

RSCDS Ribble Valley Newsletter

August 2025
Issue 79



From the Chair.....

Another fantastic Summer Dance – thank you to everyone who made it so enjoyable. Good music, good dancing, good food and above all good company. Proof of all our fun can be found in the pictures from the Dance on page 9. Also, I thought it might be interesting for you to read about the Band and for them to share some of their stories. Ewan very kindly took time out of his busy schedule to give us ‘a musician’s view – from behind the music stand’ which you can read on page 7.

On Wednesday 20th August, David Queen will be taking the class and teaching us some of the new dances from Book 54 and I hope lots of you will be able to come along and join in the fun. From September I’m planning a new notification which will let you know ‘what’s on’ in the forthcoming month – who is taking which classes and we’ve also made all Wednesday’s a social dance class with the first Wednesday being a ‘members choice’ evening where you can put your favourite dances on the programme, although the exception will be 5th November as Peter will be taking this one. You may also want to do the recap for your dance, although this is purely voluntary.

You may remember last year Sarah Horne gifted the Branch a 30th Anniversary book full of pictures and memorabilia, thank you Sarah. The book is slowly being passed around members, however, if you haven’t had a chance to see it, you can now view it online at the link either on the right or on page 3.

For your diary, we have had to make a date change to the Nice & Easy Dance for 2026, as we have struggled to get a band who are available on a Friday evening. We have long considered changing to a Saturday evening and this has forced the issue further. Many bands are booked at least a year in advance, so we decided to change the day to a Saturday but then the Hall wasn’t available!

So, we have changed the date entirely to
Saturday 28th February 2026.

Happy Dancing
Sandra



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Special points of interest

- Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/people/RSCDS-Ribble-Valley-Branch-Preston/100084280723762/>
- Website:
www.rscdsribblevalley.org.uk
- Digital 30 Anniversary Book:
<https://www.photobox.co.uk/view-online-photo-book?widgetId=fce22b14-cafe-44a0-bfd0-e9ec74fc11b5&securityId=0775d2ed-85d3-431e-a678-f61d48b276b9>



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

CUTTY SARK

We all know the whisky: a blend, perfectly drinkable - if you don't have a proper malt handy. And then there's the clipper ship at Greenwich, now happily restored after the fire in 2007. Finally (and most importantly) there's a 32 bar jig of that name.

So, what's it all about? Well, consider the ship's figurehead. A scantily clad young woman. brandishing something in an outstretched hand. If you thought it looked like hair, you'd be right. It is in fact a horse's tail. Belonging, since you ask, to a grey mare called Meg.

It all goes back to That Poet. Burns wrote some gloriously soppy love poems, lots about nature, and some stirring patriotic stuff - not to mention that interminable thingy about a haggis. But the comic poems are his best.

Which brings us to Tam o' Shanter. Tam (Tom) was a farmer who got seriously drunk (*'kings may be blessed, but Tam was glorious'*) after the market at Ayr, and tried to ride home (you guessed, on Meg) that night. And he stumbled on a witches' party in an old deserted church, with bagpipe music by the devil himself. And Tam, possibly unwisely, decided to stop and watch.

Burns (who had taken dancing lessons and so knew his stuff) describes the dances getting wilder and wilder:

'Hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels put life and mettle in their heels'

'they reeled, they set, they crossed, they cleekit (birlled)'
until they

'coost their duddies to the wark' (stripped to their underwear)

A far cry from Miss Milligan's genteel Edinburgh ladies!

But now S-E-X rears its head. The witches were mostly old and ugly, but one was young and beautiful. And wearing only her shift...*'in longitude though sorely scanty'*..ooh er missus!

Now, a 'sark' in Scots is a garment like a shirt, or a shift. And 'cutty' means cut short. So Tam, not entirely sober and quite carried away, roars out**WEEL DONE, CUTTY SARK!**

This gives the game away. This will not end well for Tam, as the witches are now after him, intent on carrying him off to hell. Meg is galloping for dear life with Cutty Sark hanging onto her tail.

But salvation appears: a bridge. Witches cannot cross running water, and so after a struggle, the witch is left behind - but still holding Meg's tail.

And Tam, and his (now tail-less) horse escape.

And that is why there is also a dance called:

WEEL DONE, CUTTY SARK!



Article by David Stoney

Weel Done, Cutty Sark !

32 Bar Reel - One long set numbered 1-2, 1-2, with ALL 1st couple's on opposite sides

1-8 1ST COUPLE ROUND THE SQUARE: 1st couple cross right hands, cast off one place, cross over left hands, and cast up to original places;

9-16 2ND COUPLE ROUND THE SQUARE: 2nd couple cross right hands, cast off one place, cross over left hands, and cast up to original places;

17-24 1ST COUPLE TURN, CAST AND DANCE UP: 1st couple turn once round with right hands, cast off one place and joining nearer hands dance up to join nearer hands with 2nd couple (who face up);

25-28 UP THE MIDDLE: all dance up the middle in a line of 4;

29-32 DOWN MIDDLE: 1st couple followed by 2nd couple to end in progressed places.

Repeat with next couple.

Editor's note – not sure this dance ever caught on.....although it looks a fun Ceilidh dance!



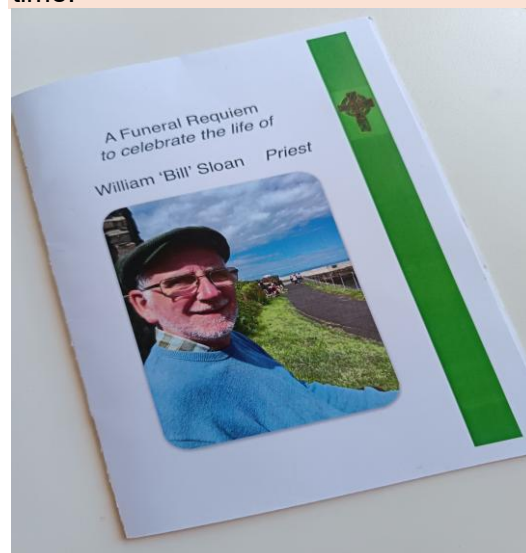
If you've not seen the real thing yet you can view the book on-line by holding down the Ctrl button on your computer and clicking the link below.....it will open another tab at the top of the page 'photobox'. Or cut and paste into google or your browser.
<https://www.photobox.co.uk/view-online-photo-book?widgetId=fce22b14-cafe-44a0-bfd0-e9ec74fc11b5&securityId=0775d2ed-85d3-431e-a678-f61d48b276b9>

In Memory of William 'Bill' Sloan

Priest, Friend and Scottish Dancer

With the heaviest of hearts, we bid farewell to our friend and fellow dancer, William 'Bill' Sloan. Bill's presence on the dance floor was matched only by his warmth and generosity of spirit. His laughter, enthusiasm and kindness enriched many lives and left an indelible mark on everyone fortunate enough to share a reel or a jig or a quiet conversation with him.

We extend our deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to Linda and all of Bill's family at this sad time.



DUKE OF PERTH

Having looked at the history of the Dashing White Sergeant last time and its apparent lack of anything to do with Scotland, I thought it might be fun to examine the origins of the popular dance 'Duke of Perth' which is very definitely part of Scotland dance history!

The title of Duke of Perth has never actually been an official Scottish or indeed British title. It was granted to James Drummond, the then Earl of Perth by the exiled King James II and VII in 1701, although some sources give 1695. The Drummonds remained loyal to the Stewart cause, and I have read it described as 'the Jacobite title'.



The dance, as many, originally started life as a tune. The first record of this tune seems to be in 1734 in the 'Drummond Castle manuscript Part 2' which had been commissioned by the Duke of Perth. Broun's Reel being another name for the Duke of Perth music. The dance itself first appears published in 1797 under the title "Keep the Country, Bonny Lassie" by William Boag. It was later modified and included in the Royal RSCDS Book 1 in 1924.

However in the times of the travelling Dancing Masters in the early 18th and 19th centuries the name of the dance, or indeed set of figures was actually the name of the tune that it was played to. The common names of tunes for this set of figures include the original name 'Keep the Country, Bonnie Lassie' Brown's Reel or Broun's Reel or indeed Broun's Reel depending on which article you read, and the Pease Strae tune. Interestingly the Pease Strae music was first published as a song in 1776 in David's Herds collection Ancient and Modern Songs.

It seems that different dancing masters in different parts of the country used the different tunes for this same set of figures. The Duke of Perth and Browns reel was most widely known and was popular throughout Angus, Perthshire and East Fife. Pease Strae was confined to the South West Lanarkshire and Ayrshire and Galloway, and Keep the Country in the upper parts of Etterick with dancing Master James Laidlaw. The Duke of Perth came to be a regular part of all the hunt Balls both in the Perth area and further afield and indeed still is to this day.



The tune the Duke of Perth played in G major is properly a reel, but is always played at half speed, so it has the rhythm of a Scottish Measure. One description described is more properly as a rant.

I do love some of the early descriptions of the dance before it was sanitised by RSCDS! The turns are all described as 'with linked arms' and the early descriptions use the term 'First Cu Swing the Right hand' or 'swing corners'. The travelling step for the Duke of Perth and Brown's reel was described as the 'chasse' while in Pease Strae described as 'hop-one-and-two' But my favourite of all comes from a description of the Duke of Perth taught at Blantyre Farm in 1805 as "Hook right hand with partner – turn round - throw off a couple!!".

Article by Sarah Horne

Sources - Traditional Tune Archive, SCDDDB, Wikipedia and most importantly 'Traditional Dancing in Scotland JP Flett and TM Flett.

Spotlight on Kath Talbot.....

As always, if one wishes to have something done, ask a busy person; since the answer was yes, life has been more than hectic. Moments that spring to mind, all to be described "without prejudice", are various and depending upon one's stance, with hindsight, amusing especially if one enjoys situation comedy with North of England humour.

It will doubtless raise eyebrows to comprehend that being extremely shy as a child, Rose, my Mum and later SCD partner, encouraged dance from pre school age as she played the piano at home, and at our Church, St Pauls Preston, there were many large social gatherings with ballroom, old time including Scottish dance. A SCD display team attended who had no problem gathering volunteers to join them; a great time. Similarly in the Girl Guides a percentage of winter activity would involve SCD because the Captain and Lieutenant were keen. They had a display team with senior guides whilst younger guides learnt from them including highland steps. It often finished with The Dashing White Sergeant which was more of a free for all where a shirt could be torn. Such training was useful 15 years later.



1968 was the start of student days in the NE with some Irish Ceili and Northumbrian Dances whilst at home, in Preston, Rose had joined evening classes at Ashton School. The Education Dept organised and financially supported a host of adult classes with a termly fee for 2 subjects; for Rose one was SCD with Mrs Lynch. An excellent teacher and dancer. She invited me to attend her class when I was home to join Rose and was delighted that I knew steps and patterns. After this when I was working North of the Sands I did likewise attending 3 classes a week plus driving home to take Mum to a SCD anywhere. Jean Shannon who taught the Ulverston Class kept up to date with new dances so I could enlighten Rose.

After all, in those days there were neither recaps nor walk throughs. Needless to say Day Schools were well attended, however on one occasion we could only support the evening scd in Manchester and arrived just in time for the first dance which happened to be Mairis Wedding; so relief all round that revision was not required. Our set had

a number of the Manchester Branch, with ladies neatly displaying white dresses with sashes. We became aware of an elderly gentleman of whom one had to take avoidance tactics in the diagonal reels; the two of us taking wide sweeps to prevent a crash as he approached shoulder first. By the startled looks upon the faces of the rest of the set they too must have been aware of his plight; or so we thought. Afterwards some people we knew came across laughing and commenting "Well, you didn't take a blind bit of notice at the Day School". Answering "Correct, we were not there...why?" "That was the teacher in your set and he spent most of the time teaching a left shoulder pass" The reply being "Goodness me, well I'm glad I didn't come if that is all he could think of to do". Right shoulder being the original way and easiest to learn.

Muirland Willie was a dance learnt in 1974 at Seascale, a fantastic Social Club for Sellafield but none of their SCD Class would attend elsewhere because they had recaps and walk throughs, most unique. The teacher partnered me for M.W. and he laughed all the time. Of course the residents had made use of their Club Bar but always served our group with soup before the long journey home along the narrow coast road. Some of us would use Corney Fell, the shorter old coach road on the outward journey to avoid Millom but being prone to mists it was inadvisable at night. It was the main topic of exhilarated questioning between drivers "Are you taking Corney Fell?" Today such fever would probably only arise if people were discussing taking cannabis before a dance!

Our Furness crowd were delightful company and rallied when asked by Jean Shannon to display dances at a large charity dinner, our teacher was going to be star of the show with a solo performance. Thankfully we had decided to rehearse in my house as it had a through lounge. Although all had been told not to come early to move furniture, as I had none, they still arrived early. Ruby, self appointed matriarch, was offered the picnic chair with arms and the troops had what was left. Everywhere had excellent ribbed hard blue carpet because the previous owner had worked at Vickers Shipyard, so ok for a practice dance. A few weeks later the event took place, within walking distance for me so I had a celebratory Courvoisier Brandy and Babycham to relax the nerves. On arrival the star marched up to the troop and read the riot act that she would be extremely annoyed if anyone let her down and no one must take alcohol; now most looked frightened rabbits. Afterwards an onlooker commented that only one dancer appeared to be smiling and enjoying the dancing without mistakes.

RSCDS AGM is an event to attend at least once and about 45 years ago it was at Glasgow, renowned for its generosity when hosting events to overshadow Edinburgh. Bands were numerous with Jordanhill College being able to offer 2 dances simultaneously so that dancers could interchange. The first evening was 'The Ball' held in the Banqueting Hall of The City Chambers in George Square most beautifully decorated, once one was allowed entrance to see it. All tired after the journey, but dressed accordingly for the occasion, eager to show our tickets, have our names announced then to enter the arena to find seats and study revision sheets quickly. The hitch was a female figure filling the doorway at the top of the grand marble staircase on which we were all gathered. She appeared to have assumed an inquisitorial role as we overheard dancers explaining why they could wear tartan or their second cousin was related to clan MacFishery. The general conversation in the queue was what to say to get through passport control quickly. Being first for our group became beneficial for all, as we were ushered inside without further question. There was a Scottish link, via marriage of a Great Grandmother to both Fergusons and Munros but not a blood line. Being a Talbot my closest link to Scotland was Mary Queen Of Scots; hearing this the inquisitor looked positively excited until she heard the connection. They were the Family entrusted by Queen Elizabeth 1 to keep her under house arrest. Well she did ask. While she recovered we got in, left historical differences behind, to enjoy a great weekend.

Provincial scds, prior to covid, used to be widespread weekly or monthly. Rose and I attended Longsight Methodist Church Hall for a monthly dance. Once again a list of dances was circulated for the next month for all to do their homework, however on one occasion we arrived to learn from Frances Carney that due to the sudden death of John Drewry all the dances that night would be dedicated to him. We all knew this was going to be a brain taxing evening as some of his dances were tricky. Following that, the news spread, and as people attended other classes it became common knowledge within the week. Then Frances telephoned to explain the terrible mistake, it was another person; John Drewry the deviser of dances was to live another 30 years. One could imagine some people being shocked when he appeared at events, like Banquo's Ghost, and the poor man would be oblivious.

In fact I did meet him, looking well, within a few months at The Dunblane Hydro where Mary Prentice held her weekly SCD Class; a pleasure to have Jim Macleod and his Band playing. If I organised the weekly SCD social night for the Stirling Summer School I was allowed off Campus one evening per week to attend The Hydro. The two events were as different as chalk and cheese. Imagine the situation. Mature students, many away from home for the first time solo, attending a residential university based summer school with tutored sessions for a week from 9am till 6pm with 1 hour optional lectures to follow. Only after that did social events commence. They were brain dead, needing to relax and hopefully let their hair down for a laugh. The location needed a bar or many would vote with their feet. MacRobert Students Disco Room was the best with a sound system, although in an elevated DJ box, dance floor and bar. It was hopeless awaiting attendance you had to persuade colleagues and recognised student leaders to migrate to the Disco Room, then like sheep others came to where lively ceilidh music was playing. As soon as there were enough people assembled albeit standing, sitting, walking around, my team of display dancers, namely tutors including me, did our best with Roxburgh Castle. After this it was time to bring others onto the floor, at all times trying to avoid the steel cap boots and flailing arms. Once underway the momentum had to be kept going despite the hubbub of talk, screams, shouting, music, thumping of feet. Gay Gordons, Strip The Willow, Dashing White Sergeant some even requested an Eightsome so it was done.

On one occasion my partner tripped and to avoid landing on me I was pushed towards a table. In seconds people lifted drinks as I slid across it and landed on the floor, my long hair in a pool of beer looking up at two astounded colleagues propping up the bar. "Don't just stand there pick me up please". After all this social module had another hour to last; all voluntary of course as we were only contracted for academic work, but if you wished to be co-opted into the Northern Irish Course Director fortnight, it was a known expectation.

Mrs Cadogan's description of ceilidh dancing with the "great leepings about and gnashings of teeth" as written by Somerville and Ross was a close match to scd/ceilidhs experienced in those 40 weeks of the 1980s and 1990s.

For those who think, goodness she has been dancing years. Yes, hopeless to hide it since when I was 50 and hired Longridge Civic Centre with band, bar etc John Haddow kindly devised a Strathspey for me called "Birthday Honours" which is printed within a Stepping Hill Hospital Charity Book; my name and age advertised too.

These are just a few of the memories. However now you know why I dance Mairis Wedding and Muirland Willie a certain way. The moral of the story lies within the poem "The Fiddler Of Dooney" by W.B. Yeats.....It is light hearted fun.

Article by Kath Talbot. Newsletter article as requested by El Presidente [note that this relates to Chairman as chosen by RV RSCDS].

A musician's view from behind the music stands



After more than 20 years of playing for Scottish Country Dancing, I can honestly say it's been a journey full of joy, chaos and unforgettable memories. From ferry crossings to forgotten bass amps, late-night giggles to early-morning rehearsals, there's far more that goes on behind the scenes than most dancers may ever see.

Before we even set foot in a hall, there's a mountain of prep that happens. Music needs to be researched and arranged – often involving matching original tunes to carefully curated sets that work rhythmically and melodically. Travel logistics come next: picking up band members (and sometimes their instruments!), packing the car with gear – and double-checking that nothing's left behind. Though... we're not always successful on that front!

I'll never forget one of my earliest gigs, when I was just 15. We'd travelled all the way from Dunbar to Perth, unloaded everything – only to discover we had no bass amp. Hours later, back in the car park in Dunbar, there it was. Sitting in the middle of the tarmac. Waiting patiently.



Then there was the time we were convoying up to the Isle of Skye and I ran out of screen wash. Thinking on my feet, I phoned the drummer in the car ahead and asked him to give his windscreen a good squirt – hoping the spray would reach mine! In the end, we pulled over and he trekked down the steepest hill imaginable to fill a bottle from a loch. That's real band teamwork.

Speaking of characters, we've had some brilliant ones. Ally Mac, one of our former drummers was never short of surprises. One night, sitting at traffic lights on the A9, he calmly got out of the car and started performing a Highland Fling. No music, no warning – just Ally being Ally. I'd say the drummer we have now gives him a run for his money too!

I absolutely love playing for country dancing – especially when the dancers let loose and really enjoy themselves. It's a brilliant feeling when you hear a spontaneous "Yuuueeeecch!" from the floor – that raw joy feeds right back

to the band. We try to return the favour with roof-raising tunes like *The Black Bear* or *The Glasgow Reel*, guaranteed to get the room buzzing.

As for nerves? They never fully go away. Especially when the first dance on the programme is something like *General Stuart's Reel* – all eight notes per bar – after a five-hour drive! But once we're into the dance programme and I've settled past the original tunes, I love taking a moment to watch the dancers in full flow.

Oddly enough, I don't often make direct eye contact with people while playing. When I was younger, I got put off by performers who made it all about theatre and showmanship. I never wanted to be that kind of musician. I just wanted to sit, play and enjoy – the same way I did every night after school, practising in my room.

I was fortunate to have an incredible teacher, the late Mr John Leslie – a true gentleman who influenced so many musicians, including Marian Anderson and Graeme Munro. His legacy lives on in every tune I play, and I feel privileged to have been one of his students.



Band trips are always a highlight – full of camaraderie and mischief. On one memorable ferry ride back from Stornoway, Derek (our drummer at the time) fell asleep. Bill and I, unable to resist temptation, tied

his shoelaces together. Another time, we found the ship's broom and gave the deck a good sweep just for the fun of it.

When I think about it, the music, the laughter, the friendships, I can't imagine anything better. Being part of something that brings people joy, movement, and connection is a privilege I never take for granted.

Music, dance, mischief, and happiness – what more could anyone want?

Article by Ewan Galloway



Summer Dance 2025

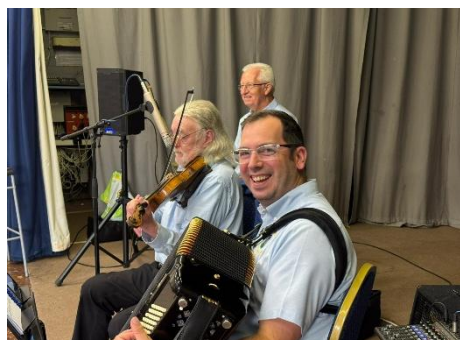


With fantastic music from Ewan and the Band we had a great night of dancing at the Summer Dance.

Special thanks to Peter for stepping in to MC three dances he didn't know he was doing.....and did anyone notice he did it from memory. Very impressive, I don't know how he does it.

Thanks to Judy for organising the kitchen and catering along with many of her helpers, Rose especially.....and to everyone who brought food for the buffet. There was so much we had to get an extra table out!

Most of all thank you to everyone for the company, great dancing and when it goes wrong it makes it all that more fun.



Future events:

Autumn Dance, Sat 18th October 2025,
7pm at Broughton Club, music by Marian
Anderson.

Hogmanay, Wed 31st December 2025, 8pm
at Samlesbury Village Hall, recorded music.

Nice & Easy Dance, **Sat 28th February 2026**,
7.30pm at Broughton Club.

30th Scottish Trip, 19 – 23 March 2026, Nethy
Bridge, Inverness- shire.

Spring Dance, Sat 25th April 2026, 7pm at
Broughton Club.

Summer Dance, Sat 8th August 2026, 7pm
at Broughton Club.

Autumn Dance, Sat 17th October 2026, 7pm
at Broughton Club.

Classes Information:

Sunday class The beginners' class, runs on
Sundays at Euxton Community Centre, 2.30 to
4.30 p.m. Classes run weekly until Easter, then
social dancing once a month through the summer
period. **Starts 28 September.**

Monday Country Dancing class
Beginners & All-abilities class runs most
Mondays at Christ Church Hall, Fulwood, at 7.30
p.m., except Bank Holidays. This class **Starts 15
September.**

Monday Ceilidh class
A monthly ceilidh class is held at Christ Church
Hall, Fulwood, at 7.30 p.m. on the last Monday of
each month (unless this lands on a bank holiday
when it will be held the following Monday). This
class will continue through the summer. Next
class **1 September then 29 September.**

Wednesday class 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*)

RIBBLE VALLEY RSCDS **OUR EXTRA, EXTRA SPECIAL TRIP** **Celebrating our 30th annual trip to Scotland!!!**

****5 days, 4 nights**** 19th to 23rd March 2026

Nethybridge, Inverness-shire

Coach travel with the usual on-board entertainment and refreshments.
Four nights, dinner, bed and breakfast staying at the **3* Nethybridge Hotel**.
Departing Thursday morning and returning Monday evening.
Friday dance hosted by The Inverness RSCDS dancing to Scott Band.
Various trips arranged but not confirmed yet.

This year's committee

Chairman : Sandra Lloyd, tel. 07989139355

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

Hon. Treasurer: Stephen Brown, tel. 01772 748034

Committee:

Jill Burrows, tel. 01253 890046

Judy Grimsey (Membership Secretary), tel. 01772 716301

Rose John, tel. 01772 713018

David and Margaret Stoney, tel. 01257 241585

Catherine Walsh, tel. 07837 654222

Mark and Joan Youlton, tel. 07944344360

David and Cathy Queen, tel. 07718903609