



One Hundred Years of Scottish Country Dancing in Dundee

**Royal Scottish Country Dance Society
Dundee Branch**

Established 9th February 1925

Scottish Charity No: SC 024986

THE BEGINNING

The following is an extract from the minutes of the first meeting held in what is now the Malmaison Hotel:

At a meeting held in Mathers' Rooms Dundee on February 9th 1925 at 4.30 pm, approximately fifty persons attended an address given by Mrs Stewart (Fasnacloich) Honorary Secretary of the Society.

In the absence of Dr. Angus McGillivray, Dr. A. E. Kidd took the chair. He explained that since Edinburgh and Glasgow had formed Branches of the Society it was felt that Dundee might follow suit. Mrs Stewart explained the aims and objects of the Society in the realm of research into the Country Dances of Scotland. She also explained that the formation of local branches was with the object not only of practising the dances but also each member investigating the various differences of perhaps the same dance in different areas.

It was then explained that local branches made all their own arrangements and were self supporting. Classes under the auspices of the Branches were to be taught by members who have passed the Teacher's Certificate standard.

Following upon Mrs Stewart's address Dr. A. E. Kidd moved from the Chair that 'Dundee form a Branch of the Scottish Country Dance Society' and this was seconded by Miss Sharp of Balmuir.

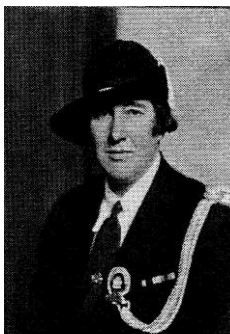
NOTABLE FOUNDERS

A detailed account of the early years and of the founders of Dundee Branch are recorded in the meticulously researched book 'Petronella to the Prince of Wales' by Branch Archivist and Honorary Vice-President, Helen Lawrenson.

Dr Alexander Edward Kidd was a GP in Carnoustie, then Medical Officer of Health in Monifieth and subsequently in Dundee. He received an OBE for his distinguished service in World War I and was honoured by both Greek and Serbian governments for his efforts in field hospitals. He served as Chairman of the Branch until the start of World War II. He was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Dundee in 1943. Dr Angus MacGillivray was a distinguished ophthalmic surgeon and was elected the first President of the Branch, remaining in post until 1939. He was also a Gaelic scholar and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.



Dr Angus MacGillivray



Miss Nora Sharp



Miss Meta Dow

Miss Nora Sharp of Balmuir estate, north of Dundee, was elected Vice-President. She was heavily involved in the Girl Guides, leading to her acquaintance with Ysobel Stewart, one of the founders of the Scottish Country Dance Society (SCDS). Both women enjoyed dancing in their social circles. Mrs Stewart realised that there was no book of Scottish Country Dance instructions for Guides, so she collected dances which led to the publication of Book 1 of the SCDS in 1924 with music arranged by Michael Diack. The popular dances included in the book were *Petronella*, *The Triumph*, *Circassian Circle*, *The Nut*, *Meg Merrilees*, *Flowers of Edinburgh*, *Strip the Willow*, *Duke of Perth*, *Rory O'More*, *Fight about the Fireside*, *Cumberland Reel*, and the *Merry Lads of Ayr*.

Miss Meta Dow was one of the first teachers in the Branch and was well known in the wider Society. She was a lecturer at Dundee Training College for many years, eventually become head of women's Physical Education. A lively and graceful dancer, she was an influential teacher in the Dundee area, with some describing her as the 'Miss Milligan of the East'. She also taught at St Andrews' Summer School and was an adjudicator at Highland Games. She was friendly with John 'Dancie' Reid of Newtyle who composed a tune '*Miss Dow's Fancy*' for her.

A past Chair of the RSCDS, Alistair MacFadyen, was of the opinion that Miss Dow deserved more recognition from the Society than was accorded to her. He suggested that RSCDS archivist Alan Macpherson devise a dance in her honour as a fitting tribute, which Alan set to John Reid's tune. Janet Johnston introduced the dance during the 2024 Dundee Half-Day School. This has not been published by the RSCDS as yet. Here are the instructions and music.

Miss Dow's Strathspey

Alan MacPherson

- 1-8** 1C+2C set & cross RH to face down; 2C followed by 1C dance down behind 3C, lead up the middle, 2C crossing to 1st place facing out, and 1C to 2nd place in the centre facing up.
- 9-16** Mirror reels of 3 on the sides, 1C starting up, and 2C+3C couples finish with loops (2,1x,3)
- 17-24** 1L+2C & 1M+3C circle left for 3 bars, on bar 4, 1C pass RSh to change circles (end couples keep NHJ); 1M+2C & 1W+3C circle right. At end, 1C turn left about to face in centre man facing down, lady facing up.
- 25-32** 1C set, petronella to 2nd place; all turn partner both hands (2,1,3).

Miss Dow's Fancy

John Reid

Arr. David Oswald

B \flat B \flat /F C \flat F7 B \flat B \flat /F E \flat F7

B \flat G \flat E \flat F7 B \flat B \flat /F F7 B \flat F7 B \flat

F G \flat B \flat F B \flat B \flat /F B \flat F7

F G \flat B \flat F B \flat B \flat /F E \flat B \flat

B \flat G \flat E \flat F7 F D \flat G \flat F

B \flat G \flat E \flat F F F7 E \flat B \flat

In 1930, Branch membership had risen to 153, with classes thriving. SCD had become so popular that the *'People's Journal'* published a special supplement of dances, with a foreword by the Duchess of Atholl. Dundee hosted the Society AGM for the first time and would continue to do so every few years until 1996.

Throughout the 1930s, various levels of dance classes were taught, and John 'Dancie' Reid often provided music for end of term dances. He and his orchestra played *Miss Dow's Fancy* for the first time at the Christmas dance in 1936 for *The Glasgow Highlanders*. The Branch was closely involved in the Dundee and District Music Festival and reached out to local groups, including Highland Societies. Physical education teachers were trained in Scottish country dance and some Branch classes and dances took place in the Training College Hall in Park Place, later demolished to make way for the Bonar Hall.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, classes were suspended, but some dancing started again in 1940. Although Branch membership dwindled during the war, a core of dancers including Meta Dow and Joan Kirk, a long-standing founder member and teacher, kept the Branch alive and organised social evenings, classes, and dances when possible. Some members had left Dundee for service during the war: Nora Sharp served with the ATS in France; Alice Mann was conscripted into the ATS and sent to Inverness; Douglas Henderson, dance teacher and drummer in Mrs Winifred Bird Matthew's Band, joined the RAF, during which time he was a founding member of Hereford Branch, before returning to Dundee to work for D C Thomson. Nancy and Katine French from Newport-on-Tay were young teachers, a reserved occupation during the war, and recalled taking the train across to Dundee for dancing, walking though the unlit streets to classes.

POST-WAR ERA

Alice Hutchison was appointed Chairman at the end of the war. Sadly, she died in her early forties and her husband gifted a badge in her memory to the RSCDS. The badge is now part of the Chain of Office of the Chairman of the RSCDS. It was originally hung on a ribbon until 1969 when Duns and District Branch gifted the silver gilt chain.



The RSCDS Chain of Office. The inscription on the badge:
In Memoriam, Alice Hutchison Dundee, 22nd February 1957. Gifted by her husband.

After the war, SCD flourished in Dundee, with classes run by the Branch and by various groups throughout the city. An item in the Dundee Courier in 1949 reported that a Scottish country dance in the Caird Hall was attended by 500 dancers and 506 spectators.

Mrs Bird Matthew, a noted musician who arranged music for the RSCDS Books 8-14, played regularly for classes and dances. Such was the demand for dancing that a Branch Club was formed for experienced dancers. Branch dances were often held in Kidd's Rooms, one of a number of dance halls in the city, later to be demolished when the original Overgate Centre was constructed.

In the 1950s, classes were organised for aspiring teachers who were in demand to teach in the Branch and at various local clubs. The Branch was often asked to perform displays, including at the Scottish and World Pipe Band Championships held in Dundee, conferences, and local business group meetings. By 1954, membership had grown to nearly 800. The Branch did not have the capacity for all dancers, so groups sprung up around the city and in Fife. Dancers from Fife would take the ferry across to dances in Dundee and even continue their dancing on the ferry home.

Dances and balls in the 1950s started at 8pm, finishing at midnight or 1pm.

THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY
(Dundee Branch)

B A L L

CAIRD HALL, DUNDEE
FRIDAY, 26th OCTOBER, 1956

8 P.M. TO 1 A.M. DRESS FORMAL TICKET 15/-

P R O G R A M M E

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dashing White Sergeant | Duke of Atholl's Reel |
| Dundee Reel (48 Bar) | Maxwell's Rant |
| Strathglass House | Monymusk |
| Machine Without Horses | Campbell's Frolic |
| Montgomerie's Rant | Lady Auckland's Reel |
| Demonstration | Off She Goes In The North |
| Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh | The Bonniest Lass in all the World |
| Perthshire Highlanders | Corn Riggs |
| General Stuart's Reel | Fergus McIver |
| Axum Reel | Extras . . . |
| Demonstration | Miss Nancy Frowns |
| Brown's Reel | Donald Bane |
| Birks of Invermay | Cauld Kail |

DEMONSTRATIONS BY INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Dance

In Dundee Training College Hall
On Friday, 3rd May, 1957
from 8 p.m. till 12 midnight

Ticket 7/6

Dress Informal

PROGRAMME

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Dundee Reel | 12. The Bonniest Lass in all the world |
| 2. Teviot Brig | 13. The Cadgers in the Canon-gate |
| 3. Monymusk | 14. Cauld Kail |
| 4. Montgomerie's Rant | 15. The Axum Reel |
| 5. Ladies' Fancy | 16. Red House |
| 6. Caledonian Rant | 17. The New Rigged Ship |
| 7. Miss Mary Douglas | 18. Jimmy's Fancy |
| 8. Mr Wilson's Hornpipe | 19. Broun's Reel |
| 9. The Braes of Balquhiddier | 20. The Duke of Atholl's Reel |
| 10. Lady Susan Stewart's Reel | |
| 11. Lucy Campbell | |

DANCE

In Kidd's Rooms, Lindsay Street
On Friday, 7th March, 1958
from 8 p.m. till 1 a.m.

TICKET 15/-

EVENING DRESS

PROGRAMME

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The Dashing White Sergeant | Lochiel's Rant |
| Middling, Thank You | Broun's Reel |
| The Birks of Invermay | Miss Mary Douglas |
| General Stuart's Reel | Donald Bane |
| Two and Two | None So Pretty |
| Monymusk | Hamilton House |
| Maxwell's Rant | New Park |
| Miss Nancy Frowns | Corn Riggs |
| Lady Auckland's Reel | The New Rigged Ship |
| The Montgomerie's Rant | Dalkeith's Strathspey |
| Dundee Reel | The Reel of the 51st Division |

In the 1960s, dances finished at a more reasonable time, but balls finished later and had an impressively long programme.

PROGRAMME

- 1 Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh
- 2 None So Pretty
- 3 Jimmy's Fancy
- 4 Baldovan Reel
- 5 Argyll's Fancy
- 6 Letham Ladies
- 7 Two and Two
- 8 The Isle
- 9 Within a Mile of Edinburgh Toon
- 10 Duke of Atholl's Reel
- 11 Minard Castle
- 12 The Birks of Invermay
- 13 General Stuart's Reel
- 14 Middling, Thank You
- 15 Lochiel's Rant
- 16 Ladies of Dingwall
- 17 Machine Without Horses
- 18 The Braes of Balquhiddier
- 19 Just as I was in the Morning
- 20 Cadgers in the Canongate
- 21 Lady Louisa MacDonald's Strathspey
- 22 White Heather Jig
- 23 Balmoral Strathspey
- 24 Mairi's Wedding

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society
(Dundee Branch)

ANNUAL DANCE

In ANGUS HOTEL, DUNDEE
On FRIDAY, 12th MARCH, 1965

7.30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Dinner 8.30 p.m. TICKET 21/- Dress Formal

MUSIC BY THE ERIC STEWART QUARTET

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|---|---|
| <p>ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY DUNDEE BRANCH</p> <p>DANCE</p> <p>ROCKWELL SCHOOL HALL</p> <p>SATURDAY, 6th DECEMBER, 1969</p> <p>7.30 p.m. to 10.45 p.m.</p> <p>TICKET 7/6d (including refreshment)</p> <p>133</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Highland Reel 2 Hooper's Jig 3 There's Nae Luck About the Hoose 4 J. B. Milne 5 The New Rigged Ship 6 The Winding Road 7 Mr Wilson's Hornpipe 8 The Irish Rover 9 Braes of Breadalbane 10 Buchan Eightsome 11 The Sailor 12 Silver Tassie 13 Montgomerie's Rant 14 White Heather Jig 15 Robertson's Rant 16 Broun's Reel 17 Garry Strathspey 18 None So Pretty |
|---|---|

In 1961, membership stood at 310 Ordinary members and 183 Life members, There was then a slow decline in membership. In the mid 1970s, some members transferred to the new Angus Branch. In 1977, there were 108 Ordinary members, 159 Life members and 12 Long-term (10-year) members.



Alice Mann



George Mechan



Douglas Henderson

An important figure in the Branch was Alice Mann who taught children and adults and was also a pianist at Branch classes and at Summer School in St Andrews. She was a member of the Society's International dance team which travelled to many countries to give displays. She served on the Branch committee as Secretary and Chairman, and was awarded the Society scroll as a recognition of her service to the RSCDS. She was a leading member of the Branch Club which held weekly classes in the Angus Hotel, at the corner of West Marketgait and Nethergate, until it was demolished to make way for the current Overgate Centre.

John Drewry devised an eponymous strathspey for Alice which is danced to a tune she composed herself.

Alice Mann's Strathspey

Devised by John Drewry; music by Alice B W Mann

1-8 1C+2C set; 1C half turn RH moving down to 2nd place in centre facing up, 2C cast up and dance in to face down; 2C+1C set, 1C finish BtoB in centre facing opp side; 1C dance out and up to top, while 2C dance down to 2pl (1x,2,3)

9-16 1C+3C dance ladies chain up and down. Both couples finish facing out.

17-24 Reels of 3 on sides (6 bars) taking hands where possible, 2C in and up to start; 1C+2C continue the reel to change places; 2C finish facing out (2,1x,3)

25-32 2M+1L turn LH *while* 2L+1M turn RH on sides; 1C pass LSh to 2nd place 1L+3L turn RH *while* 1M+3M turn LH on sides (2nd time, turn 1½ to bottom of set).



George Mechan was an illustrious member of the Branch. He was a parachute instructor during the war and had wide interests in local music and dramatic societies. He was a headmaster and an excellent Scottish Country and Highland dancer. He travelled across the world as an examiner and adjudicator for the RSCDS, receiving the Society scroll in recognition of his efforts. He coached prospective teachers and was a hard taskmaster, insisting they 'don't damn by faint praise'.

An unusual award for George was winning the STV 'Top Team' competition in 1984 with fellow Branch members, Katine French, David Hollings and Helen Lawrenson, the £1000 prize being given to the Erskine Home for Forces Veterans.



Winners of the STV Top Team Competition 1984

Douglas Henderson taught Scottish country dancing for over 50 years. He devised a number of dances and different figures at a time when the RSCDS rather frowned on 'new fangled' dances. Figures such as the spurtle (*Glens of Angus, Blue Mess Jacket*), crown triangles (*Baldovan Reel*), balance in line right round (the spoke: *Cathie McLaren's Jig*), and set to first corner then dance round partner and set to second corner (*The Armstrongs' Rant*), have been used in other dances since. One of his earliest dance pupils was Jimmy Shand, who was taught the steps and figures and also the 'barring' for figures and dances. These classes took place in the Empress Ballroom near the docks, and subsequently in Rockfield High School in Lawton Road.

Douglas published a number of dance books, raising money for charity, and he had local musicians, including Betty Low, Nan Main, David Findlay, Winifred Bird Matthew and Angus Fitchet compose music for some of the dances. He was also a drummer in Mrs Bird Matthew's Band and would join the Maple Leaf Band on stage for one or two dances at East Kirk dances in Broughty Ferry. His popular dance, the *Baldovan Reel*, was one of the dances published in the Centenary book of the RSCDS in 2023. He was awarded the Society scroll by the Earl of Mansfield, President of the RSCDS.

Like Alice Mann, Bill Forrester gained his teaching certificate in the 1950s. He taught children's and adults' classes and also served on the Branch and Club committees. He was an accomplished dancer and a very popular and charismatic teacher until his death in 1997.

A well known local fiddler and composer was Angus Fitchet, who started playing in Jimmy Shand's Band before forming his own band. Later in life he joined Jimmy Blue's Band. One of his most popular tunes was used by Hugh Foss who devised the dance *J B Milne*. J B Milne was the owner of a number of cinemas in Dundee, east Scotland, the Borders, Stornoway and Lerwick, and a musician friend of Angus in their young days. This popular dance is a clever representation of the reels of film being wound, and of a cinema screen (second and third couples forming the outline) with the actors (first couple) performing on it.

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|--|---|
| <p>ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB DUNDEE BRANCH</p> <p>DANCE</p> <p>ROCKWELL SCHOOL HALL FRIDAY, 26th NOVEMBER, 1971</p> <p>7.30 p.m. to 10.45 p.m.</p> <p>TICKET 40p (including refreshment)</p> <p>140 Music by The Olympians</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Minard Castle 2 Miss Hadden's Reel 3 Jimmy's Fancy 4 The Baldovan Reel 5 The Wild Geese 6 The Garry Strathspey 7 The Buchan Eightsome 8 Machine Without Horses 9 The Deacon of the Weavers 10 J. B. Milne 11 Hooper's Jig 12 Birks of Invermay 13 Last of the Laids 14 Just as I Was in the Morning 15 The Silver Tassie 16 Ladies of Dingwall 17 Irish Rover 18 Balmoral Strathspey 19 None So Pretty 20 Montgomerie's Rant |
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In the 60s and 70s, Branch dances included a buffet from outside caterers and numbers attending were approximately 90-140. In addition to dances, balls and demonstrations, dancers had a memorable trip to a folk dance festival in Belgium.



Dundee
dancers at the
Izegem Folk
Festival,
Belgium 1971



Branch members at the St Andrews University Celtic Ball in 1977. Back row: Jack Brown, Ian Lindsay, Tom McLeod, Brian Lawrenson, Joe Burke. Bottom row: Molly Brown, Ruby Watson, Zena McLeod, Helen Lawrenson, Fay Burke. Tom was always very proud of his bright yellow McLeod tartan!

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Dundee Branch</p> <p>JUBILEE BALL</p> <p>to be held in The Angus Hotel, Dundee on Wednesday, 16th Nov. 1977 from 7.30pm till 12.30am</p> <p>Dinner served 8.30pm prompt</p> <p>TICKET £4.00</p> <p>Music by Jimmy Lindsay's Band</p> <p>Nº 073</p> | <p>PROGRAMME</p> <p>Circassian Circle & Waltz Country Dance General Stuart's Reel Jubilee Jig Jimmy's Fancy Two to One Hoopers Jig Miss Milligan's Strathspey Round Reel of Eight La - Russe Sugar Candle The New Petronella Miss Mary Douglas Seann Truibas Willichan Duke & Duchess of Edinburgh The New Rigged Ship The Lea Rig Montgomeries Rant Airdrie Lassies Robertsons Rant Buchan Eightsome Reel</p> |
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Dundee Festival 1975-2017

The Dundee Festival of noncompetitive dance was established in 1975, the 50th Anniversary of the Branch. A number of Branch members, including George Mechan, Helen and Gordon Beat, Ruby Watson, Brian Lawrenson and Helen Elder (Lawrenson) had attended the Goyt Valley Festival in Stockport, always receiving a loud cheer as the only Scottish team taking part. Brian chaired the first sub-committee, with Ruby becoming Festival secretary. Ruby continued in the role until her sudden death after the 1990 Festival. Subsequent organisers were Susan Robertson, George Watt, Fiona Mackie and Helen Lawrenson.

In the afternoon, after a Grand March, the children's and adults' teams alternated, with three dances per display, and this was followed by an evening dance. The Festival was an important event: to give children a platform for the dancing they had done over the year; for children to see adults enjoying dancing, too; to give all ages an opportunity to dance together; to allow the children's families to see them dancing, and also to see how they might continue to enjoy dancing as adults; and to have Hon. Vice-Presidents and other special guests visible to everyone.



Participants at the Festival

Local piper Fiona McConnochie composed a march for the Festival.

THE RSCDS (DUNDEE BRANCH) FESTIVAL MARCH

BY: FIONA MCCONNOCHIE



The Festival was popular until the new century when there was a gradual reduction in teams and a lack of volunteers to help organise the event. The Festival was eventually replaced by a Half-Day School and dance in 2018.

The Rosebowl Competition

In 1981, the Rosebowl Competition for children was started after the family of bandleader David Findlay donated the Rosebowl in his memory. There were four different trophies: the **Bill Forrester Cup**, for dancers of 10 years and under, the **David Findlay Rosebowl**, for those between 10 and 13, the **Ruby Watson Shield**, for those between 13 and 18, and the **George Mechan Trophy**, for any age-mix of dancers who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. The competition continued until 2017.



The Bill Forrester Cup



The David Findlay Rosebowl



The Ruby Watson Shield



The George Mechan Trophy

David Findlay, a BBC announcer and news presenter, was the first host of BBC's Take The Floor programme of Scottish Country Dance music, and leader of the Olympians dance band. He died following a car crash on his way home from a recording in Aberdeen.

Ruby Watson was a long-term, enthusiastic Secretary of the Festival. The round-the-room dance, Ruby Watson's Reel, was devised by young Dundee dancer, Louise Fordyce, in her honour.



Competition winners

Another popular Branch teacher was Mary Currie who taught dancing to many schoolchildren and the Dundee University Scottish Country Dance Society. DUSCDS remains an important means of introducing younger people to Scottish country dancing and many continued to support the RSCDS long after their student days had finished, in particular those who became couples.

Mary also organised very popular dances over the summer in the Marryat Hall for 25 years. These were initially run by the City Council with the Branch being asked to organise the sessions. When the committee proved reluctant to take this on, Mary took on the role herself. She produced programmes suited to the particular band on the night and did not repeat a dance throughout the summer. Dancers came from far and wide to attend these popular dances, including Summer School attendees.

Mary coached teams to appear in various music festivals in Arbroath, Perth and Aberdeen, often returning with silverware for their efforts. Her enthusiasm for the RSCDS Summer School in St Andrews was recognised by Roy Goldring who devised the dance *Tae Fife and Back* with Sandy Nixon composing the tune *Mary Currie*, which is also the tune used for *Granville Market*. She was cognisant of the need to support social dances and would cancel her class so that members could travel to the Forfar Branch Annual Dance, held on a Thursday evening.



Arbroath Festival 1992. Mary Currie is in the centre behind Brian Lawrenson (with cup).

Branch members had three trips abroad in the 1990s. The first was to Orléans, France, in 1996 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its twinning with Dundee. The second was to the Jork Blossom Festival in northern Germany in 1998 after a visit by their dance group to Dundee, all organised by Sven Leyffer. Sven had friends in the German dance group and became an enthusiastic Scottish country dancer after coming to Dundee University. The Blossom Book of dances was published in 1997 to commemorate the visit of the Jork dancers to Dundee. The third trip was to the Salland Folk Dance Festival in Holland in 1999. Branch members had another enjoyable trip to Jork in 2002.



In the sunshine in Orléans

From left: Tom McLeod, Kathryn?, Louise Fordyce, Stella Phillips, Sven Leyffer, David Hollings, Gwen Stone (Leyffer), Mary Conacher.

In 1994 and the two subsequent years, Branches were invited to provide demonstration teams to appear at the Edinburgh Royal Military Tattoo. Much work went into this, including the making of new outfits for the ladies, supervised by Helen Beat, and practices led by Branch teacher Hazel Hall. Teams congregated at Redford Barracks for a final practice session and then were allocated nights for their performance. Buses were laid on from Perth for dancers from Tayside. Dancing on the Esplanade was hard on the feet but the experience was very atmospheric. The dances were chosen in accordance with the theme of the Tattoo.



Dress Rehearsal for the Edinburgh Military Tattoo

DUNDEE REEL

No 1

Newsletter of the Dundee Branch of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

January 1995

1925

70th Anniversary

1995

A warm welcome to all members and friends on the historic occasion of our 70th Birthday. The newsletter contains present day news and a dance diary as well as some material from our archives which we hope will be of interest to you.

The title of our newsletter was chosen from the dance of the same name. This is a well known dance which first appeared in the Border Book and it is popular at Old Time dances in the Dundee area as well as at Scottish Country dances. It is interesting to note that one of the objectives of the RSCDS in the beginning was that each branch took note of variations in a particular dance in its locality (see opposite). Whilst variations in dances occur in different country areas with Old Time dances, notably the Lancers and Gay Gordons, such differences have largely disappeared in the RSCDS branches. One notable exception is indeed the Dundee Reel.

Many of us are dependent on our wee green books as an aide memoire at dances and this gives the Border Book version of the Dundee Reel - a 40 bar jig. After the initial reels of three on the side, the first three couples dance right arms across followed by left arms across. In Dundee, there is a circle to the left instead of right arms across, followed by left arms across. In addition, the Dundee version has an extra 8 bars with a second reel of three (1st couple on opposite sides) before the advance and retire. Yet another variation, occasionally seen, is a retire and advance instead of advance and retire. This obviously requires space and, hopefully our dances will remain too popular to allow this variation!

The following abstract is from the minutes of the first meeting of the Dundee Branch:

At a meeting held in Mathers' Rooms Dundee on February 9th 1925 at 4.30 pm, approximately fifty persons attended an address given by Mrs Stewart (Fasnacloich) Honorary Secretary of the Society.

In the absence of Dr. Angus McGillivray, Dr. A.E. Kidd took the chair. He explained that since Edinburgh and Glasgow had formed Branches of the Society it was felt that Dundee might follow suit. Mrs Stewart explained the aims and objects of the Society in the realm of research into the Country Dances of Scotland. She also explained that the formation of local branches was with the object not only of practising the dances but also each member investigating the various differences of perhaps the same dance in different areas.

It was then explained that local Branches made all their own arrangements and were self-supporting. Classes under the auspices of the Branches were to be taught by members who have passed the Teacher's Certificate standard.

Following upon Mrs Stewart's address Dr. A.E. Kidd moved from the Chair that 'Dundee form a Branch of the Scottish Country Dance Society' and this was seconded by Miss Sharp of Balmuir.

Dr. Angus McGillivray was elected President and Miss Sharp Vice President.

The term Royal in the title was granted by King George Vith in 1951.

70th Anniversary Dance
and Buffet, Angus Hotel
Sat 4th Feb, 1995, 7.30pm.
David Cunningham's Band

Tickets (£10) from:
Mrs Hazel Hall,
Seal House,
The Old Harbour,
Tayport, DD6 9AZ.

Circassian Circle
Wild Geese
Miss Milligan's Strathspey
Baldovan Reel
Dundee Reel
Dundee Whaler
Earl of Mansfield
*Joe Foster's Jig
Frae a' the Airts
Summer Wooing

1 R
24 J
S
R
BB J
S
R
J
S&R
38 R

Gavin's Reel
*Alice Mann's Strathspey
A Trip to the Drakensberg
Glens of Angus
Robertson Rant
Tribute to the Borders
Saltire Society Reel
*Butterscotch and Honey
J. B. Milne
Broun's Reel





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38 J
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*Instructions available

In 1995, Mary Cant produced the first issue of the ‘Dundee Reel’. Whilst in London, she found ‘The Reel’ very useful for information about upcoming dances.

The ‘Dundee Reel’ was issued twice a year and gave a list of dances scheduled throughout Tayside and Fife and included articles of interest to Branch members. Information about dances gradually became available online and so the ‘Dundee Reel’ became more of a magazine with interesting articles related to Scottish dance and music, and accounts of Branch activities.

The first issue included information on the dance the *Dundee Reel*, as danced in Dundee, and the programme for the 70th Anniversary dance in the Angus Hotel, which was demolished to make way for the Overgate Centre.

| DUNDEE REEL - DUNDEE VERSION | | | | | | 8x48 J | |
|---|--|--------------------|---|------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|
|  | 1 2 3  | 1 2 3 LA |  | S T_B |  | 2 1 x 3 ↑ Retire & advance | T_{R1}¹₂ |

3C/4C longwise set

In the 1990s, Branch membership was stable: approximately 100 Annual members, 85 Life members and 10-30 Long-term members. Dances were still well attended, with the Festival dance in 1994 having 130 dancers.

In 1999 and 2000, the Branch produced a show of music, song and dance in the Blyth Hall with performances from the Cecilian Choir, the Dundee Strathspey and Reel Society, and traditional musicians. This was in support of the Dundee Accordion Band and was well received. Sven Leyffer did much of the organising and the dancers had fun dressing in period costume with dances choreographed by Hazel Hall. The Band, led by Luke Brady, gifted a quaich to the Branch to be presented to the winner of future dance competitions.

A 75th Anniversary Ball in 2000 was held in the Blyth Hall, with music by David Anderson’s Band. Alice Mann was presented with a crystal bowl in recognition of her 50 years’ service to the Branch and the RSCDS.

Into the 21st Century

In the 1990s and into the new century, dances were held in the Marryat Hall, the Blyth Hall in Newport, Balgay Church Hall, and St Stephen’s and West Church

Hall in Broughty Ferry. Popular bands were: David Anderson, Colin Dewar, Jim Berry, David Cunningham, Nicol McLaren, Craigowl, and the Maple Leaf Band. In addition to playing in the Maple Leaf Band with her husband, Jimmy, Muriel Boal was a popular Scottish country dance teacher in the Dundee area.

In 2002, a First Foot Supper Dance was held in the Invercarse Hotel, at the instigation of Chairman, John White. This was a night for the Committee to enjoy a dance without having to organise catering. It has proved a popular event since then, renamed the First Foot Ball.

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Foot Supper Dance | The Gathering | Miss Nancy Arnott |
| | Hooper's Jig | Quarries Jig |
| Saturday 5th January 2002 | Autumn in Appin | Mr Iain Stuart Robertson |
| | J B Milne | Moment of Truth |
| | Bannocks and Brose | Muirland Willie |
| David Cunningham's Band | Balquidder Strathspey | Fraser's Favourite |
| | Mrs Stewart's Jig | Monymusk |
| | Anna Holden's Strathspey | C'est l'Amour |
| | Rest and Be Thankful | General Stuart's Reel |

In the new century, it became more commonplace to include recaps at dances and, with so many new dances, quick walkthroughs were popular and indeed necessary to engage new dancers. Experienced dancers still enjoyed the thrill of summer dances in Pitlochry with few recaps and a longer programme. It also became common to finish a programme with a dance which ended with a circle.

Children's and Teenage classes in the early evening continued at a few schools for some years. They participated in the Lord Provost's Youth Parade and gave demonstrations in the City Square. Many gained certificates on passing Medal Tests. As work patterns changed, with more after school care, and other more popular children's activities available, combined with fewer teachers, classes decreased to one children's class. Unfortunately, this class did not survive the COVID pandemic and sadly, no junior class exists at the time of the Branch Centenary.

The adult social dancing class and Spring Socials continued in Park Place Primary for a number of years until it was closed and demolished, with the class moving to St Andrew's Church Hall in King Street. The Technique class met in Harris

Academy gym, moving to Victoria Park Primary, Blackness Road, for a few years, then to a dance studio in the rebuilt Harris Academy.

Summer dances were held in St Stephen's and West Church Hall in Broughty Ferry from 2007 to 2016 with attendance gradually decreasing, and were finally abandoned. Those wishing to continue dancing over the summer attended dances in Blairgowrie, Perth, St Andrews, Pitlochry and further afield.

Membership declined slowly and by 2010 there were 62 Annual members and 17 Life members, the 10-year membership option having been withdrawn in the late 1990s. By 2018, numbers had dwindled to 51 Annual members, 5 Young adults, and 4 Life Members. A dedicated Beginners' class eventually helped to increase the membership, and in 2020 stood at 65 Annual members, 3 Young adult and 3 Life members.

The 90th Anniversary in 2015 was marked by tea at the Malmaison Hotel and a Ball held in the Bonar Hall with Nicol McLaren and the Glencraig Band.



Malmaison Hotel 2015.

Chair George Watt with former incumbents Fiona Mackie, Helen Lawrenson, Stella Phillips, Helen Beat, and John White.

90th Anniversary Ball.
RSCDS Chair (and Branch teacher) Jim Healy with Hon Vice-Presidents Irene Cruickshanks and Helen Beat.

The programme for the 90th Anniversary ball was:

EH3 7AF, Mrs Macleod, Sands of Morar, Muirland Willie, The Sailor, The Robertson Rant, Sugar House Wynd, Delvine Side; Flowers of Edinburgh, Laird of Milton's Daughter, None So Pretty, Margaret Parker's Strathspey, Sunshine and Sweetie's Jig, Up in the Air, the V-C Jig, Jean Martin of Aberdeen, Reel of the 51st Division.

A few days before the Half-Day School and Dance in March 2020, the whole country was put into lockdown because of the rapidly spreading COVID pandemic. Classes could not resume until September 2021. There was some dancing out of doors during this time and the occasional indoor get-together when restrictions allowed. The RSCDS provided online classes, with many teachers across the globe taking part. The Branch also organised online quizzes and concerts hosted by musicians Jim Lindsay, Ewan Galloway, Luke Brady, and Bill Ewan. Most members continued to support the Branch during this difficult time.

In March 2023, Branch members and students from Dundee and St Andrews, performed at the opening of the acclaimed Tartan exhibition in V&A Dundee.

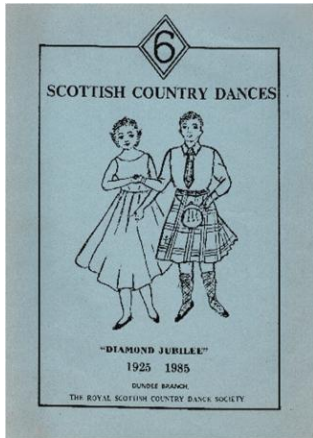


Standing: Geoff Bardsley, Don Marshall, Mary Cant, Janet Abel, Jo Reid, Sue James, Lijun Wang, Margaret Harley, Ali Reid, Bill Cant, Scott Band.

After COVID, some older dancers did not return to dancing and a number of groups in the area did not restart. Membership numbers were balanced between those leaving and joining. Like many clubs and societies, there were difficulties in recruiting new members in the 21st century and these were exacerbated after COVID. Concerted efforts were made to get new dancers into the Branch by advertising the Beginners class widely and on social media. Attracting men was particularly difficult. The Beginners class, taught by Lorna Valentine, has healthy numbers in 2025, with hopes that many will join the Branch. In 2024-25, membership numbers were 64 Annual, 2 Young adult and 2 Life.

Popular bands in Tayside running up to the Centenary were: David Oswald, Jim Lindsay, Nicol McLaren, Marian Anderson, Scott Band, Sandy Nixon, James Coutts, Frank Thomson and Ewan Galloway. Branch dances were held in the spacious assembly hall of Morgan Academy and attracted 60-80 dancers.

Dance Books Published by Dundee Branch



Diamond Jubilee Book, 1985

Dundee Branch Diamond Jubilee (H): *Lisbeth & Douglas Henderson*

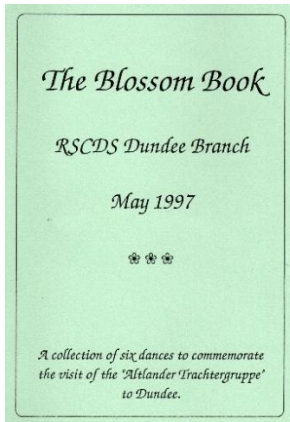
The Twa Brigs o' Dundee (S): *Irene Cruickshanks*

Geordie's Jubilee Jig: *George Mechan*

Alice Mann's Strathspey: *John Drewry*

The Jute Spinners Reel: *David Hollings*

Logan Bridge (S): *Nancy French*



The Blossom Book, 1997

Greetings from Dundee (J): *David Hollings*

Apple Blossom Time (R): *Willie Sime*

The Visitors from Jork (J): *Stella Phillips*

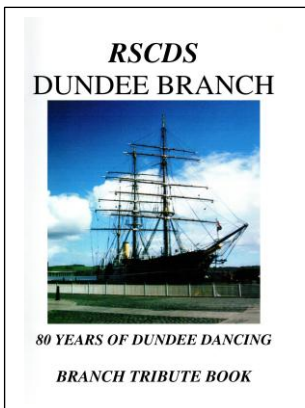
The Blossom Queen (R): *David Hollings*

The Peach Blossom Jig: *Karen Davidson & Louise Fordyce*

Reel Apples (R): *Damaris Hermey*

80 Years of Dundee Dancing, 2005

with music composed mainly by Luke Brady



The Chairman's Strathspey: *Fiona Mackie*

The Old Harbour (R): *Fiona Mackie*

Fiona Mackie's Jig: *Hazel Hall*

Cold hands, Warm Heart (S): *Fiona Mackie*

Fiona Paulin's Bairns (R): *Fiona Mackie*

The Jim Healy Jig: *Fiona Mackie*

Tom MacLeod's Strathspey: *Fiona Mackie*

Mary Currie's Marryat Dances (R): *Fiona Mackie*

The V-C Jig: *Fiona Mackie*

Luke Brady's Magical Music (R): *Fiona Mackie*

**THE
QUAICH DANCES
2010**



Scottish Country Dances
from the Dundee Branch of the
Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

The Quaich Dances, 2010

Dolphins in the Tay (R): *George Watt*
Genna's Wedding (S): *Bryan Lawrence*
Look! No Hands! (R): *Stella Phillips*
Mr Forrester's Strathspey: *Stella Phillips*
Miss Margaret Inglis (R): *Stella Phillips*
*Remembering Miss Cameron (S): *George Watt*
Sugar House Wynd (J): *Stella Phillips*
The C. M. Jig: *Andrea Re*
The Jimmy Boal Jig: *Gill Clark*
Weaving Homewards (R): *Norma Tringham*
*Winner of the Quaich

In 2025, a competition was held for a dance to celebrate the Centenary. Branch members submitted 4 strathspeys and 1 medley. The dance chosen by members was 'The Dundee Centenary Dance' devised by Sue James. The dance aims to interpret the 3 J's of Dundee namely Jute, Jam and Journalism together with our centenary. Bars 1-8 represent stirring the jam; bars 9-16 represent paper threading through the press; bars 17-24 represent weaving the jute; and bars 25-32 represent 100 years of dancing in Dundee. Recommended tune: The Sidlaw Hills by James Watson.

Dundee Centenary Strathspey

- 1-8** 1C+2C dance right hands across, then 2C+3C dance left hands across.
- 9-12** 1C cross RH and cast to 2nd place (2s step up), cross LH, 1L casts left to 1st place (2L steps down) WHILE 1M casts left to 3rd place (3M steps up).
- 17-24** Espagnole for 3 couples:
 17-18 2M+3M lead across RH changing places (2M in front)
 while 2L+3L lead across RH changing places (3L in front)
 while 1L also 1M dance across to opposite side curving left to face in.
 19-20 1L+3L lead across RH changing places (1L in front)
 while 2M+1M lead across RH changing places (1M in front)
 while 3M also 2L dance across to own side. 312
 21-24 3C also 2C turn LH while 1C turn RH.
- 25-32** All set on the side, 1L+3C and 1M+2C circle 3 hands round to the left, all set on the side.

Centenary Celebration, Malmaison Hotel 9th February 2025



Past, present and future
Chairs: George Watt, Janet
Abel, Bill Cant, Stella
Phillips, Helen Lawrenson,
Helen Beat



Piper: Geoff Bardsley
Speech: Chair Bill Cant



Cutting the Cake: Delia Abel & Helen Lawrenson

Half-Day School and Centenary Dance, 22nd March 2025

Centenary Dance
RSCDS Dundee
Saturday 22nd March 2025; Reception 7 pm
Jim Lindsay and his Band (4-pce)
 Morgan Academy, Forfar Rd, Dundee DD4 7AX
 Admission £10; Student £7; No Raffle; Please bring a cup

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Ruby Watson's Reel | 2cpl RR |
| EH3 7AF | 8x32 J |
| The Westminster Reel | 8x32 R |
| The Silver Tassie | 8x32 S |
| The V-C Jig | 8x32 J |
| <i>Teacher's Choice</i> | <i>Reel</i> |
| Alice Mann's Strathspey | 8x32 S |
| The Scallywag | 8x40 J |
| Kinfauns Castle | 5x32 S |
| The Castle of Mey | 8x32 R |
| <i>Interval</i> | |
| Mrs Macleod | 8x32 R |
| Links with St Petersburg | 8x32 J |
| <i>Teacher's Choice</i> | <i>Strathspey</i> |
| The Glens of Angus | 4x32 R |
| Midnight Oil | 5x48 J |
| The Wind on Loch Fyne | 3x32 S |
| Dundee Civic Jig | 8x32 J |
| Jean Martin of Aberdeen | 3x32 S |
| Maini's Wedding | 8x40 R |



The afternoon class with 65 dancers was very entertaining and taught by William Williamson from Dumfries, the immediate past RSCDS Chair. The dance, attended by 90, was a treat, with superb music from Jim Lindsay, Gillian Stevenson, Graham Berry and Malcolm Ross. The Teacher's Choice dances were the *Centenary Circle* and *The Publisher* from the Diack Dances.



Bill Cant (Dundee Branch Chair), William Williamson, Gary Coull (RSCDS Chair) and Dr Sebastian Wanless (RSCDS Chair-Elect).

Below left: class; right: dance.



Dundee Branch Chairpersons

| | | | |
|------|---------------------|------|-----------------|
| 1925 | Angus MacGillivray | 1988 | Helen Beat |
| 1926 | Alexander Kidd | 1991 | Stella Phillips |
| 1940 | Margaret (Meta) Dow | 1994 | Alice Mann |
| 1944 | Joan Kirk | 1995 | Helen Beat |
| 1945 | Alice Hutchison | 1998 | Harry Hall |
| 1951 | George Sharpe | 2001 | David Hollings |
| 1959 | George Mechan | 2002 | John White |
| 1961 | George Sharpe | 2003 | Derek Cochrane |
| 1962 | Douglas Henderson | 2005 | Shirley Mackie |
| 1964 | George Mechan | 2007 | George Watt |
| 1967 | Alice Wighton | 2009 | Helen Lawrenson |
| 1970 | Dorothy Nicoll | 2011 | Fiona Mackie |
| 1973 | George Mechan | 2013 | George Watt |
| 1976 | Alice Mann | 2015 | Stella Phillips |
| 1979 | Katine French | 2017 | Bill Cant |
| 1982 | Ruby Watson | 2019 | Fiona Mackie |
| 1985 | Alice Mann | 2022 | Bill Cant |

This booklet mentions a relatively small number of the many people who have contributed to the Branch over the last century. In addition to the Chairpersons above, many have taken on the demanding roles of Secretary or Treasurer. Others have contributed as committee members, editors of the Dundee Reel, and helpers at the various classes, functions, festivals and competitions. Dundee Branch classes have also benefited from the many talented teachers and musicians over the years and also input from the University Society. Although a small Branch, there remains much enthusiasm for Scottish country dancing to ensure it thrives well into its new century.

Compiled by Mary Cant with grateful thanks to Helen Lawrenson for her contributions and suggestions, March 2025.

Thanks also to Brian Lawrenson, Helen Beat, Gary Coull, Sven & Gwen Leyffer, Sue Steele, Alan MacPherson, Janet Johnston, Keith Rose and Mats Melin.