

# Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust

*researching, conserving, fostering and promoting  
all of Scotland's traditions of dance*

**Newsletter October 2000**



One of the many treasures uncovered in the Angus Project - Catherine Adams' dancers at the King's Cinema, Brechin circa 1926.

## ***inside:***

- 2-3 News
- 4/5 National Lottery Project: Angus & Borders up-dates
- 6/7 Forum: members' letters & comments
- 8 Events



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## From the Chair

The Scottish Executive's National Cultural Strategy document has come in for all sorts of criticism - most of it adverse. Flannel, woolly, muddled, indecisive, unfocused - the words applied sound like a Thesaurus entry for "vague". And vague it certainly is, although I can applaud, at least, the fact that an attempt was made, however unsatisfactorily, to formulate some kind of National Strategy on the subject.

Nevertheless, I had a distinct feeling of disappointment when I first saw the document - an unwieldy, bulky affair. Apart from the officialese, or whatever politically correct language it is written in, there are few images in it connected with the traditional arts of Scotland.

Even the page on which we are informed that "Scotland's unique cultural treasures and traditions should be conserved, valued and promoted both at home and abroad", is illuminated by a photograph of three classical dancers looking none too happy in their work! There is nowhere an image of the joy that comes from participation in our traditional arts, and, apart from a general view of the mass of performers at an Edinburgh Tattoo, and a solitary clarsach on the back cover, the reader looks in vain for a representation of Scottish dance, Scottish music, Scottish story or Scottish song.

That a so-called cultural champion be appointed from existing staffs within schools, was one of the few proposals in the Strategy to trigger any real press debate, and was a topic raised at a Forum I took part in in September at Aberfeldy during the Heart of Scotland Festival. The other Forum members were Elspeth Cowie of the TMSA, Linda Fabiani MSP, and Dr. Maggie McKay from the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University. The meeting was chaired by Dave Francis.

We were unanimous in our opinion that Scottish culture ought to permeate the entire curriculum. We feared that the proposed cultural champions will find it hard to be objective in their promotion of culture and that what is promoted in each school is likely to be the culture which interests the individual champion - and that might not necessarily be any of the native traditional arts.

From my experience in lecturing on the story of dance in Scotland, I am aware of just how very few Scots themselves know the story or even that there is such a story to tell, or that dance has been an integral part of our social history from earliest documented times. And so few people are aware of just how rich and varied are our Scottish traditions of dance that I ask myself where traditional dance will figure

when it comes to cultural championship? This is one of the major challenges confronting the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust. However, we take encouragement from the most recent feedback we have had from Angus schools following upon teaching visits Mats Melin, our Development Officer in Angus working on the dance! Dance!! DANCE!! Project, has been paying to schools in the county.

The teachers' comments fairly gladden the heart!

Answering the question "In what ways do you feel the children have benefitted?" teachers have responded with remarks such as: *good, for dance, technique, social aspects; co-operation and enjoyment; Scottish culture, something they can use outwith school; opportunity to meet others, great enjoyment, good experience for future opportunities socially; fitness, knowledge and sociability; excellent social dance skills; extended their skills and knowledge of Scottish traditional dance and country dancing, social skills extended through working with other children; listening and social skills; enjoying a combination of dance and music; learning about Scottish culture and social skills.*

It is interesting how often those words "social" and "sociability" crop up.

And when the teachers were asked how they, as teachers, had benefitted from the dance days the answers were equally interesting: *my knowledge was broadened on Scottish dance and my teaching skills were enhanced; I watched how the children reacted and learned a little about teaching dance; an increased knowledge and awareness of dance; sharing a happy experience together and learning new skills; learnt new dances relevant to the area; a better knowledge of dance traditions and the use of music; knowledge; broadened my knowledge of Scottish dance and enhanced my teaching skills; boosted my enthusiasm.*

And as if that weren't encouragement enough here are the remarks from the same teachers on the developments they would like to see as a result of the course: *more of the same, please, we bid a brow time; more of this available please; more of the same, please; an on-going programme, please; please continue to offer these courses; please can we be considered for any future projects to enable the children and staff to build on their repertoire of traditional dances; let's have on-going input; more of the same; same again, please.*

If, with **one** skilled and enthusiastic teacher, the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust can inspire that kind of response after only six teaching sessions, showing Angus primary school children the traditional dances of their area, I am more convinced than ever that the educational outreach programme in the Angus Project should serve as a model to be copied throughout the length and breadth of Scotland.

It was Winston Churchill, I think, who said that there was no better way of securing the future of the country than putting milk into babies! Surely there can be no better way of ensuring that our great cultural heritage is preserved than the strategy of seeing to it that our children have the opportunity to learn all about them.

Evelyn Hood.

## The STDT Annual General Meeting

Over forty members travelled from all over Scotland to attend the business session of our Annual General Meeting, held this year in the Northmuir Hall, Kirriemuir. The programme for the day allowed us all time to greet each other, study the excellent small exhibition the Angus Project staff, Mats Melin and Marion Robson, had set out for us, and enjoy a soup, pud and coffee lunch provided by caterer Jim Lang. (Jim does so much to help the Trust in Angus that we are tempted to get him a copy of our logo, for the side of his van, accompanied by the words "By Appointment"!)

At 1.30 we got down to business. Evelyn Hood, Chair, welcomed the members and Board, introduced Mary Anne Alburger and John Drysdale who had been invited to join the Board during the preceding year, and called on Mike Thomson to present the Annual Accounts which were unanimously approved.

In the absence of Bruce Wood, Company Secretary, the business of the election of Directors to the Board was undertaken by Mike Thomson. Mary Anne Alburger and John Drysdale were formally elected to the Board and retiring members Joan Henderson and Sheila Whyte were re-elected.

Giving his report as Trust Co-ordinator, Liam Paterson took the opportunity to talk about how his work with the Trust had encouraged him to take up dancing in earnest - and how much he enjoyed it.

There followed reports by Alastair MacFadyen, Chairman of the Research and Education sub-committee; Jimmy Spankie, Chairman of the Events and Sponsorship sub-committees.

Reports from the Development Officers, Karin Ingram in the Scottish Borders and Mats Melin in Angus were warmly received.

In the following Open Forum questions from members were put to the Board. There was considerable discussion on raising the profile of the Trust and several offers of practical help in the day-to-day running of our organisation.

By the end of the meeting at 3.45, we had been joined in the hall by a large number of dancers of all ages and from all over Angus, and by Angus Chief Executive Sandy Watson and Mrs Watson.



The AGM - young dancers from Eassie and Airlie.



Under the direction of Mats Melin and with music provided by the Ian Cruickshanks Band, the afternoon's entertainment started off in real Angus style with the *Circassian Circle* followed by a varied, first class programme of dances. Children from Airlie and Eassie Primary Schools and Webster's High School, Kirriemuir, demonstrated *Rory O' More* and *Jacky Tar Country Dance* - both old Angus favourites. A group of three young solo dancers from the Wilma Tolmie School of Dancing in Monifieth demonstrated *Calum Brougach* as taught by Dancie Neill of Forfar, *Delvineside Highland Fling* and the *Threesome Reel* as taught by Dancie Reid of Newtyle in the 19th and 20th centuries.

At the time of writing the venue for the AGM in 2001 has not been chosen but one Board member enjoyed himself so much that he proposed we hold an AGM every week in Northmuir Hall! Particular thanks are due to Mats and Marion for organising such a splendid day.

## Old Time Dance Day

On Saturday 30th September The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust held an Old Time Dance Day in the Ednam House Hotel, Kelso. Jessie Stuart was the tutor and Duncan Black played the accordion.

Jessie's knowledge of the history of dance is second to none, and she always explains the origins of a dance before beginning to teach it. Her pleasant manner and obvious enjoyment of her subject go a long way to explaining why her classes are always popular. Even experienced Old Time and Country Dance teachers and enthusiasts feel that they can learn from Jessie.



Jessie Stuart in inimitable style at the Borders Old Time Workshop.

The morning session began with warm up exercises, gently leading us into waltz steps to be incorporated into *The Doris Waltz*. Other dances taught throughout the day included *The Lancers*, *The Progressive Quadrille*, *Over The Top*, *The Blues Glide*, *The Millennium March*, *The Pride of Erin Waltz* (original), *Honeymoon Parade*, *The Lancelot Two Step* and *The University Waltz*.

The Ednam House Hotel is an excellent dance venue, with a sizeable floor and beautiful views over the River Tweed. The hotel provided a first class buffet lunch, and participants had enough time afterwards to wander round the many interesting shops in Kelso.

Another successful workshop, and thanks must go to Jessie, Duncan, and all who supported us.

## Labanotation Course

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust arranged a course in Labanotation held at Edinburgh University's Chaplaincy Centre from June 6th to 9th inclusive.

This course was for Scots interested in using this form of notation in their own dance work and the Trust considered such a course essential since no Labanotators were available in Scotland.

Those attending were Olivia Prendergast, Dance Co-ordinator for Scottish Borders Council; Peggy Duesenberry, co-leader of the Scottish Traditional Music Course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama; Rosemary Gordon-Harvey of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society; Lorna Warrender, Ethnologist and the Trust's Project Assistant; Mats Melin, the Trust's Dance Development Officer in Angus; Catriona Chisholm, Post-Graduate Dance student, School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University; and Karin Ingram, the Trust's Dance Development Officer in the Scottish Borders. The tutor was Rosemarie Gerhard, M.A., Professional Dance Notator at the Laban Centre in London.

In advance of the course the tutor had received a video showing the wide range of Scottish Traditional dances. Since her normal work in London consists of lecturing to undergraduate dance students, she declared herself surprised at the speed of learning and the "hunger for knowledge" demonstrated by the Scottish students! She covered more work than she had thought possible in four days.

The course included a brief introduction to the work of Rudolf Laban, the direction symbols of his notation, timing, positions of the feet, gestures, pas-de-basque variations, timing, levels, foot positions, individual writing practice and partner work based on the students' own specialist knowledge, position and movement writing and so on in a far longer list than we have space for here.

Each day the students were given handouts to illustrate the topics covered and Rosemarie spent a great deal of time with individual students helping each one with his or her particular problems. Offers of follow-up assistance were made and a booklist and useful addresses were issued to everyone.

The Trust would like to thank Joan Henderson very much indeed for organising this course and also the Scottish Arts Council for their contribution to ensuring these vital skills are found now in Scotland.

## Dance Research Training in Shetland

**Joan Henderson reports on the results of an invitation to train researchers in Shetland.**

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust were invited to present a training

course in dance research for traditional dance researchers in Shetland, from July 24th to 26th. Lorna Warrender and I travelled to Lerwick as guests of the Shetland Arts Trust and held a course for key workers Kathy Hubbard, Maria Leask and Anna Mary Leask.

Apart from an explanation of the work of the STDT and the aims of dance research, the course included instruction on dance research methods including preparation, lines of enquiry, management of interviews, analysis of material, transcription, follow-up work, technical analysis and documentation.

Also included in the course was a hands-on task of interviewing experience, followed by self-assessment and evaluation of the course. Future plans may lead to attempting a pilot research project in one geographical area of Shetland.

Shetland is particularly rich in traditional dance which varies from area to area, and the researchers on the course are already very knowledgeable about their rich dance culture. We wish them all success in securing this information for posterity.

We were also invited to attend a dance performance given by the Shetland Folk Dance Group and we joined in the dances with them as part of the audience participation. The number of local people who attend the weekly dance performances demonstrates that there is local interest in these events which provide entertainment and cultural education for tourists.

The Isleburgh Hall in Lerwick in which the weekly dance performance is given, has a permanent exhibition of the arts, crafts, music and history of Shetland.

## Charity Taxation Changes

The trust is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity and, effective from April 2000, our subscription income can be enhanced by the benefit of Gift Aid.

The previous Gift Aid scheme required a payment of at least £250.00, but now there is no minimum value. All that is required is for the subscription to be made by a UK taxpayer and for a simple form to be completed indicating that all payments to the charity since April 6th, 2000 be treated as Gift Aid donations. We in the office of the Trust will make the necessary arrangements to recover from the Inland Revenue 28p for every £1.00 received under this scheme.

We shall shortly start including the simple form for completion with subscription notices to our UK members. Thereafter, thank you very much to the Chancellor!!

**Mike Thomson**  
Chair-Finance Committee



The last report from the Forfar Office on the dance!Dance!!DANCE!!! Lottery Funded Project in Angus dealt mainly with our progress on the educational front and on our successful dance organised for the children of the Monifieth Schools cluster.

In October it is the turn of the Arbroath High School cluster to be the focus of our attention in a six-week teaching block ending with a similar dance for all in Arbroath High School during the week beginning 20th November.

On the subject of children and dance we can also report on a very successful "Day of Dance" organised by the East Angus RSCDS and held in Arbroath on June 6th. Organiser of the event, Donna Hays, did a splendid job, bringing together 280 boys and girls from twelve Angus Primary schools to dance with great energy and enthusiasm from 10.30am until 2.15pm. The last dance, The Flying Scotsman, all but lifted the roof from the Hall! A wonderful day was had by everyone - children, teachers and helpers alike. The Deirdre Adamson Duo provided the music.

The **Angus People's Dances** series continues with good support from local dancers. All the dances - at Montrose Town Hall, Kirriemuir Town Hall, Brechin City Hall and the Wharncliffe Hall, Newtyle - where, incidentally, Dancie John Reid taught, have attracted capacity attendance.

A dance in Edzell on September 22nd kicked off our autumn programme. This will be followed by a Scottish Country Dance evening in Kirriemuir on October 20th and a dance in the Reid Hall, Forfar on November 24th.

At the Charity Dance we held in the Eassie Hall in March the music was provided by Wayne Robertson, who was on cracking good form! And the programme was a mix of couple and set dances which are popular now and which used to be taught in the hall by both Dancie Reid and Dancie Kydd. Apart from an autumn programme of dances in Eassie and Memus we are in collaboration with the Farmers' Market organising a Farmers' Dance in the Reid Hall, Forfar on November 11.



Ian Cruickshanks (r.) and his musicians at the AGM dance. Ian's band has played for many of our Angus events and for the Angus Teachers' pack CD of Angus dances.

Dance is so much a part of social life in Angus that every night of the week sees some kind of dance activity and this autumn Mats will be helping out with Scottish Country Dance in Southmuir, Kirriemuir, the Eassie Dance classes, and it is hoped to start a parents and children's dance class at Ruthven.

## A reflection on a recent change in part of the Angus dance tradition.

Since the beginning of the Angus programme we have observed a change in the Social Dance repertoire. We are, in particular, looking at the dances attended by a core of dedicated dancers numbering 200-300 who go dancing several times a week. Most of them are over 50 years of age and many are retired. Many attend the numerous Tea Dances that are held in the halls round the district on weekday afternoons while others go to evening classes or dances. There is social dancing most evenings of the week, during the autumn, winter and early spring - the dark evenings.



In Angus the young and the not-so-young get together to dance.

What we have observed is a swing towards more set dances being danced on the social dancing scene. Two and a half years ago, a typical programme would have consisted of about 75% couple dances and 25% set dances. Popular dances were *Eva Three Step*, *Marine Four Step*, *Flirtation Two Step*, *White Heather Foxtrot* and the waltzes - *Lomond*, *Southern Rose*, *Pride of Erin*, *St. Bernard's*, *Victory* and *New Killarney*. The most popular set dances were *Broun's Reel*, *Postie's Jig*, *Shifftin' Bobbins*, *Bobby Brown's Canadian Breakdown* and *Black Mountain Reel*. Also the *Lancers* were commonly danced, and sometimes the *Quadrilles*.

Today we are seeing a shift towards set dances almost on a 50/50 ratio to the couple dances. New dances are introduced regularly. There are a good many new waltzes on the scene - *Iona*, *Lilac*, *Sweetheart*, *New Hesitation* and *Waltz of the Bells* to name but a few. We have *Festival Glide*, *Square Tango*, *Sapphire Square* and *Windsor Foxtrot*, again naming only a few of the couple dances in favour. As for set dances, those regularly seen now are *Midnight Oil*, *Bees of Maggie Knockater*, *Joe McDiarmid's Jig*, *Caddam Wood*, *Craigleith*, *Trip to Bavaria*, *Plantation Reel*, *Welcome to Dufftown*, *Royal Deeside Railway*, *Irish Rover*, *Reel of the 51st Division*, *Seton's Ceilidh Band*, *Hogmanay Jig* and *Ian Powrie's Farewell to Auchterarder*.

Most dances are done twice through for all couples, and with some 30 to 35 dances done in an evening, and repeated, there's plenty of exercise for all. We also find combination sets such as *Bobby Brown's Canadian Breakdown* followed by *Cumberland Square Eight* and *Round Reel of Eight* featured in places.

*Lancers*, *Broun's Reel* and *Postie's Jig*, and many of the common couple dances are not featured as regularly as they were 2-3 years ago. However, depending on the location, you will still find the *Quadrilles*, *Broun's Reel*, *Dundee Reel* and *Rory O' More* danced.

Please note that this observation is of a general, overall picture and does not apply to all the dances held by any means.

What we are curious to know is whether or not there is a similar trend in other places - or is this happening only in Angus? The reasons for the change are undoubtedly many but it would seem that the chief impulse for change comes from the dancers with the choice of music by the musicians.

There is certainly a very big repertoire of dances in Angus at this time. An estimated 150-200 different dances are on the programme - taking into account all the activities, from children's groups and family dances, to Ceilidh dances for young adults.

However, the core group of dancers - those over 50s mentioned at the beginning of this article - have a combined repertoire of from 100 to 150 different dances alone!

Mats Melin.

## The Ruthven Parish Festival 2000

In June the tiny parish of Ruthven in Angus held its 11th annual Music Festival and for the Millennium Festival the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust collaborated with the Festival organisers, and Angus Council. Ruthven Festival music organiser Angus Hood recruited Mats Melin, STDT Development Officer for Angus, to assist in producing what proved to be a highly successful and memorable celebration of the Music and Dance of Angus.

Following an afternoon in Ruthven Kirk of music and song composed by Angus composers - from Archibald Duff in the 18th century to Robin Orr of the present day - and the poetry of Violet Jacob, the company re-assembled at Airlie Hall for a traditional Angus supper and dance. Mats and his dancers from Eassie and Airlie Primary Schools, Eassie dance class and Kirriemuir Scottish Country Dance Class, demonstrated the *Jacky Tar Two-Step*, *Jacky Tar Country Dance* and the *Wee Cooper o' Fife*, all danced to music by Angus composers. The company then enthusiastically joined in a programme of social dances including *La Russe* and *Broun's Reel*.

Eight students from the Wilma Tolmie School of Dancing, Monifieth, had practiced with Mats to produce some very fine performances of the Highland Dances, *Calum Brougach*, *Delvineside Highland Fling* and the *Threesome Reel*. (Dancie Neill of Forfar taught *Calum Brougach* and Dancie Reid of Newtyle is our source for the others).

The evening was rounded off in splendid style with the *Reel of the 51st Highland Division* danced to the sound of the pipes played by Dr. Finlay McLaren.

Jimmy Spankie, a member of the STDT Board was Master of Ceremonies for the evening and it was good to see so many Directors and members present.



## The Borders Exhibition

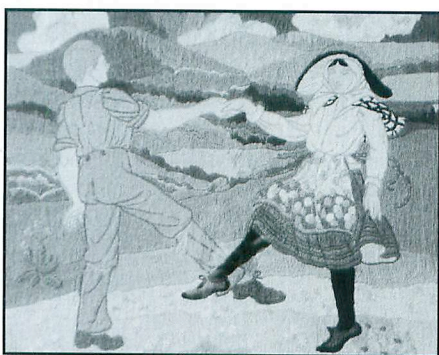
Our touring exhibition about Dance in the Scottish Borders has been generating a great deal of interest and response. We launched in Hawick, moved to Galashiels, then Coldstream and it is currently in Peebles.



*A group of STDT staff and Board Members at the opening of the Borders Exhibition in Hawick in July. From l. to r. Anne Turnbull, Alastair MacFadyen, Karin Ingram, Joan Henderson, Lorna Warrender, Liam Paterson, Jean Hannah, Sheila Whyte, Evelyn Hood. (Photograph Courtesy Robert Clapperton, Selkirk.)*

As we mentioned in the last Newsletter, a section of the Exhibition is devoted to Ion Jamieson and his team of dancers. Thanks to the exhibition, and the media publicity it has received, we were contacted by two ladies, Florence Steven and Ina Dobson each of whom had known the Jamiesons well.

Florence Steven's mother was the sister of Ion Jamieson's wife Mary and Florence refers to Ion as "Unc". She was able to give us a fascinating insight into the Jamiesons' personalities. Her son has a picture of a couple dancing in bondagers' costume that was drawn by Ion and then embroidered by Mary. The colours in the picture (pink blouse, brown skirt etc) were apparently the same as those of the dance team's costumes, and although the picture is reproduced here in black and white it will give you some idea of the intricacy of the work.



*The embroidery of the Bondagers' costumes worn in the 1935 London Folkdance Festival*

## The Bondager story continued....

Ina Dobson has been involved with the Women's Rural Institute for many years, and was very friendly with the Jamiesons. The year after the dance team's trip to London in 1935, their "Rural" approached Mrs (Granny) Noble, who had been the wardrobe mistress and chaperone, and asked her to give a talk about the visit to London. Ina wrote out a copy of the transcript that Granny Noble used when

giving her talk, and we hope you'll agree there's nothing quite like an eye-witness account.

### Langshaw in London

"There does not seem to be much connection between the two, except that both begin with a capital L, but more than a year ago there was contact, when for two whole days Langshaw, to the number of eleven, invaded London - peacefully - but not unheralded as the local papers had given a good account for some weeks of the Bondagers - the first team from Scotland to be invited to take part in the English Folk Dance Festival held in the Albert Hall, London.

"You may imagine what excitement there was in this district when the invitation was first heard of. May I here quote one of the papers. 'Congratulations to the Langshaw dancers on being invited to represent Scotland at the great Folk Dance Festival in the Albert Hall on Saturday. This is the first time we understand that Scotia has been represented. Last year it was Portugal. The Langshaw Bondagers can be depended upon to maintain the reputation of the North. There are eight of them- four winsome Border lasses and four stalwart Border lads - plus a skilful melodeon player. Good Luck to the nine, and may they stir the Sassenach !'

"Well, we set off by bus on the Thursday night and that ride was not the least enjoyable part of the whole adventure. We were out to enjoy every minute of it and we didn't waste much time in sleeping on the way. As soon as day dawned we were all gazing out. The sights and sounds were new to most of us and it seemed such a long ride into the heart of London from the time we first entered. Those who had been there already were kept busy pointing out to the others the several places of note and it now was an hour and a half after entering London before we were put down at our Hotel in Gower Street.

"After a short rest, a much-needed wash, and a very enjoyable breakfast we timidly set foot in the streets and got safely to Trafalgar Square under Mr. Jamieson's guiding care. But the traffic was tremendous and it is a mystery to me how well the London police control it. But when the policeman lifted up both hands, Langshaw and the other pedestrians at last streamed by. The shops were a great attraction, Bond Street and Oxford Street are no longer just a name to us and although we couldn't purchase, we revelled in the beautiful things - gorgeous jewels, handsome dresses and hats - which are not seen in Langshaw.

"We were out in the afternoon again and by that time had almost overcome our fear of the streets. After tea we were taken by bus to the Albert Hall where we made the acquaintance of some other teams who were also there for rehearsal. The Dublin team we knew well by this time as they were staying in the same



*At the opening of the Borders Exhibition we took the chance to salute once again the Bondagers of 1935.*

hotel. We were rather over-awed by the size of the Albert Hall and wondered if there could be enough people to fill it. Our doubts were settled on the following night, Saturday, when from the arena we had to face a vast audience. In fact, there wasn't sitting room at all and some of the Langshaw team found itself perched on the stool belonging to the greatest organ in the British Isles. My part, I thought, was to chaperone and see that everything was correct about the team - dress especially, but my legs felt as if they wouldn't support me when I was told I had to lead into the hall - not only the Langshaw team but all the others - so behold me with the St. Andrew banner flying leading a procession representing Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England. It was a wonderful march past and I shall never forget it.

"The dancing that followed was marvellous, the massed Morris dancers, the Girl Guide dancers from Anglesey who looked so charming in their quaint white smocks and lace caps, the solo dancer from Barra in the Outer Hebrides and the old man of 73 from Londonderry, a champion step-dancer, and eight dancers, Bondagers from Langshaw - from the Scottish Border. They danced "The Shepherds Crook" and "The Scotch Bonnet" two of the many dances collected by Mr. Jamieson, but for whom there would probably have been no dancing team and certainly no trip to London, so, at this point I should like to record our thanks to Mr. Jamieson, for all his training and all the duties he undertook to make our visit to London such a success.

"But I must not miss out the Saturday morning when we saw more of the London sights and when the company had lunch in Park Lane through the kindness of a lady who visited Langshaw during the summer. Mr. Jamieson fixed up a bus ride for us and we had the privilege of being shown over the Royal Mews, seeing the King's horses and the State Coaches.

"We had tea, then a rest before the great moment when we set out in taxis to the Albert Hall to take our part among the five hundred dancers from every corner of the British Isles. We could not wait until the end of the performance as our bus was waiting and we began our long journey back at 11pm when Langshaw and London were separated."



*This section has been designed as a Forum for STDT members. Please send us your letters, reviews of events, books, videos or anything else about traditional dance which may be of interest.*

## A Night in Angus

**Wallace Lockhart offers a few thoughts on "The Dances of Angus" night at the Ruthven Festival.**

Being an Angus man I seldom need two invitations to socialise in my calf country. So it was, having gone through the exile's emotional barrier of seeing Strathmore in all its glory as I left Rattray on the A926, I arrived at the little Airlie hall with a touch of excitement in my being and the query in my mind if drink would be available on the Sabbath! The music and dance of Angus had been promised - I sought no more.

Well, it was a good night. That expression in Angus needs no superlatives.

Smokie pâté, bridie and calories provided the suitable anchor for some vigorous dancing. *Rory O'More*, the first set dance I learned at school, *Broom's Reel* and *La Russe* in succession let me know without doubt where I was dancing. The tunes of Angus were to the fore and I had the pleasure of meeting Sandy Ingram in the flesh.

Up till that day I had only corresponded with him and, of course, used some of his splendid compositions. The programme attributed *Caddam Woods* to Adam Rennie and I wondered if his name shouldn't have appeared jointly with that of Jim Cameron\*.

When I thought of other Angus tunes not included, I became aware, more than ever, of the extent of our native music. I hope the classical musicians who were playing for the dancing found the experience stimulating.

But, in retrospect, I found that the youngsters provided the greatest stimulation of the evening. One could not help but notice that, even with an audience pressure upon them, their dancing was easy and natural and, therefore, enjoyable. And that, as they say, is what it is all about. My congratulations to those working with them. No, more than that, my thanks.

There are other things I could write about. Yes, I did get a drink, and Jimmy Spankie was in spanking form and I noticed one or two people had travelled a long way to receive an Angus education.

It was, as I said, a good night.

*\*The editor has it on the authority of no less a figure than Professor Sandy Tulloch in conversation with Sandy Ingram that the authorship of Caddam Woods was the subject of legal action in the 1950s between Adam Rennie and Jim Cameron. The judgement was that Adam Rennie could claim to be the composer of the first eight bars and the 2nd eight bars came from a Bavarian melody. We have it from the same reliable source that not long after, Angus Fitchett claimed he'd written a new tune which he intended to call "Adam Cameron" - but didn't!*

## CEÒLAS 2000

Picture this - six sunny, hot days, blue skies, white sands, the sounds of piping, fiddling, Gaelic song, dancing, and merriment - and you will have an idea of South Uist in the first week of July, 2000, and the fifth Ceòlas Summer School.

Ceòlas is the dream child of piper and pipe-maker Hamish Moore bringing together the links between music, song, dance and language in a natural environment. The whole idea of the Summer School is to explore, and open the eyes of the modern generation to, how the music, song and dance are connected through language in a way which was taken for granted by past generations. The aim is to bring them all back together again.

Pipers explore how the rhythms of Gaelic songs should reflect their playing of the same. For dancing, pipers and fiddlers explore the rhythms of the step dancing of old, which in turn are a reflection of the rhythm of the Gaelic language of the songs which the pipers and the fiddlers are playing. Many old tunes originate from songs for which the words have largely been neglected but which are now being revived. The school certainly concentrates on the Gaelic aspects of the foregoing, but it would also be true to say that it reflects how the same influences could have worked in any part of the country.

The course opens the mind and allows the participant to be at one with all aspects of the traditions.

The tutors this year were Allan MacDonald of Genuig who explored the relationship between Gaelic song and Pibroch, and Angus Mackenzie of Cape Breton who taught piping for dancing. Margaret Stewart, Kenna Campbell, Rona Lightfoot and Mairi MacInnes explored Gaelic songs of the Pibroch and Phuir-a-

Beul traditions. Step dance was taught by Margie MacDonald from Cape Breton and Alexander MacDonnell from Toronto, assisted by Sandra Robertson.

*Scotch Reels, Quadrilles, Lancers* and *Cape Breton Square Sets* were taught by Mats Melin and last, but definitely not least, there was fiddle tuition from Jackie Dunn and Cape Breton's greatest, Buddy MacMaster. Beginners fiddle classes were run by Deirdre Morrison.

Apart from the formal side of the daytime classes, mainly in Daliburgh School, the real learning experience happened at the dances, sessions and house ceilidhs which took place every night throughout the week. What was learned through the day was put into practice with, for example, the reels and square sets being danced in halls and at house ceilidhs.

The local hotels were alive with music and song every night and the annual excursion to Eriskay saw us dancing on the ferry for the last time. Next year we'll be dancing on the bridge as a causeway is presently being built to connect the island with South Uist.

On Friday we all went to the local hall for the final concert and dance. On this night seven or eight sets got up for the *Quadrilles* and at 5 the next morning we were still reeling away at a house ceilidh!

Long may Ceòlas prosper and grow!

We'll certainly be back - but we'll need a year to recover from this year's glorious experience!

Anyone interested in the connection between piping and song should listen to the excellent album, "*Fhuair Mi Pog*" by Allan Macdonald and Margaret Stewart. And, for fiddlers and dancers, the new release by Buddy MacMaster - *The Judique Flyer* - is a tremendous treat.

**Mats Melin.**

## Sword Dance of the Glover Incorporation of Perth

Most of the trade and craft guilds of Europe had elaborate ceremonies and rituals associated with their holidays and gatherings. The Perth Glovers, once a wealthy and powerful guild, performed their own hilt and point sword dance, similar to those today found in the Low Countries, northern England and the German states, as well as, historically, in many parts of eastern and southern Europe.

Every two years, an international festival of sword dance takes place - the



last one being in May 2000 in Whitby, North Yorkshire. Around thirty Longsword and Rapper teams took part, including nine teams representing seven European countries. Most of the overseas teams were associated with local folklore societies, and ranged in age from teens to sixties or so. All were very proud of their traditions, even though hardly any of the dances had existed after the turn of the seventeenth century. Most had been recreated in the last decade or so from, sometimes very sketchy, local records.

No one knows when exactly the Perth Glovers dance fell into disuse. Apparently, the team, comprising freemen and apprentices of the guild, danced each May on Kinnoull Hill to celebrate Beltane, and they certainly would have performed on key dates in the Incorporation's calendar including St. Bartholemew's Day - he being Patron Saint of glovers. It is also on record that the Perth Glovers provided dance displays at several great occasions of State such as Royal weddings.

A brief description of the dance as performed in 1633 on the occasion of Charles the First's state visit to Scotland, is contained in the Glovers' annals. The description informs us that there were thirteen dancers in all taking part and the swords that they used were the long double-handled draw knives ("schearing rapers") of the sort glovers would have used to dress hides.

In 2002 there will be another international festival of sword dance

which would seem to be an ideal opportunity to put into action a long-considered plan to form a new Glovers Sword Dance team, to practise, and be nominally based in, the Perth area. Permission has been obtained from the current members of the Incorporation of Glovers and experienced longsword dancers are available to help re-create this fascinating and exciting ancient Scottish tradition.

Almost anyone can become a sword dancer. It is no more physically

demanding than an average *Strip the Willow* and the dance figures can be as simple or as complicated as the team is able to execute. Ideally, eighteen enthusiasts would be required to set this scheme in motion - and that's not including the musicians!

**Geoff Kirk.**

If you would like further information please contact: Geoff Kirk on 01236 730927.

## Best Wishes to Lorna and Colin.

Wedding bells rang out over Kennoway in Fife on September 23rd when our Project Assistant Lorna Warrender married Colin Thomson in a traditional ceremony in St. Kenneth's Church. In spite of rain early in the day, it is good to report that the sun broke through to shine on the happy couple. And even if King Sol hadn't chosen to put in an appearance, Lorna and Colin's radiant smiles would have created a warm glow all round them! Our congratulations and warmest wishes to them both.



Wedding bells on September 23rd for our Project Assistant, Lorna Warrender and Colin Thomson.

## Publications Order Form

Please complete the form below and return to STDT, 54 Blackfriars Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1NE  
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**Monographs Series** - STDT is planning to publish a series of monographs on traditional dance themes, based on the format of the AGM 2000 souvenir booklet. If you would like to suggest topics or submit ideas for consideration, please contact **Liam Paterson** in the Edinburgh office.



# EVENTS

## We're Planning a Tribute to Bobby Watson

Bobby Watson, the famous dancer and dance teacher who died in 1998 was, by any criterion one cares to apply, a remarkable figure in the story of Scottish dance.

Born in Aberdeen on April 21st, 1914, he became a dance pupil of John Pirie, Aberdeenshire's famous Dancie Pirie, at the tender age of 2½. Bobby Watson won his first medal for dance at the age of 3 and from then to the end of his life he accrued honours and admiration for his legendary dance style.

From 1949 until just before his death he not only taught regularly in Aberdeen but also travelled weekly to Ballater, Braemar and Aboyne, and coached his demonstration team at his studio in his Aberdeen home at least once a week. He loved all kinds of Scottish dance, helped form the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dance, was a member of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society demonstration team and taught regularly at the RSCDS Summer School.

Bobby Watson performed frequently on television and undertook performing and teaching tours all over the world, but particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

In 1999 Aberdeen University Special Collections Department acquired the Bobby Watson collection which includes film, costume, dance notebooks, photographs, letters and other memorabilia. Before such a collection can be made available to researchers etc. it must be properly catalogued and conserved - work for an expert archivist.

In order to assist with the funding of this very important work, the STDT, in collaboration with The Elphinstone Institute at Aberdeen University, is organising a tribute to Bobby Watson in the form of dance displays and participation on April 21st, his birthday, at the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen.

We are anxious to hear from anyone with memories of Bobby, his former pupils, his associates in the dance world, his friends, so that we can produce a truly fitting tribute to the memory of this very fine dancing master. So if you, members of your family, or former pupils, would like to help us make April 21st, 2001, a dance event to remember please contact Jimmy Spankie, at The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust office - you'll find the address and phone number on this page.

## SOME FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All over Scotland, England, indeed, the world - the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society hold regular dances and dance classes. For information on your area telephone RSCDS Headquarters on 0131 225 3884

Fiddle 2000 with a superb programme of workshops, recitals, lectures, ceilidhs etc. takes place on November 25th and 26th, mostly in the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh. For information tel. 0131 346 0977 or e-mail scots\_fiddle@lineone.net.

### From the Membership Secretary, Jean Hannah

Our worldwide membership is the life-blood of the Trust. It always gives us pleasure to hear from our band of enthusiastic members who give us the support and encouragement required to continue our work. As well as sending us tales of dancing and life experiences, all of which are interesting, sometimes funny, often stimulating, we also receive from you precious archive material to add to our store of knowledge. They all have a vital place in our organisation.

Many of you have visited us here in our small office in Blackfriars Street, and when you consider that the members who have made this pilgrimage are from as far away as New Zealand to as near as just "down the road", all bearing stories of their experience of dance and its effect on their lives, you can understand why I find this such an interesting job.

We love to hear from you and hope you will continue to keep us informed of your activities and, here's a thought, why not send us your story for the next Newsletter? I always think of the Trust as a family and as such we so like to hear how members of that family live and dance! Also I am certain you have friends and acquaintances who'd like to know about us and join us - so, please spread the word.

Absolute Beginners Ceilidh Dance - Wednesdays until December 6th at the Marcos Leisure Centre, 55 Grove Street, Edinburgh, 8pm, to 9.30 at £2.50/£1.50 per week. For more information call 0131 337 5442.

Glasgow Fiddle Workshop Step Dance Classes - a six week course from November 1st to December 6th from 6 - 7 pm at Kinning Park Complex, Cornwall Street, Kinning Park, Glasgow. Tutor - Alison Macleod. £3.00 members/£1.50 concessions. £4.00 non-members/£2.00 conc. For more information call Sara Melville on 0141 779 9047

St Andrew's in the Square re-opening programme over several days begins on Wednesday, November 29th. For further information contact the STDT office at 0131 558 8737.

Hogmanay Ceilidh at the Rothes Halls, Glenrothes, Fife from 8pm to 1am. Dance to Annasach and Dunragan. £10.00 ticket to be booked as soon as possible - Box Office number - 01592 611101

For information on STDT events in Angus, phone Mats Melin or Marion Robson on 01307 468335; and for events in The Borders, phone Karin Ingram or Anne Turnbull on 01896 755110.

**Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust**

54 Blackfriars Street,  
Edinburgh, EH1 1NE

phone/fax: 0131 558 8737  
Email: edinburgh.stdt@virgin.net



Help us to research, conserve, foster and promote all of the Scottish traditions of dance - join us now or introduce a friend! Please complete the form below with your credit card details or cheque (UK only) made payable to STDT Ltd., and send to Jean Hannah, Membership Secretary, Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, 54 Blackfriars Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1NE

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