

RSCDS Ribble Valley Newsletter

April 2024
Issue 74



From the Chair

It seems a long time since the last newsletter and so much has happened whilst I've been away. We've had some friends who are recovering from illness, Chris and Ruth, and Susie in her bereavement. Our love and best wishes go out to you all and we hope to see you soon, maybe not dancing just yet!

The Nice and Easy Dance, the annual trip, this year to Oban and the Spring Dance have all been very successful, the organisation and planning for all these events is considerable and I want to personally thank everyone involved with the arrangements and everyone who contributes to make these events such fun and so successful. That includes all Dancers and Trippers!

As this year is our 30th Anniversary and I wanted to return some of the money we've accrued back to you as dancers, we have set the price of the Spring and Autumn Dance tickets this year at a nice round sum of £10, except for the Summer Dance which will be £15. I will also be celebrating a big Birthday and I want us to have a joint celebration in the summer.

We still have a lot to do, and I thank every one of you for your continued support.

Happy Dancing Sandra



Oban Trip

As always, Jill and her team plan and deliver an excellent trip: this year's trip to Oban was no exception. We are thankful for the amount of time, effort and creative thinking that you all complete. The trip is always very enjoyable. Read further on in newsletter for how Jill plans the trip, photographs and a first timer's account of their trip experience.

Branch Clothing

Keep an eye out at branch classes for a selection of T-shirts and polo shirts with the branch logo on. These will be a selection of what will be able to be ordered. An order form will be available soon.

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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



Nice and Easy Dance held at Broughton Club. Music by Martainn Skene & Colin Garvin

For photographs see Facebook or the website

Our annual Nice and Easy evening was a complete success. All of our novice dancers were able to dance the entire programme as this had been put together with them in mind. Regular practice of these dances in the previous weeks' classes (Sundays and Mondays) enabled them to dance without looking like rabbits in headlights for the whole evening. Laughter was heard throughout the night as dancers showed off their newly developed skills. One of the dancers commented by saying, "Thank you to everybody involved in planning and de-

livering a great "Nice and Easy" evening last night. Also for all the teaching and practical support with techniques and moves over the past few months. The website with the link to cribs and videos has been invaluable too." For more photos see the website or Facebook.

Our latest teacher in the spotlight: Joan Thompson

I have been dancing for nearly 70 years! Before you say it – you would think I would be better at it than I am! I started as a child with Orpington Caledonian Society in their children's class. In my teens I started to attend day schools and dance afternoons and big band dances throughout Kent. While studying to be a teacher in Manchester I gave it a miss but as soon as I was in a steady job I was back on the dance floor.

I moved back to Manchester in 1972, joining the Manchester Branch of the RSCDS and their classes. On the last Saturday in September in 1972 I attended the Manchester Day School which was a huge event in those days with 4 classes in the morning and 4 more in the afternoon and a Lacrosse tournament being played outside. At the end of the first dance in the morning I homed on the only person in the room that I knew. John did the same and John and I were inseparable for the rest of the day and married less than a year later.

We both attended Manchester classes for some years until we moved to Euxton. We tried to find dancing locally and attended Doris' class briefly, but it did not fit with John's work pattern. We discovered the Thistle Society Wigan and joined in all the activities they did: shows, competitions, children's festivals, on top of classes and dances. While with Thistle Society, I decided I wanted to teach dancing – no idea why. So 30 plus years ago I went through the old system and passed my full certificate in illustrious company of David Hall and David Queen. I taught the beginner's class at Thistle for several years.

Just as I qualified, Lucy's School wanted the School Hall used more to help stop vandals, so I started a Children's class which ran for over 10 years. By this time John and I were attending class at Ribble Valley. Don Barnes, the secretary at the time, knew I had a full certificate and asked me to fill in for David on a Monday when he was called away by work. He also asked me to teach on a Wednesday, which, with great relief I had to decline as it clashed with my Children's class. That was a step too far! How I was persuaded in the end I have no idea as I still find it a bit intimidating. Another thing I was never going to do was stand on the stage and recap dances – it just shows you how a hobby can increase your confidence.

In 2016 I had the (bright!) idea of starting a dedicated beginners' class!! However it has become one of the highlights of my week and the Branch has grown and reached to so many new people. Some have come once and said never again but most come and stay. It is great to see people become more confident and continue to grow into well rounded dancers and begin to dance with other groups. Half the current committee have come through this class and we now have Peter training to instruct dancing. I think it was a good idea to start the Sunday Class?



Spring Dance held at Broughton Club. Music by Robert Whitehead

*Smiles all round dancing
to an excellent pairs of
musicians!*

For photographs see Facebook or the website

The recent Scottish Country Dancing event hosted by our local branch was a delightful gathering filled with laughter, camaraderie, and of course, the graceful art of dance. Held in the cosy community hall, the atmosphere was buzzing with excitement as members eagerly awaited the evening's festivities.

One of the highlights of the event was undoubtedly the assortment of delicious cakes lovingly baked by both the committee and members of the branch. From millionaire's shortbread to decadent chocolate treats, there was something to satisfy every sweet tooth and fuel the dancers throughout the night.

Amidst the swirl of tartan skirts and lively music, provided by Robert Whitehead, the dance floor echoed with laughter and joy. As one participant aptly put it, "When I saw the list of dances I wasn't sure I'd be able to dance them—but the star system helped me to know which ones I could dance." This sentiment encapsulated the inclusive spirit of the branch, where dancers of all skill levels could join in the merriment and share in the joy of Scottish country dancing.

Overall, it was an evening filled with warmth, friendship, and a celebration of Scottish dancing. For more photos see Facebook or our website

About Oban:

Oban is a resort town within the Argyll and Bute council area. Despite its small size, it is the largest town between Helensburgh and Fort William. During the tourist season, the temporary population can increase to 24000 people. Oban occupies a setting in the Firth of Lorn.

Ribble Valley

Planning for the trip:

The amount of work that goes into planning our annual trip is immense and we are very grateful to Jill (and others who support her) for organising the event. Jill explains everything about planning the trip:

PLANNING THE RIBBLE VALLEY TRIPS by Jill Burrows

The planning for a trip will normally start about 12-18 months before we go. First I need to find a local group to host a dance for us or have enough room to let us join an existing dance. Then, I need to find a reasonably priced hotel nearby that is big enough to cope with a coach party. This is harder than you may think, because the majority of hotels don't have over the 30 bedrooms, which we require. Also if they only have that many rooms, most do not want one party taking over the whole hotel, presumably in case of cancellation and leaving them with nothing! It is hard to find out how many bedrooms a hotel has without contacting them, so it can take a while to find a suitable hotel, especially when we also require a ballroom or large meeting room for our ceilidh!!

Finding a local group isn't easy either. However it is a lot easier if I am known to them because they know that I deliver! When I email to a group where I don't know anyone, a lot of them seem to find it hard to believe that I will bring so many dancers and some don't seem to want to put on an extra dance to accommodate us! Of course the more trips that I run, the more people have come across us, which helps!!

Once I have a hotel and a local group willing to host us, I then ask the hotel to hold a couple of dates in March and in April until I hear back from the local group. The local group then chooses which date they prefer so as not to clash with any other dances in their area. Some prefer a Friday and others prefer a Saturday dance, which is why the day of the week that we go and come back may vary.

Once I have a hotel and a dance, my biggest worries are over!! The next step is for me to contact the coach firm for the price and to confirm our dates, where we are going and hopefully book Ben as our driver!

I can then relax for a while, just looking at possible places to visit! I do my initial costings and write out and print the application forms ready to go out to all members at our AGM in June.

I work the costings out by having joint costs (eg coach, hire of ball room, tips, planning etc) anything that has to be paid regardless of how many people go and individual costs (eg hotel, entry to venues, dance ticket, meals out etc). The joint costs are divided by the number of people going and added to the individual costs, so the joint costs reduce with the more people that we have on the coach. Sandie collects the deposits from everyone to give to Stephen and sends me a spreadsheet with all the names and any specific requests.

I normally go up to Scotland in the summer so that I can check out the suitability of any venues and meet up with the hotel manager to go through our various requirements.

I check out numerous venues to find hopefully, interesting and suitable ones for us, expecting the weather to be at its worst! Over the years there's a few places that I have considered, which on paper sounded ideal, however once there, not suitable at all for various reasons! Examples of this are: the coach unable to gain access or turn around or insufficient toilet facilities for 50 people!! Therefore I have found that every venue under consideration needs a visit as well as reading the general information provided on their website!

Whilst in Scotland, I try to collect as many leaflets and maps as I can, relating to the places that we are visiting. However this is becoming harder as the years go by, a lot of venues now just put their information onto the internet to save on costs. The ones that are still available are limited and I cannot always get the numbers that I need for you all. I may have to visit a few places or go in two or three times and sometimes send friends in to collect a few more for me! So please look after any leaflets that you do receive, as I may have had to resort to devious methods to obtain them for you!!

Once back from my “holiday” I need to write to the hotel and all the venues confirming everything that has been discussed. This is to make sure that at a later date “our recollections don’t vary” on what was discussed and agreed upon! In the New Year the emails all start again as some venues don’t know their prices until then. I also need to know how everyone wants paying. The costings are continually changing so any “extras” given are not guaranteed as they can’t be worked out until just before we go. The “extras” will also depend upon things like, how many National Trust members we have if we are visiting a National Trust property, whether I can negotiate free entry for the driver and the guide (me!) or whether we have to pay to park the coach anywhere, to mention just a few things!!

As soon as Sandie has collected the final payments in, I can send my guest list with any special requests to the hotel. I like to make sure that my list is in before any other parties that may be staying at the same time! I also have to arrange to pay the hotel.

I’m slow I know, but it takes me hours and hours to work out the timings!! Places for our regular toilet stops on the way up and back, all to fit in with the driver’s hours, breaks and allowing time to get everyone on and off the coach. I also need to work out the timings for the pick-ups when we go and when away, for visiting the various places. Once this is done, I send it to the coach firm for them to confirm that the driving regulations have been met. They usually do, with only very minor alterations occasionally, if necessary!

About this time I usually start writing the itinerary, telling everyone exactly where we are going, what is happening and when. I usually meet up with Sandie so that I can dictate it to her and we can transfer all the new information onto last year’s itinerary and add any new pictures which are relevant.

Next, I need to compile the seating plan for the coach, hopefully accommodating the various requests received and seating people near to people that they get on with! Not always easy when we have a full coach! I will then print everything out!! The itinerary, the dance cribs, coach seating plans are put them into envelopes with various leaflets about the venues and given out to the trippers. This is what everyone has been eagerly awaiting, probably unaware of how long it takes to get everything co-ordinated and confirmed!

Once this is done, I can now concentrate on the parking and pick up points for everyone and make sure that I am holding your current mobile number. I also need to sort out the music, cribs and callers for the last night ceilidh and to make sure that we have the CD player and speakers with us.

The last thing to organise is the coach catering which Judy helps me with. We have both done it for so many years now that we have our own lists and we know exactly what we need! I also collect a list of people who are prepared to bring us some boiling water in a thermos flask. From past experience we don’t trust the coach water tank and we want to ensure that we can serve you all a hot drink on the journey up!!

Hopefully, if I have done my preparation right, the trip will run smoothly and to plan, although I can never guarantee everything, especially things outside of my control! Those of you on the Fort William trip a few years ago may remember the problem I had when one of our venues was closed due to bad weather conditions!!

Back home and while the rest of you are unpacking and relaxing, I am busy trying to balance the books to account for everything that we have spent, while we were away and balance it with the money Sandie has taken in! For me that’s the worst part of the whole trip!!

However, I must be a glutton for punishment because next year’s planning is already well under way!!

Dunfermline Thursday 27th—Sunday 30th March 2025

Oban:

Ribble Valley RSCDS trip to Oban

Home for three nights—
spending time with lovely
people; creating lots of
memories and dancing the
time away!

Clachan Bridge

(the "Bridge over the
Atlantic")

For photographs see Facebook or the website

The name "The Bridge over the Atlantic" appears to have been designed to draw people in to see it. It is quite right that people should be so drawn in, as it is a very fine location. The bridge was built in 1792, therefore has lasted 230+ years so far. It connects the mainland to the island of Seil, which was once a major source of slate as a building material. There is a group of houses by the bridge, and a hostelry called "Tigh an Truish", that is "House of the Trousers". There are a number of theories to account for the name, some more likely than others. The theory published at the site is that it was used by workers to change out of their then-forbidden kilts into trousers, when travelling back to the mainland. Further along the road, at the village of Ellenabeich, there is a very interesting museum run by volunteers, where it is published that Tigh an Truish was occupied by a family of trouser makers. Ellenabeich has a tiny ferry to the well-populated island of Easdale. It is easy to reach Clachan Bridge and Ellenabeich as a day trip from Oban, even without a car, as there are 5 or 6 buses a day from Oban.

I think I'm right in saying that the only other mainland-to-island bridge in Scotland is the Skye bridge at Kyle of Lochalsh. England has several bridges to estuarial islands in the South-East, also Walney Island in Barrow-in-Furness. Wales has the two bridges to Anglesey. By Stephen Brown

Hamish found moonlighting!

For photographs see Facebook or the website

Message from Janet Moon: I would like to send many thanks to Jill for organising yet another brilliant trip to Scotland. Not forgetting Judy and Sandie who help her to make sure it all runs smoothly. I must also express my thanks to everyone else on the trip for their wonderful support and above all friendship. I am looking forward to next years adventure!

First Timers' experiences of a Ribble Valley Trip

Having been to classes on Sundays, Mondays & Wednesdays, we decided to bite the bullet & go on the RV annual Scottish trip this year ...to Oban. We are pleased that we went on a very enjoyable break. Bit tired out afterwards though.

Everything was expertly arranged by Jill, with nothing for us to do, other than be on time.

The journey up was well catered for by the Heinz beans twins of Jill & Judy and the reliable driver, Ben. Even they couldn't prevent the rain and M6 holdups, but we got to Oban early evening.

Suitably fed & watered by the really efficient hotel staff, we had a practice session for the dance the next evening.

Jill had arranged a trip across the Atlantic on Saturday...but we just wandered around Oban a stunning place with its fantastic views.

We swamped the local branch at the Saturday evening dance in a church hall in Oban. They were extremely welcoming and set up a great dance, with local musicians and an expert MC and even some nibbles and coffee to keep us going.

Sunday dawned, then rained, & we went to Inveraray. More food arranged by Jill and laid on at the George Hotel. Then a visit to the Inveraray Jail.... interesting & sobering how people were treated.

Sunday night was our Ceilidh. Dancing and let's say some interesting & unexpected in-between acts....hilarious. There is a video....apparently !! All went so quickly and we were soon on our way home, with one more well organised event via Bannockburn where the Scots won!

The trip allowed us to get to know people much better than a hello, goodbye, set, cast, right hands across etc etc allows, & it was great fun.

All credit to the organisers, who made it all so simple for everyone, although it probably wasn't & we are grateful for their own time & effort that they put into something for the enjoyment of others.

Written by Joan & Mark Youlton

Future events:

Summer Dance, Sat. 10th August 2024, 7 p.m., at Broughton Club, music by Sandy Nixon.

Autumn Dance, Sat 26th October 2024, 7pm at Broughton Club, music by Ewan Galloway.

Hogmanay, Tuesday 31st December 2024, 8pm at Samlesbury Village Hall, recorded music.

Nice & Easy Dance, Friday 7th March 2025, 7.30pm at Broughton Club, music by Robert Whitehead.

Scottish Trip : Dunfermline. Thursday 27th March—Sunday 30th March 2025.

Spring Dance, Sat 26th April 2025, 7pm at Broughton Club, music by Nicol McLaren

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 finished for the Summer on 28th April. Over the summer months we meet once a month for easy social dancing. We will meet on:

12 May 24 9 June 24 7 July 24 18 Aug 24

These sessions are aimed at dancers with a little experience, they are not suitable for beginners. Please get in touch if you want to know more

New Season will start on 22nd September 2024 this is an ideal time for new people to start as we go back to the very beginning!

Look out for our next edition: 30th Anniversary special where a history of the branch will be included.

This year's committee

Chairman: Sandra Lloyd, tel. 07989 139355.

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

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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