

Tribute Dance for Maureen Robson

By Désirée Patterson

On Saturday 7 December, Tawa Club held a very special dance to pay tribute to their tutor Maureen Robson, who is retiring from teaching the club after 38 years.

Just over a hundred people attended – eight sets of enthusiastic dancers on the floor, and a good number of non-dancing and no-longer-dancing friends who enjoyed watching proceedings from the side-lines. The programme consisted of dances selected by Maureen herself, some of which held a special significance for her, several that she had devised herself (now published in her new book *“From North to South”*) and one dance that had been devised for her.



Maureen and Iain Boyd dance *“The King of Spain’s Daughter”*, which Iain devised for Maureen (photo: John Patterson)

The music was provided by *“The Cranberry Tarts”* (i.e. Aileen Logie and Hilary Ferral) and the MCs were Maureen’s long-time dancing buddies and fellow teachers Melva Waite and Philippa Pointon.

The Ngaio Town Hall was decorated with a wonderful back-drop to the stage, declaring *“Maureen, we thank you”*, created by long-standing Tawa member John Gregory, while around the hall were his beautiful Luckenboth Brooch panels. Also around the hall were posters illustrating the fun Tawa Club has had over the years under Maureen’s leadership. They featured photos copied (by John Patterson) from photo albums Maureen has kept over 38 years of teaching Tawa – photos of the themed party nights, the costumes and props, the jubilees and the special birthdays. On top of the piano at the back of the hall, was a screen, set up by John Patterson, which displayed a continuous loop of photos from Maureen’s albums and also photos taken more recently at special club events.

After the speech by the club secretary (yes, that’s me) and the cutting of the celebratory cake, the new President of the Wellington Region, Ann Oliver, presented Maureen with a Certificate of Appreciation to thank her for her services to Scottish country dancing in the Region.



Maureen cuts the cake, flanked by John Gregory and Duncan McDonald (photo: John Patterson)

After supper, there was a performance by an ensemble of musically talented Tawa members, organised by Moggy Grayson. She had cleverly re-wrote some well-known Northumbrian songs, to Maureen’s great delight, as she hails from Newcastle (the words are in the next article).

Over 38 years of teaching, Maureen has touched many lives. She must have taught many hundreds of dancers – not just in the Tawa Club, but also in Region classes and events, day schools and weekend schools throughout NZ, as well as at Summer Schools. She has also supported and mentored a number of aspiring candidates through their teaching certificates. On a personal note, I have Maureen to thank for nominating me as secretary of the Tawa Club, and for encouraging me to take on the editorship of Harbour City Happenings – both jobs I absolutely love doing.

I think Tawa Club did Maureen proud with this tribute dance, judging from her thank you note: *“From start to finish it was an amazing night”*. We will miss Maureen at Tawa, but we are sure that her wisdom and teaching skills will not be entirely lost to the Region, as she will still make herself available to teach special classes – for instance her wonderful reels classes – and to fill in when required.

Thank you, Maureen, enjoy your (semi-)retirement, and we hope to see you again some time on another dance floor.



Moggie and the Tributeers. Front row, from left: Cici Kong (pipa, Chinese lute), Moggie Grayson (guitar), Duncan McDonald (drum), Mary McDonald (violin), Ted Aspey (viola), Todd Foster (banjo).
Back row: singers Pat Reesby, Sylvie Gentry, Brenda Vale, Carolyn Rait (photo: John Patterson)

Our Tribute to Maureen

From Moggie Grayson

Moggie and the Tributeers

Here are the words and short backgrounds of the songs we played and sang at Maureen's tribute night. All the words were written by Moggie in honour of Maureen, and were sung to the tunes of well-known 'Geordie' songs that Maureen grew up with.

Blaydon Races is a Geordie folk song written in the 19th century by Geordie Ridley, in a style deriving from music hall. It is regarded by many as the unofficial anthem of Tyneside. Blaydon is a small town in Gateshead, about four miles from Newcastle upon Tyne.

Here are the words we sang:

As I went out to Tawa club on a summer's day,
A-carrying my dancing pumps to dance the night away.
We took hands in a circle as we twirled our feet around,
That helped to stabilise us and stopped us falling down.

Chorus:

Oh me lads, ye should have seen us gannin' (*going*);
Jigging and reeling round the place, just like we were planning.
There were lots of lads and lassies there, all with smiling faces;
Stepping it out with style and grace, just like the Trentham races.

Blow the Wind Southerly is a traditional English folk song from Northumberland. It tells of a woman desperately hoping for a southerly wind to blow her lover back home over the sea to her. The celebrated contralto Kathleen Ferrier CBE recorded what is perhaps the best-known version of the song in London in 1949.

Here are the words that were sung on Saturday night:

Blow the wind northerly, northerly, northerly;
Stick the damn northerly right in your ear.
Blow the wind northerly, northerly, northerly;
Don't give a monkey's 'cause we're safe in here.

You told us last night we were doing a rondel,
Our feet going one way, our arms somewhere else.
But the couple approaching they need much more coaching,
In who makes the arch and who goes underneath.

Then it's out in the northerly, northerly, northerly;
Driving back home in the wind and the rain.
I wish it were southerly, southerly, southerly;
Maybe next week when we do it again.

The Lambton Worm is from County Durham in the north-east of England. The story takes place around the River Wear, and is one of the area's most famous pieces of folklore, having been adapted from written and oral tradition into pantomime and song formats. It revolves around John Lambton, an heir of the Lambton Estate, (from where Wellington's Lambton Quay derives its name) and his battle with a giant worm or dragon that had been terrorising the local villages. As with most myths, details of the story

change with each telling. The story was made into a song by Clarence Leumane in 1867, which passed into oral tradition and has several slightly different variants.

Here is the 'variant' heard on Saturday:

Verse 1

One Thursday night a taniwha went out to have a dance;
He found his way to Tawa club and thought he'd take a chance.
He learned the steps and danced them well, we thought him cute as pie,
Till someone stepped upon his tail and made the poor lad cry.

Chorus

Whoosh, bang hoad your gobs (*hush*), I'll tell ye all an awful story,
Here comes the taniwha that lives on Lambton Quay.

Verse 2

He didn't come to have a dance at Tawa anymore;
We hoped that he'd forgive us and come walking in the door.
But he was spotted on the train, which caused us great alarm;
He was heading out to Ngaio with his pumps under his arm. (Oh)

The Water of Tyne is another folk song from the north-east of England. The song is sung by a woman lamenting the fact that her paramour is on the opposite bank of the River Tyne. The song was collected by John Bell in 1810 and published two years later in the book *Rhymes of Northern Bards*.

Saturday's words were:

O thank you dear Maureen from all of us here,
For your skills and devotion for thirty-eight years.
Our hearts are so heavy it all has to end,
Our teacher, our mentor, devisor and friend.

Cushie Butterfield is a famous Geordie folk song also written in the 19th century by Geordie Ridley, in the style of the music hall popular then. It is regarded by many as the second unofficial anthem of Tyneside after *Blaydon Races*. The song was featured, along with a number of other Geordie folk songs of yesteryear, in *Geordie, The Musical*, which premiered at the Customs House in North Shields in 2015.

The original chorus goes as follows:

She's a big lass an' a bonny one,
An' she likes her beer;
An, they call her Cushy Butterfield,
An' I wish she was here.

The words sung on Saturday night were:

She's a great lass, she's a bonny lass,
And we've made it clear;
That we all love our Maureen,
SO LET'S GIVE THREE CHEERS.

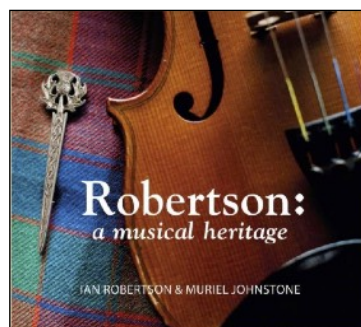
And so say all of us ...

A video of the performance is available to view here (with thanks to Pat Reesby and John Patterson):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbyR542Uz40>

From the Branch Recordshop

From Dorothy Wilson

NEW RELEASE ! This CD will be on sale at Summer School, Cambridge: "Robertson: A Musical Heritage". 18 tracks 10 SCD and 8 being a variety of marches, waltzes and listening.



Ian Robertson (fiddle) and Muriel Johnstone (piano) have combined to produce this tribute to The Robertsons. A programme of music spanning four centuries. Something for everyone – a CD for dancing or simply listening and enjoying. Slow airs and reels through to marches, waltzes, jigs and strathspeys.

LAST ORDERS, please! A reminder that the Branch Recordshop will close at the end of November until our personal appearance at Summer School, Cambridge. Anything you need? Look forward to hearing from you – but soon.

And that is IT!! Happy Christmas!

Dorothy Wilson, PO Box 612 Blenheim 7240
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