

I guessed that if I didn't manage to send this report out straight away on Sunday 11th then it could be awhile before it would happen ... and here we are 2 weeks later ...

The May class was the day after the ASCDS Festival and so I was expecting quite a few regulars to be absent, and I had had several apologies for holidays, etc. as well, so it was excellent to have just 16 to start with (though I knew that a couple of them were likely to leave by tea-time), and a welcome to Liz Fraser who was with us for the first time.

As the 80th anniversary of VE Day had just passed, we started with 2 dances from a new book called *Dances of Valour*, published by Ewan Galloway who recorded the (very suitable) music.

The first was **Don't Panic**, an 8x40 reel by Robert Atkinson in honour of the Home Guard. The first 16 bars depict Captain Mainwaring & Sergeant Wilson moving among the residents of Walmington-on-Sea, bars 17-24 is gathering the troops, 25-32 is the parade and bars 33-36 is manoeuvres. Bars 17-24 are a little "non-standard" feeling but once you know where you are supposed to be going then it works OK. The music made the difference. :-)

Another dance from the same book was the 3-couple strathspey **We'll Meet Again** by Margo Priestley. This dance finishes with a Rose Progression, also 1s half-turned-&-twirled earlier in the dance so, one to watch if you have dancers who find twirling too disorientating.

Our first jig was **The Flying Spur**, an 8x32 bar jig by John Drewry. This dance was on the programme at the Duns Weekend and is not an easy dance to learn from watching a video (seemingly the preferred method these days!) as a lot of the time the 1s are doing something different from the supporting couples. It is a good dance, if a bit relentless.

The second 3-couple strathspey of the day was also from the Duns Weekend programmes - **Carradale Bay** by Rhona Burchick. A nice little dance finishing with a diamond poussette.

Another 3-couple dance was a 3x40 reel which I have just written for my children & partners who are all turning 40, beginning last November & December with my daughters' partners, then my son (the day before VE Day) and his partner next month. My two daughters will follow, next year and in 2028. As yet the dance doesn't have a name - I am referring to it as **The 40s** - though Marian Anderson has written me a tune which Max suggested could be called **Family At Forty**. Someone else then suggested the dance could be Family Fortunes but I thought that would work better if it was 4x through as there then could be 4 tunes! I have trialled the dance now with three different groups and it seems to work well so I will get in touch with Keith Rose and ask for a diagram - that will make me pick a name too.

Continuing the earlier "theme" of dancing to non-Scottish song tunes, our next dance was a square set medley, **The Purple Octopus**, by Jill Burrows ("Purple Jill" from Ribble Valley). We could tell it was nearly tea-time as I missed out 4 bars (13-16) which are then repeated as 21-24, meaning that we finished 8 bars early and in the wrong places!! Tea was very welcome, once we had completed the dance successfully. :-)

The third dance from the Duns Weekend was **The Meeting of the Waters**, an 8x48 bar reel by Iain Boyd of New Zealand. Apart from getting in & out of the reel of 4 in the first 8 bars, there is nothing tricky to this dance, rather, it is one of those old fashioned dances with one basic formation after another (which is why it ended up as 48 bars) though it does flow. The dance was written for the tune, so one can forgive a lot when the music is this good.

And the one dance from the Duns programmes which no-one much knew, even though it is RSCDS Book 32, was **Oriel Strathspey**, for 4-couples in a longwise set. Another dance which trotted along for 24 bars, very forgettable, but then the most awkward progression at the end. No wonder no-one much remembered ever doing it before - and they weren't rushing to do it again either.

By this time we were really down to two 3-couple sets so a 6-couple dance seemed a good idea. My two go-to dances for this situation are **Fire in the Rye** and **Never At Sea**. Surprisingly - to me - many people didn't really know **Never At Sea** but we nailed it so that might become part of our repertoire of "finishing" dances.

Our next class is on Sunday 8th June, 4.30 - 7.30pm in Oakham Church Hall (off the car park opposite the church), the day after the Market Harborough Summer Dance with Robert Whitehead and the Danelaw Band.

Hope to see you there!