



# Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 1996

## PROJECTS, PLANS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Angus and Fife Research Projects continue. We plan our Press Launch for September. Our schools programme is under discussion. Joan Henderson and Jimmy Spankie launch the Aberdeenshire Research Project. Tarfside Hall hosts the first Angus Feedback. We receive additional financial support from the Scottish Arts Council. We open our office. The University of Dundee includes STDT Research in its Continuing Education Syllabus.

Any of these could be our main headline for this edition of the Newsletter. Each one marks an important stage in the development of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust. But is it because of the ever-quickening pace of that development that our number one piece of

news must be the appointment of the Trust's Co-ordinator, Jennifer Swanson.

Jennifer was appointed part-time Co-ordinator in February 1996 to organise projects, market and fund raise for the Trust's work. Her appointment was originally set to run until the end of July. Happily, the Trust have secured Scottish Arts Council core funding to allow us to offer Jennifer a full-time contract from August 5th and we are delighted she has accepted this.

### All This - and Walkies too!

Before joining the Trust, Jennifer worked with the Scottish Arts Council on various projects and was Marketing Administrator for AMTIS (the Arts Management Training Initiative

Scotland) responsible for planning, marketing and administering an annual short course programme.

This post also took her to Krakow, Poland, where she helped to establish a school of cultural management.

Although Jennifer isn't a member of any particular dance organisation she says she is enjoying learning about the various dance traditions and is looking forward to taking part in the Trust's dance gatherings round the country.

In addition, she is developing a network of traditional dance organisations and would be pleased to hear what is happening in your area.

....all this and she still finds time to walk Robbie who is, of course, a shepherd dog!  
Jennifer can be contacted on 0131-445-7936.

## A NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME, RESOURCE CENTRE AND ARCHIVE

### Urgent and Necessary

*This century has seen massive social changes and population shifts in Scotland. When the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust began its Research Project we realised we were undertaking not only an enormous task but an extremely valuable one.*

*The pilot schemes in Angus and Fife have produced a huge amount of very valuable dance information and material. The research project in Aberdeenshire has been launched.*

*Hardly a day goes by that we do not receive information, an offer of written or pictorial material, a request to come and interview a dancer with memories of the long ago.*

### Museums Council and University Help

The National Resource Centre Committee of the Board is chaired by Bob Blair and he and his fellow members are hard at work on the

plans for a Centre and the Archive. Such a building isn't going to appear overnight, but, with the guidance of the Scottish Museums Council, we are carefully collecting and conserving taped and other material making our collection as accessible as possible in the circumstances.

We realise we must now move very quickly to establish a national network of interviewers and plan to organise a series of training weekends for researchers. We already have an offer of help from the University of Dundee to host such a training scheme and this is now being discussed with the Director of their Department of Continuing Education.

Any member of the Trust who would be interested in training in interview techniques and in helping either to interview or to supply us with information is invited to write to Jennifer Swanson, at 43 Pentlandfield Business Park, The Bush, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9RE or telephone or fax 0131-445-7936

## TWO NORTHERN EIGHTSOME REELS

Described by MATS MELIN

*The Eightsome Reel has, no doubt, undergone many changes in the rural districts of Scotland since it was devised in Perthshire in the 1870s and introduced to sophisticated society balls at the Northern Meeting, and the Argyllshire and Skye Gatherings in the 1880s.*

*The two Eightsome Reels presented here are found danced at local dances in Shetland and Sutherland.*

### Shetland Speed and Style

First of all, let me introduce you to a Shetland-style Eightsome Reel.

The formation is the usual square with the top couple nearest the music but what makes this Eightsome Reel so different from others is that it is probably the fastest one around. It goes at a whizzing speed but with the women only taking a turn in the middle, yet it can still take up to 25 minutes to dance it through. And at the end of it you feel that you have really danced!

Anyway, the chord is now sounding, and with a short nod or bow/curtsey, we are away.

All eight circle to the left only with skipping steps, once, twice...round picking up speed in the process and this continues until someone decides it is time to slowdown and stop. Facing your partner and giving the right hand first to partner grand chain halfway round using skips

or a low hopping skip change like step-close-step or simply liting walking steps, meet your partner and swing with a right elbow hold, holding left hands on top.

This swing continues until someone decides it is time to grand chain again to conclude the circuit and swing with your partner again.

When the first woman is released into the middle by her partner, the other seven circle to the left only as at the beginning of the dance until her partner or anybody else thinks it is time to proceed. Meanwhile the first woman commonly stands still and claps her hands or dances some Shetland reel steps if she knows how.

#### *Swings and...more Swings!*

Now that the circle has stopped, the first couple await the beginning of a turn in the music. They most likely set to one another with a relaxed step-kick-step-kick and then swing one another with the hold described earlier. This swing continues for quite some time, 8-16-24...bars! Skilled dancers have developed a tremendous technique of starting the swing slowly, building the speed up, then slowing it down and walking out of it to continue. The ways of avoiding dizziness are many but looking at a fixed spot or turning the head from side to side are favourites. Those who don't, suffer for it!

The first woman repeats the step kicks and swing with the opposite man in the usual fashion. A reel of three follows, or "figure of eight" as it is called in Shetland. Depending on which shoulder is the nearest as she comes out of the swing, the woman presents either her right or left shoulder to begin. Flowing walking steps or skips or step-close-steps are used. The first woman repeats this whole sequence swinging the man nearest to her (i.e. out of the two left to dance with, most often the second man) after the circle to the left.

This is now all repeated by the second, third and fourth woman in turn. As you can now well imagine, after all this swinging there is no time left for the men to repeat all this, so instead everybody now repeats the beginning - the circle left and chain, swing, chain and swing partner. The band keeps playing until all the sets on the floor have stopped dancing.

A now well-needed rest probably takes place in the form of a short break followed by a St. Bernard's Waltz.

The greatest feeling in a Shetland-style Eightsome is the very fine sense of timing and the relationship between dancer, music and musician.

#### **A Sutherland Eightsome in Lairg.**

Now, we turn our attention to Sutherland and to how I observed an Eightsome being danced in Lairg recently.

Here the formation is the usual one and the speed of the music is comfortably fast.

The dance begins with a circle round and back to the left and right with either slip steps or skip-hop steps for 8 bars. Start by giving the right hand to partner, chain halfway round, then meeting your partner, swing for a bit, before moving on to complete the circle. The most usual hold is the right elbow grip with left on left hand, as in Shetland, stepping onto the right foot and pushing off with the left foot. In the chain a sort of skip step/walking/skip-hop step is used and the chain usually takes from 8 to 16 bars.

Now the first woman goes into the middle, where she sets with a Pas de Basque or any

similar step - or she simply stands still clapping her hands. The circle by the remaining seven dancers is to the left only for 8 bars.

#### *Swinging in Duplicate*

The first woman now sets to her partner with two Pas de Basque or a relaxed step-kick-step-kick and turns by the right arm with elbow grip. She does the same with the opposite man, then the reel figure begins as she gives her right arm to her partner and the left to the opposite man twice over. But after each man turns the first woman in the centre he then turns the nearest free woman with his free arm before turning the woman in the centre again. This takes about 8 bars.

The circle is again repeated to the left and the set, swing and swinging figure of eight proceeds again with the two remaining men who also alternate turning the woman in the centre with turning the nearest woman.

There is no strict rule about which man a woman starts setting and swinging with. The nearest one when the circling stops is a likely choice!

#### *Good Fun and Few Bits Missing!*

The second, third and fourth women repeat the sequence, as do all the men in turn. The men dance similarly to the women in the middle but perhaps with a more robust and vigorous style.

The dance concludes as it began - that is with the circle round and back and chain, swing, chain and swing. Partners and others in the set are thanked and, as in Shetland, the band keeps playing until all the sets have stopped dancing.

After the dance in Lairg a local man said to me - "great dance, but there are probably a few bits missing there, but never mind, it's good fun."

I wholeheartedly agreed, because it was the best Eightsome Reel I had danced since I had lived in Shetland. But both forms of the dance allow for a lot of personal style and interpretation of the music.

I suspect these are not the only variations of the Eightsome Reel which are being danced in Scotland. I know of differences in Perthshire, Buchan, Caithness and Orkney.

It would be interesting to hear from you how you dance the Eightsome Reel now, or how you danced it in the past.

*Mats Melin has been Traditional Dance Artist in Residence in Shetland and Sutherland and, with his wife Emma who is also a highly skilled dancer, is a Founder Member of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust.*

## **A GIANT STEP FOR SARA - LEAPS AND BOUNDS FOR BUCHAN!**

*Sara Schena reflects on her dancing life in Aberdeenshire.*

Variety, they say, is the spice of life and although I have lived in London for most of my life, I have spent long periods abroad in Europe, America and Asia. As a result I have been exposed to a wide variety of influences and am constantly looking out for new experiences from which to draw personal inspiration.

So, when I was offered the post of Dance Artist in Residence for Banff and Buchan in the autumn of 1994, I simply could not turn down the opportunity to sample the culture of a tiny fishing village on the Banffshire coast.

My work in Banff and Buchan has certainly proved to be an exciting and stimulating challenge, working in an area with a widely dispersed population where fishing, farming and oil dominate the community.

## **Settling in with the Doric.**

On taking up the post my first task was to familiarise myself with the local environment, culture and language! Then I consulted with colleagues and the local community to ascertain the dance needs of the district - before deciding what could be achieved in the nine months for which I had been contracted.

Almost 2 years later I am still in post! And this makes me well able to appreciate the benefits that longer contracts and long-term planning would bring to dance residency, indeed to any residency.

My initial task was to begin and gradually build up a programme of classes, special events and residencies with visiting artists.

Most classes started on a very small scale and during the initial weeks it was a few dedicated students who kept my spirits up. In this community there is a natural resistance to or a reticence towards anything new. After all, many people in the community have lived in the same town or village since birth - just as their parents and grandparents for many generations back.

Perseverance on my part has been an essential part of the job and I am proud to be able to announce that parents must now book in advance if their little treasures wish to attend a "Leaps and Frolics" project. In these the 5-12 year old age group combine dance with visual art. And in any group of "Evergreens" there are rarely fewer than fifteen 50-75-year olds, most of them brought along by a friend's recommendation. In any event whenever the "Evergreens" are around, the Arts Centre resounds with laughter.

## **Publicity, Plans and No Regrets**

One thing I have learned is that word of mouth is a very important - if not THE best method of advertising. But I have tried many others and that includes creeping out at dead of night hammering placards into roadside grass verges - and finding this surprisingly successful!

Other popular classes include Youth Dance, an Adult Performance Group and Scottish Step Dance. I have only discovered and studied the last since my arrival in Scotland but I am now completely "hooked", stepping at every possible opportunity.

Plans for summer events in 1996 include the 2nd Fraserburgh Beach Party, workshops combining storytelling and dance, and an outdoor project involving a local sculptor, myself and many children. Also being finalised is an autumn residency by Jayachandan, the director of Imlata Dance Company.

Since arriving in Banff and Buchan I have, I know, given an enormous amount of myself to the community via the residency. That was to be expected.

However, the returns have been very rewarding thanks to two major factors. The first is that my students and co-workers have been a constant source of inspiration and humour. And, second, it has been a remarkable experience to be immersed in a culture which enjoys, amongst other things, a music tradition so alive and strong that sessions have a habit of running into the early hours. I have also learned that wild ceilidh dances are attended only at risk to one's health - and I had a fractured foot to prove it!

My work here has been every bit as exciting and stimulating as I had anticipated and for that reason I feel four times the person I was when I arrived in the autumn of '94! Sara Schena is assisting the STDT with their Dance Research Project in Aberdeenshire.

## DANCES GALORE

*A thought or two on dances and dance research from Alex McGuire member of the Board of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust and President of The Scottish Official Highland Dancing Association.*

The most colourful spectacle at any Highland Gathering is, without doubt, the Highland Dancing. The dances are at once splendid and majestic in the history they represent.

The pictures conjured up in the minds of the spectators soon come to life when the dance contestants take to the dancing platform and there takes shape a kind of kaleidoscope of colour in the many and varied shades of clan tartan on display.

Most of today's dances have legendary beginnings. They have been passed down by action and word of mouth through the centuries with the aid of the dancing masters who interpreted the steps and "created" the dances we have today. It has been claimed that the history of Scotland's dances is so ancient and so obscure that there are, in fact, as many Highland and Hebridean dances and variations as there are Highland Games!

For many years the dances which were regularly performed on the Highland Games circuit were the traditional and well-known *Highland Fling*, the *Sean Trubhais*, the *Sword Dance*, and the *Strathspey and Reel of Tulloch*. A few decades later solo dances were introduced such as *Wilt Thou Go to the Barracks, Johnny?* *Scottish Lilt*, *Flora MacDonald's Fancy* - bringing added colour and new challenges to each dancers' repertoire.

The resurgence of interest in these lesser known dances stimulated the Technical Committee of The Scottish Official Highland Dance Association to look closely into the possibility of unearthing more of these solo and set dances and research in depth has uncovered not just a handful of dances but a real treasure trove!

The Scottish Official Highland Dance Association now have set out instructions for these dances in sheet form and are encouraging their many members to learn and master them. They have now arrived at a stage where the Association now regularly hold Lesser Known National Dance Championships where only those National and Hebridean dances are contested.

As with all dancing events organised by the SOHDA, all dancers are welcome to enter these competitions at every venue, no matter which dancing organisation they belong to - making every event a truly open-to-all competition.

Dances which have been revived or given a new lease of life include *The Flowers of Edinburgh*, *Over the Water to Charlie*, *Louden Lassies*, *Tullochgorm*, *Lochaber Broadwords*, *Aberdonian Lassie*, *Miss Forbes*, *Linkumoddie*, *Lassies of Kyle*.

### Far Flung Flings

The Highland Clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries may have been a disaster for the Highland Scot and his way of life, but from the dancing point of view it had the effect of circulating Highland Dancing over the entire

globe! No matter to which foreign land the Scot was forced to move, that country gained its share of Scottish Dance tradition through the instruction, carried on no matter where they found themselves, by the dancing masters.

Through regular correspondence with many of today's dancing organisations throughout the world the Scottish Official Highland Dancing Association has ascertained that traditional steps being executed nowadays are the original steps - with slight variations, that these dancing masters carried with them all over the world.

So a catalogue has been compiled by Charlie Mill of the SOHDA of these steps being done today and those relating to *The Highland Fling* as danced in the Southern Hemisphere is now in the hands of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust. These 37 Australian and New Zealand *Highland Fling* steps are now being fed into the archive computer of the STDT ensuring their safekeeping and their availability for scrutiny by anyone interested now and in the future.

The Scottish Official Highland Dancing Association are optimistic that this will be just the start of such archiving and that other dancers and dancing bodies will follow suit providing material for this stockpile of extraordinary tradition we call Scottish Dance!

Let's hear from you!

## SUMMER DANCING IN LINLITHGOW

*Explanation and an invitation from STDT member John Carswell.*

For some years now for the first few Wednesdays in August we make use of the Linlithgow Palace Courtyard for dancing and at the end of the month - or if the weather is unsuitable - we use the nearby Burgh Halls. The Palace has a unique atmosphere especially when it is getting dark! It also has some very hard paving so that soft, lightweight shoes are not suitable.

It is the music and the company that make dancing. We therefore have a selection of the best Scottish bands and good company come from all parts. As regards the dancing there is a wide ranging programme including country, ceilidh, reels, children's (everyone should know *The Dhoon* and *The Flying Scotsman*), a little Highland perhaps and a few other odds and ends! Guidance/instruction is given as required.

We also have a display or two. For example on August 7th we hope to have a display of Irish Dancing and, on the 14th, a Pipe Band.

This year on Wednesday July 31st we are having something just a little different - a champagne reception in the Great Hall followed by dancing in the Courtyard with a fairly traditional country dance programme of jigs and reels etc. plus a smattering of dances associated with Burns in this the bicentenary of his death. We invite those attending to bring their own hamper supper. Music will be provided by the great John Renton and his Band from Inverary.

Linlithgow is about 20 miles west of Edinburgh with access from the M9. It also has a convenient railway station on the Edinburgh - Glasgow line.

I organise these events with the friends of

the Linlithgow Festival Trust so if anyone would like some more information they can telephone or fax 01506 845698.

## RESEARCH REPORT

*An update from Research Co-ordinator Joan Henderson.*

The STDT Pilot Research projects in Fife and Angus were not primarily aimed at discovering dances but at recording how people actually danced and still dance.

But when researcher Neil Paterson began sending back his interview tapes from visits to the Glenesk area of Angus it became quickly clear that there was dancing "gold" in the Angus hills!

The Angus glens are long valley fingers pointing into the Grampians. Each valley - Isla, Prosen, Clova, Ogil, Lethnot and Esk has its own character and each is a scattered community of farmers, shepherds, estate workers and commuters. Some have retained better than others a sense of community and Glenesk is, happily, one of these.

For over a century the Masonic Hall at Tarfside, about halfway up the glen, has been the focus of social life.

As Neil gathered information, Tarfside Hall and its dance calendar always came up in the reminiscences along with references to dances like the *Schottische Country Dance*, *Jack a Tar*, a 5-couple *Broun's Reel*, the *Waltz Cotillion* and a country dance called *Les Royal* with the Les locally pronounced Lees.

As one informant told us "*Les Royal* is mair like *The Grand Old Duke of York*. You take your partner and jump down the hall and back up and then you do the star. There's four of you at the star. The top couple does doon the hall, comes back up. The women join hands, the men join hands and they turn round and back and then the top man swings the second lady. There's four couples in a set. It's a hilarious dance when you get a'body"

As for *Broun's Reel* - "Dancie Reid (John Reid of Newtyle) said that *Broun's Reel* and *The Duke of Perth* are not the same. He explained the difference. He said that when you're dancing *The Duke of Perth* you just do three couples doon - and slip the fourth couple; when you're dancing *Broun's Reel* you dance three couples doon and then (with) the fourth couple you do a reel (of) four to finish with. Now Jim Cameron, for as good a band as he had, he would not play (for it)."

### Tarfside Masonic Hall

The memories of dances at Tarfside Hall were many and usually fond.

"People in the old days didn't drink nearly so much. There wasn't the money. The quality of the dancing has deteriorated. In Tarfside, it's a small hall, and if you have too much to drink it can be dangerous swinging your partner. So we clamped down on that. But it's all good humoured. It's the modern mentality at the dances. They're now going for the bar rather than for the dances."

And from another informant - "The good thing about Tarfside Hall is it's long and narrow with seats round the outside, and so it's a great place for people to mix; and you don't always go back to the same seat unlike the dinner dances where you return to your table. The shape of the hall - we'll get about 4 sets of eight like for the Quadrilles or Lancers or Eightsome

Reel. In the past this man came up the Glen to teach dancing - I suppose he did it as a business this chap Robertson."

### Feedback at Tarfside

When I visited Glenesk first I was shown a book of dances set down by "this chap Robertson" and they include *Les Royal* and all the others that were mentioned by the various informants in the glen. A treasure, indeed, to find a collection of dances as taught by one travelling teacher - dances which have probably passed out of the social dance repertoire everywhere else except in this part of Angus.

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust is committed to ensuring that young people learn about the dance traditions in their area and in the autumn term we will be holding a series of dance afternoons first in Angus schools and later in Fife schools.

We see it very much part of our job to pass on the information we gather to dance enthusiasts and when we realised the quality of the information we were gathering in Glenesk it was decided to hold our very first feedback session in Tarfside Hall.

Angus Davidson who lives in Tarfside organised this for us and said he would assemble as many Glen folk as he could on an afternoon in spring. What had been intended as an early spring gathering actually had twice to be postponed because of the unusually late snowfalls. In April Tarfside was still under several feet of snow with the glen road a single track through the drifts!

But by May 18th the glen was in full spring colour and Angus had brought together a grand assembly of Glenesk people - from schoolchildren to very senior citizens. Present too were Neil Paterson and Janet McCall, two of our Angus researchers, Catherine Schoupe who has been researching for us in Fife, dance teachers and STDT Board members Bob Blair, Jimmy Spankie - who video-recorded the whole proceedings, Evelyn Hood and Co-ordinator Jennifer Swanson. Founder members Mats and Emma Melin came all the way from Sutherland for the event.

There were around 50 of us altogether in that tiny oblong hall with its bench seats round the walls.

Seven musicians from "The Sound of Dun" took their places on the little platform at one end and with great energy and enthusiasm Angus Davidson was our master of ceremonies, dance tutor and sergeant major - and not always in that order!

The five-couple *Brown's Reel*, an *Eightsome Reel*, *Schottische Country Dance*, *Waltz Cotillion*, *La Russe*, *Jack a Tar*, *Petronella*, *Quadrilles*, *Floo'ers o' Edinburgh*, *Student Lancers* - we were put through our paces in great style.

For many reasons this was a memorable afternoon. It was good to see all age groups together having such fun. We had the pleasure of seeing and learning some dances long out of the social dance repertoire.

Above all for those Trust members and researchers present, there was the satisfaction of knowing that the work the Trust has undertaken is not only necessary but so very worthwhile.

## NOTICE BOARD

Membership grows apace and in every corner of the globe. We have lately organised distribution of our brochure in all the larger tourist centres of Scotland, and await results! It is extremely gratifying to know just how many people are interested in and sympathetic to the aims of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust.

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As a result of discussions between STDT Board members and University staff the University of Dundee Department of Continuing Education is including Scottish Traditions of Dance research in its 1996 syllabus. Board Members Joan Henderson and Evelyn Hood will be giving a series of Monday evening lectures to "Elderhostel" visitors to Dundee University in August and September.

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The Aberdeenshire Research Project is underway and recorded interview tapes are already coming in from our small team of volunteer researchers.

We are very grateful to them for undertaking this important work on an expenses-only basis and if you know of anyone who might like to join them, or can provide information to the Trust we'd be delighted to hear from you. Call Jennifer Swanson on 0131-445 7936.

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The Trust archive grows and we've been in discussion lately with the Scottish Museums Council whose representative is advising us on conservation and storage.

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If you live in the Edinburgh area - this is an SOS message. We urgently require volunteer help to transcribe research tapes. Are you by any chance an audio-typist with some spare time on your hands? Please do get in touch if you can help - and Save Our Secretary Jean Hannah from drowning in a flood of fascinating information!

Call Jennifer on 0131-445-79. Contributions for the next Newsletter will be gratefully received - as will letters from members. These should be sent to Jennifer Swanson, 43 Pentlandfield Business Park, The Bush, Roslin, EH25 9RE arriving not later than September 27th, 1996.

### FOR DANCING BOOKWORMS!

We are delighted to announce the forthcoming publication in August of *TRADITIONAL STEP-DANCING IN SCOTLAND* by J.F. & T.M. Flett with an Appendix on Step-Dancing in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia by F. Rhodes. Between 1950 and 1967 the Fletts travelled all over Scotland meticulously researching and collecting for this long-awaited book which apart from being a fascinating record of Scottish solo step-dancing also contains instructions for the step-dances the Fletts collected on mainland Scotland, the Hebrides and Cape Breton, including clog dances and dirk dances. The book is fully illustrated and will be of interest not only to dancers but to anyone interested in Scottish social history. *TRADITIONAL STEP DANCING IN SCOTLAND* (ISBN 1 898218 45 5) is published by Scottish Cultural Press, Aberdeen, and costs £12.95.

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The recently published *DANCE STUDIES* Vol. 19 edited by Roderik Lange is, in fact, a single study on The Traditional Dances of the Outer Hebrides written by STDT Board Member Joan Henderson. Joan's study gives not only a remarkable picture of dancing in the Hebrides in the 1980's but is an object lesson in how dance research is conducted. *DANCE STUDIES* Vol. 19 is published by the Centre for Dance Studies, Jersey JE3 7AQ, Channel Islands and costs £9.50.

Another welcome newcomer to the bookshelves is *HEBRIDEAN DANCES - DANNSA NAN EILEANNACH* by Comhlan Dannsa nan Eileannach. This is a practical and attractively presented book with descriptions of step and country dances from the Outer Isles.

*HEBRIDEAN DANCES - DANNSA NAN EILEANNACH* (ISBN 0 86152 9133 8) is published by Acair Ltd., 7 James St., Stormoy, Isle of Lewis and costs £12.99

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*COLLINS POCKET REFERENCE TO SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING* has been compiled in association with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. It contains sections relating to the history, form and music of Scottish Country Dance, the steps and formations - and includes written instructions for one hundred different dances along with some handy hints. The dances are taken from Royal Scottish Country Dance Society publications, non-RSCDS devisers and as well as country dances includes ceilidh and party dances. The book which costs £5.99 is available from all good bookshops and can also be bought direct from the Society where RSCDS members are entitled to buy at a reduced price.

## SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING TODAY

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society was formed in Glasgow on 23rd November, 1923, by Miss Jean Milligan and Mrs. Ysobel Stewart of Fasnacloich, in order to safeguard the traditional Scottish country dances which were gradually being lost.

Since those early days, the Society has evolved into a world-wide organisation, catering to the needs of some 25,000 members. A branch network has been developed of approximately 170 branches covering all continents, with some 500 affiliated groups world wide.

The Society today is the representative body for Scottish country dancing, and regularly holds examinations throughout the world for teachers of Scottish country dance, and, in so doing, sets the recognised standards.

The Society runs classes for all levels from beginners to fully qualified teachers, and an annual Summer School is held in Scotland each year. This is open to all members to attend and tuition is given by experienced teachers. In addition many branches ensure a variety of events is provided for both adults and children in their area.

While there are many other forms of dance evolving today, the Society has been successful in locating many 18th and 19th century dances. The Society has always sought to be aware of the influences in our dance heritage, and has researched the evolution of simple social dances from different parts of the Highlands and Lowlands. Today, many dance devisers have evolved new dances based on these traditional formations and the Society has published many of these, together with recorded music and videos. Keen to encourage other forms of dance, as evidenced by the upsurge of interest in ceilidh dancing, the Society has always striven to instill an appreciation of the technique of traditional steps.

With the approach of our 75th anniversary celebrations in 1998, the Society is looking forward to the challenge of an ever-changing art form, and continuing to safeguard the traditions of Scotland, through her dance and music. *If you would like further details on the Society these are available from the Secretary, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, 12 Coates Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7AF (Tel 0131-225-3854)*