# RSCDS WELLINGTON REGION NEWSLETTER



Volume 22 No. 3 September 2019



#### **President's Column**

From Melva Waite, President

Here we are, nearing the end of our dancing year, as clubs are gearing up for their AGMs and final nights.

There has been a great atmosphere and attendance to all clubs' Saturday dances, and we will still have the Carterton dance with musicians

Marion and Max in November. More and more theme nights are being held. These certainly create a lot of fun and let our members feel the friendship by inviting other clubs.

The Region members eagerly look forward to our New Dancers' Celebration. This year it is organised by the Tawa Club, and will be held in the Te Rauparaha Arena, Porirua on 12 October. On two Tuesdays before the big dance, 1 and 8 October, in the St David's Multicultural Church Hall in Petone, we will be reviewing many of the dances on the programme. Everyone is welcome.

The JAMs (Junior members) had a very enjoyable and successful time at their camp in Auckland. I was thrilled to present three of them with their medals at the Lower Hutt dance, and they are very keen to keep dancing and aiming for higher levels.

Sadly we learned of the passing of Gabrielle McLauchlin. Gabrielle did most of her dancing at the Upper Hutt Club until a few years ago.

I am a great believer in the Region classes which are held through the year. The confidence that the dancers get from these classes shows each week at club, especially for those in the early years of their dancing journey. The full-day class for Upper Intermediate with tutor Graeme Plank from Christchurch had nearly three sets and Graeme gave them a challenging but very enjoyable day. The Advanced Class with Debbie Roxburgh from Whanganui will be on Saturday 21 September. Registrations for this are very good and I know you will all have a fun time. Most classes had a variety of musicians, all from our Region. This is certainly a win/win for everyone and we thank Lynne Scott who got them all rostered for so many weeks.

In July, a very successful Reels afternoon was hosted by Maureen Robson. There were 40-plus dancers who got valuable coaching on the many ways of dancing reels. Thank you Maureen.

Looking ahead, there is the very important Annual General Meeting on 12 November. Your attendance is warmly welcome for the future of the Region with ideas and support from everyone for all to benefit. We are looking for a new President for one year at least, as my three years are up. We also need new committee members as we have three vacancies. There is no limit to the number of committee members and your input is what keeps the Region going. There are only four meetings a year on a Tuesday night, plus the Annual General Meeting.

Hogmanay is also ahead of us, and for this event to happen we are still looking for an organiser or group to come forward – needed very soon, as bookings for the hall etc. have to be made ASAP. It would be sad if this event didn't eventuate!

This is my last column as President. The three years have been very rewarding and just saying thank you to the

committee members over that time does not seem adequate. I do sincerely thank each of you for the great support to the Region. Meantime, enjoy the dancing time left for the year and I look forward to seeing you on the dance floor.

#### Dancing is always 'in season'

from the Spurtle-wielder

What a wealth of knowledge of our world's 'nature' we have gained from many spectacular documentaries, such as how virtually overnight, when seasonal rains arrive, deserts suddenly come to life, filled with colour, as flowers burst into bloom and little creatures emerge. In some zones, years were traditionally seen as having only two parts, winter when it was cold and dark, and summer when it was not! When the Romans conquered Britain, they perceived two transitional periods between these two seasons — one at the end of winter and the other at the end of summer, so they introduced the idea of Spring and Autumn (Latin ver and autumnus).

The name *autumn* continued, but various others were tried instead of *ver*; for some time *lententide* was commonly used, probably coming from the 'lengthening' of the days, but then that term became associated with liturgy. Eventually, as the concept of it being a time when new life was seen to be 'springing forth', *spring* was gradually adopted. *Primetide*, seeing it as a 'first' season was another possibility – in the Renaissance, youth was seen as the prime time of life, but nowadays that 'prime' tends to reflect rather more maturity.

Before the Industrial Revolution, the seasons matching the sequence of agricultural activity determined the pattern of life – the necessity of 'all hands on deck' once the planting season began, through to harvesting. Children could no longer be spared time to attend school, and the student, who had gone off to university, having used up the sack of oatmeal taken to nourish the body, returned home. Whilst mechanical inventions dramatically changed styles of work and therefore, living habits, the progress of artificial lighting was an enormous contributor to that change. The use of gas to fuel lighting took quite a long time to become practical – the name of Scotsman William Murdoch should be better known in that regard, but unfortunately he did not patent his findings. Then electricity took over. So the hours of work were no longer governed by daylight with its differing seasonal lengths.

Before the advent of artificial light, our ancestors simply slept longer during winter nights. But as people started going regularly to work in the dark and coming home after dark, the medical fraternity noticed that a problem of 'winter blues' appeared – S.A.D. seasonal affective disorder

– a winter depression! It was seen as being particularly prevalent in Germany, so their doctors investigated and found it seemed that the interaction of various chemicals, which previously sorted themselves out harmoniously, were upset by the loss of sleep patterns according to the daylight. The Greek philosopher Hippocrates had remarked on it, but modern conditions made it vastly more noticeable.

Now the pattern of our dancing season is really more a reaction to seasonal temperatures rather than daylight. Obviously, an activity which stimulates warmth when the weather is cold is excellent, so certainly it is appropriate for winter. Also our enthusiasm must be dealing with chemicals which try to impinge on our quality of life, counteracting any suggestion of winter blues!

Of course the advent of spring naturally gives a fresh impetus to our energy as winter activities may be tailing off.

Spring emotions inspire poets, then in turn the musicians, then the dance devisers. Many dance titles have ladies' names which may arise from declarations of affection, but a good number were devised by dancing masters for their pupils. Any excuse is a good excuse. Records of many events show that Scots always took every opportunity to dance whenever and wherever possible. When unceasing agricultural toil defined the work calendar, every festival – often saints' days – were a relief enjoyed to the full. Then, when work restrictions were enforced by factory hours etc., occasions to dance were contrived, more or less as we do with club nights and the more formal dances with larger gatherings.

Some of the old tradition of dancing being a pleasant way to meet persons of the opposite sex still holds, though today's starting a dance with a bow and curtsey is a bit tame compared with the old practice of beginning with "two beks (bows) and a kiss". Apparently, visitors to the country in the 16th century commented on the amount of kissing that went on! After all, it is said that Scots are friendly folk!

### Standing in the shoes of new dancers at Johnsonville

From Kristin Downey

We were all new dancers once, but it's easy to forget what it was like actually being a new dancer. The further on we progress in our dancing, and the longer we are part of the dancing community, the more difficult it is to imagine ourselves in the shoes of a new dancer.

It's hard to remember that as a beginning dancer, all you see is club night, and you have no idea what else is out there waiting for you. You don't know about tartan nights or annual dances, or region classes. You may not realise there is more dancing to be had at other clubs nearby, let

alone farther afield in the region or throughout NZ and the world.

To try to extend our new dancers' awareness, we first focused on promoting the opportunities that exist at region level. Consequently quite a few of Johnsonville's newer dancers attended the region's Basics and Beyond Basics classes, as well as Maureen Robson's Reels class. They not only gained skills and knowledge, they became familiar with other tutors, and met dancers from other clubs.

Next we included items in our newsletter sharing members' experiences dancing at different clubs, at weekend schools, at Summer School and at Saturday night dances. Building on that, we then focused on encouraging our newer dancers to attend our annual dance. In 2018, only two of our new dancers came along, despite our best efforts at supporting them from beginners' classes onwards. It was clear we needed to see what we could do to turn that around. We decided to try a few different ways of promoting the event, while also informing and encouraging our new dancers.

We announced at club that this was the premier event of the club year, and emphasised that it was for all members of the club – not just experienced dancers. We followed this up with a series of e-news mail-outs focusing solely on the annual dance. It contained a combination of practical information (like what to wear, where to park, etiquette), encouragement from our tutor Rod, and a clear message of the fun to be had on the night. Committee members personally approached new dancers at club to encourage them to attend, and we talked at club about experienced dancers buddying up with newer dancers to make sure they had partners. Finally, to relieve any concern about "not knowing the dances", Rod and Jeanette, as joint MCs, decided to walk all dances.



Elena and Tomoko dance "Barbara's Strathspey" at Johnsonville's Annual Dance (photo by Loralee Hyde)

In the end, a lot of different things contributed to a really good turnout of Johnsonville's newer dancers. On the night, fourteen of our dancers with less than two years' dancing experience took to the floor and were part of a really happy

fun night. For the majority of them, it was their first time at a Saturday night dance, and they had a ball. Thanks to all those experienced dancers from Johnsonville and also other clubs who supported our new dancers on the night.

See lots more photos at <a href="http://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/2019/06/26/annual-dance-2019/">http://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/2019/06/26/annual-dance-2019/</a>

And please join us for our final live music night of the year – our Tartan and Final Night on Monday November 25<sup>th</sup>. Programme can be found elsewhere in this newsletter or at <a href="http://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/event/tartan-final-night-2019/">http://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/event/tartan-final-night-2019/</a>

#### **Tawa Castle Theme Night**

From Désirée Patterson

On 18 July, the Tawa Club had another theme night. Tutor Maureen Robson devised a programme in which all the dances were named for castles in Scotland – with one exception, *Sophie's Sand Castle*, a lovely new dance by Romaine Butterfield – perhaps not a Scottish castle, but a castle none the less.

Members and guests from the Ngaio and Linden Clubs had been asked to dress in "castle attire", and what a lot of interesting costumes turned up! Maureen swept in wearing a beautiful Renaissance gown and our creative genius John Gregory built us a wonderful castle backdrop. Lots of people arrived in brilliant costumes — we saw some ladies in fancy gowns and headdresses, a couple of cooks, some ladies' maids, a laird, a ghost, a mouse (every castle has mice!), a jester, a castle tour guide, a game keeper, a soldier, and several people dressed for a sunny day at the beach to build sand castles. The ghost kept some people guessing all evening who that might be!

As people arrived, they were handed slips of paper with a single word on them – of people inhabiting a castle. For the first dance, it became clear what these were for: Maureen asked people to make up sets, with the "correct hierarchy": Lords and Ladies were at the top of the set, followed by Knights and Maidens (in 2nd place), Butlers and Cooks (in 3rd), and finally Footmen and Ladies' maids.

To dance *Roxburgh Castle* – which starts with a square tower (*chase around a square*), followed by two round towers (*RH across and LH back*), down the road to the castle (*lead down the middle and back*) and over the drawbridge (*Poussette*) – Maureen stipulated that it was to be danced without hands! Tricky, but everyone managed.

In a couple of dances, two "Excuse me" people – armed with a beach spade each, for one dance, and a bucket for another – were instructed to go and pick a dancer, hand them the spade or bucket, and take their place in the

dance. The recipient would then have to go and find another dancer to "excuse me" to. It caused some hilarious confusion when people were suddenly faced with different people as partners or supporting couples.

The 40 people who came to the castle, including our guests from the Ngaio and Linden clubs, had a wonderful night. A big thank you to Maureen, for creating such a hugely entertaining and fun evening, to John G for his magnificent castle backdrop, to John P for being court photographer, and to everyone for being such good sports in getting into costume.



The assembled company in front of 'Castle Gregory'

#### Australian Winter School, July 2019

From Michele Miller

Four Wellington dancers enjoyed the Australian Winter School held in Melbourne during July 2019: Juping Zhou, Dora Koleff, Michele Miller and Lee Miller. More than 200 dancers came together from all over Australia and beyond with more than 30 from NZ managing to make it across the Tasman.

The school was organised by Melbourne and Districts Branch. We stayed at University College, near central Melbourne and a stroll away from the cafés of Lygon Street. The accommodation was comfortable (ensuite rooms for all!) with excellent catering facilities, although it did take nearly the whole week for us to sort out the network of buildings and corridors.

#### Highlights of the week:

- A 'Soirée Musicale' featuring Matthew Robertson, Ian T Muir (who will be here in NZ at this year's Cambridge Summer School), Judy Nicolson, Sharlene Penman (from NZ), and other friends!
- The formal dinner with four courses and more live music
- Meeting old friends (especially for Lee, from his days in Melbourne) and making new ones
- The Formal Ball to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Melbourne Branch in Collingwood Town Hall, one of Melbourne's grand old town halls.

An unusual extra at the school was the emergency evacuations. University College has an efficient fire alarm system, which activates if anyone even boils a jug of water in their bedroom! We arrived on the Sunday to the sound of an alarm and the sight of Scottish Country Dancers



Lee, Michele, Dora and Juping enjoy the formal dinner

evacuating. And we were awakened at  $6.15~\mathrm{am}$  on our last morning with another alarm.

Oh – and in between all this was some dancing, with classes every morning and a social dance most evenings. An excellent week away.

## Why attend region classes? Three new dancers share their thoughts

From Kristin Downey

This year the Wellington region offered classes at many levels, including a Basics class for newer dancers. And in July, Maureen Robson taught an afternoon Reels class. Amongst the many Johnsonville dancers who attended classes, some have shared their thoughts. Here is what Andrea Boult, Andrea Buxton and Elizabeth Judge had to say about their class experiences:

#### **BASICS CLASS - Andrea Boult writes:**

Between May and July the Wellington Region ran a Basics Class for beginners, consisting of six fortnightly sessions. Melva Waite was our ever so patient and enthusiastic teacher. Catherine McCutcheon, and Robert and Brenda Vale very kindly helped on the nights too.

Each night we focused on three or four formations/steps which we repeated over and over. For a newbie like me, this reinforced what I had been learning at my Johnsonville club.

Melva encouraged us to be constantly thinking ahead as to what position we were in and what was the next move in each dance. This was the hardest part as we could not rely on our more experienced partners like we do on our club nights.

In between the concentrating and the laughs, we all had a wonderful time learning, and appreciated all the efforts that Melva had put into these classes. She surprised us at the last class with live music! What a treat to finish on.

As at all Scottish Country Dancing gatherings, we made some new friends and are looking forward to seeing them in the future on the dance floor.

#### And Elizabeth Judge writes:

At our first lesson, Melva gave us an overview of Scottish Country Dancing in New Zealand. Throughout the lessons Melva, who is passionate about SCD, imparted to us the importance of etiquette, precision and enthusiasm when dancing.

When teaching us a dance with new formations, we would go over and over it until absolutely everyone had mastered it without a mistake, something we appreciate can only happen in a smaller group with people all at the same level. My time at the Basics Class has helped me understand the steps and formations better when I come to do them at our club nights. Our last week saw a couple of people come along to play live music and Melva treated us to a little gift for trying so hard.

Besides the dancing, I really enjoyed connecting with other dancers from around Wellington. We met up again at the Reels class held recently in Tawa and no doubt will see each other at the New Dancers' Celebration later in the year. Also these classes have shown me that there is a great network of Scottish Country dancers in Wellington.

I would thoroughly recommend attending these classes if you are just starting out on the journey of Scottish Country Dancing.

#### **REELS CLASS - Andrea Buxton writes:**

There was a Reels class held recently in Tawa. I went along as there was no question I needed help!

Once there, I sat in the carpark wondering how on earth we could be spending two and a half hours doing the same thing and wouldn't that be a long afternoon ... I couldn't

believe the time went so fast and we had so much fun doing reels, reels and more reels.

Hats off to the tutor for her patience! Met some lovely people all the way from Waikanae. Had an absolute blast!

These three dancers were also part of a fourteen-strong contingent of first- and second-year dancers at this year's Johnsonville-Capital City joint annual dance in August. With skills, knowledge and the help of friends old and new, how could they not have a wonderful dancing experience?

Keep your eyes open next year and you could be enjoying classes on offer round the region, having fun, learning more, and making new friends.

Originally published at http://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/2019/09/15/region-classes-2019/

#### **Upper Intermediate Day School**

From Debbie Stephens

We were very lucky to have a visiting teacher, Graeme Plank, fly up from Christchurch to teach us for the day at the Ngaio Town Hall. Our numbers were around 18 with a last-minute flurry of people turning up, which was great – lots of different partners to practise with.

I really enjoyed taking my dancing to the next level. It is always fun learning new formations and working on timing and flow, as this so enhances the experience.

We started the day with a warm-up dance, *The Fairy Ring*. After this we were treated to some challenges. Graeme had a theme going of 'half formations'. *Nickie Tams*, with its multiple half-reels on the sides and across the set, was very challenging, especially when you try the second time round and change from being a female to male position. But great fun when it all flows.



Participants in the Upper Intermediate Day School, with tutor Graeme Plank on the left

There were some tricky formations too, such as 'interlocking' and 'circulating' Allemandes in *The Golden Years* and *The Flower of Glasgow*. Graeme saved the best till last with the *The Ullapool Ferry*, where we learnt how to do the 'Hello-Goodbye Poussette', so much fun.

It was also great that Graeme took time to warm us up after each time we stopped for our morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. I wasn't at all sore from dancing all day. Home-made yummy baking was provided by Elaine and Melva for our morning and afternoon teas. And we were also so lucky to have live music from Iain Matcham and Jason Morris, which was awesome.

I would highly recommend attending the regional classes. It was a great day.

#### A Bright Night at Lower Hutt

From Lesley Campbell

The grey days of winter were upon us, so on 8 July, Lower Hutt club decided to have a colour theme evening to brighten up our lives a little.

The live music provided by *Saltire* brightened the whole evening immensely. Mary and Jason lifted our spirits and our feet off the floor with their marvellous playing. Many thanks to them for their dedication and commitment.

The hall was decorated with balloons and streamers of all colours. Our teacher Elizabeth Ferguson gave us a 'colourful' programme which included *The White Heather Jig, The Blue Loch* and *Violet*. Another of Elizabeth's artistic touches was the way the programme was presented. There was a series of pictures on the walls and we all had to guess the name of the dance from the pictures! Some of them were a bit of a challenge, but we all had great fun guessing. Thanks Elizabeth!



Andrea, Murrey and June

Many of the dancers also lit up the hall with their bright 'costumes'. There was a prize for the best costume and I think you will agree, looking at the photo, that Murrey with his sunny sunglasses and the rest of his colourful outfit deserved to win it! We didn't recognise him at first!

The evening finished with a lovely supper and a chance to chat. Thanks to everyone

who helped to decorate the hall and to everyone who came along to make the night such a great success.

#### **Ngaio Club Tartan Night**

From Désirée Patterson

On 29 August, Tawa Club members were invited to join the Ngaio Club for a Tartan Night. Twenty-four of us went along for a hugely enjoyable evening. I think we even outnumbered Ngaio's own members.

Melva wove the night's dances into a story of Tartans and Clans. Upon arrival everyone was given a label with the name of a Scottish clan – McLeod, McDonald, McMillan, McPherson, Elliott, and McNab – and before dancing Highland Fair, we had to do a gathering of the clans (i.e. sets in clan groups). Then we danced The Tartan Rainbow, where sets had to be made up of six people with different colour labels, to make up a rainbow. The person in each set wearing the most colourful tartan, i.e. the most colours, got a prize (mini choc bar). Shiftin' Bobbins told the story of the looms weaving the tartans, with the joined hands representing the threads in the weaving, but for each second time through, the threads were broken, and the dance was to be danced without hands! Tricky!

Then Melva asked if there was anyone of the Robertson Clan in the hall – nobody qualified. Anyone called Robert? Yes, Tawa member Robert stepped up. He was temporarily dubbed "Laird of the Robertson Clan", installed on the stage, draped with a tartan sash and given a big sword to seal his authority.

This gave the signal for the dance *The Roberston Rant* — of course, what else? Except, when it came to where dancers dance the Highland Schottische with their corners, followed by two two-handed turns, we were instructed that this had to be eight bars of Highland steps. Unbeknownst to us "rabble" on the floor, the Laird, from the ramparts of his castle (a.k.a. the stage), was to observe the dancers and decide which dancers performed the best Highland steps. Then the Laird descended among the populace and "knighted" the best Highland dancers with his sword. These lucky dancers were then required to perform their best steps again, to the skirl of the bagpipes this time, in order to win the prize.

Clan McDonald apparently has the role of closing a Highland Fair, so the last dance was *Macdonald of the Isles*, which was followed by *The Clan Farewell*, a two-couple round-the-room "roaming" dance, where people switch partners and couples (in my case genders too!) to farewell everyone. After all this fun, there was a great supper and an opportunity to catch up with our Ngaio friends and chat.

Thank you to Melva and the Ngaio Club for a wonderful fun evening.

#### **Levin SCD Club**

From Jaki Williams

We have had a reasonable year of dancing despite not having a tutor. Our committee and club members have stepped up and briefed the dances each Monday and although we are not as proficient as a qualified teacher, we have managed pretty well.

To take some of the pressure off and introduce different dances and teaching techniques, we have enjoyed a guest tutor each month. Thank you to Maureen Robson, Melva Waite, Romaine Butterfield, Wullie Grant and Nicole Trewayas.

We travelled to Manawatu club one Monday evening, where we all had a great evening – and what an amazing supper they served up! And in September, the Manawatu club came down to our club for an evening of dance with a difference.

So our first year has had its challenges, but all in all we have had a pretty good year of fun and dancing.

#### Wellington Region New Dancers' Celebration Te Rauparaha Arena, Porirua

12 October 2019 7.30pm

Music by Aileen Logie, Don McKay, Hilary Ferral and Terry Bradshaw

RSCDS members \$12, Non RSCDS members \$15 with a small disposable plate of finger food New dancers \$8, Juniors and Non-dancers \$6

#### Programme

J New Year Jig	Book 51	
H Mary Erskine	Graded 2	
S The Shores of Solway	10 Social - Goldring	
J Lady Catherine Bruce's Reel	Graded 1	
R The Highland Reel	Book 13	
S Gramachie	MMM1	
J The Laird of Milton's Daughter	Book 22	
R The Old Man of Storr	Children's Book	
S Fair Donald	Book 29	
I Haste to the Wedding	Book 25	

Book 45



H Catch the Wind

New Dancers' Celebration
Preparation Classes

Two Tuesdays, 1 and 8 October, 7:30 pm

St David's Multicultural Church Hall Elizabeth Street, Petone

#### **New Dancers' Celebration**

Tawa Club looks forward to welcoming all dancers to the New Dancers' Celebration at

Te Rauparaha Arena, Porirua, at 7.30pm on 12 October.

This is an excellent venue, with a double-sprung floor and a large carpark, however there are some regulations to observe.

City Council regulations restrict the type of food which can be taken into the Arena. **No cooked meat is allowed**, which means no sausage rolls, pizzas, pies etc. Suggestions for supper contributions are sandwiches (store-bought ham is allowed), cakes, cheese and biscuits or fruit. As there are no kitchen facilities for washing up, please use disposable plates.

The floor of the arena is double sprung and, being a gym, **no outdoor shoes** are allowed in the arena. Non-marking shoes must be worn. Facilities for changing into dance shoes and hanging up outdoor coats will be available.

We hope to see you there.



## Closing date for the next issue 7 December 2019

#### Hogmanay

We urgently need someone or a group to organise this yearly event!

If you are interested, please contact Region Secretary, Ann Aspey wellington@dancescottish.org.nz

#### **VUW Scottish Interest Group**

meets on the 28th day of the month Feb-Oct, 7.15 for 7.30pm start (unless stated otherwise). VUW Law Faculty, Old Government Buildings, Lambton Quay

Visitors welcome; no charge, no university connections needed. <u>www.wellyscots.wordpress.com</u>

## Wellington Region Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 12 November, 7:30 pm

Note the different venue

Epuni Community Hall

Cnr Mitchell St and Oxford Tce

Lower Hutt

Please come along with your ideas
and show support for
Scottish Country Dancing
in the Wellington Region



Carterton Scottish Country Dance Club

#### The Scarecrow Caper

7.30 pm Saturday 2 November 2019 Carterton Events Centre, Holloway Street, Carterton



Cost: RSCDS Members \$16, Non-RSCDS \$18, Non-Dancer or Student \$5

J	New Year Jig	RSCDS 51
R	The Royal Deeside Railway	RSCDS 40
S	The Paisley Weavers	Graded 3
J	Yan Tan Tethera	Haines
R	Corn Rigs	RSCDS 4
S	Wisp of Thistle	RSCDS 37
J	It's Nae Bother	Graded 2
R	The Capering Scarecrows	EEL
S	City of Belfast	RSCDS 48
J	The Edinburgh Toyshop	RSCDS 51
R	Scott Meikle	RSCDS 46
	SUPPER	
J	Lamb Skinnet	RSCDS 14
R	Orpington Caledonians	RSCDS 49
S	The Shores of Solway	Goldring
J	Joie de Vivre	RSCDS 39
R	The Old Man of Storr	Childrens
S	Miss Eleanor	RSCDS 49
R	The Reel of the 51st Division	RSCDS 13





