

HAYTOR WEEKEND

14th-16th March 2008

Just for once the British were not talking about the weather - it had been so bad-to-indifferent in the preceding weeks that we were all talked out on that topic.

However, in the, to many of us, now-familiar lounge with the QE II chandelier, sombre wallpaper, Agatha Christie mementoes, the grand piano and the ankle-breaker at the foot of the central pillar - be patient, please, I am just setting the scene for those who have never been, not trying to put them off - sitting in the leather club chairs or the low, squashy leather settees that can catch an unwary kilt-wearer out the first time he tries them, round the tea-cups and several different sorts of cakes (start as you mean to go on seemed to be most folks' motto) there seemed to be three main topics of conversation, and one could see which stage each group had reached by the body language. [Oh, and the fish in the tall cylindrical tank seemed much bigger this year, didn't you think?].

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The initial tense/weary look and the subsequent gradual relaxation marked those recently arrived who thought the motorway traffic rather heavy, if drivers, or that the Devon lanes were terribly narrow, if passengers. The turning round by

individuals to look towards the door from the entrance hall indicated the groups who were not looking to see who the latest arrivals were but who, having passed the first stage, had registered the removal of the tea/coffee/etc machine and all its accompanying wide choice of (non-alcoholic) beverages. Finally came the gesticulating groups, comprising some of whom were animatedly counting on fingers (and some who were trying hard to show an interest), which were trying to establish how many times we had been away and where we had visited since Marcus first suggested a Branch weekend.

The consensus seemed to be that we had had three years in each of the HF houses at Brecon and then Selworthy, before settling on Haytor, and that we were now embarking on the 15th. But I was not aware that anyone remembered which material/gemstone etc that represented. [Crystal - Ed.].

That settled, there was concern about Peter, who had not been at all well for a couple of weeks, and yes, we had to get back to it eventually, whether the weather would allow those who preferred to take their exercise on their own two feet (rather than sweating in a comfortable chair over the outcome of Rugby Internationals) to get a walk on the Saturday afternoon. Which just goes to prove that "a pessimist is just an optimist who doesn't want to be disappointed" [I hope I have that right, Margaret (C.)?].

But, hey, it's still only Friday - after a very generous spread of both a hot and a cold buffet supper, we were welcomed by Mike Innes, who again organised the whole event, and introduced us to the weekend's brain teaser, which was to place an alphabet of Scottish place names associated with dances, from



Abernethy to Ythanside (but no X or Z) on an outline map of Scotland. This proved a distraction until we went in to the ballroom for the opening evening dance; MC'd as usual by Barbara de Winton, who gave us a relaxed but interesting programme of dances.



The music was provided, with their accustomed flair, by Hugh Ferguson and Dalriada. This year, instead of being supported by Elisabeth, Fran, Kevin and Sharon, Hugh was joined by Elisabeth on the keyboard, as before, and we enjoyed the playing of Bob on the guitar and Hilary on the fiddle.

After the excitement of the dance the full impact of the loss of the hot drinks machine from the lounge was most strongly felt. Instead of a companionable chamomile before retiring, if one felt the need for a gentle nightcap one was forced to become a solitary drinker in one's room. It is only to be hoped that it does not result in Branch members developing drinking problems.



Saturday dawned. Just. From the vantage of a second floor window Stuart was barely perceptible (visually) in the mist as he played his pipes round the grounds before breakfast. [The efficient double-glazing means that your window has to be ajar to make him audibly perceptible]. The walkers were as gloomy as the overcast day when Mike announced that for safety reasons the walk would not take place, but by this time it was also raining pretty steadily.

The morning class went well, with another eclectic and enjoyable selection of dances from Peter, and the treat of dancing to a 4-piece accompaniment.



The afternoon was variously taken up with the options, either singly or in combinations, of furtive rehearsals, secret shopping expeditions (by car), sentimental journeys (in one case as far as Paignton), touristy traipsings, a crash course in steps for the middle of the Eightsome Reel, or even just 'crashing out'. Oh, yes, and the r***y.

Then, after dinner, THE CEILIDH, very ably programmed by Clive who also acted as 'Faire an Tigh'. [He also had a slide show running on a lap-top of photos that he had taken.



The camera might not lie, but it does seem to be economical with the truth.] It was a veritable feast of song, dance and saxophones, but the highlight was undoubtedly 'The Desert Rats' backed by 4 of the 8th Army, aka Hugh and Dalriada,



augmented by Barbara Lord replicating the susurrantion of sandals on sand. Leonard and Stuart captured the Wilson, Keppel and Betty act to perfection (except that Barbara declined the latter part). Caroline Yuill conceived and choreographed 'A Differently Caught Dream' an amalgam of Scottish and Spanish gypsy themes, involving herself, Barbara, Leonard and Andrew. Graham and Lorna again entertained us, 'Saxing Around', with some well-chosen pieces on their saxophones and there was a reprise by a slightly different cast of 'Four Girls Bright and Beautiful', the men-hungry women who had burst in upon us on a previous visit to Haytor. Jose (biker), Lynn (land-girl), Joan (what was Joan, her leggings were certainly psychedelic?) and Lady Keith, immaculately turned out and adding a touch of class to the act, all accused us of not helping them the last time. At least I think that was the tenor of their plaint - sorry about that, girls.



The 'Haytor Harmony' group made a guest appearance under their leader and accompanist, Elisabeth, with a nicely balanced programme. Unfortunately they are too numerous to mention individually, but collectively did sound good. We also had an exposition by Roger Jackson on Pythagoras' Theorem that would not have satisfied a maths teacher, but was entertaining, and 'Peter's choice' was 'Sulis Minerva', devised by Ros for Bath's diamond jubilee year. The whole was encapsulated in and interspersed with a programme of lively dances, and the fact that the acts had been so good made up for the fact that we did not complete the dance programme. Thanks, too, to the volunteer re-cappers.

Retiring to the lounge the demise of the drinks machine was much lamented, but 'The Fringe' gradually gathered momentum. Your reporter is not clear whether it was the last two, or three or more hours that he missed, so you will have to enquire of the usual suspects. [Names are not given to protect the guilty].

More subdued Sunday mornings have been experienced in the past, but even so at least one pair of dark glasses was noticed. Peter had tailored the programme in the light of experience and again we had a very good morning's class. Hilary had had to leave but Dalriada still kept us moving.

After lunch we had the usual awards ceremony, but without any tears or emotional acceptance speeches. Christine and John were close runners-up in the 'dancing alphabet' competition. It was good to see them again from the east and Frances from the west. It shows that there is a good spirit alive in the Branch, and it is very much hoped that folk with us for the first time would agree.

We all owe Mike a very big "Thank you", even more so to the teachers, and to the musicians in abundance. They are the mainstay of the whole weekend's activities, and get virtually no respite.

The last dance of the morning had been 'The Sun Dance'. Is it just coincidence that the cloud-base lifted for the journey home? If nothing else, we were talking about "the weather again".



By Andrew Smith

REELING IN REIMS

Just to put you in the mood and set the scene, first read the text in the triangle out loud, preferably to a friend.



It was with some trepidation that I applied for a place on the Paris Branch Easter Weekend, being neither a seasoned Continental traveller nor an accomplished linguist. I had been invited last year but had declined and when the invitation was repeated thought that I should stir myself, despite my misgivings.

This Easter it would be held in Reims – like Easter, it is a moveable feast. [I was told subsequently that the last time they had held it there was 21 years ago].

There was a choice of three hotels, and that was just to start, then there was the choice of flights, trains, etc etc, until at the very end, "What will the weather be like?"

Due to getting caught in a time-warp, which I still cannot work out, I

was only just in time for the first class on Saturday afternoon, which was taken by Mary Murray from Vancouver, accompanied by Angela Young from London on the keyboard. After a superb dinner there was a dance, in what was left of the evening, to Marian Anderson and her band.

Sunday morning was a leisurely start, followed by a class before a very good lunch. The first part of the afternoon was free but we had to be ready in our best gear for 16:30 to get the coaches to Champagne Mumm. Our arrival coincided with the departure of a group of young tourists from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. You could hear the jaws dropping. We had a most interesting tour of the cellars, their museum and a champagne aperitif before a marvellous *Dîner au Champagne* in the Caveau Mumm. The coaches then took us back to the Salons Degermann for the ball, with Marian Anderson.

And suddenly it was Monday morning. One more class, truncated for me because of the TGV timetable, a long wait at Charles de Gaulle airport, where it was snowing for a while, and home.

Overall it was an enjoyable experience. All the dancing was in the Art Nouveau Salons Degermann, built in 1900, and apparently modelled on Versailles, all gilt and mirrors, and only fifty yards from the hotel. Every one of the 128 participants was friendly and welcoming: there were quite a lot of folk from the UK and I have met quite a few of the Paris Branch at RSCDS events in Scotland. There were even two Japanese couples whom I had met before, so one did not feel isolated. It was also a nice surprise to find 'Alan J Smith' on the programme on the Saturday evening – apparently it is popular in Paris [A dance Andrew wrote for his brother – Ed]. The weather was fine but cold, and yes, you have no idea of speed in the TGV.

Back to the triangle – what did you read? Was it "Paris in the spring"? If so, look more closely.

Andrew Smith

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Dancers,

Several of our members have just returned from a very enjoyable weekend at Haytor on Dartmoor. From my perspective it seemed to go well and everyone had a good time. Please do let a committee member know if you had any problems. Our thanks go as always to Mike who worked so hard to put the weekend in place and also to all those who had anything to do with the programme of teaching and running the activities throughout the time we spent at Haytor. I can only hope that we are able to go again next year for I am sure that we not only have a good time but it is also a great activity for getting to know each other better.

The final dance of our year took place on 10th May 2008. I would like to say thank you to everyone who supported and coming along on such a beautiful evening. Thanks also to Barbara de Winton our excellent MC.

The committee will meet a couple of times before the end of our dancing year at the end of June in order to make plans for 2008/09. If you have any bright ideas or would like to see changes in how the Branch runs do please get in touch with us. It will be much easier for the committee to discuss any new ideas before the new season starts in September. Whilst writing about Committee activities, I would like to thank all members of the committee for their unstinting help during this my second year in the Chair. It has been a pleasure to work with them all for they all have just got on with their jobs and this has all made it so easy for me. We will be seeking two new members of the committee at our AGM in October so if you feel that you would like to play a part in running the Branch do let Joan Ferguson, Ruth Ilston or me know.

Finally I do hope that you all have a very enjoyable Summer and manage to get away on holiday in good weather. The committee and I look forward to seeing you back safely at the beginning of next season early in September.

Marcus Ashman

THE INTREPID TRAVELLERS' DIARY

As many of you know, Alan and Lesley Cottle recently took time out to travel the world. They spent the first six months, from April 2007, in Europe living in their caravan and climbing every mountain they liked the look of. They met up with Patsy and Gordon in Austria for a week dancing to Marian Anderson, and later with the Bristol group dancing in southern France. From there they came home to visit family and deposit their caravan before taking off carrying only their rucksacks with tent, for Canada and the States. Here are some extracts from emails received as they made their way south through South America, towards New Zealand.

Patsy & Gordon Paterson

We were thrilled to obtain a permit to trek to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. We spent 2 nights in the canyon and during this time were able to experience the breathtaking views and stunning sunrises and sunsets. We left the campground in the canyon at sunrise in T-shirts and shorts and carrying 6 litres of water on the Ranger's advice, but by the time we reached the rim everyone was well wrapped up against the chilly wind and near zero temperatures. On Tuesday we will drive back to Phoenix for the flight to Peru. A 3 week trek including the Amazon jungle awaits us.

We are back in Puno following a night on an island on Lake Titicaca. It was a fascinating experience. We were allocated to a family and stayed in their home. There was no electricity and supper was cooked on a wood-burning stove by the light of a candle. Afterwards we dressed up in Peruvian costumes and went to a fiesta, where we joined in with the dancing. At present we are not sure whether we will have to stay in Peru for an extra night.

We have had a hitch to our travels today due to a strike in Bolivia. We were due to cross the border today, but have had to spend an extra day in Puno. Luckily no one in our group had onward flights booked from La Paz for tomorrow and our guide has

been able to arrange accommodation and an extra tour today. Tonight is our last night with this group and Alan has been nominated to make the farewell speech to our guide. He has just gone back to the hotel to think about it.

We are having a wonderful time in NZ. It is such a beautiful country and everyone is so friendly. We have stayed in Raglan, Waiotapu, Rotorua, Napier and now near Wellington. All very different but all super places. 6 weeks is not going to be long enough to do everything that we would like to! So far we have been rapelling, rafting, caving, rock climbing, orienteering, swimming in a thermal stream, to a Maori 'Marae' and to 2 museums - life is very busy!

Today we have picked up a kilt for Alan and we bought 2 skirts for me in Buenos Aires so we are all set for summer school. We have taken the easy option for the fancy dress and hired 2 bee costumes. We were trying to think of something more original as no doubt the room will be full of 'bees', but black and yellow is quite a difficult theme.

We are all set for Christmas. Our little tent is sited under a Pohutukawa tree and we have 4 decorations in the tent and a piece of tinsel outside. We are spending Christmas Day with a friend we made in Peru and her NZ friends. The plan is for a BBQ on a beach and we are keeping our fingers crossed that the weather will be good.

Lesley & Alan Cottle

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR BALLS AND SOCIALS

We thought you might enjoy these ten (actually 11!) commandments for Balls and Socials (King James, version) that have been doing the rounds; originally available at: <http://www.frankfurt-scd-club.org/etiquette>

These may not have been carried down from Mount Schiehallion on shortbread tablets, but anyway, you will not make a mistake by trying to adhere to them:

1 Thou shalt not overestimate thyself when asking people to dance, lest thou beest embarrassed if the set breaks down six times out of eight because of thee.

2 Thou shalt dance now and then with other people than thy spouse and immediate tribe - possibly even with someone from the other table or yon wallflower from the outer reaches of the hall.

3 Thou shalt not walk on the dance floor too early, neither shalt thou do thus alone, for lo! The MC will announce the dance when it is time, and even in Scotland it takes at least two to dance.

4 Thou shalt join a set at the bottom and not in the middle (especially if it may already have been counted), lest thou cause much wailing and gnashing of teeth before the dance has even started.

5 Thou shalt count the lines if thou art the top man, for the knowledge of one's station in the set produces good will in all men (and women!) (If thou art a woman on the men's side, this commandment may apply to the next man down the line).

6 Thou shalt look at thy partner during the dance and not at thy 'Pilling', so that she (or he) may remain friendly towards thee and thou mayest ask her (or him) to dance again.

7 Thou shalt not hinder thy neighbour's dance by returning from thy 'Down-the-middle-and-up' on bar 9, blocking forever the centre of the set with extra twiddles and hand-clapping during a half diagonal reel of four, or otherwise not acting as a team player.

8 Thou shalt honour thy musicians, that thy dance may be long into the night and they might even repeat a dance that thou hast liked. But similarly shalt thou help your MC; clap both loudly and long, but remain on the dance floor if thou wilt do that dance again or clear it speedily if not.

9 Thou shalt not chide, lest thou be chided - for verily, nobody hath appointed thee (of all people!) judge of thy neighbour's dancing ability or

outlook on what is enjoyable. If thou must chide people, become a dance teacher and chide them in thy class; at balls and socials it is an abomination.

10 Thou shalt enjoy thyself - in spite of these tedious commandments - and help others enjoy themselves, too.

11 Other dancers will be commented upon on thy way home.

Thanks to our friends at the Frankfurt SCD Club.

Edited by Andrew Smith

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT!

A date for your diaries:

'A Summer Fling' 6th July 2008 at Ubley Village Hall from 4-9pm.

Recorded music will be provided and the dances will be your choice. There will be an interval for an American "Tea".

Tickets on sale from beginning of June (for further details, see web site).

This will be an informal dance and a dance with a difference – when you buy your ticket, you will be asked to fill in a slip with your choice of dance. On the day, dances will be randomly selected from the dances suggested creating a relaxed, varied and interesting programme.

So make it a date – come and have fun at the VERY last dance of the season!!

This dance is open to Bristol Branch members only.

BRISTOL BRANCH EVENTS

Informal Dance
6th July (Details above)

New Season Dance
11th October 2008

Band: Strathallen
Venue: St Monica Trust W-O-T

Day School & Dance
15th November 2008
Teacher: Eric Finley

Musician: Ian Muir
Band: Green Ginger
Venue: St Peters, Henleaze

Burns Supper & Dance
24th January 2009

Band: Hugh Ferguson & Dalriada
Venue: Redland High School

Newcomers Dance
14th February 2009

Band & Venue:TBC

Haytor Weekend
13-15th March 2009

Please contact Mike Innes
(mike_innes@blueyonder.co.uk) for details and booking form.

Summer Dance
16th May 2009

Band & Venue: TBC

Further information can always be found on the notice board and in the events folder that Lynn and Clive Robinson bring to the class every week.

THURSDAY EVENING CLASSES

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

2007-2008

3rd April – 26th June

2008-2009

11th Sept – 18th Dec 2008

(Breakout/beginners starts 2nd Oct)

8th Jan – 9th April 2009

23rd April – 25th June 2009

Thursday nights for all

7.30 – 10.00pm

With weekly breakout / beginners sessions

7.30 – break

Venue: Main Hall, St Monica Trust, Cote Lane, Bristol.

TEACHERS

Peter Wright: 01761 462874
peterwri@mac.com

Barbara De Winton: 0117 962 2724
bdewinton@hotmail.co.uk

Cheryl Ayers: 0117 959 0970
cheryl.ayers@blueyonder.co.uk

The class structure and teaching schedule will continue in a similar vein next year. However, Cheryl Ayers will now take the beginners / breakout sessions and Peter and Barbara will share the main class; teaching consecutive blocks of classes each term. If you have any comments please do not hesitate to speak to a committee member.

BRISTOL BRANCH COMMITTEE

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

Chairman: Retiring Oct 2008
Marcus Ashman 0117 968 2949
mashman@freenet.co.uk

Chair elect: Chair from Oct 2008
Joan Ferguson 01934 852091
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Secretary:
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Andrew Smith: 0117 962 9533
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RSCDS EVENTS

RSCDS Summer School 2008

20th July – 17th August 2008
St Andrews

RSCDS AGM 2008

7th – 9th November 2008
Perth

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

<http://www.rscds.org>

(Ask a Committee member for password)

Grand Chain

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

Strathspey Server

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

NEWSLETTER

I can't quite believe it but this is my final Newsletter as editor.

As always I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the contributors who have willingly provided their articles and fantastic photographs for this edition. It certainly makes my job as editor incredibly easy and I really do appreciate your help. 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.

Thanks for all the entries to the Christmas quiz! We had a grand total of one! So, congratulations to Joan Ferguson who landed the prize and correctly identified all 26 dance titles in the article! If you would like a list of answers please contact Andrew Smith or myself.

At the last committee meeting we agreed that from now on there would only be one Newsletter a year, probably published in the spring term. This will mean less

work for the editor and less pressure on branch members to contribute, but we think in return members will receive one meaty, interesting edition, full of the year's activities and photographs.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find material for the publication and since the branch has such a comprehensive website, up-to-date information is always to hand.

If you foresee any problems due to this change please do not hesitate to contact one of the committee members.

I would like to end by reminding you that as ever no news submitted means no newsletter!! So please keep the new editor supplied with your dance ditties and photographs.

Fiona Thompson

Editor: Fiona Thompson

Next Issue: provisionally Spring

2009

Submissions by Easter 2009

SUMMER DANCE



A selection of pictures from the Summer Dance that was held on the 10th May 2008 at St Monica's Hall, Bristol. Over 60 people attended the dance; the programme consisted of John Drewry's Brodie Dances and Barbara de Winton was the M.C. for the evening. The Ian

Robertson Band provided the excellent, lively music. A fun, if very hot, evening was had by all. Thanks to everyone that contributed to the evening and to Andrew Smith for the great photographs.

