



BRANCH NEWS JULY 2015

Welcome to the first Newsletter since the AGM held on Saturday 20 June in Swansea. The intention is to send it out to all members, either electronically (if possible) or hard copy. If you become aware that you should have received a copy and haven't, please let me know!

Talking of which, with this Newsletter I'm also re-sending the Membership Form for 2015-16. Membership subscriptions became due on 1 July, and those on e-mail should have received an electronic copy soon after that date. Thanks to the twenty-six of you who have already renewed your membership. I look forward to hearing from the remaining fifty or so over the course of the summer!

Alison Jackson
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CONGRATULATIONS

... are in order for two of our members, Sue Chaplin and Chris Downes, who were married on Saturday 18 July. Chris's full surname is Farquhar Downes, and this is the name the happy couple have decided to use. They immediately went on to celebrate the event by dancing at the Whitland dance that evening to the fabulous music of Iain MacPhail, and they are spending the following week in Scotland (to include dancing – of course!). All our best wishes to you both, Sue and Chris.

BRANCH COMMITTEE

The new office bearers and committee members are:

Chairman: Conor Farmer
Secretary: Alison Jackson
Treasurer: Pat Rye
Committee: Carole Butters
Heather Davies
Sue Farquhar Downes
Alex Gray
Tony Harland
Alison Littlejohn
Ann Morgan
Fran Smith

You will no doubt have noticed the absence of two familiar names from the Committee: Alan and Irene Williams have stood down after many years of loyal service. Many thanks to both for all their hard work.

Equally, thanks and welcome to the new committee members, Carole Butters and Heather Davies, and to Alison Littlejohn, who we are glad to say has agreed to resume the reins after an absence of some years.

RSCDS Book 49

This year's new book of dances and its CD will be available from the RSCDS very soon. If anyone would like a copy please let me know by August 1st so that I can order while Alison is at Summer School to bring items home.

If you're interested in anything else in RSCDS Shop please feel free to add it to your request. To contact me with an order please use:

shop@rscds-southwales.org.uk

Fran Smith

What do members think about the Branch dance calendar?

"I don't know which of the different dances to go to – they're all the same format."

"There are too many RSCDS dances."

In an article in the Newsletter of February 2015 these remarks were quoted as having come from members of the Branch. Here to remind you is a list of the events the Branch regularly organises. (This list also appeared in that same Newsletter.)

- **A Welcome Dance** held in September. This was a new function that was introduced when we had the AGM in September 2013. People said that they enjoyed the dance and we should do it again. The dance is meant to get us dancing again after summer break, and the programme is relatively straightforward and designed for all comers.
- **Residential Weekend**, October. A weekend away for those who want to have a country break, with some teaching and social dancing included.
- **St Andrew's Night**, November. An event to celebrate our patron saint, and to have an evening with food and a short programme of dancing. It is also an opportunity to meet and chat with old friends who are no longer dancing, and a chance to bring other halves who are so patient with us when we go out dancing and leave them at home.
- **Walk-Through Dance**, January. A dance for the more experienced dancer which includes less familiar, more complex or slightly quirky dances. All dances are walked through.
- **Workshop with tea dance (or day school)**, February. We brought this forward to February in order to spread events. Designed first and foremost for beginners, to give them an opportunity to be taught by a teacher not normally associated with their class. However dancers of all ability levels can benefit.
- **Annual Ball**, March. A special occasion –and the one chance to dress up by putting on the best frock or the dress kilt and jacket. Dancing to a live band and a nice meal at the break. The only event in the calendar at

which there are neither recaps not walks-through.

(This is likely to become a biennial event, with a spring dance taking its place in alternate years. In 2016 the spring dance will be on 9 April.)

- **Newcomers' Dance**, April. Designed for those who have recently started dancing and don't yet have the confidence to attend regular social dances, but who with encouragement could become addicted like the rest of us!
- **Branch AGM**, June. To take care of the administration of the Branch. We don't dance at this event, normally held in the late afternoon, but there is usually a social dance later the same evening organised by the Swansea group.
- **South Wales Festival**, also held in June. This is an opportunity to dance outdoors in the afternoon (weather permitting), with a potential audience of members of the public who may become interested in dancing. We can enjoy the beautiful views, have a picnic and then dance indoors in the evening.

We believe that there are differences between the various dances in the calendar, but of course you as members may not share our view. So we would still like answers to the questions. "Are we giving you what you want?" "If not, what sort of dances would attract you?", "How many?" and "If there are currently too many which should we cut out?" Please send your thoughts, views and comments to me via the branch email address conor@rscds-southwales.org.uk or by letter. Or if you prefer, you're welcome to talk to me or one of the other committee members.

We look forward to hearing from you, if possible before our next committee meeting on 19 September 2015, when we shall be planning the programme for the coming year (and more).

Conor Farmer, Chairman

SOUTH WALES FESTIVAL OF SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING BRECON, 27 JUNE 2015

There follow two contrasting accounts of experiences at this year's Festival, contrasting in that one is by veteran organiser Irene Williams, the other by first-time attendees Diana and Nigel Morris. However they are in complete agreement about the great music, lively dancing and conviviality of the day. As this was Irene's last time of co-ordinating the event, I'm sure the Branch will wish to extend to her our heartfelt thanks for her hard work in organising a very long run of highly memorable Festivals. Many thanks, Irene.

IRENE'S REPORT

Driving towards Brecon in the early morning of Saturday 27th June there were dark clouds forming over Pen y Fan and just a hint of rain in the air. Was it going to be a repeat of 2014; was the afternoon dancing going to have to take place indoors at Bishops Meadow?

As we drew nearer there was a bit of blue sky in the distance so our hopes rose. It was only 10 o'clock; we had 4 hours before the dancing was due to start. I spoke to John Morgan, the manager of Bishops Meadow. He was sure it was not going to rain. He should know as he lives there and must be used to local weather conditions. He needed to know my decision about the afternoon as he would have to keep the staff working if we were going to use the hall (the place is not usually open in the afternoon). I looked out of my caravan and saw a bit more blue in the sky so took a chance and decided we would dance in the open at the Mountain Centre. Am I glad I did?



Lots of dancers started arriving quite early to enjoy a picnic lunch. By 2pm George Meikle was ready to play, the dancers were lined up and the sun shone. I was sad that Alex Gray was not able to be there to compère the dancing especially as he had arranged the afternoon and evening programmes; however Conor Farmer did a grand job in his place.

It was a lovely afternoon. A little cool wind blew at times which most appreciated but a

few others did not. Good selections of dances were demonstrated by the Cardiff Caledonian Society, Celtic Links, Bristol RSCDS and Radyr SCD throughout the afternoon. My thanks to all those dancers in the various groups who took the time to practise and perform. It was appreciated by everyone including the non-dancing public of whom there were many who stayed all afternoon.

After a food break the dancing continued in the evening at Bishops Meadow, George again providing the music on his accordion. This was the last South Wales Festival I would be involved in organising and I am so glad it went off without too many hitches. My thanks to everyone who helped and to Conor for the lovely flowers he presented to me on behalf of the Branch.

Irene Williams

..... AND THE FIRST-TIMERS' VIEW

For three of us from the Cardiff Tuesday Class, it was our first visit to the Festival. We approached the Brecon Mountain Centre with a heady mix of trepidation and anticipation. Multiple fears chased around our brains which were so hard-wired to remember the steps and dance tips for "Friendships" and "Craigleith" ready for the class demo, that there seemed no room for anything else (apart from those pesky fears!).

1. Would the weather hold? A small breeze was chasing light clouds around.
2. How would dancing on grass feel?
3. Would we know anyone there? (Apart from the rest of our demo team).
4. Would our brains, feet and hands all actually replicate a fair version of the demo dances? (taught so patiently by our wonderful teachers) - so that
5. Non-dancers who were watching from the café would enjoy the experience?

As we parked in the spacious car park, sun prevailed over cloud. Around a large field with the stunning backdrop of Pen y Fan, were many familiar faces from our own class, Swansea, Brecon, Builth and Bristol groups (strike fear no. 3.). They smiled invitingly for us to share their luscious home-grown strawberries, or to dance one of the afternoon's many social dances.

Fear number 2 evaporated as we quickly learned to shorten our steps to cope with the uneven surface. (Also to always dance as a lady, as the gentlemen had to dance uphill!). Interspersed between the social dances were demos from other groups. It was so lovely to see the variety of Scottish dress and beautiful dancing of these groups that a possible fear 6 didn't even gain a foothold (How could we ever look as polished as them?).

George Meikle's playing was incomparable – how could anyone fail to enjoy his great music in the open air, with the sun, smiling

dancers and amazing view? The lingering watchers from the café certainly did and – once we had performed our demo dances without mishap – they again showed their enthusiastic appreciation (fears 4 and 5 banished!)



Cardiff Tuesday Class dem set

A very sociable, fun afternoon was followed by a fast evening dance in the popular Bishops Meadow venue and we drove home tired and very happy.

When is next year's?

Diana & Nigel Morris

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE EVENTS

Sat 29 August, 7:00 – 11:00 pm: RSCDS Herefordshire Branch Summer Dance, Preston Wynne, Hereford. Details Margaret Campbell mcuzen1@talktalk.net 01432 264072

Sat 5 September, 7:30-10:30 pm: Cardiff Caledonian Society Dancers – first monthly dance of the season in Whitchurch Scout Hall, Cardiff. Details Conor Farmer conor@farmer199.fsnet.co.uk 07812 569744

Sat 19 September, 7:00 – 10:00 pm: RSCDS South Wales Branch New Season Welcome Dance, St Paul's Parish Centre, Swansea. Details info@rscds-southwales.org.uk

Sat 3 October: Cardiff Caledonian dance in Whitchurch (as for Sept – see above) and first Saturday Letterston dance, Pembs - details Pat Rye ryedp@hotmail.com 01646 698463

Sat 14 November: RSCDS Bristol Branch Day School & Evening Dance. Teacher Deb Lees, musicians Judith Muir and Ian Robertson. Details Lorna Coles 01275 854782, lorna.coles@btinternet.com