RSCDS WELLINGTON REGION NEWSLETTER



Volume 23 No.2 June 2020



President's Column

From Ann Oliver, President

I finished my column in the March Harbour City Happenings with the comment "*it promises to be another busy year and I hope to see you all at a club or on the dance floor*". Perhaps that was

tempting fate, because as things have turned out with Covid-19 restrictions, there has been very little opportunity to dance over the last few months.

However, despite the restrictions, it has been fantastic to see clubs and the RSCDS headquarters actively working to keep the dancing community connected and interested in Scottish dance and music, with regular emails, newsletters, online dance classes, etc.

In May, I also emailed clubs to set a challenge for the dance devisers in the community. This was a competition to devise a dance which allows for "Social Distancing" to be demonstrated in the dance. We have received a few submissions and are hoping for a few more yet. Please send these to <u>secretary.rscdswell@gmail.com</u> by 1 August. The plan is then to try the dances out, vote on a winner and possibly publish a book to mark this unusual, and hopefully never to be repeated, year.

Now that restrictions have lifted, it is great to hear that clubs are recommencing club nights and committing to going ahead with annual dances.

In addition to club events, the region events planned for the rest of the year will now proceed. Unfortunately however, we will not be offering replacement classes for the series of Basics and Lower Intermediate classes, which would normally have been run through May to July.

This means that the first region event will be the Basic Teaching Skills training course for those interested in teaching. This will be run on 1 and 2 August. This course is not only for those who are thinking about becoming certified teachers, but also for those who would like to gain more confidence and experience to help out occasionally at club level. Your club's secretary should have received information about this course, so if you are interested, please ask them for the details. For applications and further information you can also email Jeanette at beauwat@xtra.co.nz.

On 15 August will be the first of our classes for Upper Intermediate and Advanced dancers, the second being on 12 September. The morning class each day will be for Upper Intermediate dancers and the afternoon for Advanced dancers. Enrolment forms and other information will be sent out to your club secretaries shortly.

This year, the region committee has also decided to undertake a strategic review, with the aim of reflecting on the current environment and clearly articulating the purpose and objectives of the region. This will help us to guide decisions with regard to future actions and activities. This is scheduled for mid-October, so in August we will be emailing clubs to ask some questions to feed into this process. Please do look out for this and take the opportunity to let us know your thoughts.

Meanwhile, I hope that everyone has managed to stay fit and well and all are keen to dance now that we are able. So again I say *"I hope to see you all at a club or on the dance floor soon"* and hopefully, this time that will be the case.

Region Classes

Upper Intermediate and Advanced

Saturdays 15 August and 12 September Redwood Hall (Tawa Union Church Hall), Redwood Ave, Tawa

On **both** days:

Upper Intermediate class: 9:30 am - 12:30 pm Advanced class: 1 - 4 pm

Basic Teaching Skills Course

Saturday 1 August, 9am - 5 pm Sunday 2 August, 9:30 am - 1 pm

Tutor: Jeanette Watson

This course targets dancers who are not certificated teachers, but are already teaching or are about to take on a group; dancers who may be interested in moving into teaching; and dancers who are interested in learning more about teaching, but do not necessarily wish to sit the RSCDS Teaching Certificate.

For further information contact your club secretary.

Defence mechanisms

from the Spurtle-wielder

Every man, woman and child has aspirations – attainments they dream to achieve. Developments in building techniques allowed spires on churches to be designed to demonstrate people's dream to reach heaven – their desire to stretch heavenwards to get as near to God as humanly possible. Early churches were usually made of wood; many burned down – the fate of many in New Zealand. Eventually stone was used, making substantial walls able to support vaulted roofs. A church was always a place of refuge. Protection and defence were the purpose of castles. We have many dances with the names of castles, many now ruins, but still impressive. Walls were often six feet wide (two metre distancing?) sometimes constructed as two walls with rubble filling the gap, thus giving the stability needed to enable the structure to rise to a height far above the surrounding dwellings. Where possible, positioned on higher round, they were good vantage points to look out for enemies and provide the ability to rain down missiles on attackers from their crenellated walls. Virtually impregnable to attack until the advent of cannonballs, their only vulnerable points were entrances – though ladders to scale the walls were another means of access, and firebrands were sometimes catapulted over the walls. While building materials were usually locally sourced, castles often took ten or more years to build; it took time to collect, transport and then prepare the materials.

From Corstorphine Hill in the west side of Edinburgh, there is a panoramic view over the city; its attractive skyline, including the Castle, has many church spires (though now intruded upon by some modern, much less graceful, buildings). Sadly in aerial photographs of cities, such as New York, one must look closely to pick out the church spires dwarfed by skyscrapers - material gain trying to suffocate the spiritual? A reminder of those who tried to go further than spires pointing upwards – they planned to build a tower to reach heaven and look what happened to Babel! Edinburgh was one of the earliest cities to have 'skyscrapers'; the original main street (Royal Mile) running down the spine of a hill had buildings on both sides, going three or four storeys above street level and their backs, on the downward slope of the hill, had three or four more. The narrow alleys between them were called closes or wynds. Across the street from St Giles' High Kirk is Mary King's Close – at one time seen as a 'red light' area. In 1645 a particularly bad bubonic plague hit the city and the gate to the Close was summarily locked, securely quarantining those inside: food was passed in to them but... A hundred years later the Royal Exchange was built on the truncated buildings and more recently the old closes were opened to the public – some of whom reported feeling the presence of ghosts!

Recent world events have made us very aware of the power of 'defence'. Some restrictions required us to change long-standing habits, e.g. not shaking hands and not performing the traditional hongi greeting. Etiquette is in fact a form of personal protection – perhaps reviving some of the old practices might be helpful? A bow can say a lot; a quick nod recognises another's presence – like "hello"; a slower bow of the head with a smile conveys a message – the delight or disinterest apparent in the eyes can emphasise the depth of feeling. A curtsey a dubious revival? It could be seen as having a slightly deferential element not appropriate in these days of equality of the sexes. Maybe using a curtsey could be a more effusive style of greeting – perhaps to replace a hug? Offering an arm for support instead of a hand means no flesh touches possibly contagious flesh? Clearly, we shall have to pay a lot more attention to these actions – taking out the automatic element could be a good thing – and give them more meaning.

Etiquette plays a vital part in our dancing. While we constantly aver that dancing has always been a marvellous way to enjoy closer social interaction in rather formal situations, observing more particularly the proprieties integrates the spacing. Some say that the crinoline was designed to define a circle of sanctity round a woman – it certainly meant others had to keep their distance (the name 'crinoline' is combined from *crin* – the heavy horsehair used for petticoats before flexible steel hoops were invented – and the linen covering). Tragically many women died when they caught alight from coming too near an open fire.

Rather than counting *down* to level one, it would have been encouraging to count *upwards* – aspiring to *rise* from four to one. It is a great feeling to achieve the highest level. We would now be celebrating being in first place, just as our first couple goes through all the experiences of the other numbers to get back to the 'top' ... on top of that hopefully squashed covid!

Ngaio Club – it's great to be dancing again

From Moira Scott

Ngaio Club has decided to extend our dancing year further into the summer months to make up for the reduced dancing as a result of Covid-19, which also resulted in our May Annual Dance being cancelled.

We were very happy to be back dancing on Thursday 11 June. Melva had selected some lovely simple dances to get us back into it. We started with a *Lockdown Jig*, celebrated with a *City of Bubbles*, were happy to tackle *Life is Sweet Again* with Sugar Candie, and finished with kicking up our heels to *Crowds Allowed* (Mairi's Wedding). There was much laughter as we attempted dancing with no hands – touching elbows just doesn't have the same stability as hands across. From now on, instead of the sidestep shuffle, we are looking forward to "step we gaily, on we go, heel for heel and toe for toe...".

We are also opening up our club to beginners, as we feel many people may want to get some exercise and meet new people after the lockdown. We are doing a letterbox drop in our area and we welcome anyone who, like us, would enjoy kicking up their heels and enjoy meeting a friendly group.

Ngaio SCD Club 50th Anniversary 2021

We will be celebrating our 50th anniversary next year and will be marking this milestone in style.

We would like to hear from anyone who has had a connection with the Ngaio Club over the years. Our intention is to invite as many past members as we can track down, but in case we don't find folk, it would great to be given a nudge in the direction of people who were once part of us.

Our annual dance next year will thus be very special and we will be planning something quite different and enjoyable. Anyone who remembers a time with the club is asked to please contact us.

Thank you Moira Scott Ngaio SCD Club Joint Secretary.

Competition to devise a dance

In March, when the lockdown began, Region President Ann Oliver set us a challenge to devise a dance which allows for "Social Distancing" measures to be demonstrated.

Send your entries to the Region secretary

secretary.rscdswell@gmail.com

by 1 August 2020

Never a dull moment at Johnsonville

From Kristin Downey

We'd only just started settling in to our new club home at Johnsonville Bowling Club, when it became obvious that we would need to suspend club nights because of the risks posed by Covid-19. We also had to cancel the club's planned April 6 Tartan Night, and postpone the club's annual mid-winter dinner dance.

We did however manage to squeeze in our St Patrick's day celebration night on March 16 before we shut up shop. It was a fun night of Irish-themed dances with a lot of green to be seen, not only on the four sets of dancers, but also on the supper table.

Rod started with a set of Irish reels for *A Trip to Ireland* and finished with *Irish Rover*. He searched out Irish style music to add a flavour of Ireland to well-known dances with an Irish theme such as *City of Belfast*, and we got a second chance to dance *The Coleraine Rant*, written by Rod for last year's St Patrick's day.

Elizabeth Ngan supplied a super supper with a green theme. Dancers were spoiled for choice with minted green pea dip and corn chips, Easter eggs and Lindt chocolates in green paper, green apple sherbet fizz, and Kiwiberry (for the health conscious amongst us). All in all, a cheery last club night before embarking on Alert Level 4.

Going into lockdown, the challenge was to keep club spirit alive, our new dancers connected, and our experienced dancers interested. The club newsletter became our point of contact, a means of dance instruction, and a way to keep us entertained.

The newsletter team worked hard to put together a weekly newsletter including teaching points from Rod, a focus on dances previously done at club by John Homes, a Scotland-themed item from Robert Vale, and tidbits for lockdown entertainment from Kristin. Club members also took up the challenge, writing about their connections to anything Scottish. Thanks to all our contributors, we managed to keep the newsletter running throughout lockdown.

Thanks also to Loralee Hyde who set up our very appealing Mailchimp newsletter template, and continued to maintain the <u>Johnsonville club website</u>. She posted all Rod's instructions on the website for future reference, as well as the stories and photos contributed by members. Two special stories featured Johnsonville's longest standing members Aline and John Homes, and Liz Rendell.



Johnsonville's longest standing members Liz Rendell, and Aline and John Homes cut the cake at Johnsonville's celebration of 60 years as a community dance group in 2015 (Photo: Loralee Hyde)

The website is increasingly becoming a great historical resource for the club. Read Johnsonville members' <u>stories of their Scottish connections</u>, <u>2020 articles</u>, or <u>history articles</u>.

Johnsonville returned to the dance floor on June 15, although there are still lots of adjustments to make to the club's operations and planned social events.

One thing remaining unchanged is the joint Johnsonville-Capital City annual dance, to be held on Saturday 22 August at Ngaio Town Hall.

With so many of us having missed so much dancing this year, Jeanette and Rod have put together a programme of well-known easy dances, to suit everyone. Please join us on the night. See the programme later in the newsletter or find it on the Johnsonville website.

From Seatoun Club

Dances Introducing Various Other Configurations (Covid reversed!)

From Edith Campbell

Plans were underway to adapt some dances to avoid physical contact when the Level 4 requirements were imposed which closed our venue. Easing of restrictions in Level 2 allowed the facility to reopen.

So on Friday 5 June, we arrived to find previous users had stuck masking tape crosses on the floor marking two metre distancing between people in the sidelines and across the set – very useful. Four couples just fitted into the length of the hall!

The Lockdown Jig starts with two couples chasing round four walls as we 'stayed at home'; one step forward and one back let us bounce within our bubbles. Going Shopping meant two dancers circle round from home to shop, whilst the shop assistants move to keep their distance, then all finish dancing round their bubbles washing their hands. The *Jewellery Shop* is a strathspey – not the kind of store one dashes into and out again. For all these dances, travelling between the two-metre-marked places requires four steps rather than the usual two, so there are quite a lot of diamond patterns involved as dancers change places - two steps forward and sideways as they pass each other, and two to the other place. When a couple follows each other up or down the 'middle', to keep their distance, the second couple dances a diamond pin – moving outwards two steps, four quarter turns on the spot - the four diamond points - and back (remember the pins men used to wear in their ties?). Level Three has a reel of three with a staggered start to avoid a clash in the centre and ends with a new triangular progression which has the alternative name of a Zoom progression as the first couple's moves create a Z.

Dancing four steps instead of two means some of the compactness of the usual figures is lost and so it is harder to maintain the continuity, but after a second night of having a go, the new patterns became easier. Of course, with no hands to help to control the figures, each dancer has to work more as an individual. Next time we may try reducing the four steps to two, etc, perhaps – to add extra interest – using some of the recordings of 16 bars at strathspey tempo followed by 16 of reel or jig. Everyone seemed to enjoy having fun with the experiment!

Tawa Club during Lockdown

From Désirée Patterson

Only two weeks into the new dancing year, it became obvious that the Covid-19 pandemic had arrived, so our club decided to suspend club nights from 19 March, anticipating the lockdown.

Once the lockdown was imposed, some of our members were working from home, and a few wonderful people were still working as care givers, but most of us were going to be confined to our homes for the next goodness knew how many weeks. We realised that many would miss the social contact, so to keep a sense of community, I wanted to keep our Tawa Club going in a "virtual" way, by continuing our weekly emails.

As there would be no dancing news, I invited members to send in snippets to share – YouTube videos, exercise routines, and dance or music performances to watch out for online, 'funnies' and jokes. I also shared the weekly RSCDS UK emails.

Inspired by the RSCDS Thursday Challenge, we started a series of "Questions of the Week". The first one asked members – of course – when and why they started SC dancing, and what role SCD played in their lives. I received a lot of responses which I collated into one document which was sent out with the following week's email. This set the pattern for the next few weeks.

In following weeks we had questions such as:

- What is your favourite dance, or what was your most memorable dancing moment?
- What activity (activities) did you use to do when young, which have lapsed over time, but you took up again later in life? Why did you take it up again, and how did it work out?
- What are you reading, what genre of reading do you enjoy, do you have a favourite author or book?
- Favourite lockdown recipes
- How has the lockdown affected you? What have you enjoyed, missed, or not missed?
- If you could begin your working life again, what would you chose to do?
- Where were you born, and where did you spend your primary school days? What memories (good or bad) do you have of that time?

Some questions generated more responses than others, but they were a good way for members to get to know each other a bit better. On club nights, there often isn't much time between dances to chat.

We also had a very successful photo competition: 25 members sent in a photo of themselves aged between two and six years old, which I collated into one document, in random order. Another document contained adult photos of the participants and their names in alpha order (because not everyone knew everyone's names, so they could go "Ah, so *that's* what that person's name is!"). The task, of course, was to guess who was who in the childhood photos. Dallas was declared the winner, with 20 correct guesses.

About three quarters of our members contributed to our emails at least once. We look forward to catching up with the remaining quarter once we resume dancing – hopefully on 25 June (depending on whether our hall will be available for use).

Lower Hutt Club

Lower Hutt Club will resume on Monday June 15th. Through the lockdown members were kept in contact with club newsletters. Members were asked to contribute what they had been doing. Activities included walks observing teddy bears appearing in various places in the neighbourhood, painting fences, taking up new craft activities, finishing UFOs (unfinished craft projects), trying out new recipes, tuning into the zoom online dance class, meeting with the neighbours at 5pm daily to applaud the emergency workers, decluttering and social distancing.

We are looking forward to being able to meet up on the dance floor again.

Lower Hutt Club invites you to join us on our

Tartan Night on Monday 16 July, 7:30 pm

Epuni Community Hall, Mitchell Street

Dance to the Monday Knights

Iain Matcham, Terry Bradshaw and associates

Popular dances will await you - Cost \$5

Levin Club

From Jaki Williams

During lockdown, the Levin SCD club was quite active in maintaining contact with members. I sent out a regular communication to everyone as a way of letting all our dancers know that I was thinking of them and always available by phone, text or email. I received some lovely messages back.

A couple of our committee members came up with $(ADAD - A \ dance \ a \ day'$, which they sent out five days a week for the first month. This included the instruction, video clips and some history. From there, another two members followed on, so we now have enough dances to last us for the rest of the year.

Our third couple are giving us an international block buster, inspired by the RSCDS. Using artistic licence, they have crafted a tale using three types of dance titles: ones we know, ones we have never heard of, and the others – well, we wonder what the deviser was thinking when naming the various dances. We are now looking forward to chapter five.

A small group of us have been dancing since Level 3, learning some challenging dances, and polishing up

on our briefing skills. The committee have also used Zoom to catch up. Now, after twelve weeks, we are back dancing again.

With less than a month to our proposed annual dance, we have decided to cancel it for this year, but we are planning for the same time next year.

Club re-opening dates

Now that we are down to Covid Alert Level 1, several clubs have already resumed dancing, and others will be starting up soon. Here are their start dates:

Seatoun Club – Friday 5 June

Linden Club – Monday 8 June. Their annual dance will be on Saturday 4 July (programme on page 8)

Eastbourne Club – Wednesday 10 June

Ngaio Club – Thursday 11 June

Carterton Club – Monday 15 June

Johnsonville Club – Monday 15 June. Their combined annual dance with Capital City will be on 22 August (programme on page 8)

Lower Hutt Club – Monday 15 June

Upper Hutt Club – Wednesday 17 June. Their annual dance will go ahead, but the date is yet to be confirmed.

Capital City Club – Thursday 18 June. Live music on opening night and on the first Thursday of each month.

Tawa Club – Thursday 25 June (probably – check with Désirée)

Kelburn Club – Wednesday 1 July. Their tea dance, which was to be held on 21 June, is cancelled.

Waikanae Club – Late July, to be confirmed.

Tuesday afternoon dancing resumes!

From Pat Reesby

Daytime dancing on Tuesdays at St John's Church hall in Johnsonville began in late 2018, organised by Gaylia Powell and tutored by Catherine McCutcheon.

Initially for more advanced dancers, it was so popular that Catherine added extra 'general' sessions on the third Tuesday of each month – and also on the fifth Tuesday when there was one. People have enjoyed getting to know dancers from clubs besides their own, and catching up with their new friends later at Saturday dances. Tuesday daytime dancing continued last year, when Catherine continued with the general group and also tutored the advanced group during the first term. Maureen Robson and Melva Waite took over the advanced group for the second and third terms, while the final session was taken by Rod Downey.

Gaylia moved to Christchurch early this year, so I took over as daytime dancing organiser, with the assistance of John Homes and Maureen Sullivan.

And we had 2020 all worked out! Catherine was to tutor the general group all year, while Gaye Collin would tutor the advanced group for the first term and other tutors would follow, fitting in with various travel plans: Catherine, Maureen, Melva and Rod would take between one and three sessions each, while Iain Boyd agreed to tutor the group for the first time, taking three sessions.

By mid-March, we'd enjoyed Gaye's first two sessions and were looking forward to more. Catherine's general group met on March 17, St Patrick's Day, when Xiaowen Yu, home from the United States and now a fully qualified tutor, taught a couple of the dances. It was a great afternoon.

And as you've probably guessed, that was the last time we danced! But now New Zealand has reached Level 1, Tuesday afternoon dancing will resume.

The advanced group will meet on **Tuesday, June 23**. Gaye plans to continue with the sessions she planned early in the year, although she says that after such a long gap she won't tax people's brains with overcomplicated dances on the first day. Gaye's sessions will continue until early August, after which other tutors will follow, details yet to be finalised.

Fortuitously, June has five Tuesdays. Catherine's 'general' Tuesday sessions will resume on **Tuesday**, **June 30** and continue for the rest of the year.

The sessions run from 12.45 pm (we get there a bit earlier) until 2.45 pm. We pay \$5 each time; this covers hall hire and a payment to the tutor.

Obviously hand washing and sanitising will be important, and making sure we have people's names and phone numbers, just in case contact tracing is needed. St John's Church will provide antibacterial spray so we can wipe down any surfaces we use.

In short, we'll follow the <u>Alert Level 1 golden rules</u>.

And at last we'll be dancing again!

"The music will tell you what to do"

A workshop for dancers and interested musicians

You are invited to a workshop with Lynne Scott, Branch Music Adviser. Lynne will demonstrate how music for SCD is organised to match the dances, and discuss what to listen for to inform your dancing. No question is too silly!

Musicians will have the opportunity to try a dance under Lynne's expert tuition. A piano is available.

Lynne's Music Studio 11 Edwin St, Belmont Domain, Lower Hutt **Sunday 26 July, 2pm – 4pm** \$5 Koha – afternoon tea provided

Please call Lynne to confirm your attendance Ph 04 565 0164

To donate: SCD books

I have several SCD books I'd like to donate to someone who would like them – they are too good to be just thrown away.

Pocket Books 1-21, 25-27,30,32,33-35,36-38,39-41 Music books 26,35-42 101 Scottish Country Dances compiled by Jean Milligan 1956 Leaflet 32 Society 75th Anniversary Booklet 1923-1998 Scottish country dances in diagrams (Pilling) 5th ed. Won't you join the dance? by Jean Milligan

I can arrange post or delivery.

For sale: Bloch dancing shoes

Ladies' jazz/ ballet shoes with slight heel, black lace up (not ghillies), size 7½, worn once.

Price when new \$100. Asking price: \$50 ono.

For books or shoes: Please contact Karen Harris on 04 232 3436, or <u>karenh5028@gmail.com</u>



Lower Hutt Club invite you to join us Monday 31 August to dance to music by

Aileen Logie, Hilary Ferral, Jason Morris and Terry Bradshaw

This will be an opportunity to take part in dances on our Annual Dance programme the following Saturday

Closing date for the next issue Saturday 8 September 2020

Victoria University of Wellington Scottish Interest Group

Meets on the 28th day of the month Feb-Oct. at VUW Law School, Old Government Buildings, Lambton Quay (Bunny St entrance), near railway and bus stations. PLEASE NOTE: the May and July presentations were swapped.

Sunday 28 June, 3.00 pm – *Scottish Favourites* by Members.

Tuesday 28 July – Old/New Homelands – Scozia ed Italia.

Friday 28 August – The Declaration of Arbroath

Mon 28 Sep – Mrs. Barbour's Army

Visitors welcome; no charge, no university connections needed. Phone 88-8069/567-0557 for brochure. Check the website for locations: <u>www.wellyscots.wordpress.com</u>.



