

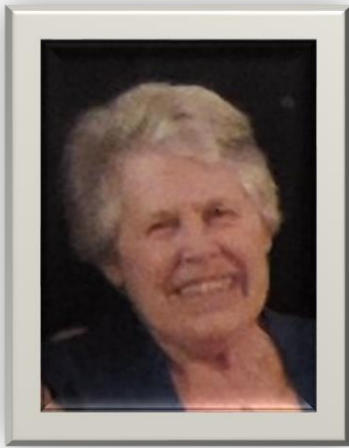


BRANCH NEWS MARCH 2020

Registered charity No. 106

Catherine Gray

19th June 1944 – 30th December 2019



At the end of December 2019 Branch members were shocked and saddened to learn of the death in hospital in Edinburgh of Cate (Kate) Gray, very shortly after she and Alex had moved north. We send our condolences to Alex, James and Jamie, Alison and Sean, Alasdair and Katie, and all the grandchildren.

Here are tributes paid to her by three Branch members who knew her well.

Thank you, Graham, Jim and Isabel, for sharing your memories on behalf of us all.

Photos: Jo Lyons, Jim Proudfoot & Alison Jackson

From Graham Tough:

Kate grew up in the village of Boldon near Sunderland. On leaving school she went to study pharmacy in Sunderland and later in Glasgow. It was during this time that she met Alex. They were married on December 27th 1969. After three years in Newcastle, in September 1972 they moved to Cardiff.

In the 1970s there were several evening classes in SCD held each week under the auspices of the local authority. In late 1981 Kate saw an opportunity to set up an evening class in the then expanding suburb of Radyr. This continued there for several years until local authority cut backs and rising rents forced a move of the class to the Scout Hall in Whitchurch, where it still runs today. There have been two dances composed in acknowledgement of this class: *The Radyr Dancers* (devised by Alex himself) and *Radyr Welcome* (by David Queen).

Whilst negotiating to start the dance class Kate was asked if she would take an evening cookery class. Despite having no formal qualification in this area, not being one to miss a challenge, Kate agreed. As she said, mixing chemicals for pills and mixing ingredients for cakes – they only differ in magnitude!

In addition to SCD Kate also taught Scottish Step-Dancing during the weekly

Highland class which Alex had set up. Kate was also a keen singer and set about learning *puirt a beul* (Gaelic mouth music). She would often sing for the dancers performing the Sword Dance, Highland Fling, etc. (though she would acknowledge that she didn't understand the words of the tunes, which in any event can often sound silly in translation).

Kate was mother to daughter Alison and two sons James and Alasdair. They were all brought up in a home immersed in SCD. James in particular inherited Kate's aptitude for music and has, in his own right, become a well-known, and well-travelled, musician in the SCD world.

As already stated, Kate liked a challenge, so in the 1980's she took up playing the clarsach. Her dedication to this eventually led to her becoming Convenor of The Clarsach Society.

Kate and Alex were married for a few days over 50 years. Unfortunately, the circumstances of their Golden Wedding Anniversary were heart-rendingly sad.

From Jim Proudfoot:

Kate was a generous lady - not just in the material sense but with her time, her expertise and her enthusiasm. She would find time to help anyone she could, who had shared interests. We met, through dancing of course, a few years after she and Alex moved to Cardiff. Jan knew Alex through the Branch committee and it wasn't long before we were travelling to Cardiff to attend the Thursday night Highland Class.

In those days, Kate's time was largely taken up looking after their three young children, yet she could still find time to accommodate visiting teachers and bands for day schools, balls and the then new Branch event, the summer Festival. We

have many memories of travelling on the old A48 (the M4 hadn't penetrated as far west as Swansea in those days!) trying to keep trifles and flans intact, our contribution to the band's lunch, as the jelly started to melt in the morning sun!



Our family enjoyed regular hospitality at Coryton Crescent, particularly after the monthly Sunday afternoon Family Class and Kate and I would would debate, long after the children should have been in bed, putting the world (and the RSCDS!) to rights. Kate had firm views on most things; fortunately for me, it wasn't necessary always to agree with them!

We also enjoyed a number of trips to dance festivals with Kate and Alex, organised by the Thursday class. Not only did these provide the experience of participating in some excellent dance displays (genuine 3rd party reviews - honest!) but also the numerous social events that go along with such visits, both organised and ad hoc, en route! Kate was competitive in many ways - the family referred to it in their eulogies as "liking a challenge". I'm told that on one such trip, I think, to Rheine, she and I engaged in a schnaps-drinking competition - I have to say, I have no recollection of the event!

In more recent years, as our own growing family commitments prevented us from travelling, particularly mid-week, our close involvement waned - others will recall their experiences from these times. But the friendship between the families endures - *Should auld acquaintance be forgot?*



From Isabel Hitchman:

'Straighten your lines – heads up – shoulders back – tummies in – toes turned out' – were Kate Gray's often-repeated words in her Cardiff Tuesday class. They were said as she put its members through technique practice, with her constant emphasis on footwork, covering, phrasing, giving of hands, looking at one's partner, and (that wonderful thing) flight.

Her own dancing inspired by example. Kate demonstrated, beautifully, what she insisted on; her strathspey steps, in particular, were exquisite. Watching her, one understood exactly what to aim for and how it should be done.

Inspire she did. A sizeable core of students followed her, over thirty-plus years of the class, from Radyr Comprehensive School (after the Head decided its dingy spaces could be put to other uses on Tuesday evenings) to Whitchurch Scout Hall (which had a sprung floor; the Gray family had a voice in Cardiff Scouts).

In its early years, Kate's class was a family affair. Kate's stepmother, Dorothy, had been the accompanist for Anthea Dalziel's Cardiff class, the precursor of Kate's. She continued playing for Kate, with the

teenage James standing in and finally accompanying regularly until he went to university. Alison's participation was celebrated by members dancing 'Miss Alison Rhona', written by Alex for his daughter. Alasdair was by far the youngest member of the class.

Throughout the decades from the 1980s, Kate kept together the medallists, the RSCDS aspirant teachers, and the once-a-week enjoyment seekers. All would be represented in the South Wales Branch outdoor summer Annual Festival. Eventually, the aspirants qualified and took over more and more of the teaching. Kate kept her hand in, for several years editing the programme for the class's annual June dance. Two years ago, the class demonstrated a dance devised by Alex for Kate's Radyr dancers in a farewell event organised by the South Wales Branch of the RSCDS to thank and say goodbye to the Grays, then about to move to a new house near Edinburgh.

It is a considerable tribute to Kate that the class today continues to flourish. The present teachers inherited a longstanding and enthusiastic group welcoming the new members finding their way to it. It is one of Kate's many legacies to dancing.





**RSCDS South Wales Branch
Festival of Dance
27th June 2020**



The South Wales Festival of Dance is being held in Brecon. The afternoon venue will be at the Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Centre, ("Mountain Centre"), Libanus, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8ER or if wet the afternoon session will take place at the Community Hall, Station Yard, Sennybridge, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8RR (opposite the Post Office.)

The timetable for the day is as follows:

2.00pm - 5.30pm social dancing / demonstrations
7.00pm – 9.30pm social dance at the Community Hall, Sennybridge

The afternoon will consist of demonstrations and social dancing to the music of George Meikle. The programme of social dancing will be published after we know how many demonstrations we have. The afternoon event is free, although there is a small charge for parking and there will be a bucket collection during the afternoon.

Food at the Mountain Centre

The centre offers hot & cold lunches, good food at affordable prices. Visitors are also welcome to bring their own food to picnic outside, & there are several local pubs where you can eat.

A dance will be held in the evening at the Community Hall Sennybridge. The evening dance will be £8.00 (RSCDS members), £10.00 (non-RSCDS members) and £4 for juniors (18 and under). Pay at the door. If you would like to attend the evening session it would help with the planning processes if you could let Conor know that you will be attending. The evening programme will be available shortly, and a crib will be available at the dance or on request to Conor.

If your group would like to demonstrate a dance during the afternoon session, please contact Conor Farmer **by 1st June 2020** at 43 Queen Street Tongwynlais, CF15 7NN, tel. 07812 569744 or by email at conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Walk-Through Dances, 8 & 29 February 2020

These were held in Whitland and Morganstown respectively, and were aimed at more experienced dancers. Each venue attracted between 20 and 30 dancers. The programme was identical, and based mainly around less well known dances from a new CD by Jim Lindsay and his band, "Recorded Highlights from the Sunday Class", as well as a few more familiar dances from the recently issued RSCDS CDs of "Thirty Popular Dances".

***Diana and Nigel Morris**, who attended the Morganstown dance, have kindly written up some comments. Thank you to you both for doing this, and thank you also to everyone who danced with us on either date.*

On an evening when the dreadful windy weather forecast materialised, some intrepid dancers from Bristol & W. Wales joined locals in Morganstown, near Cardiff, for a very cheery four sets of dancers.

The makeup of the programme varied from previous years, as some old favourites mingled amongst the more unusual walk-through dances, giving our hard-working brains a few short rests. All dances were very professionally called by Alison Jackson with her trusty microphone. What a sense of achievement when we managed the 'Flitting of Lorn', which was a lovely dance - once the brain's satnav worked! Some of the older dances were those that had never had their own music - until now - so we enjoyed a selection of tunes from a new CD specially composed or arranged for those.

Added to the fun dancing and socialising was the usual delicious spread – an excellent evening and a safe journey home were had by all.



REMINDER

All functions in South Wales are listed on the Web Site.

www.rscds-southwales.org.uk

Detailed information about each Branch event is posted as soon as it becomes available. Club event details are also posted if they are sent to me.

If there's anything else you think should be on the site please let me know.

Fran Smith (Web Manager)



LISTINGS MARCH – JUNE 2020

Sat 7 March: Regular first Sat of the month dance in Letterston, Pembs, 7:00 pm. Details Pat Rye 01646 698463 ryedp@hotmail.com

Sat 14 March: Branch Newcomers' Dance, Whitland Town Hall SA34 0AG, 7:00 – 10:00 pm. £2.50. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Sat 21 March: Regular St Andrew's Club dance at Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 7:15 pm. Details Jim & Jan Proudfoot 01792 299443 jimnjan@ntlworld.com

Sat 28 March: Branch Newcomers' Dance, St Paul's Parish Centre, Swansea SA2 9AR, 7:00 – 10:00 pm. £2.50. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Sat 25 April: S Wales Ball – see box opposite

Sat 25 April: Westbury Scottish Club Spring Dance, St Peter's Hall, Bristol BS9 4LD, 7:00 – 11:00. Music Ian Muir of Prestwick, Details josetarnowski71@gmail.com

Fri 1 May: Cardiff Cal Soc May Day Dance, Whitchurch Scout Hall, Penlline Rd., Cardiff CF14 2AD, 7:30-10:30 pm. £2. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Sat 2 May: Regular first Sat of the month dance in Letterston, Pembs, 7:00 pm. Details Pat Rye 01646 698463 ryedp@hotmail.com

Sat 2 May: Herefordshire RSCDS Annual Dance, Saxon Hall, Hoarwithy Rd., Hereford HR2 6HE, 7:30 – 11:00 pm. Alan Ross Band. Details Margaret Campbell 01432 264072 mcuzen1@talktalk.net

Sat 9 May: Gloucester Scottish Society, Ribston Hall High School, Gloucester GL1 5LE, 7:00 – 11:00 pm. Music by Ian Slater. Details Pam Latham 01452 306857 pl259@talktalk.net

Sat 16 May: Regular St Andrew's Club third Sat of the month dance, Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 7:15 pm. Details Jim & Jan Proudfoot 01792 299443 jimnjan@ntlworld.com

Sat 16 May: Bristol RSCDS Summer Dance, Oatley Hall, St Monica Trust, Cote Lane, Bristol BS9 3UN. Chris Dewhurst Trio. Tickets £12. Details Maggie Keeshan 07771 965011, tickets@rscdsbristol.info

Sat 6 June: Cardiff Tuesday Class Summer Dance, Morganstown Village Hall CF15 8LE, 7:30 – 1:00 pm. Frank Thomson Band.

Sat 13 June: Cheltenham Scottish Society Summer Dance, Reddings Community Centre, Cheltenham GL51 6RF, 7:30 – 11:00 pm. Details John Marshall, 17 Gratton Rd., Cheltenham GL50 2BT or on website www.iockjigging.btck.co.uk

Sat 20 June: South Wales Branch AGM, Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 5:00 pm.

Sat 20 June: Regular St Andrew's Club dance at Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 7:15 pm. Details Jim & Jan Proudfoot 01792 299443 jimnjan@ntlworld.com

Sat 27 June: South Wales Festival, Brecon in the afternoon, Sennybridge if wet, and for the evening dance. Details from Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Hurry and get your ticket for the South Wales Ball on Saturday 25 April 2020 at the Paget Rooms in Penarth CF64 3EG, 7:00 for 7:15 – 11:00. Music by Nicol McLaren and the Glenraig Band. Tickets £21 members £23 non-members from Jean Elliott 01994 419505 jean.ell1@btinternet.com



