



Clubs affiliated to the Association 1953-61

# FOREWORD

It will be a very large scale map of New Zealand that has Morison's Bush marked on it - so why should it have a book of dances named after it? For Country Dancers in the Wellington, Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay area it was for many years the centre of social life and dances there were not to be missed.

It all began in 1953. Before then there had been country dancing clubs in many parts of the country, most of which had started as the dancing circles of local Scottish Societies and none of which had much relationship with each other. However, in that year, some far sighted dancers in the Wellington and Hawkes Bay areas suggested getting together and forming an association. Mr and Mrs L.J. Coe had arranged dances at Morison's Bush in the Wairarapa in 1952 and there in October 1953 a meeting was held, an association formed and a tradition begun.

For some years the Wellington/Hawkes Bay Association of Scottish Country Dance Clubs held two or three dances a year (always one at Labour Weekend) at Morison's Bush and at each dance a member club was asked to provide a demonstration. Remarkably the hall stood up to the dancing. Originally built for the military camp during the war (the ladies cloakroom was still labelled "officers", the gentlemen's "other ranks" and the supper-room "chaplain"), it now had a notice on the inside of the door which dancers read as they left - "Persons using this hall do so at their own risk". It was finally deserted by the dancers, not because of the risk, but because of its size - the Anzac Hall at Featherston was larger (but the pillars down the sides not quite so convenient) and eventually we graduated to the even larger hall in Masterton. A highlight of those days for the Hawkes Bay dancers was the over-night hospitality provided by Mr and Mrs Coe on their farm - ladies in the house, gentlemen in the hay-loft. There was always some doubt as to how much sleep the men got when Jack Seton started telling his stories.

The problem of Wellingtonians "after the ball" was well expressed by Marion Cunningham in the second edition of the New Zealand Country Dancer 1955

" O some hae feet that winna heat  
Nae matter hoo they're stampit  
It's unco' chill gaun ower the hill  
An' oor banes wi' cauld are crampit  
But him an' me hae cause for glee  
We're warm, the Lord be thankit  
And rest is sweet tae weary feet  
Neath oor braw electric blanket "

"Coming home with the milk" was often a reality in those days.

Another highlight of those early days was the formation of the first local country dancing band. This was organised by the energetic and ever enthusiastic Jack Seton from among Hawkes Bay musicians. Jack's own performance on the drums was much appreciated and in addition to live performances the band had several 45 r.p.m. records to its credit.

It is difficult to pick out personalities from those early days without running the risk of leaving some out and so this becomes a record of happenings and achievements rather than of people. However it is worth noting that the subcommittee that produced the constitution of the Wellington/Hawkes Bay Association found a formula that is still being used by the Regions of the New Zealand Branch today.



There was to be an elected President, Vice-President and Secretary and a committee consisting of two members from each member club. The first recorded representatives were:

President	Mr J. Seton	Hastings
Vice-President	Mr W. McPherson	Lower Hutt
Secretary	Miss S. Childs	Wellington
Committee	Mr M. Colbourne	Hastings
	Mr B. Fordyce	
	Mr J. MacLennan	Lower Hutt
	Mr A. Douglas	
	Dr M. Cunningham	Wallaceville
	Mr D.C. Dodd	
	Mrs P. Lynds	Whakatane
	Mrs A. Sharp	
Miss E. Grimmond	Wellington	
Mr G. Walker		

Affiliated clubs at the time were Napier, Napier Boy's High School and Paraparaumu.

At this time, too, Marion Cunningham conceived the idea of producing a magazine for the newly formed Association, and in 1954 the first issue of the New Zealand Scottish Country Dancer made its appearance. In its initial years the "Dancer" was cyclostyled and put together by a group of Wallaceville Club members walking round and round a table picking up successive pages. Printing and production became more sophisticated as time went on, but to this day the general format of articles and Club notes remains.

In December 1954/January 1955 the Association held the first ever summer school. Approximately 80 members and children attended the school arranged at Napier Boy's High School by Bruce Fordyce with Peggy Hudson from Dunedin and Jack Seton as tutors. The following year a summer school was held at Days Bay, Wellington and at that preliminary steps were taken towards the formation of a New Zealand Society. Jack Seton was elected President and Mildred Clancey Secretary of an interim committee, and a Rules Committee headed by Ira Cunningham was set up to produce a New Zealand Constitution. At the third summer school at Wanganui the New Zealand Society was officially born and the Wellington/Hawkes Bay Association handed over the running of summer schools. Production of the magazine continued under the new body, Marion Cunningham remaining as editor for some years. The charges at the Wanganui school incidentally were £1.50 registration and £1 per day for accommodation.

The Wellington/Hawkes Bay Association remained an affiliated organisation till 1961 when it split into 3 branches of the New Zealand Society. From 8 clubs in 1954 it had grown to 8 clubs in the Wellington area (stretching to Levin) 5 in the Wairarapa and 5 in Hawkes Bay. Since then the growth of dancing in New Zealand has continued and although the Wellington area has lost the Levin club to the Rangitikei region we have now 14 clubs and there is a club dance in the Wellington region nearly every alternate Saturday from May to October.

It is interesting to see the number of dancers to-day who are children and even grandchildren of former members. The family feeling fostered in the early days has continued and is one of the real strengths of the movement.



This book offers in a different way a "potted" history of the past 25 years. Some of the early dances were published in the magazine. The earliest of these (and possibly the earliest one composed in New Zealand) Ken Shaw's "Morison's Bush" was published in 1954. Mention should also be made of the "Govandale Reel", written by Jim Lean who looked after and played the records for the Lower Hutt club for many years but never did any dancing himself. Local colour is added by Geof Machin's evocative description of the long wait at Epuni Station for a train home. Finally we have "The Thrang Wynd" by Andrew Mills who had not been born in 1953.

Looking round we feel our founding fathers (and mothers) can be proud of the movement they started. May its next 25 years be as fruitful and as successful.

Peg Hutchison  
President, Wellington Region  
October 1978

#### MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL COMMITTEE



Back row:W. MacPherson,D. Dodd,A. Douglas,B. Fordyce, M. Colbourne.  
Front row:S. Childs,M. Cunningham,J. Seton,P. Lynds,A. Sharp.