

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2007



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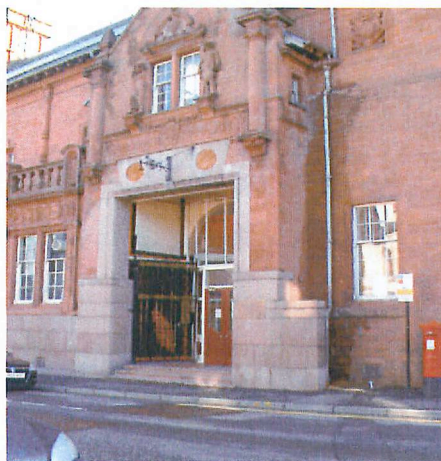
On Monday 3rd September, our operations moved to the Speirs building in Alloa. This was the result of two years of negotiation with Clackmannanshire Council Cultural and Community Services. Here is the background to the Speirs Centre, how and why STDT chose to move home, and the plans for the building...

History of the Speirs Centre

The Speirs Centre was built as Alloa Public Baths and Gymnasium which opened in 1898 and was presented to the town by John Thomson Paton of Norwood for the benefit of the townspeople, many of whom would have had little access to running water and baths. The Paton family, famous millowners, were generous benefactors, also giving Alloa Town Hall to the local people in 1887. It was designed by the architects Burnet and Campbell. The exterior is typically Scots Renaissance in style, but inside the carved wooden dragons and other decorative features show a strong Oriental and Moorish influence.

There are a lot of dragons in the Speirs Centre in Alloa, skilfully hand carved in wood, attached to the horizontal beams supporting the roof trusses over the former

Our New Home !



swimming pool and gymnasium and decorating the balconies on either side of the gym. They also curl themselves around the wooden balustrade on the main staircases. People who learned to swim in the former baths may well remember these fierce creatures in this, one of the important civic buildings of late Victorian Alloa.

The building housed an extensive Turkish and Russian baths suite which included two hot rooms, changing facilities, a plunge pool, toilets and a professional masseur! All quite decadent for its time. In 1933 it was re-named Speirs Centre after local boy Tommy Speirs, Lightweight Boxing Champion. The Turkish baths were finally closed in 1965, although the swimming pool remained open until 1986.

Background

Originally, the Patons building, an old woollen mill in Alloa, was gifted to the Council to be developed as a centre for creative industries, eg IT based companies. However, due to lack of infrastructure there was no incentive for companies to re-locate, but the Council then became interested

in the idea of regeneration through culture.

Ron Carthy, Cultural & Community Services Manager, Clackmannanshire Council has been our main contact in Clackmannanshire Council, together with Kathleen O'Neill, Creative Links Officer. Ron Carthy had visited Denmark to look at other initiatives which had supported the view of regeneration through arts and culture, which is rarely an easy message to sell. Funding was received for a Creative Links Officer, a key post in developing the Council approach to culture and the wider vision. While the Council committed funding to building new schools, the idea of converting an old warehouse (Kilncraigs) as a cultural centre was less popular. However, the seed had been planted.

Partnership with STDT

Clacks Council was approached by our Director as part of her programme of local authority visits with the aim of establishing a Dance Artist in Residence.. This then led to the appointment of Lisa Dunlop as Traditional Dance Artist in Residence in 2005.

Two years ago regular meetings began with our Director which, together with the success of the TDA post, led to a strong relationship between the two organisations. STDT were looking for a



Our New Home ! Cont'd

home which could support a future Archive and Resource Centre while Clacks Council had premises and willingness to support our activities: an ideal partnership. By this time the proposed development had outgrown the original earmarked building but Ron's Dept then discovered that another listed building, the Speirs Centre, was to be retained and developed. This was an opportunity to get into an interesting space with a lot of character. As a listed building, many of the features will be retained, but there is great scope for sympathetic refurbishment.

Plans for the Building

The intention is that the current goods entrance of the building and those nearby will become the new frontages around the town square opposite the new railway station. An extension at the (new) front of Speirs Centre will allow for disabled access and provision of a café area and a performance space. It is anticipated that the building will house the library, Clacks museum and archive, STDT archive, resource centre, performance space and a café. It will probably be 3 years until the building is completed in all its glory. Architects Malcolm Fraser

have been appointed specialists in this kind of project, including Dancebase in Edinburgh.

The Future

There is no doubt that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Trust. It is very unlikely that this kind of partnership would readily present itself in future, and certainly not with accommodation attached. At last one of the original remits of the Trust to have a Centre of Excellence for Scottish Dance has at least a chance of becoming a reality. The promise of office, performance, archive and dance space all under the one roof was an opportunity too good to miss.

Derek Stewart, Lord Provost Clackmannanshire said: *"We're delighted to welcome the Trust to Clackmannanshire. The fact that they've chosen the Speirs Centre as their new headquarters is very pleasing and it marks the start of a significant period of redevelopment for the centre"*

Resident Dance Tutor

South Ayrshire Project

Commencing in April I taught a 6 week block of Traditional and Fusion dance classes in South Ayrshire primary schools. The children learned various ceilidh dances and had taster sessions in fusing other dance styles, such as Bollywood, Hip-Hop and Flamenco with Traditional Scottish dance. Each group of children then chose one dance style and worked on a final Fusion piece which they performed at a Dance Share Day enjoyed by all the dancers involved. The project was a complete success and all the dancers seemed to enjoy the experience.

South Lanarkshire Project Taster Sessions

In June, I led various taster sessions in some of the schools I am set to visit in the autumn term as part of a collaborative project between South Lanarkshire Council, STDT and Spinal Chord (Contemporary Dance Co.). The sessions, in both primary and secondary schools, were extremely successful and I am looking forward to starting Block 1 in September.

Clackmannanshire

The Whins and A.L.L.O.A. Centre classes have continued to run successfully throughout the summer. I also returned to Clackmannan Nursery and Carsebridge House to lead one-off sessions in Ceilidh and Fusion dance.

The Lornshill Fusion dancers performed 3 of their pieces at the Dobbie Hall in Larbert in April as part of *The Strathcarron Singers* annual concert.

The Arts Academy returned this summer offering Wee County 12-18



Lisa's special needs group

year olds 5 weeks of classes in dance, drama, art, puppetry and much more in all 3 secondary schools. I delivered sessions throughout the duration of the Academy, working towards a final performance for family and friends at Lornshill Academy.

And last but not least.....

I got married to Robert on Friday 17th August and had a fabulous honeymoon cruising round the Med!

Lisa Dunlop



Girvan Dance Day Ceilidh, June 07

Castle Campbell Revisited

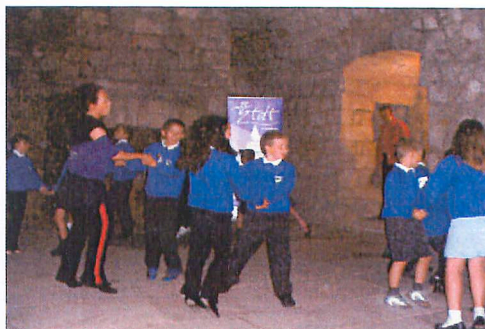
The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust, in collaboration with Historic Scotland, helped many people to “dance through time” from 19th – 21st June at the scenic Castle Campbell in Dollar. Last year some of this event was held in the rose gardens overlooking Dollar Glen, but the weather was unkind this year which meant we were unable to enjoy those spectacular views.

The free dance sessions covered Historic, Step, Ceilidh and Fusion. The Historic and Ceilidh were particularly busy thanks to the local school, Strathdevon Primary, pre-booking for these sessions. When the school was unable walk the class to the castle one day due to driving wind and rain (yes, sunny June!), Robert Lambie the Historic dance tutor walked down the hill to the school and took the class there. That’s what we call service!

Many individuals and community groups had pre-booked for the classes, but they were also open to visitors to the castle. Some of these visitors, many from overseas, were bemused to see Scottish dance sessions going on within the historic walls and joined in after a bit of encouragement. Everyone left with a smile on their face. We would like to thank our tutors Robert Lambie, Sheila McCutcheon and Lisa Dunlop for being such good sports!



What? Boys enjoy a Historic Dance class?!?



Lisa leads children from Strathdevon Primary in a dance workshop

All for Lisa’s Wedding....

“Step we gaily on we go, heel for heel and toe for toe....”



Lisa and Robert

Our popular Resident Dance Artist, Lisa Dunlop, was married to Robert on Friday 17th August 2007, and thus became Mrs Lisa Kennedy.

On a rare, warm, sunny day Lisa took her vows in the beautiful venue of Chatelrehaut Country Park, Hamilton, in front of family and friends. Her Maid of Honour was her equally talented sister, Emma,

who sang during the wedding ceremony, apparently not leaving a dry eye in the house.

Many more guests were invited to the evening reception in the Parkville Roadhouse, Blantyre including Angela and Diane from STDT, looking more like members of the paparazzi than wedding guests as they took so many photographs and Angela had gone armed with a piece of camera equipment which put even the professional photographer’s nose out of joint!

As you can see, Lisa was absolutely stunning in her wedding gown, complete with 30ft train, while Robert was handsomely attired in the Kennedy tartan. It was a wonderful day for all, but the highlight of the evening was Lisa’s father taking to the dance floor, apparently for the first time ever! That will be a memory for her to treasure forever.

The only missing VIP was Arnie, Robert’s pet Rottweiler, who had to



Awww! Wasn’t she beautiful?

take second place to Lisa on this one occasion!

Everyone at STDT, and I’m sure all Friends of the Trust, would like to wish the happy couple a wonderful and fun-filled life together.

Dance Artist Update—Fife

I have been keeping very busy during the past few months with successful traditional dance workshops, Primary School Cluster Group Ceilidhs, and demonstrations.

Almost 6000 participants danced during 88 workshop sessions, ceilidhs held with school pupils, after-school sessions and summer dance workshops.

I also organised 4 schools ceilidhs to round off the workshops, including dance demonstrations held in Newport, Anstruther, St Andrews & Glenrothes involving 22 schools.



Leuchars Nursery School

The success of those dance days has meant that they have become annual events, and I am delighted schools are now hosting their own Scottish events to showcase pupils' talents and also raise school funds.

I have always promoted Scottish Dancing as very much part of Health & Fitness programmes. Pupils were issued with pedometers which proved that **they can accumulate an average of 3000 steps during a one hourly session of dance** more than half the amount expected in one full day!

My input has been very much in demand from various nurseries across Fife, to provide workshops following on from a very successful In service Day Traditional Dance Session.

Successful summer dance workshops were held in Auchtermuchty and Glenrothes for children aged 7 - 14 years with 61 participants and Highland dance sessions were provided during the RSCDS Summer school held in St Andrews with members from Canada,



Schools' Ceilidh, St Andrews

Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Scotland & England.

I also delivered a dance session to those with Audio & Visual Impairment which was enjoyed by all and attended workshop sessions and gained a Generation Certificate for "dancing for older people".

Demonstration teams have been prepared for various events including Sir Jimmy Shand Tribute show in St Andrews, Falkland in Bloom celebrating the only Scottish village in final of Best Kept European Village, Anstruther's Annual Muster Yacht Race, Scottish Deer Centre Scottish weekend, and is continuously building relationship with Chinese community and ESOL groups hosting ceilidhs along with demonstrations.

Once again another very hectic few months **keeping dancing ALIVE in Fife.**

Thank you all for your support
Joyce Anderson

Our V.C. becomes an M.B.E.!

In the recent Queen's Birthday Honours, Billy Forsyth was awarded an MBE for his services to the word of highland dance.

We are absolutely delighted that Billy has at last been recognised for all his work over the years, and in particular for his support of the Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust with whom he has been associated from the beginning.



STDT at the National Museum

Our programme at the Museum has continued during the summer with Stirling Highland Dancers, Tay Dance & Music Group, Inverkeithing Step Dancers and the Edinburgh Tattoo Highland Ceilidh Dancers all providing fantastic performance sets in Hawthornden Court, followed by a short have-a-go session where members of the audience can join in.

The Commonwealth Highland Dancers provided a truly international demonstration, with dancers hailing from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa as part of the Museum's Festival Fringe celebrations.

We also welcomed the stirring Scottish Step dance group Danrsa to the Museum in September.



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