country Dance on the following dates:

Thursday nights for all
7.30 – 10.00pm
With weekly breakout sessions
7.50 – 8.50pm
Term Dates:
2007:
12 April – 28 June

After the summer break:
2007-08:
13 Sept – 13 Dec
10 Jan – 13 March
3 April – 26 June
Thursday nights for all
7.30 – 10.00pm
With weekly beginners sessions
7.30 – break

The new term will begin in September and we will have a new venue to enjoy our classes, St Monica's Trust. We will also have a new teaching structure details to follow in the summer. Remember in order to keep the branch alive we need new members. So please try to recruit new people and advertise the Branch if the opportunity arises.

Teachers 2006/07

Peter Wright: 01761 462874
peterwri@mac.com

Barbara De Winton: 0117 962 2724
dewinton@talk21.com

We will be trying out a new class structure and teaching schedule next term after our summer break.

Bristol Branch Committee 2006/2007

Below are details of the Branch committee, we are all happy to hear from you if you have any comments regarding the Branch.

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Useful Web links

Don't forget our own website which will help to keep you up-to-date with the branch, classes and events.

RSCDS Bristol Branch
<http://www.rscdsbristol.info>
Webmaster: Peter Wright

Others sites of interest:

RSCDS Headquarters
<http://www.rscds.org>
(Ask Committee member for password)

Grand Chain
<http://www.scottishdance.net/>

Strathspey Server
<http://www.strathspey.org/>

Newsletter

This has been my first attempt at the Branch Newsletter and I hope that you all enjoy this issue. I would like to express my heart-felt thanks to all the contributors who allowed me to twist their arms into producing articles for this edition and taking copious amounts of great photographs. They have all made my life, as editor, incredibly easy and I really do appreciate your help as I undertake this new role on the committee. I can take no credit for any of the articles above but I am sure you will agree we have some very talented members in the branch.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike Innes for providing me with all the tools required to produce this Newsletter and if I may to thank Mike, on behalf of the Branch, for all his hard work on previous editions. I am sure you will all agree that Mike did a great job and that the Newsletters were fun and a pleasure to read.

Finally I would like to pick up Mike's mantra and remind you all that no news submitted means no newsletter!! So please get in touch with all your news especially your activities over the summer break.

Editor: Fiona Thompson
Next Issue: Winter 2007/08
Submissions by December 07.