**Kapiti Scottish Country Dance Club – A Brief History**

It all began in 1975 when a group of keen Scottish Country dancers who had moved to the Kāpiti Coast wanted to continue their dancing. With encouragement from the Wellington Region Committee, Ian Taylforth established the club and became our first tutor. Friday night was chosen as club night, as the other evenings were already taken by Wellington clubs. Waikanae was selected as the base, with the Presbyterian Church Hall as our first venue.

From the outset, Ian was supported by experienced teachers such as Val Scoble and Betty Redfearn, and the club flourished. At first, there was no music equipment. To raise funds, $20 redeemable debentures were issued (none were ever redeemed!), which allowed the purchase of much-needed equipment.

In 1979 the club held its first dance at Southward Car Museum. Sir Len Southward had asked the club to help test the unique hydraulic floor there. He and his wife often watched the dancers from the upstairs projection suite.

Between 1981 and 1984, the club was tutored by Richard Tunley. At this time, many young people joined, and the 1980s and 1990s became known for lively dress-up nights and fun social events. The club had a strong community profile and was invited to perform at a range of events, including the opening of Wellington’s commuter train electrification in 1982. On another occasion, during an Arts Festival at Coastlands, the stage began to separate under the dancers’ feet – but the team kept calm, carried on, and managed to finish with style!

In 1985, Glenys Mills became tutor, with Richard continuing to support beginners. Glenys tutored the club for 17 years. With numbers growing, the club moved to St Luke’s Church in 1990. During her time, the Kāpiti area hosted several weekend schools, workshops and day schools. Formal dances at Southwards were a highlight, with up to 18 sets dancing to the lively music of Peter Elmes and John Smith. On one memorable night, Glenys—acting as MC—forgot she was on a small dais, stepped off the edge and disappeared, only to pop up moments later, still smiling.

When Glenys took a short break, Rita Brennan tutored, bringing her trademark thoroughness and careful planning to each evening.

In 2001 the club moved again, this time to Kapakapanui School Hall, which offered more storage space. The following year Catherine Edwards became tutor. Attendance was strong, with five or six sets dancing most weeks, making us the largest club in the Wellington region. A children’s class was also formed, which continued until the dancers reached their teens. One of those pupils, Nicole Trewavas, went on to become a fully certificated tutor. The club was also highly social, enjoying trips away to the Wairarapa, Napier, Whanganui, Ruapehu and Marlborough. Catherine and Ross frequently welcomed members into their home for potluck dinners, music and dancing. In 2008, long-standing member Val Lyons was honoured with Life Membership for her 33 years of active participation.

From 2010 to 2013, the club was tutored by Wullie Grant, whose cheerful style and emphasis on social fun made for lively evenings full of laughter. His trademark word was “Wait!” and he often entertained members with his guitar and singing at social events.

Catherine Edwards returned as tutor in 2014, re-establishing the children’s class with up to 12 young dancers. At that time, club members ranged in age from 5 to 93. That same year, Romaine Butterfield received her RSCDS Branch Award for services to Scottish Country Dancing, and in 2016 she became tutor until her retirement in 2023. Her deep knowledge and the fascinating back stories she shared about many dances were always appreciated.

Also in 2016, Life Membership was conferred on Kath Rigalsford, Keown Shirley, Pam Heffernan, Rita Brennan, and Nelma Woodfield.

During the Covid years, when gatherings were limited, a small group of members stepped up to keep the club running, supported by visiting tutors including Melva Waite and Catherine McCutcheon. Today, the club is tutored by Joy Tracey, Annie Christie and Isobel Harris-Clark.

In 2025 we celebrated our 50th Anniversary at our annual dance on 9 August and also with a Pot Luck Luncheon on 5 July. The dance programme was drawn from favourites performed over the years, bringing together both old and new dances. A beautiful anniversary cake, baked and decorated by Annie Christie, was cut by long-time members Alex and Olive MacDonald alongside their granddaughters Katie and Emily, who have also danced with the club for many years.

**50th Anniversary Pot Luck Luncheon**

On Saturday 5 July, Waikanae Scottish Country Dance Club hosted a Pot Luck Lunch at the Presbyterian Church Hall as part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations. Present and former members enjoyed a social afternoon of shared food, friendship, and dancing. Tutors Joy Tracey, Annie Christie and Isobel Harris-Clark led a selection of dances, and it was a delight to see past members back on the floor. The afternoon was both enjoyable and successful – with the added bonus that some former members have since returned to regular club nights.