

Well, it's hot here in central England, but not so bad yesterday when 12 dancers gathered in Oakham for The Sunday Class.

It was great to welcome distant travellers Adrian (from Croydon) and Alan & Lesley (from Gloucester) but also more close-to class members who forewent Wimbledon and other distractions to enjoy an afternoon's dancing. :-)

We began with the jig **Circling the Globe** by Sue McKinnell, which I had found when looking for "Globe" dances for my radio show. A 3-couple dance, normally in a 4-couple set, it worked fine in 3-couple sets as 1s only start. The central movement, which looked interesting to me, involved 1/2 teapots (2 bars) then 1s moving on while the corners turned about it place (2 bars). After 4 repeats of this the dance finished with Double Triangles. By everyone's second time through we did seem to have got it, but I wouldn't say it rated that well.

Next a 5-couple hornpipe, **Ocean Voyage** by Hugh Cowell, published in the Berkhamsted Diamond Collection for which Sandy Nixon & his Band recorded the CD. This dance includes 1/2 alternating tandem (dolphin) reels of 3 with corners, though unusually, in the top half of the dance they begin facing 3rd Lady's position whilst at the bottom they face 3rd Man's position. Still both on the 1st diagonal, and then moving on anti-clockwise, it is the person who leads the first of those reels (1M and 3L) who determines the starting place. I have a feeling, now, that I misled everyone in the last 8 bars - and we had a discussion on it and I looked at the original instructions and the diagram, and still told them that it was similar to John of Bon Accord (i.e. 3/4 turn, set, 3/4 turn set) rather than 1/2 turn, Balance-in-Line, full turn, set which is what the instructions and diagram very clearly say! It must have been the heat ...

Our first strathspey of the afternoon, **Summer in Sherbrooke** by Francis Walduck was for 3 couples and was full of formations. All 1/2 turn, chase 1/2way. cross to opposite sides. Set&Link for 3, then set & change/turn R back to same positions. All set and La Baratte and then the bottom 2 couples change places with a Bourrel.

Another 5-couple dance which I came across via my radio show, is **Alexander's Link** by Anne Macauley Miller from Hamilton, Ontario, named for the Lincoln M Alexander Parkway, known locally as The Linc. The dance is a longwise set jig, with Set&Link for 2, top & bottom at the beginning and then later Set&Link for 3 twice. Otherwise it is quite basic and the dancers seemed to enjoy it.

A dance which has made a slight resurgence recently is **The Wee Cooper o' Fife**, the bane of musicians' lives as they try to find alternative tunes to match the original with its 10 bar phrasing. There is, really, only one tricky bit in it, bars 29-30, remembering who hangs on for the turn and who casts, and there are various ways which people use to remind them. I like the "gender" version (as I am often dancing as a Man) but that does work better if Men look like Men - two couples all female find that one difficult! We had 5 Men so only one foursome had to find a different method.

We restarted after tea with a strathspey, triangular set called **The Ivy Leaf** by Eddy West from 2002. The central part of this dance was a 12 bar "Clover Leaf reel" which was essentially similar to a Schiehallion reel, dancing out to loop on the vertices, and passing someone by the left as you danced through the middle towards the next place to your right. The progression was 1/2 R&Ls twice in the last 8 bars. We liked it, so I'm sure we will do it again.

Another dance getting a mention a bit more often now is **Muirland Willie**, or at least the movement for which it is noted, and so I thought we would have a go at **The Cuckoo Clock** by Ian Barbour, with the great recording by Sandy Nixon (beware the speed, which in true Sandy style, gets faster with each iteration - and it doesn't start slowly either!). Nobody was in birling mood so they didn't take their chance in bars 21-24, but at least that meant they were all ready for the Set&Link for 3 which followed.

3-couple strathspeys were very much the order of the day and so we revisited **City of Wisteria** with its 3-couple Espagnole (when you lose your partner) and then 8 bars later a 3-couple Bourrel to reunite you.

A short dance to recap is **The Wellington Connection**, an 8x32 bar reel by Campbell Hunter from the Reels & Wheels CD. 1s+2s Set&Rotate. Teapots. 3-couple R&Ls. All turn partner for 4 bars. The recording by Gordon Shand is superb.

We finished the day with **Stanford Swing**, a great TSC favourite from pre-Covid times, which many of the current class have not really done. Having danced La Baratte earlier in strathspey time, it was appropriate to try it in jig time, and with corners rather than partner. It was noted that one didn't really dance very much with one's partner, even as 1st couple.

It was definitely cooler by the end of the class and four of us retired to the pub for an hour or so afterwards which was very welcome. I understand we have some rain forecast in the next couple of days though how much, I'm not sure.

At Peterborough & Stamford we are partway through our summer classes, with a **Social Dance on Saturday 26th July** to the music of John Dudley. We would love to see you there.

I am then off to the "central belt" of Scotland for my 2 weeks of summer dancing!

Leicester RSCDS have their **Summer Dance on Saturday 16th August** with Chris & Julie Dewhurst and the next Sunday Class is the following day, Sunday 17th August.

Hope you all keep well until the next dancing opportunity.