



# Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 1998

## A FOND FAREWELL

Our Trust Co-ordinator since February 1996, Jennifer Swanson leaves the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust at the end of September to become the Millennium Co-ordinator for Argyll and Bute Council.

Whenever I refer to Jennifer's appointment to the Trust I find myself using the phrase "Quantum leap". The Trust was then in its infancy. The "office" was a desk and a computer in Board member Joan Henderson's back bedroom. Jean Hannah, our Membership Secretary today, was doing her utmost to keep us organised and to enjoy her retirement at the same time!

With the Scottish Arts Council funded pilot research projects in Fife and Angus up and running and the membership scheme launched, we were all fully stretched and badly in need of full-time help.

Jennifer assures me that she has never regretted coming to work for us - although I'm certain there must have been times she wondered what she'd taken on. Certainly with Jennifer WE got rather more than we had bargained for - in the nicest possible sense, I hasten to add.

For we not only found a Co-ordinator who has run our office with the utmost efficiency, but has also been a champion of our cause, a diplomat, a gentle persuader, a setter of ideals and standards, and a guide and a mentor to us on all sorts of matters. Add to that a sweet personality, a lively sense of humour and an ability to cope with no matter what, and you'll have some idea of what the Trust are losing. Thanks to Jennifer we have already moved a long way towards achieving many of our aims and objectives.

We most heartily congratulate Jennifer on her new appointment and wish her, her husband Gordon and faithful dog Robbie (who became a sort of mascot for us, too!) all the very best for the future.

We shall all - Board, staff and members alike - miss her very much indeed.

Evelyn Hood (Chair)

## CEOLAS 1998 - FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

An important revival has taken place in South Uist as a result of an international summer school, Ceolas, held annually in early July. Not only has step-dancing been re-introduced to an area which has a rich dance history (eg Euan MacLachlan's Hebridean dances), but a local version of the Quadrilles has been resurrected by the community and is now being danced regularly.

The involvement of the community is one of Ceolas's great strengths and in this its third year, a local company has been formed to take over the management of Ceolas from the national Gaelic Arts Agency. On the ground, the close links between teachers, students and local people are ever more evident, with friendships being forged and continuing from one year to the next.

Ceolas started this year with a "bang" - a wonderful dance in St Peter's Hall, Daliburgh. It was a 6-hour affair, where the floor was never empty and participants were treated to and encouraged to join in with local versions of several ceilidh dances and the piece-de-resistance, the Quadrilles. Other evening events followed thick and fast, with many opportunities to dance - house parties, ceilidhs, concerts, pub sessions, even the annual ferry trip to Eriskay was an excuse for a dance or many!

During the day, step-dance classes were led by distinguished guests from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia - Mary-Jane MacDonald and Willie Fraser and his daughter, Maureen McQuarrie. Willie is considered to be the grand old man of step-dancing, and when you see the gracefulness, precision and rhythm of his steps at age 83, it is difficult to

imagine what his dancing must have been like in his prime. A native Gaelic speaker and a wonderful Gaelic singer, Willie learnt both his dancing and his singing from his grandmother, who emigrated from Morar in Scotland. The other very popular dance class was old Scotch Reels and Quadrilles, taken by Mats Melin.

As all students must take a second discipline, dancers either chose pìut a'beul or fiddle or pipes, and many of the singers and musicians took dance as their second choice. But the real understanding of how step-dancing fits the old rhythms of strathspeys and reels, whether sung or played, was forged in the cross-over classes every afternoon. There, small groups worked together to ensure that the steps really did fit the music and vice versa, in emulation of maestros like Buddy Macmaster (fiddle) and Willie Fraser.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Trust's AGM this year will be held at the Golden Lion Hotel, King Street, Stirling, on Saturday 31 October at 3.00 pm. Stirling Council has kindly agreed to host the meeting and will provide refreshments on arrival.

The meeting is likely to finish at

5.00 pm and a high tea will be available at the Golden Lion Hotel prior to the dance in the Albert Halls at 7.30 pm. If you would like to take this opportunity to join other members of the Trust, please look out for the reply slip in your pack of AGM papers which will be sent out shortly.

## SWINGS, LIFTS AND DUNTS

### Playing for Dance Masterclass/Seminar

The Trust's Forum at Celtic Connections caused a bit of a stooshie when emotions ran high (see Newsletter Spring '98). It was obvious that the subject of playing for dancing was close to many people's hearts. We thought that enough hot air had been blown and it was time for something more practical. So, together with Fife Council the Trust has developed a Masterclass/Seminar particularly for musicians who want to play for dance and for those who have been playing for some time.

On Sunday 25 October, the Carnegie Hall in Dunfermline will be the venue for "Swings, Lifts and Dunts". Bacon rolls will be available on arrival (well, it is a Sunday morning!). The day will start with a dance (what else?) and the scene will be set with a keynote speech about recognition of the state of Scottish dance and music. The big issues of rhythm and tempo, swings, lifts and dunts, and styles of playing will be explored. During the masterclasses, there will also be the chance to discuss the issues of passing on the tradition, instrumentation, and the relationship between musicians and dancers. These masterclasses will be instrument-based and led by experienced and respected tutors such as Jim Johnstone and Freeland Barbour (accordion), Marie Fielding (fiddle) and Jim Walker and Gus Miller (rhythm).

There will be ample opportunity for discussion - over lunch (which is included) or during the afternoon session. We hope that musicians will come and share their experiences of playing for dance and take the opportunity to learn from the experienced tutors.

All this for £25! (£20 if you're a member of the Trust, unwaged or a full-time student.) We are grateful to Fife Council for hosting this event and enabling us to keep the cost down.

Places will be limited, so please book in advance by contacting the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, 54 Blackfriars Street, Edinburgh EH1 1NE, telephone/fax: 0131-558 8737. (Payment can be made by cheque or credit card.)

Copies of the audio recording of the Playing for Dance Forum at Celtic Connections are still available. Please send a 120-minute blank cassette with sufficient return postage to the Trust at the above address.

JS

## ANGUS PROJECT

*Mats Melin, STDT Development*

*Officer & Maggie Patullo,*

*STDT Project Assistant*

The project is gaining momentum and we have gained great support from local musicians and dancers. The research is ongoing with interviews held regularly and we have also started building up a photographic library. The photographs donated or copied so far include the Angus Occasionals, Jim Cameron's Band, The Heather Band, The Thistle Band, The Murroes Dance Band, Lindsay Ross, Forfar Highland Games, and Dancie Reid's dance classes in Kirriemuir.

The interviews reveal many interesting aspects of dance practice of old. For example at Miss Gibson's old fashioned Highland dance classes in Forfar no music was played but all steps were counted and the students only encountered the music of the pipes or fiddle at displays or at competitions. Or in Miss Dingwall's Highland dance classes in Dundee where it was the rule that Miss Dingwall's mother diddled the appropriate tunes during the classes. We are finding out how people learned to play in the bothies or at home from parents or relations or simply by watching other musicians at the dances and then going home and learning. The same goes for the dancing, either one picked up the steps and movements of the various dances at home or at the public dances. Some went to the Dancing Master's classes to learn the necessary skills before going to the dance. The Angus Dance Archive is slowly but surely growing.

The exhibition - "The People's Dance" which the STDT and the Angus Council Cultural Services has put together started its tour round the district at the Meffan Institute in Forfar on 13 June. The exhibition which shows Angus dancing and music through the ages shows some very interesting photographs and paintings of dancing and the Dancies Neill, Kydd and Reid. Sheet music and music books of Scott Skinner and music used by Dancie Neill are also among the exhibits, i.e. fiddles, shoes and dance programmes together with audio and video displays are all part of "The Peoples Dance". The exhibition is well worth visiting and has been very well received. After being in Forfar, Arbroath and Carnoustie it will be at Montrose Museum from 26 September and Brechin Library from 7 November.

We have held three dances in partnership with Angus Council Cultural Services. The first two were held in Forfar on 12 June and Newtyle on 17 July with music provided in good style by the Ian Cruickshanks Band. Each dance gave a good blend of Old Time, Scottish and some Scottish Country Dances, including favourites such as Dundee Reel, Caddam Wood and the Lancers.

Bill Black's Band provided excellent music for a great dance at the Kirriemuir Town Hall on the 14 August which was attended by about 180 dancers. Seen on the dance floor some 20 Austrians, 3 French, 2

Germans, 2 Americans and dancers from Aberdeen, Laurencekirk, Stirling, Glasgow, Montrose, Arbroath and Newtyle and many other places. The dance programme was a good blend of the usual waltzes, Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow and Eightsome Reel to more local favourites such as The Lancers, Blackmountain Reel and Posties Jig. Jim Laing provided the bar and the stovies. It was a great night with a very happy crowd. We took the opportunity to video parts of the evening and this will form part of the Angus Archives.

At the Arbroath Seafest 21 to 23 August among the many activities, schoolchildren from Inverbrothock Primary School performed the Playford dance "The Black Nag" in authentic costumes, and the Fisher Wedding Walk included several elements of dance, involving the audience as well as a display by young Highland dancer Rona de Felice of a Fisherwife's solo dance as collected in Canada in the 1950s and said to have originated on the East coast of Scotland.

## BORDERS PROJECT

*Karin Ingram,*

*STDT Development Officer*

The Borders summer (if it can be called that this year!) draws to a close, and it seems that everyone is looking out their dancing shoes in anticipation of Old Time and RSCDS groups resuming. The village halls are being cleared of the debris left behind from the sales of work and flower shows, in readiness for the weekly or monthly dances.

The Common Ridings are over, and the banners and ceremonies set aside for another year. Every Borders town has its own traditions, but each would appear to have a "Cornet's Reel" or its own equivalent. I was interested to discover that the one danced by the Hawick Cornet and his supporters bears more than a passing resemblance to the "Reel of Tulloch". They dance this not only at midnight at the "Cornet's Ball", but also in the town square at dawn. During the course of my research I interviewed several past Cornets. I was also shown a programme from the Cornet's Ball of 1930 which included two rounds of the Lancers and a dance called the "Radona Waltz" - if anyone can remember having seen the latter danced we would be very keen to hear from you.

Most of my time has been spent speaking to Borders folk about their dance experience past and present and I should like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for sharing their memories with me. Some places and characters would appear to have touched many people's lives. The Boston Hall in Ettrick, for example seems to have been a Mecca for dancers for years, even inspiring a poem by local author, broadcaster and historian Walter Elliot. Many people told of Willie Macvicar, a pal of Jimmy Shand's who lived in the Ettrick Valley and did everything from driving the school bus to

charging the batteries for the old-fashioned wirelesses and playing at local dances. Then there is Jock Davidson who, although having no use of his right arm, led his own dance band for years, playing the accordion by turning it upside down and tying it to his leg to work the bellows! Another well-kent and well-loved character is Jock Dalgliesh. Jock and his wife Peggy have retired to Moffat now but for many years Jock was a shepherd in the Borders Valleys. He has danced in every village hall, and was usually MC for the night. Jock and Peggy celebrate their Golden Wedding in November and we wish them all the very best.

One very successful summer event has been the Country Dance nights in Peebles run by Julia and Rod Sharp. These dances took place in the church hall every second Wednesday and regularly attracted more than seventy people a night. Many foreigners came to join in, and Julia's friendly manner and easy to follow instructions made certain that the night was good fun for all. The dance programmes were varied, with dances to suit experienced country dancers (of which there were several) as well as those of us who are still trying to execute the perfect Strathspey step (and failing miserably!). Children were also welcomed and encouraged to join in with everything from the Britannia Two-Step to the Reel of the Royal Scots.

I am looking forward to having support from Anne Brown, the Trust's newly appointed Project Assistant for the Borders who will take up her post on 5 October.

The Dance Trust has several events taking place in the Borders this autumn, and we hope to see you at some of these. For further information or to book places please phone Karin Ingram or Anne Brown at the Borders office on 01896-755110. Karin can also be contacted on 01450-850262 in the evenings.

### Public Meetings

We have two public meetings planned for September - we shall be in Eyemouth Community Centre on Wednesday 23rd September, and in the Langlee Centre, Galashiels on Thursday 24th September. These meetings are aimed at people in the area who have knowledge of traditional dancing in the past as well as those who have a current interest, so if you can help us in any way please come along.

### Dance Researchers' Training Day

This is an all-day training and it will be held in the Langlee Centre, Galashiels on Saturday 3rd October. The training will be free of charge and you will have the option of buying a set lunch in the local hotel. We desperately need good volunteer researchers to cope with the ever-growing numbers of potential interviewees throughout the country.

### Shetland Dance Workshop

This will be held in the Eyemouth Community Centre on the evening of Monday 19th October. Maria Leask will be teaching a two-hour workshop in

traditional Shetland Dancing. Maria comes from Lerwick and is a co-founder of Shetland Folkdance. She teaches dance in the Shetland schools, as well as throughout the UK and overseas. There is a strong similarity between the fishing communities of the south-east of Scotland and those of the Shetland islands. Cost for this workshop will be £4.00 (£3.00 conc.).

### Old Time Dances in the Cogsmill Hall

Like so many of our local village halls, the one at Cogsmill near Hawick was threatened with closure due to underuse. We are running a series of monthly dances with musicians such as Freeland Barbour and Colin Dewar.

This is not the only village hall whose future is uncertain, and it was another - the local hall at Bonchester Bridge, affectionately know as "The Binster" - which prompted Margaret Sheridan of Hawick to put pen to paper and write this marvellously evocative poem .....

*While browsin' through the news yin week  
A heedline caught ma ee  
What they're closin' Binsters Laidlaw Hall?  
O no! That cannie be!  
An as a read ma thoughts flew back  
Ower forty years and mair  
When as a lass, New in ma teens,  
A first took tae the flair.*

*O weel a mind the excitement felt  
As doon tae the Brig oo gaed  
Hurry'd for fear oo missed the first note  
On fiddle or accordion played.  
An often hud tae kick oor heels  
An hing patiently about  
Till the prizes won at the whist afore  
At last wir a' geen oot.*

*The weemin wi' their weel sterched cloths  
Silver teapots, shinin' kettles  
Happily cleared the remains o' the spread  
That had met wi' such great approval  
Then the hall wis cleared the forms set roond  
The laddies in cliques a standin'  
While the lassies sat at the opposite side  
Kiddin' oan that they werenae watchin'*

*The band stepped up on tae the stage  
Their box ower their shoulder flung  
The only assemblin needed then  
Wis the fixin' up o' the drum.  
Nae fancy electronic gear  
Or mikes set in the middle  
Nae test for soond, except maybe  
Bob Hopkirk tunin' in his fiddle!*

*Be it Margaret Leslie, Bobby Rae  
The Robertson band or some ither  
Their music sae easily filled the hall  
There wis nae need at a' for lood speakers  
Tae the beat o' the "Morris" signature tune  
"In the Mood" - oor feet oo a tappit  
An then of course their wis Bunny's Band  
The leader - oor ain "Rob the Rabbit".*

*The MC then shouted  
"Take your partners please.  
Come on now no jist a wee pickle!  
A want tae see ye a' on the flair  
Tae dance the circassian circle".  
Immediately the flair wis fu'  
The spirit wis there frae the stert.  
Nae waitin' or half road through the night  
Or the spirit oot the bottle took effect!*

*An sae we were off in a medley  
O one-steps waltzes and reels  
Nae sinner wis yin dance feenished  
Than anither came close on its heels  
Oo hopped roond in time tae the polka  
Did the waltz that wis "Erin's" pride  
An made lang raw across the flair  
Tae dance the Palais Glide.*

*E'd never credit when watchin' the men  
As they hooched and birlid and stampit'  
That perhaps that very day frae dawn tae dusk  
A hint horse an' ploo' they hud trampit'.  
Or oot bye on the hill hud battled their way  
In the wund an' the rain and cauld  
Tae roond up the strays and stragglers  
An' fetched them a hame tae the faulds.*

*An the weemin' tae wi' their hair upswept  
Sae trim and sae neatly cleed  
Widnae pass for the same that a few hours a'fore  
Wir smeared heid tae fit wi' black leed  
Nae sign o' weariness now on their face  
As they bob and weave and curtsey.  
A' haste wi' coupons and points - forgot tae the morn  
Thae nights were made for enjoyment!*

*A wee while oan an' oo became aware  
The lights hung frae the ceilin' abuin,  
Rubber fixed roond tae catch ony dreeps,  
Wir gettin' away awfae dim  
Sae while they were lowered an' pumped up again  
An the band hud a weel earned rest  
The lassies took off tae the ante-room  
Tae check they still lookit' their best.*

*The second half got underway  
Tae the swing o' the "Gay Gordons"  
Followed by a progressive barn dance.  
Then somethin' a wee bit mair modern  
Whit fun as youngsters used tae huv  
As oo joned in the frivolity  
An changed oor pairtners umpteen times  
In the quick-step - double novelty!*

*Wi' the Military and Boston two-step  
Petronella, lancers eightsome reels  
The aulder folk, fair in their element,  
A've even seen try the quadrilles  
And that dance that came frae Hungary  
Wi' a name tae even try tae spell am stuck  
But 'cos o' its "Cossack type" o' fit work  
Oo ca'd it cock yer leg up!*

*Atween each hectic set they'd play  
A nice relaxing tune  
As tae the valeta or the Spanish  
Oo waltzed roond and roond the room  
An of course the auld St Bernards  
A great favourite o' mine and Geordie's  
But - at a different time - a different place -  
In fact a different story!*

*Ower sin it seemed the time came roond  
Tae bring the evening tae a close  
When lads plucked up the courage tae ask  
The lassies o' their choice  
An mony a couple all wager, on looking back'l admit  
They've had guid reason tae bless, or curse!  
That first set hame frae the "Brig".*

*Since a begun tae write this verse  
Am happy now tae see  
The hall has had a reprieve  
And aince again its doors will be  
Open tae serve the needs o' auld and young alike  
Be it Rural, boolin' badminton  
Flo'er Show or the like.*

*Noo "Binsters" no the only hall  
That's strugglin' tae pay its way  
For a number o' other places  
Have they very same problems tae  
Sae it's hoped the folks will rally roond  
An support them wi' a' their might  
Sae that they retain their right fu' place  
The Hub o' country social life.*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### FUNDRAISING DANCE SATURDAY 31 OCTOBER, 7.30 PM ALBERT HALLS, STIRLING

Everyone is welcome to the Trust's first Fundraising Dance at the Albert Halls in Stirling. Bring your friends and enjoy all kinds of Scottish dancing. Neil McEachern and his band will provide the music.

Accommodation will be available at Stirling Youth Hostel at the special bed and breakfast rate of £11.50. Rooms are four bedded and en-suite.

### Glasgow Fiddle Workshop

#### Calling all Step Dance Teachers! - and Dancers

GFW would be pleased to hear from any Step Dance Teachers/Dancers planning on visiting Glasgow in the next nine months. If you would like to come along on a Wednesday night and pass on some of your steps to our eager class or join the class please get in touch with our Administrator on Tel/Fax: 0141 779 9047.

GFW will be running a fortnightly Step Dance class starting October 1998 until May 1999.

### Ballachulish Onich

#### Scottish Country Dancers Annual Rally

Ballachulish Village Hall, Saturday 28th November 1998

Music from Drummond Cook

Tickets £5.

Contact Mary Michie on 01855-821202.

### Ballachulish Onich Scottish Country Dancers

Social Classes will be held on Monday evenings at 8.00 pm at Ballachulish Village Hall starting on 21st September 1998.

Contact Mary Michie on 01855-821202.

### STDT Shetland Dance Series

#### Shetland Dancing

##### STDT in collaboration with Aberdeen

Alternative Festival

Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen

Friday 16 October, 8.00 pm

Shetland Folkdance performance followed by a "Come and Try" session when all are welcome to join in. Live music.

Cost: £5.00 (£3 concessions and Stage Pass)

Further details from Gill Paterson, Aberdeen Alternative Festival, 01224-635822

#### Shetland Quadrilles Workshop

##### STDT in partnership with Scottish Culture and Tradition (SCaT)

Saturday 17 October, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Rosemount Hall, Aberdeen

Fast and lively Shetland Quadrilles taught by Maria Leask and performers from Shetland Folkdance. Live music.

Cost: £6 (£3 concessions)

Limited number of non-participant places at £2 (£1 concession)

Further details from SCaT, 01224-630979

#### Shetland Dance Workshop

##### STDT in partnership with DanceBase

St Stephen's Centre, Stockbridge, Edinburgh

Sunday 18 October, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Lively reels, birlin' polkas and jigs - and expert tuition from Maria Leask, Shetland Arts Trust's Traditional Dancer-in-residence, accompanied by a Shetland fiddler. Come prepared to have fun!

Fee: £12 (£10 concessions)

For further details and to book places, contact the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, 0131-558 8737.

#### Shetland Dance Workshop - STDT

Eyemouth Community Centre, Scottish Borders

Monday 19 October, 7.30 pm - 9.30 pm

Details as above

Fee: £5.00 (£3.00 concessions)

For further details and to book, contact Karin Ingram, STDT Borders office, 01896-755110.

#### Swings, Lifts and Dunts

##### Playing for Dancing Masterclass

Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline

Sunday 25 October, 10.30 am - 4.30 pm

STDT in partnership with Fife Council present a seminar and masterclasses, following the success of the Trust's Forum on Playing for Dance held at Celtic Connections earlier this year.

For further details and to book, contact the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, 0131-558 8737.

Fee: £25.00 (£20.00 concessions). Lunch and refreshments are included.

Events in 1999 - dates to be arranged. Look out for more details in the next Newsletter.

### Highland Dance Choreography Workshop

The Piping Centre, Glasgow

One day workshop for dance teachers and adult dancers who are interested in choreographing Highland dance. Practical group sessions working with both Highland tutors and a contemporary choreographer.

### Traditional Dance for All Abilities

A share-day for those already teaching, or those about to teach, people with disabilities. An opportunity to share ideas and teaching experience using practical sessions and video.

### ALP Scots Music Group

This term, evening classes at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh will include Scottish Step Dance for absolute beginners and improving beginners and Ceilidh. Dance for absolute beginners.

There will also be a 4-week workshop on Scots Social Dance and Steps led by Fiona Campbell whose aim is to research old dances and bring them back onto the floor. For more details contact the Adult Learning Project on 0131-337 5442.



## Notice board

### Sense Scotland Helen Keller Award

Applications are invited for this arts competition run by the National Deafblind and Rubella Association. The award has become a celebration of the senses and is given to the most exciting submission in any art form (including dance) on the subject of deafblindness. If you would like further details or an entry form please contact Bill Mitchell or Ian Murray on 0141-564 2444.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 12 November for distribution in mid-December. Please send all correspondence, articles and suggestions to: the Co-ordinator, Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, 54 Blackfriars Street, Edinburgh EH1 1NE. Tel./Fax.: 0131-558 8737.