



Royal Scottish Country Dance Society
St Andrews Branch

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A tribute to Elsie Ritchie



Elsie Ritchie, who died in February, was, for many years, a very loyal member of the Branch. She attended the Thursday class regularly and supported all our dances. Elsie also enjoyed attending dances in the surrounding area, frequently travelling with John S. Sturrock.

Many inexperienced dancers have said how much they benefited from Elsie's encouragement as she cajoled them into taking part; she did this with good humour.

Lewis Derrick devised 'Elsie's Dance' for her in 1981, and the tune 'Elsie Ritchie' was composed by Dave McGregor. The tune was played by Luke Brady at both the 40 Club and the branch class during the week after Elsie died.

A wee story from Linda Struthers: Elsie fell for the burgundy dance pumps, ordered a pair and promptly bought a new skirt to match!

The picture shows Elsie cutting the cake at the 40 Club's 80th Anniversary in March 2013.

Irene Bennett; photograph by Jonathan Wilson. 'Elsie's Dance' is included as an insert, by kind permission of Lewis Derrick.

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Do you have a story, a picture or anything else on SCD for our next issue? If so, please contact the Branch Secretary.



Becoming a Dancing Teacher

I am often amazed by the unexpected twists and turns life can take. Not for the first time have I found myself in a situation I would never have envisaged only a few short months before. This is how it was last October when I turned up in St. Andrews one Thursday evening to teach my first adult dancing class.

The road to this unexpected situation started the previous February. Members of the Dundee Branch of the RSCDS were about to work towards Unit Five of their teaching qualification. They told me that there was an opportunity for me to work on Units Two and Three at the same time. I was quite reluctant initially but was finally persuaded that it was a good idea.

The Banffshire Branch of the RSCDS was running the teachers' course. Every second Sunday during March, April and May 2013 I left Dundee, very early indeed, to travel to Keith to participate in the course. During this time my own ability to dance was assessed, advice for improvement was given and I learned to recap dances. I was taught how to break down and teach steps and formations and how to work successfully with musicians. I completed lots of lesson plans, teaching practice and homework!

I viewed the last Sunday in May (exam day) with some anxiety. I had to dance three dances—a jig, a reel and a strathspey—for the examiners. For my teaching assessment I had to teach strathspey travelling step, followed by an allemande, within a given time scale. I then spent an agonising few days until I was finally told that I had passed. I cannot describe the relief!

It was fine to have passed Units Two and Three but there was still Unit One; the written paper. I had managed to do things out of order! I must have read "The Manual" countless times in preparation for the exam. I passed and was now able to start teaching.

It was during this time that I happened to meet Irene one Saturday afternoon at Pitlochry Festival Theatre. This chance meeting had quite an effect! She suggested that it was important to get teaching experience as soon as possible and that I might like to teach the class in St. Andrews. After considering my work commitments I decided that it was possible and agreed.

And so it was that I turned up in St. Andrews that Thursday evening in October having had advice from Irene and my programme of dances checked. I was feeling very nervous and did think about running away. I'm glad now that I did not run. Everyone was very kind and supportive on that night, and on subsequent evenings.

Thank you all for your support. I am still at the start of this new journey but I am on my way.

Margaret Harley



Dancing for the D of E Award

I started coming to the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society's beginners' class in St Andrews last autumn. My reason for joining the class was to complete part of my Duke of Edinburgh silver award, and I could not have chosen a better activity to participate in. I had little experience of Scottish country dancing previously but I found the class very easy to join in with. Every dance is explained and walked through several times before you dance it, and they are easy to understand and get the hang of. When you do make a mistake though, it does not matter very much as everyone helps each other to remember which way to dance. More experienced dancers mix in with the beginners' class, and dancing with them can really help you improve. Not only is it great fun, it is good exercise too.

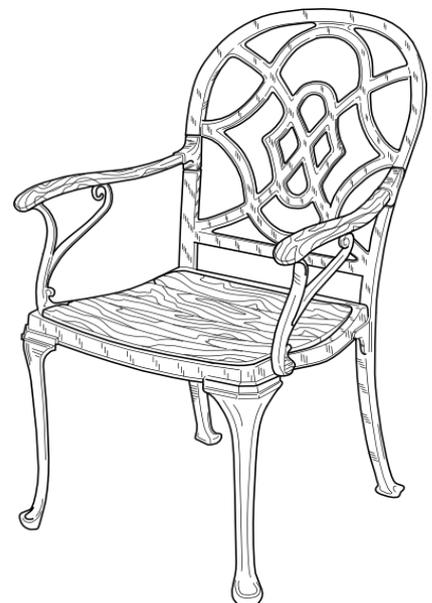


I have really enjoyed the class and would highly recommend it to anyone else who wants to try Scottish country dancing. Although the age range is mixed, it would be good to see some younger people coming to the class. You do not need to be an experienced dancer to come along, just willing to give it a go and have some fun!

Iona Bhatti

From the Chair

As I sit down today to write, the weather is forecast to be seven days with a 0% chance of precipitation and highs in the teens, an indication that soon we will be turning our thoughts towards outdoor pursuits. The past season has seen several changes. The relocation of our annual ball along with its change in format and catering proved to be quite a success, dictating only minor refinements for next year. Unfortunately the experiment in a new class format proved to be less so. The committee had hoped to reduce costs by maximising the usage of our hall rental expenses. We pay for 6-10 PM regardless of the time we use. It was also hoped that this format would serve to better integrate the newer dancers with those more experienced. While it did meet these aims, I do not believe it served the needs of the members on the whole. This illustrates the fact that while the committee works very hard to serve the branch, it needs input from the general members. With this in mind I hope you will take part in the coming AGM and enjoy the half day school, May, and summer dances.



Shelley McElney

Dates for your Diary

22nd March	Half-Day School and Dance. Class: 2 p.m., Dance: 7 p.m. Cost: £10.
1, 8, 15 May	Spring Classes: 7.30-9.30 p.m., Cost: £5 per night.
29 May	Annual General Meeting: 7.30, Victory Memorial Hall.
22, 29 July, 5 August	Summer Dances: Town Hall, 8-11 p.m. Cost: £7 per night.
12 August	Summer Dance: Boys' Brigade Hall. 8-11 p.m. Cost: £7.

The Committee Ditty

(With apologies to William Schwenk Gilbert / Sir Arthur Sullivan)

When we've advertised a tea break at the day school
 And the tea-lovers are champing at the bit
 The lack of tea will make us all look awful fools
 And bring complaints a-flooding, flooding in (flooding in)

Our feelings we with difficulty smother
 When the RSCDS is to be run, to be run
 When the AGM's a fight and everyone 's uptight
 The committee's lot is not a happy one (happy one).

When the RSCDS is to be run, to be run,
 The committee's lot is not a happy one (happy one).

When the music makar's nowhere to be seen
 And we're scared that there will be a nasty scene
 The committee has to sort the situation
 And keep the horde of angry dancers calm (dancers calm)

Oh, some of all these problems, they are indeed our fault
 Though others are a mournful misfortune
 Oh, with caterers, musicians, the Younger Hall, Fife Council...
 The committee's lot is not a happy one (happy one).

When the RSCDS is to be run, to be run,
 The committee's lot is not a happy one (happy one).

But just in case you might be hesitating
 To join the Chairman and her merry little band
 There are sometimes days that we're appreciating -
 The committee's lot can sometimes be quite fun (be quite fun).