

SCOTCH CIRCLE

Vol 29 No 2

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RSCDS Canberra and District Branch Incorporated
GPO Box 1795, CANBERRA ACT 2601

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Chair's Message

Greetings to you all. And as I write, I realise how far we have already travelled in the dancing year. The various regular classes around Canberra and District are in full swing, and several successful social events have already taken place. Where does the time go?

A forthcoming event worthy of your support is a special class to be taken by Margo Priestley, who will very soon be arriving in Sydney from Scotland for the start of an RSCDS examination and teaching tour. The tour will take in visits to several centres and Margo will be in Canberra on Wednesday 3 June to instruct a general class for regular dancers. The class will take place at St Andrews Church Hall, Forrest, from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to experience a fresh approach to the teaching of Scottish country dancing and enjoy yourselves at the same time.

In addition to the special Branch class, you will find information about other forthcoming events contained in this issue, including the Belconnen SCD Birthday Social (20 June), the Branch Tea Dance (4 July) and the Canberra Ball (29 August).

Do any of our readers have anything they would like to know or say about SCD? Are there any SCD issues about which you are happy, or unhappy? If so, we would like to hear from you. Send your letter or contribution to June Browne at ceilidh@bigpond.com.au or to the Branch post office address shown above, no later than Friday, 31 July.

We have included in this issue the first of two instalments of "*The Twists and Turns of My Life*" by David Currie. David has been a Scottish country dancer for many years, possibly more years than he cares to remember. In 2005 he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in recognition of the SCD entertainment he organised over a period of many years, principally for the residents of retirement villages and nursing homes. In this first instalment, David relates how his military service during World War II took him to Scotland, where he met and married his wife Agnes; and where he eventually discovered Scottish country dancing.

Finally, a change to the RSCDS membership fee structure, effective from the start of the 2009/2010 financial year, offers a reduced rate adult joint membership for two adult members living at the same address. The 2009/2010 Branch adult single membership fee will be \$56, while the adult joint membership fee will be \$99. The adult joint membership brings with it a single copy of each issue of the RSCDS magazine "*Scottish Country Dancer*". You will find an annual membership/subscription renewal notice at the back of this issue.

IN MEMORY OF BARBARA MONAHAN

From about 1994, Scottish country dancing became and remained a significant part of Barbara's life. So it is fitting to reflect briefly on how it is that, in the pursuit of her newfound pastime, she made such a strong and lasting impression on so many Scottish country dancers in Canberra and District, in other parts of Australia, and in New Zealand too.

Quite simply, both as a dancer and a person, Barbara was special. Not only was her graceful and seemingly effortless dancing style greatly admired, but also her enthusiasm for the dance rubbed off on us – we seemed to enjoy our dancing all the more when she was among us. Then there was her warm-hearted and generous nature, and her willingness, always, to help others, which was an example to the rest of us. And Barbara could, and did, roll up her sleeves to take on many of the mundane tasks that needed to be done to help keep her dancing groups running smoothly – as a secretary, as a committee member, as a chairperson, and as a helper in other ways. No job was too big or too small for her.

Barbara took to Scottish country dancing like a duck to water - perhaps more like a duckling at first – but becoming fully-fledged in no time at all. As a duckling, she was an eager learner. In her fully-fledged state, she never forgot that she herself had once been a duckling.

To my mind, Barbara was imbued with that intangible quality which the co-founder of modern Scottish country dancing called the spirit of the dance. Barbara was interested, of course, in correct dance performance, and she was a very fine dancer. But beyond that, it was her obvious enjoyment of the dance, in her own distinctively charming and friendly style, which stood out and which endeared her to so many other dancers.

And thus - whether in Canberra and District, in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, or in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and whether as her dancing partner or in the same set or even in the same room - dancing in Barbara's presence invariably added to the enjoyment of dancing Scottish.

Although our sadness at Barbara's passing may linger a while, the many, happy memories of her will remain with us.

Jack Arthur

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE 2009

SPECIAL CLASS

BY MARGO PRIESTLEY, FROM SCOTLAND

Time: 7.30 pm; Place: St Andrews Church Hall, Forrest

Margo Priestley, who is visiting Australia from Scotland on an RSCDS examination and teaching tour, will be in Canberra to teach a general class on Wednesday 3 June from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm at St Andrews Church Hall in Forrest. Such visits are infrequent; hence this is a rare opportunity for you to experience a fresh approach to the teaching of Scottish country dancing. So why not come along for what promises to be an enjoyable evening?
Cost: members: \$4; non-members \$5

SATURDAY 20 JUNE, 2009

BELCONNEN SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS

33RD BIRTHDAY SOCIAL

Date: Saturday, 20 June 2009. N.B. EARLIER DATE THIS YEAR

Time: Dancing commences 7.30 pm; Supper at conclusion of dancing

Venue: Macquarie Primary School, Bennelong Crescent, Macquarie

Music: Strathmannan

Cost: \$10

Program:

Hooper's Jig; Davy Nick Nack; The Minister on the Loch; EH3 7AF; Linnea's Strathspey; The Morrison Measure; The Wild Geese; The Dream Catcher; Celtic Dreaming; The Kelloholm Jig; John McAlpin; The Homecoming Dance; Pelorus Jack; Bruce's Men; The Nurseryman; Mairi's Wedding.

SATURDAY 4 JULY, 2009

BRANCH POT LUCK TEA DANCE

Date: Saturday, 4 July 2009 (American Independence Day)

Time: Dancing 3-5.30 pm; Pot Luck Tea 5.30 pm

Venue: St Andrews Church Hall

Cost: \$5 plus a little food to share for a pot luck tea.

Join us on the 4th July to sample something a little different than our usual bill of fare. At our previous hosted dinner evenings, dining has preceded dancing. On this occasion, we shall reverse the order of proceedings. An afternoon of dancing to be followed by an early Pot Luck tea will also leave your American Independence Day Saturday evening free for other pursuits. The dancing program will be published in the June issue of the Branch email Newsletter. Bring some food to share with others. Enquiries to Elizabeth Low cnorton@pcug.org.au or Hisako Ewing ewing.i.h@gmail.com

34TH RSCDS Australian Winter School, Kiama, NSW

Date: 12-18 July, 2009

Contact: Clare Haack, Winter School Secretary

Phone: 0408 669 439

Email: winterschool2009@rscds.org.au

SATURDAY, 29 AUGUST 2009

The Canberra Ball

A special occasion to mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns

In The Great Hall of University House, Australian National University

with music by Stringfiddle

Saturday 29 August 2009, Drinks 7.00pm, Grand March 7.30pm; Tickets \$40

Programme:

1. Joie de Vivre (8x32J) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Bk 39; 2. Riggs of Corn (6x32R) 2C (3C set) Glasgow Assembly;
3. The Silver Tassie (8x32S) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Leaflet; 4. The Wild Geese (8x32J) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Bk 24;
5. Frae A' The Airs (8x32M [16S+16R]) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Leaflet; 6. The Homecoming Dance (4x32R) 4C (4C set) RSCDS Leaflet 2009 ; 7. The Lea Rig (8x32S) 2C (4C set) RSCDS Bk 21; 8. The Montgomeries' Rant (8x32R) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Bk 10; 9. Ayrshire Lassies (5x32S) 5C (5C set) Haynes, Carnforth 4; 10. Twa Rogueish Een (8x32J) 3C (4C set) Drewry, Rondel Bk;
- ~ 9.15 pm Burns Anniversary Ceremony and Supper
11. Duncan Gray (8x40R) 3C (4C set) Drewry, Rondel Bk; 12. A Man's a Man For A' That (8x32S) 3C (4C set) Drewry, Silver City Bk; 13. Cutty Sark (8x32J) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Bk 40; 14. Round Reel of Eight (1x88R) Sq set RSCDS Bk 27; 15. Burns Night (6x32J) 2C (3C set) McOwen, Boston Branch; 16 The Minister on the Loch (3x32S) 3C (3C set) RSCDS 4 dances 2008; 17. The Kelloholm Jig (8x32J) 3C (4C set) RSCDS Leaflet 32; 18. Mairi's Wedding (8x40R) 3C (4C set) Cosh, 22 SCDs plus 2

Visitors are especially welcome; For further information contact:

Elaine Arthur (02) 6254 7879 elaine.arthur@apex.net.au

Bruce Clark (02) 6288 2487 jbclark@webone.com.au

Clare Hughes (02) 6248 9090 friendly@homemail.com.au

Elizabeth Low (02) 6288 8177 cnorton@pcug.org.

Calendar for 2009 (as at May 09)

3 June	Special Branch Class by visiting RSCDS teacher Margo Priestley St Andrews Church Hall, Forrest 7.30pm
5 June	Belconnen SCD advanced social class
20 June	Belconnen SCD 33 rd Birthday Social
4 July	Branch "Tea Dance"
12-18 July	34th RSCDS Australian Winter School, Kiama, NSW (Sydney Branch)
7 August	Belconnen advanced social class
29 August	Canberra Ball
11 Sept	Belconnen advanced social class
16 Sept	Branch AGM
Sept	Marengo SCD Social
9-11 Oct	Far South Coast SCD Group, Bermagui Weekend
23 Oct	Belconnen advanced social class. Final for year
7 Nov	Branch end-of-year social
21 Nov	Burns SCD Group St Andrew's Night Celebration
4 Dec	Branch "Gentle Dancing for Gentle Dancers" class Annual Picnic
29 Nov	Bateman's Bay Caledonian Society Supper Dance
5 Dec	Combined Belconnen SCD and SCDCC Christmas Social

THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF MY LIFE by David Currie

Scottish Country dancing has been a big part of my life, for more than half of my 85 years and I have enjoyed every moment of it. When I look back there have been many decisions I have made which would have steered me in the wrong direction if I was to become a Scottish Country dancer. One such occasion was in Queensland in 1942 when I had to give a yes or no answer to a simple question which was to change my life.

Let me tell you my story from the beginning. I was born in Melbourne in 1922. Until I went to school, they tell me, I had a Scottish accent which was not surprising as I had Scottish parents. School days were not very exciting for me. The simple reason I guess was that I wasn't clever enough. At 14 ½, in one of the great depression years of 1937, my father took me out of school. Not long after that I became an apprentice compositor in the printing trade.

World War II had broken out when at the age of 19 I was called up for service in the Australian Army. My infantry unit took me to many places around the country eventually moving to Queensland. At one of the camps near Nambour, we had a visit from a group of Royal Australian Air Force people. They wanted to know if any of us wanted to transfer to the air force and train to become air crewmen. Air crewmen were never conscripted; they were all volunteers.

We had completed roughly nine months of army training and I decided a change to the RAAF might be a good idea. A few volunteers stepped forward and we were all given an aptitude test. We were all called before the Squadron Leader following the test and when it came to my turn I was asked if I really wanted to join the Air Force. I said "yes" to the Squadron Leader's question feeling they must have been undecided whether to accept me or not.

Weeks went by when we almost forgot about the visit by the RAAF. Then after returning from Christmas home leave in early 1943, we discovered our transfer to the Air Force had come through. So we were off home again to prepare for a new type of training. This commenced with classroom training. It was a case of back to school at Somers in Victoria. They decided I was to be a wireless operator.

I was posted to Parkes in New South Wales to do a six-month wireless course. I would venture to say that the long course was not so much about wireless but enough to acquire a desired speed of sending and receiving Morse code. I passed my course at Parkes then it was off back to Victoria again. My official listing was Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, so I had to complete a short course at West Sale before I was awarded my wings.

The next thing on the agenda was embarkation. All top secret of course, but we were all sure it was the UK we were bound for. In late January 1944, we boarded a liner called Nieuw Amsterdam and headed non-stop for Durban, South Africa. With short stops at Cape Town and Freetown in West Africa, we then found ourselves in Gourock on the River Clyde in Scotland. We were taken in a troop train on an overnight trip from Glasgow to Brighton in the South of England.

Well, here I was in the UK. I doubt whether that possibility ever entered my head when the Squadron Leader asked me that, now important, question some months earlier. Discovering Scottish Country dancing was still very much in the future. We had a fair bit of free time on arrival at Brighton and I chose to take a leave pass and head for Scotland where I had many relatives I had never met including my grandmother (my mother's mother, who my mother had not seen for more than 20 years).

It was exciting meeting these relatives especially my grandmother and she must have been thrilled to meet a grandson from Australia. I often wonder about my mother's inner thoughts when she read my letter about the meeting with her mother. They were never to meet again. Grandma died in 1944 and I was able to get special leave to attend her funeral. My mother only lasted another three years herself.

During that same visit to my grandmother, I went to see an uncle. Visiting him and his wife was a young lady called Agnes Hay. Her aunt was married to my uncle. We were introduced during that meeting and that was about all. It wasn't until the next leave that something happened. I am talking of course about the lady who was to become my wife. Needless to say, every time I got a leave pass from then on, and I received a few, I took the train to Scotland. We became engaged in September '44 and married in Perth, Scotland on 9 June '45.

I returned home to Melbourne at the end of '45 and Agnes followed me six months later on a bride ship, the Athlone Castle, specially chartered by the Australian Government. Agnes had plenty to interest her in the early days in Melbourne but we failed to get a house of our own and friends gave up their front bedroom for us and we shared their kitchen. We decided to start a family and Robert was born in June '47. Still with no house of our own, things were not getting easier, especially with a baby in our limited accommodation. I would have to say that at this point in time Agnes was far from settled in her new country.

One day in early '48, Agnes startled me with a request she made. The request was simple and straightforward: "Take me back to Scotland". Things were difficult I knew but they were bound to improve. I soon realised what the trouble was. Agnes was an only child who lost her father when she was only four. Until she married me and came to Australia, she had been living with her mother for something like 16 years. She was still caring about her mother like my mother did. Ships used to take a month each way so my mum could never do that. Agnes, Bob and I did have enough money for the trip, but only just. If I say yes to this request, will I simply be reversing the problem by making Agnes happy and upsetting me? After a few weeks thought, I decided to go in the hope we could be happier in Scotland.

My father was very much opposed to us going to Scotland. One particular evening there were tears in his eyes as he tried to talk me out of what we were doing. Sadly, he failed to show up at the wharf to wave us goodbye. The decision to go to Scotland was by far the most important decision of my life. Scottish Country dancing was still in the distant future and at least by going to Scotland I was pointing myself in the right direction.

In June 1948, we set sail for the United Kingdom in the P&O Strathaird. Agnes found before we left she was pregnant which didn't make her happy with a long sea voyage ahead. She had a young baby to look after as well. I helped wherever I could but for me, I enjoyed that month on board ship. After such a lovely holiday, arriving in Scotland dropped me into the real world. While Agnes was glad to be home and reunited with her mother, I began to repeatedly ask myself "What have I done?" For the first fortnight it rained every day.

I soon realised I was here in Perth for keeps and there was no way out. I was a printing tradesman and thanks to Agnes I had a job lined up in Perth before I left Australia. She had written to a friend who owned a printing office in Perth. After the rain stopped I decided I had better find this place and start working to earn some money.

Fortunately, I didn't sit around feeling sorry for myself. I made many nice new friends among workmates and church people. My workmates seemed to enjoy visiting each others houses and we took our turn at inviting them. I had never played badminton before but I decided to join the church badminton club.

We had chosen a time to travel when we were leaving one winter to enter the start of another, well almost. Scottish winters are real winters and I managed to survive the first one. Meanwhile, it was time for the birth of our second child. Helen Mary was born on 2 January 1949 which, from memory, was a nice winter day.

I said at the time that the summer of 1949 was the best I had spent anywhere. Day after day the sun shone, the temperature never above the mid 20s and next to no rain. I wasn't long in buying a bike which I would often ride after work out along the Edinburgh Road to Glenfarg on those wonderful twilight evenings. It was great tennis weather, another sport I took up. I even played lawn bowls. My feeling of depression had disappeared in the lovely summer of '49 and I guess it helped me settle down in my new country.

In the early days of our new life in Perth, television was yet to start transmission and everyone had to content themselves with radio. There were two half-hour programs of Scottish Country dance music on the BBC every week with the well known bands of the day taking their turn. For a young bloke brought up on Bing Crosby and the like, the music didn't turn me on at all – at first that is. I eventually came to enjoy the music and started tapping my feet in time like everyone else. One particular night in the '50s, a dance was to be held in the Perth City Hall. I said to my Scottish workmate and friend Ronnie Macfarlane, how about we go along and listen to the music live? For the small sum of five shillings, we could sit in the balcony.

I wasn't interested at all in the dancing but they came to this dance, I now know was the Glasgow Highlanders; I sat up in my seat when I noticed all the dancers dancing down the hall in step together and back. I was so impressed with what I saw, I immediately said to Ronnie, how about we go to a class and learn this dancing? I wish I could remember the date in the early '50s but this was the evening that set me on the road to 50 years of happiness as a Scottish Country dancer.

Ronnie and I found a class at Hillend on the Edinburgh Road south of Perth and we very soon became good enough to join the dancers on the floor of the Perth City Hall, dancing to all the bands of the day including Jimmy Shand and Ian Powrie.

Television eventually arrived in Scotland and I first watched TV like many others in a shop window. The BBC was televising the funeral of our Queen's grandmother Queen Mary. We eventually bought a TV set and as we were one of the first in the street to own one, we invited neighbours and relatives in to watch the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. We soon had another houseful to watch the first televised football match – the FA cup final starring the great Stanley Matthews.

(To be continued)

Scotch Circle is published by RSCDS (Canberra & District) and the Committee reserves rights of editorial control

Closing date for next Scotch Circle – Friday, 31 July 2009

Contributions and requests for electronic version to June Browne at ceilidh@bigpond.com.au

RSCDS Canberra and District Branch Inc
Membership renewal for financial year 2009/2010

Dear member or subscription holder,

Your renewal of membership of the RSCDS Canberra & District Branch for 2009/2010 will become due on 1 July 2009. Please note that Headquarters has amended their fee structure for this financial year introducing a new category Adult Joint (both 25+ both residing at the same address) this will be \$99 while the Adult Single membership will be \$56.

Would you please print clearly your current details in the spaces below.

Name

Name 2 (if adult joint membership)

Address:

Phone:

Email:

This year we have three options for payment.

1. If you wish to pay by cash, please hand this renewal notice and your payment to a committee member at a class.
2. If you wish to pay by cheque or money order, please hand this renewal notice and your payment to a committee member at a class or post to the Branch post box.
3. If you wish to pay by electronic transfer, please make your payment to the Branch account and advise the treasurer by email.

In each case we will return a membership card and receipt to you.

If you do not wish to continue your membership/subscription, please complete this form and return by post, or advise the treasurer by email.

- \$56.00 for adult single membership as cheque or money order is enclosed, or
- \$99.00 for adult joint membership as cheque or money order is enclosed, or
- \$10.00 for subscription to Scotch Circle as cheque or money order is enclosed, or
- I do not wish to continue my membership/subscription

Our postal address is:

Treasurer
Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Canberra and District Branch Inc
PO Box 1795
CANBERRA ACT 2601

For electronic payments our Branch account details are:

BSB: 062-901

Account number: 00905121

Account name: Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Canberra and District Branch Inc

Please ensure you label the transfer with your name/names so the payment can be identified in the bank statements.

Sincerely,

Mary Gellatly (Hon. Treasurer)

Email: marygellatly@hotmail.com