

RSCDS Ribble Valley Newsletter

January 2024
Issue 73



From the Chair

HAPPY NEW YEAR & HAPPY 30th BIRTHDAY

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a not too merry a New Year. The year ended with Christmas parties and the Hogmanay Dance which was in such high demand we could have sold all the tickets again!

A special thank you to Peter and Tracey for organising such a successful and enjoyable evening. A big thankyou too to Sandie for all her hard work in previous years, I hope you enjoyed it even more without the responsibility.

So what's in-store for 2024?

2024 marks the 30th Birthday of Ribble Valley Branch and this year we have some noteworthy activities and events being planned to make it a little different from every other year. As I've reported previously, due to our success, we have a little extra money in the kitty to spend on making this a special year. Jill is looking at how we can have clothing with the Ribble Valley logo, as many of us can only get the RSCDS ones and would like something that is just ours. The Summer Dance will be our Birthday Party, and the Committee are considering how we can make this extra special. The Autumn Dance has had to be moved this year due to the Hall not being available and is now very close to Halloween. I'd love to see a repeat of the 2021 trip where we all dressed up with a prize for the best outfit. There were some excellent costumes. Also, I have thoughts (this idea hasn't moved out of my head yet), of having another RV Book of Dances, as we have quite a few people who have written dances that aren't captured anywhere.

All in all, a lot to do and I thank every one of you for your continued support. Happy dancing

Sandra

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Special points of interest

- Facebook page : https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084280723762&locale=en_GB
- Website: www.rscdsribblevalley.org.uk

An Audience with Alan Ross

Ribble Valley, 'An Audience with Alan Ross'

We were incredibly saddened to hear of the death of Alan Ross on the 9th of December after his health deteriorated. As many of you know, Alan went through treatment for cancer in 2021 and as he recovered, he was able to get back to playing, and he and Lesley were able to resume their travels. He will be greatly missed by the whole music and dancing community both here, in Scotland and abroad where he was highly respected, and valued as a musician, and lovely kind and gentle man. Many people will be mourning his loss and we are particularly sad for Lesley and his very close family at this difficult time.



We were incredibly honoured that he shared his musical life story with us so recently, and this is a short report of our discussions.

The Ribble Valley 'An Audience with' lockdown programme finally ended on the 7th November with a fascinating conversation with Alan Ross. It was particularly appropriate that Alan should join us: he was the first professional musician to take the plunge and join our embryo 'Lock down' activities. He helped the development of the monthly ceilidhs which became such a wonderful support for many people in those difficult times. That was not his only 'first' for Lancashire. He was the first musician to come to Lancashire since the days of Jimmy Shand, coming for Tom Smith's father when he came with the Lothian band when booked by Chris Bell for Preston Caledonian in 1982.

Alan's musical story was fascinating, and I am only able to share a tiny glimpse of all he shared with us. Having been surrounded by music as a child and young man, he told us he never actually 'practised', but came home from school every day and played his accordion till bedtime! He told us about his first performance and how he was picked up by the Lothian Band when very young. He played with them all over the world for 20 years before embarking with his own band. He spoke about the different genres of Scottish music and the people who influenced him across his career, and told us about the 4 accordions he owned. Finally he shared some of the challenges of managing a professional career and his musical activities, and he shared some of the hobbies he enjoys.

It was a pleasure to listen to him, and from the feedback from all the people who attended, it was greatly appreciated and was a very fitting end to the Ribble Valley Lockdown activities.

(Written by Sarah Horne)

End of Year Christmas Parties

Visit our Facebook page
for photographs from
the parties

Who doesn't love an end of year Christmas Party? All three of our Ribble Valley classes enjoyed a Jacob's join to help celebrate the festive season. The Euxton beginners' class was on Sunday 10th, Fulwood's all abilities class was on Monday 18th with the Intermediate class celebrating on Wednesday 20th of December. The dancing was light-hearted and fun with many laughs heard throughout the parties. A party goer exclaimed, "How could you not enjoy Scottish Country Dancing when you have as much fun as this."

Our Ribble Valley Teachers: Stephen Brown

When I was a much younger man, I went on walking holidays, and in the evening we did what is now known as ceilidh dancing, including The Dashing White Sergeant, The Eight-some Reel, Strip the Willow, and The Virginia Reel, amongst others. At age 31, and looking for something to get involved with, I saw Scottish Dancing being done socially (in Perth); soon afterwards, learning that a colleague had started dancing, started myself, first in Wrea Green then in Preston, under Tom Smith Snr. A year later, I joined what was then a local authority class in Penwortham, first under Betty Lynch then under Doris McCutcheon, soon becoming more proficient in steps and general technique. During my 30's, there were day schools in Southport and Manchester, and a weekend school in Newcastle, and at age 39, joined the RSCDS, attending the advanced class in Manchester.

While in Manchester, I was one of those volunteers (known as stooges) who are taught by exam candidates as part of the exam. I got to thinking "could I do this?" It turned out I couldn't as, without knowing it, I had become increasingly ill over several years, and my exam attempt at age 40 in St. Andrews was a failure; however, at age 43 I had fully recovered my health and my confidence, and passed at the second attempt. My finals at age 45 were also a success. Between those two exams I did some teaching practice at the local authority class in Ribbleton, then taught by Sarah Horne, the class later becoming the direct predecessor of Ribble Valley Branch. I had a class in Southport Branch from age 46 to age 56, but I became increasingly unhappy in the branch, and joined Ribble Valley Branch later that year.



The History of Hogmanay

It is believed that many of the traditional Hogmanay celebrations were originally brought to Scotland by the invading Vikings in the early 8th and 9th centuries. These Norsemen, or men from an even more northerly latitude than Scotland, paid particular attention to the arrival of the Winter Solstice or the shortest day, and fully intended to celebrate its passing with some serious partying.

In Shetland, where the [Viking](#) influence remains strongest, New Year is still called Yules, deriving from the Scandinavian word for the midwinter festival of Yule.

It may surprise many people to note that Christmas was not celebrated as a festival and virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years, from the end of the 17th century to the 1950s. The reason for this dates back to the years of [Protestant Reformation](#), when the straight-laced Kirk proclaimed Christmas as a Popish or Catholic feast, and as such needed banning.

And so it was, right up until the 1950s that many Scots worked over Christmas and celebrated their winter solstice holiday at New Year, when family and friends would gather for a party and to exchange presents which came to be known as hogmanays.

There are several traditions and superstitions that

should be taken care of before midnight on the 31st December: these include cleaning the house and taking out the ashes from the fire, there is also the requirement to clear all your debts before “the bells” sound midnight, the underlying message being to clear out the remains of the old year, have a clean break and welcome in a young, New Year on a happy note.

Immediately after midnight it is traditional to sing [Robert Burns](#)’ “Auld Lang Syne”. Burns published his version of this popular little ditty in 1788, although the tune was in print over 80 years before this.

*“Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never
brought to mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot and auld lang
syne*

*For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne,
We’ll take a cup o kindness yet, for auld lang syne.”*

(Taken from an article by Ben Johnson (Historic UK))

Thank you Sandie!

Since 2015, Sandie has been the host of Hogmanay alongside Judy; together they always ensured an entertaining evening was had by all. Sandie has decided to hang up her organising hat for the event and has passed the reins on to Peter and Tracey. Everyone here at Ribble Valley RSCDS would like to thank Sandie for all she has done to provide excellent entertainment, choice of dances and creating a very fun and enjoyable way to celebrate Hogmanay. Hopefully Sandie enjoyed this year’s event without the stress of organising and hosting it!

Celebrating Hogmanay!

See the gallery section on the website or visit our Facebook page for photographs from the event

Hogmanay 2023

Dancing, quizzes, socialising, and eating—what more could you want for a fiver on New Year's Eve!

Ribble Valley's RSCDS annual Hogmanay celebration took place at Samlesbury village hall – obviously on 31st December 2023! Over 60 tickets were sold ensuring a lively atmosphere. Peter and Tracey took over the reins of running the event where they carried on the usual activities but also added some of their own. "It's been a learning curve for us both as we tried to put together a set of dances that would appeal to all abilities of dancers," Peter stated. The stars allocated to each dance made it easy for less experienced dancers to know which dances they could dance to. Enjoying the evening, a new dancer exclaimed that it was a wonderful evening. "I usually stay at home and just watch the TV—what have I been missing all these years!"

Thanks also need to be said to Judy for organising the refreshments, and other committee and branch members who helped set up the hall for the evening.

Jeff was the surprise of the evening as he welcomed everyone in to the hall with his wonderful bagpipe playing. Thank you Jeff—you made the night very special indeed.

The raffle was also a success with over £150 raised for Derian House. Thank you all.

See our Facebook and Website page for more photographs.

Future events:

[Nice & Easy Dance](#), Friday 1st March 2024, 7.30 p.m., at Broughton Club, music by Nicky McMichan and Martainn Skene.

[Annual Trip](#)

Oban, Friday 12th April– Monday 15th April 2024

[Spring Dance](#), Sat. 27th April 2024, 7 p.m., at Broughton Club, music by Robert Whitehead.

[Summer Dance](#), Sat. 10th August 2024, 7 p.m., at Broughton Club, music by Sandy Nixon.

[Autumn Dance](#), Sat 26th October 2024, 7 p.m. at Broughton Club, music by Ewan Galloway

Classes Information

Monday classes The beginners & all-abilities class runs every Monday at Christ Church Hall, Fulwood, at 7.30 p.m., except Bank Holidays. This class has a break for a short period during the summer (approximately 8 weeks)

Wednesday classes The Intermediate and Social class runs every Wednesday at Christ Church Hall, Fulwood, at 7.30 p.m. (*This class does not break for Summer*)

Sunday classes The beginners' class, runs on Sundays at Euxton Community Centre, 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. This class breaks at Easter until around the third week in September. There may be a few summer classes for social dancing and refreshing memories.

This year's committee

Chairman: Sandra Lloyd, tel. 07989 139355.

Hon. Secretary: Michael John, tel. 01772 713018. (Address 42 Marina Drive, Fulwood, PR2 9SB.)

Hon. Treasurer: Stephen Brown, tel. 01772 748034.

Jill Burrows, tel. 01253 890046.

Judy Grimsey (Membership Secretary), tel. 01772 716301.

Peter Holmes (Online Media Administrator) tel. 07724 875543.

Tracey Holmes, tel. 07742 699490.

David and Margaret Stoney, tel. 01257 241585.

Chris Waddington (Ticket Secretary), tel. 01253 761055.

Catherine Walsh, tel, 07837 654222.

Mark Youlton, tel. 07768 006433.

Joan Youlton, tel. 07944 344360.

New Year Start dates for all Classes:

Sunday Class: 7th January 2024

Monday Class : 8th January 2024

Wednesday Class: 10th January 2024

Happy Dancing in 2024!

Editor: Tracey Holmes

If you have any articles that you would like to be included in future newsletters, please either pass them to me in a class or email holmestracey37@gmail.com