



BRANCH NEWS SEPTEMBER 2015

It looks as though it'll be a busy year ahead. Conor is currently finalising this season's Calendar of Events for the Branch and will be sending it out shortly. In Newsletters we generally include a brief résumé of dance events, both inside and outside our immediate area. If anyone knows of other events they wish to see listed in future, please let me know. And if you would like to write an article for inclusion in a future Newsletter, please get in touch with me or with any other committee member.

Alison Jackson jacksonaj@talktalk.net or 07811 082 510

Branch Membership 2015-16

Of our approximately seventy annual members who, along with seven life members, made up our Branch membership last year, I am delighted to say that over fifty have already signed up again for this year. I would love to hear from the remaining twenty or so, as well as any new members who might like to join us.

I shall be contacting those twenty dancers individually some time in the next few weeks to see if we can entice them to renew their membership. If any of you needs a fresh copy of the subscription form, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.

Alison Jackson

Branch Shop (see attached flyer)

As many of you will be aware, here in the South Wales Branch we have a shop. Many of the items are home-produced - books of dances devised by Alex Gray and John Rigby, CDs in which James Gray is involved, books produced in Newport and just across the border in Herefordshire. All of the above are clearly listed at www.rscds-southwales.org.uk/shop.html. There are also a number of books and CDs produced by the RSCDS in Edinburgh, and various accessories, including key-rings, fans, and car stickers with the Branch logo. These and other items can also be purchased at Branch functions and sometimes at local club events.

Fran Smith

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE EVENTS

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

Sun 20 Sept: Autumn Tea Dance, Tenbury Wells (Worcs), 2:00-5:30 pm. Details jane.mcin@googlemail.com or 01584 781005

Sat 3 Oct: Cardiff Caledonian Dance in Whitchurch - details Conor Farmer conor@farmer199.fsnet.co.uk 07812 569744 and Letterston Dance, Pembs - details Pat Rye ryedp@hotmail.com 01646 698463

Sun 4 Oct till Fri 9 Oct (or shorter): SCD Holiday at Sidmouth, Devon. Teacher Sue Tyler. Book direct with Sidholme Hotel, 01395 515104

Sat 10 Oct: Bristol RSCDS New Season Dance, St Monica Trust Oatley Hall, Cote Lane, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, 7:30 – 11:00. Phill Jones Band. Details Lorna Coles 01275 854782, lorna.coles@btinternet.com

Sat 17 Oct: Swansea Saturday Dance with Sandy Nixon & his Band, 7:15 pm. Details: Jim & Jan Proudfoot on jjmjan@ntlworld.com (though tickets may already be sold out)

Sat 7 Nov: Whitchurch and Letterston Dances as usual on first Sat of the month. See October.

Sat 14 Nov: 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

Pontardawe Summerfest 2015

Well, the sun shone, the crowds came, the dancers danced, and we even received cheers and applause when we performed the ceilidh dance “The Loch Ness Monster” in the procession! Life doesn’t get much better than that, does it?

We tend to take the view that Pontardawe isn’t Pontardawe if there aren’t glitches, often frustrating but usually amusing. This time, amazingly, things seemed to run pretty flawlessly, other than the almost inevitable delays (which, however, were generally fewer and less significant). Oh – and the fact that our promised MC for the afternoon performance on the indoor theatre stage never materialised, and with only a few minutes’ notice we had to do a DIY job!

On the other hand, on the outside stage we were delighted to discover that Keith Lascelles, a Welsh dancer with an eclectic command of dancing in general (including Scottish), had been delegated to announce our dances. He was able to use his own knowledge of SCD to supplement the remarks we had prepared for him. Incidentally, some of the team acknowledged that the information contained in the vignettes about the dances was new to them as well as to the audience. Good that we can still learn something fresh every day!



The Pontardawe Thirteen, Summerfest Aug 2015

Thank you to the twelve dancers who took part with such aplomb and good humour. We danced quite a varied range of twelve dances. I think everyone put in a very creditable performance, dancing nicely and managing to look as though they were enjoying dancing together – well done. Thanks, too, to Jim for his musicianship – it was so good to have live music again this year. And thanks to those who helped us with practices, even though they couldn’t be there for the Festival itself. You were very long-suffering!

It was lovely to have such a spread of dancers from all over the area between Swansea, Cardiff and Brecon. Sadly, the respective timings of the Festival and of RSCDS Summer School in recent years have meant that there is a clash for some dancers, especially those from West Wales. And unfortunately, this is likely to be the case again next year.

However we were lucky enough to be joined by two new faces this year. One dancer who has in the past resisted taking part wrote the following day: *I had a fantastic time yesterday. I am so glad I decided to give in and come along, and [...] it all went without a hitch!* (Mind you, she enjoyed the Festival so much that she now fancies having a go at Flamenco – hope we don’t lose her!) The other first-timer commented *“I felt very much supported and I really enjoyed it”*.

Tony did his usual stalwart job in the overall organisation of the event. He tells us that Summerfest 2016 is likely to take place on the weekend of Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th August. For those of you not at Summer School in Week Four, please put the date in your diaries and come and join us. The more dancers we have the more of a show we can put on – and the less exhausting it is for any one of us.

Alison Jackson

View from Bucharest

The following letter appeared in the Sept-Dec 2015 edition of The Reel (the RSCDS London Branch quarterly magazine). I thought that South Wales and Bristol Branch members might be interested, as the South Wales Branch were among those who initially sponsored Alina Petrișan, enabling her to attend her first Summer School in 2011, whilst Bristol successfully applied for a Summer School scholarship for her in 2013. The rest, as they say, is history, brought up to date by this letter from one of Alina's pupils, who – along with Alina herself and two other dancers from her class – attended Spring Fling in London in April 2015. AJ

Why I am so Happy when Scottish Country Dancing

When it comes to happiness there is no universal recipe that one can prescribe another in order to achieve it, but you might be surprised to find out that happiness is studied in some of the most prestigious universities around the world. Take Harvard, for example, where the Positive Psychology class, the science behind happiness, has been the most popular class in the history of the university, with more than 1,400 enrolled students in the spring of 2006.

And while you might be surprised that there is a science behind happiness, the fact that people want to know more about it is not that surprising. We not only have the right to pursue happiness, but it is, in fact, our main goal in life. And while our recipes may not include the same ingredients, I feel sure we have at least one that we do indeed share. And yes, I am talking about Scottish country dancing!

There are said to be five dimensions that you should consider when it comes to happiness: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement. SCD just ticks them all! For me, it's all about the joy that comes with the dance, about the fact that my mind stops wandering around and I live in the moment, about connecting with my partner and other couples on the dance floor, about the feeling that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life and about getting through a whole dance with a huge smile upon my face.

I discovered SCD in March 2014. A friend of mine invited me to a 'Scottish evening', and what I thought to be Scotch whisky and kilts turned out to be 'love at first dance'. It was a good old fashioned Virginia Reel, and while I enjoyed the dance, what really got a hold of me was the energy of the group. This wasn't a regular dance class, but a place where people could put their mind aside for a bit and just enjoy being in one another's company, where not competition but co-operation came first; where

we were not only dance partners, but part of a community. It was in Alina Petrișan's dance studio. It was she who brought SCD to Romania and afterwards convinced me and others to come to London for the fun event that was the Spring Fling 2015 experience.



Alina, Ana-Maria, Andrew, Oana and Alexandra at Spring Fling, London, April 2015

In our Bucharest class there were about eight of us last year, this year the number has doubled, and we are actually hoping that next year it will double again. Because the more of us, the merrier! It is here that it is the place where for a couple of hours we are as one with the music and nothing else seems to be more important than living the moment.

And be honest with yourself, isn't this what life is really about? Isn't happiness all about living the moment, being grateful, laughing, loving and connecting with the ones next to you? Be sure to be happy next time you go Scottish country dancing!

Oana Brătilă