



R.S.C.D.S.



NOTTINGHAM NEWS REEL

No. 25

Easter 2011

Bruce Frazer

Most of us will by now have received the latest 'Scottish Country Dancer' magazine which carries an excellent tribute to Bruce Frazer, who died in late January after a long battle with cancer. Leslie writes:

'Bruce Frazer was our Advanced Class teacher at the St. Andrews Summer School in 1982. He and Alec Gray encouraged me to try for the Preliminary Teacher's Certificate – which I duly did, and was successful. (The full Certificate came in 1988, again at St. Andrews.) I was very moved to hear of his death. He was a strong teacher – there were twelve or thirteen sets in his class back in 1982 – and set a good example.'

Dilemma

A recent issue of 'TACTalk' – the newsletter of the Teachers' Association of Canada – poses a worthwhile selection of questions about the dynamics of a class containing, not only the usual range from experienced dancers to beginners, but also a number of *weak dancers who are also experienced* – and does the class have a role to play in trying to secure maximum benefit for all? On the whole I hope that our classes do not fit the model illustrated by the author - *'go for self-preservation and hurriedly choose the best partner, head for the top set and say a short prayer for those who didn't act fast enough to get into the top set(s)'* – because the benefits of trying to avoid the direct result of that extreme situation, in which whole sets can be brought to a standstill through too many pairings of weak and inexperienced dancers, are obvious to all. It has to be said, though, that the writer does not take into account the nature of the dance which is being taught. I personally would not ask a weak or inexperienced partner – *for the sake of her own confidence and enjoyment* – for a dance in which she would be on her own for a large part of it unless in a strong set where help from others would be at hand. There's a difference between *'Tribute to the Borders'* and the likes of *'Gothenburg's Welcome'* and *'Follow me Home'* and it isn't only a question of difficulty,

but of the proportion of the 32 bars in which one can give one's partner direct and friendly help without having eyes in the back of one's head or trying to keep the majority of the set on the straight and narrow...at which the multi-tasking channels come close to overload and pose the risk of plunging into the Void oneself!

I'm not arguing for the screening of class dances for the percentage of bars in close contact with a partner or attempting to fix something that ain't bust and I suspect that there's no easy answer, but future issues of 'TACTalk' may well carry accounts of other possible ways and means of squaring this particular circle. Watch this space!

What's in a Name?

Does anyone else find the names of so many of our dances intriguing, and appreciate an explanatory note here and there? Somebody at TAC seems to think so...

For instance, anyone whose childhood reading included the works of the difficult and highly-talented Alison Uttley will have no difficulty in recalling 'Moldywarp the Mole' and seeing 'The Moudiewart' - (Book 11, a 32-bar jig, and 'mou' to rhyme with 'how') - as a Scots word for the same animal, no less than the 'wee gentleman in velvet' of the Jacobite toast, whose mole-hole resulted in a fatal accident to William of Orange, thrown from his horse in the hunting field in 1702. The dance was recorded in manuscript just over fifty years later.

Three books further on, and last week we danced another jig, 'Lamb Skinned' about which I'd made the easy assumption around Scots past participles and 'skinned lamb'. Wrong! How on earth did a 15th-century card game give its name to a dance? It is said that a French king hired German farm labourers as mercenaries about the year 1480 and they brought with them a card game which they called 'Landesknecht', translated as 'farm labourer'. Inevitably, it was corrupted into French as 'Lansquenet' and then again into 'Lamb Skinned' on reaching our shores. Rather unhelpfully my old 'Concise Oxford French Dictionary' includes the word 'lansquenet'

complete with its origin as '*Landesknecht*' - but simply translates it into English as '*Iansquet*! Clearly Messrs. Chevalley and Goodridge weren't Scottish Country Dancers or card players...according to Wikipedia the game was played by D'Artagnan in a later work of Alexandre Dumas and it was much favoured by card-sharppers for their own nefarious reasons...

May I remind you....? Reprint from No.24...

Your Editor is running VERY short of copy for the next edition; if you would like to see NewsReel's 25th issue please think kindly of him and put pen to paper! Thank you, Leslie...

May I remind you?...Reprint from No. 23...

And then, as they say, '*The rest is silence...*' issue No. 23 almost fell flat on its face for want of copy. So, after the manner of Oliver, I'm asking for more if anyone out there really wants to see edition No. 24 hit the streets...

Compleynt to his Purs: Reprint from No. 20...

After the death of his patron, Edward III, the poet Chaucer, as a gentle hint to Henry IV, wrote the **Compleynt to his Purs** to let the new monarch know that that receptacle was almost empty, and what was he going to do about it?

I am minded to do something similar about the NewsReel because I am almost reduced to writing the whole thing myself...**PLEASE keep your contributions coming lest it fall by the wayside!!**

Toilet Dances

In Thespian circles, so I am told, there is a horrible gag known as a Toilet Entrance whereby an unwary actor comes on stage to a cacophony of screeching tyres, banging doors and a loudly flushing lavatory, courtesy of the Special Effects lad. At times this might be no bad thing on class nights - see '**Sleeping Partners**'. However, a Toilet Dance is quite different, for this is a tactical move designed to ensure that she who employs it makes an exit rather than an entrance, for she has just heard what's next and been seized with an unconquerable urge to powder her nose. The fact that other ladies may be similarly inclined and oversubscribe the limited accommodation by a factor of three makes no difference at all: the race is to the swiftest. To the self-confident, too, if the dance in question is first or second on the bill, for the exit may well take place amid a flurry of quiet remarks about making sure before leaving home. A medical certificate

signed by three doctors is the only answer to these. It is generally considered safe to emerge once '*Sean Truibhas Willichan*', '*Knit the Pocky*' or other popular number has lurched into its first eight bars. Careful observation over a period of time will provide a data bank on which ladies it is pointless to ask up for which dances, though since *la donna* has been known to be *mobile* this information is subject to change without prior notice. Such things as male Toilet Dances, incidentally, despite a noticeably lengthening male queue for water or squash as certain dances are called, do not exist (but see '**Shall we Join the Ladies?**')

New Recruit!

Congratulations to Klára and Tomi on the arrival of Szuszi on 9th February; Her Ladyship has paid her first visit to Branch but declined an offer of first lady's place in '*Duke of Perth*' on the grounds of unsuitable footwear and being ready for sleepies!

Diary Dates

As the season draws to a close, please make a note of the **A.G.M.**, to be held on Wednesday, 18th May at 7.30 p.m., and of our **End of Season Dance** (21st May, 7.30 p.m. at Burton Joyce Village Hall, £5/£3, music by Mr.C.D.Player, bring and share supper)

Garden Dances

We know that many of you love to keep the season going for that little bit longer, but sadly so many of us drift away and go AWOL on such frivolities as holidays, etc., that hall hire and income just don't balance. So we welcome two garden dances on 8th and 22nd June, on a bring-a-plate basis, the first hosted by Elizabeth Gull and the second, preceded by a dem at two care homes, at Leslie Harris' rectory at Pinxton. Further details may be obtained from the hosts - and listen out for news of any further dates!

...and finally...

...in the last ten days before the ASCDS Festival, rehearsals are taking place for the Massed Dancing - one of these fine days I'll remember the *proper* name for Minnie Bänninger's strathspey and not refer to it as '*The Washin'hoose*' or '*The Dishwasher*' - and a dem which is largely 'home made' in terms of choreography and music...thanks to Tony and Joy for preparing us, and to Chris Dewhurst and his band for getting their fingers round our music!