



BRANCH NEWS APRIL 2018

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NEWCOMERS' DANCES IN ST FAGANS AND WHITLAND

St Fagans

At 7:15 pm, when the dance was due to start, the company amounted to a single set, plus Trish as the re-capper and me as the operator of the music system. Not only that, but the group was made up entirely of dancers of many years' experience, including five teachers! Newcomers? Where?

Mercifully, just as we got under way we were joined by a varied group which was much more in keeping with our target participants. We eventually totalled seventeen. All Trish's considerable skills and adaptability were called upon as she revised and improvised the programme in the light of each fresh arrival and constantly changing numbers. In the end, everyone was catered for. I think we all had lots of fun – which, after all, is the point of it.

Trish gave clear instructions, well paced and easily audible (thanks to her nifty voice amplifier). She was patient and good humoured throughout, managing to keep coaching over the music despite having to dance at the same time. We all admired her ability to keep enough breath and enough brain-power to persevere in repeating the instructions while she figured out where she and her partner had to go.

Alison L's programme (which covered our dance in St Fagans and the parallel dance in Whitland) worked well, with enough challenges to keep us on our mettle without over-stressing us. I think we all discovered

some fresh dances that are set to become useful items in our repertoire.

St Fagans Village Hall (which we hadn't used before) proved to be a spacious and attractive venue with a fabulous kitchen – a number of us coveted it!. The supper table was a delightful selection of food (we again marvelled at how – by serendipity – it always seems to balance out with a wide variety of dishes). And the company – ranging in age from 8 to 91 – was delightful.

Thank you to Alison L for the programme and the overall co-ordinating of the two events, to Trish for her preparation and re-capping, to Ed for his support, to those stalwarts who stayed on at the end and helped clear up, to all who brought such delicious food, to those who brought raffle prizes and bought raffle tickets ... In fact, thank you to everyone for a lovely evening.

Alison Jackson

Whitland

Each time we organise the Newcomers' Dances we set out to provide an evening of dancing suitable for everyone. Dances are chosen to be easy to follow (with a walk-through of each dance). The programme also includes new dances for those of us who have danced for some time.

With this in mind we spread the word, encouraging attendance from dancers and interested non-dancers alike. This year in Whitland seven people who had never tried

Scottish Country Dancing joined the twenty West Wales dancers who supported the event. We were able to ensure that all of us enjoyed the evening. The main reason for the success was that all the dancers joined with the new dancers to help them through.

My thanks go to all the dancers who attended Whitland, and especially to Conor and Jean for their support in organising the evening.

Alison Littlejohn



**THE “BIG THANK YOU” EVENT IN HONOUR OF KATE AND ALEX GRAY
Morganstown, 24 March 2018**

Thank you to Kate and Alex, as well as James and the rest of their family, but a big thank you also to all of you who worked so hard to make the event the success that it was.



Photos: Alison Jackson



Cardiff Tuesday Class dance “The Radyr Dancers”
Photo: Fiona Grant



The Gray Family (most of them – Alasdair’s family not present)
Photo: Jo Lyon



Alasdair in action in the Fling
Photo: Alison Jackson

(Sorry it’s a bit blurred – Alasdair was moving too fast for my camera!)

Kate and Alex would like to let everyone know that they enjoyed themselves immensely, and will be writing a “thank you” message for the next Newsletter.



COMING EVENTS

Please come along to our **annual Ball**, which this year is returning to the **Paget Rooms in Penarth, with Marian Anderson and her band**. The date is **Saturday 28 April, 7:30 – 11:00 pm**. Tickets still available from teachers (£19 members, £22 non-members).

And don’t forget the South Wales Festival of Dance which is being held on **Saturday 23 June in Brecon** (if the weather is fine) and **Sennybridge** (in the case of bad weather, and in any event for the evening dance).

If you haven’t received fliers or if you need any further info, please contact:

Alison 07811 082510 jacksonaj@talktalk.net
or Conor 07812 569744
conorfarmer52@gmail.com

Dancing in the USA and Canada

Ed and Trish Reid have been members of our Branch for a couple of years, having moved south from Rhyl. Sadly, they are moving north again (this time to Wrexham), but have promised to remain S Wales Branch members. Both have been on our Branch Committee, and Trish is also on the Society Education and Training Committee. Ed, who is originally from North America, has written an article about their trip across the Atlantic in late 2017.

Back in November Trish and I had the opportunity to visit the USA and Canada for a holiday, which was mainly to visit family and friends, though I also ran the Richmond (Virginia) Marathon while I was there, finishing in my slowest ever time of 4:31. However, running the marathon fortunately did not seem to affect my dancing subsequently!

In spite of some differences between the groups and classes there were a few things that almost all of the groups had in common. The first was that, while they taught dances, there was also in most locations a significant emphasis on technique and formations, similar to the Tuesday evening class in Cardiff. In addition most classes were mixed ability, with a varying balance of experienced and newer dancers. Of the groups I went to almost all had (or have had in the recent past) RSCDS qualified teachers, which meant that the standard of teaching was high. Finally, almost none of the groups had a tea or other break during the class itself, though there are often short breaks for the dancers to get a drink of water.

The first group that we visited this time was the Richmond, Virginia group, which meets on Tuesday evenings. As my dad is from Richmond I have visited this group many times in the past and even though it was never one of my 'regular' groups when I lived in North America I think I'm currently considered an honorary member from having been regularly the last 10 years or so. Currently the group has around two sets plus (it has sometimes been bigger in the past, like most groups)

and it's in a bit of a transition as the long-time teacher has moved away and the one who replaced her has now also left. However, the two teachers who are currently leading the class (Moirra and Vern, the latter travelling around 50 miles each way to do this) seem to be doing quite well. The Richmond group has relatively few experienced dancers and every time I visit there are quite a few new faces, but many of these don't seem to be there on the following visit. As is almost always the case, visiting the Richmond group was a very enjoyable experience on this trip.

The next evening we were in Cincinnati, Ohio and the main reason for visiting the city was to visit the dance group (Cincinnati Branch RSCDS) which I used to attend regularly (around once a month or so, coming from Columbus – 100 miles away) but which I hadn't been to for over 20 years, but remembered fondly due to the high standard of teaching and the welcoming dancers. The location has changed and there were fewer dancers than used to attend, but there were a few familiar faces as well, notably the current teacher Tracey Applebee. Tracey was one of several friends of mine who did their preliminary certificate at the same time in 1995-6 (some years before I decided to do the same) and though the numbers were relatively small at the class the evening we attended it was very good and very enjoyable.

After Cincinnati we went to Columbus for the Heather and Thistle class on Thursday, which was a class I attended

weekly when I lived there and is the main SCD group in Columbus. This was taught by Laura Russell, another of the group mentioned earlier who did their RSCDS teaching around the same time. As was the case in Cincinnati there are fewer dancers than when I lived there but for this class many of the newer dancers seemed to have continued to dance as there is lower turnover as compared to Richmond. The class was again very enjoyable and the group normally has tea and snacks after the class in the same hall which is a nice touch.

The next day, after passing through the Akron area we arrived at the dance class in Cleveland Heights (a near suburb of Cleveland) which is in still in the same location as when I danced there regularly in 1990-91, returning regularly for visits when I lived in Columbus. This is currently taught by Diane Klann and has a number of experienced and newer dancers. There was a good turnout for our visit and there was more of a dance programme than the other classes (as this was partly for our benefit), but there was still detailed teaching. Afterwards most of those present went out to a nearby pub like we did in my day (over 20 years ago) and it was nice to get together with everyone in an informal atmosphere once again.

As the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) class we had hoped to go to was cancelled due to most of the dancers going to an Alisdair Fraser concert our next classes were in Kingston, Ontario (Canada) where we were visiting with friends. Our first class there was the Portsmouth Village group on Monday evening which had a large group of mainly experienced dancers – this is described as a ‘social dance’ group, but teacher Kay Munn* still includes a significant amount of technique in this class, often using her sense of humour to highlight teaching points. Our final class was the RSCDS Kingston Wednesday

class in a much larger hall and the only one not categorised or de facto functioning as a mixed ability class – this one was intended for experienced dancers and the web site description is ‘the emphasis will be on learning dances’. The teacher at this class was Ruth Taylor*, and this was broadly similar to the other classes in that dances were taught with some technique included as well. As with all of the classes that I visited we enjoyed both classes in Kingston.

Dancing in North America is a very enjoyable experience and almost all of the groups are very welcoming and would be pleased to see visiting dancers. If you’re planning to visit the USA or Canada and there’s a group anywhere nearby I would recommend trying to attend – you probably won’t be disappointed.

Ed Reid

** Ed mentions Kay Munn and Ruth Taylor. Ruth Taylor wrote the strathspey “The Flower of Glasgow”, published by the RSCDS in Book 46. I myself met Kay Munn in a Teachers’ Class in St Andrews in 2013. As fellow-Glaswegians we had lots to talk about, and she told me that Ruth dedicated the dance to her, so she is the original “Flower”. Alison Jackson*



REMINDER

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

www.rscds-southwales.org.uk

Detailed information about each Branch event is also 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 APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2018

Sat 14 April: Cardiff Cal Soc regular first Sat of the month dance, (but this month held on 2nd Sat!) Whitchurch Scout Hall, Cardiff. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

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

Sat 21 April: Spring Dance, Westbury Scottish Club (Bristol), St Peter's Church Hall, Bristol BS9 4LD. Music by Frank Thomson. Tickets £12 from Maggie Kirkup, 01934 838175 ticketsecretary@wscbristol.co.uk

Sat 28 April: Annual Ball, Paget Rooms, Penarth CF64 3EG, 7:15 for 7:30 – 11:00 pm. Marian Anderson Band. By ticket only (£19 members, £22 non-members). Contact: Jean Elliott 01994 419505 jean.ell1@btinternet.com

Sat 5 May: 50th Anniversary May Ball, RSCDS Herefordshire. Town Hall, Hereford, 7:30-11:30. Music Sandy Nixon. £25 (early discount £22). Details Margaret Campbell, 01432 264072 mcuzen1@talktalk.net

Sat 5 May: Regular first Sat of the month dance in Letterston, Pembs. Details Pat Rye 01646 698463 ryedp@hotmail.com

Mon 7 May: Cardiff Cal Soc Bank Holiday dance, Whitchurch Scout Hall, Cardiff, 7:30 – 10:00 pm. Details Conor Farmer 7812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Sat 12 May: Gloucester Scottish Society Summer Dance, Ribston Hall High School,

Gloucester GL1 5LE, 7:00 – 11:00 pm. Pam Latham 01452 306857 pj259@talktalk.net

Sat 19 May: St Andrew's Club third Sat of the month dance at Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 7:15 pm - but not the regular one! **Music by Sandy Nixon's Band – tickets only.** Details Jim & Jan Proudfoot 01792 299443 jimnjan@ntlworld.com

Sat 2 June: Summer Dance, Morganstown Village Hall, Cardiff CF15 8LE. 7:30 – 11:00. Music by Ian Muir of Prestwick with Bob Parson on drums. Tickets £10. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

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

Sat 16 June: Branch AGM, Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 4:30 pm, followed by regular Swansea dance

Sat 23 June: South Wales Festival. Open-air social dancing and demonstrations in Brecon in the afternoon (weather permitting), evening dance in Sennybridge Community Hall. Details Conor Farmer 07812 569744 conorfarmer52@googlemail.com

Sat 19 Aug: Pontardawe Festival – dancing, stalls, procession etc. SCD dem – anyone interested in taking part please contact Alison Jackson 07811 082510 or jacksonaj@talktalk.net

Sat 29 Sept: New Season Dance, Scout & Guide HQ, Swansea, 7:00 – 10:30 pm. Entrance on door £2.50. Details: Tony Harland 01639 633611 anthony.harland@anthonyh102.plus

