

The problem with Sunday afternoon / evening is that Monday, and all that a new week brings, follows very closely on, and I am finding that if I don't send the class report out immediately then it sinks down my pile of jobs ... here we are 10 days on ...

So, apologies for the delay, and hopefully I can remember all that we did. The weather and holidays affected the numbers and we had 5 couples if I danced, but Sue Ronald had broken her collarbone so often sat out, leaving 5 men and 3 ladies for a 4-couple set.

We began with a reel which I picked up in Nairn two weeks earlier by Neil M Grant. **The Lass From Stonehaven** was written for Christine Grant (no relative) for, I think, her birthday. 1s dance down, under the Man's arm, back up & turn the 2s to face down in 2nd place. from there they cross down into 1/2 mirror reels of 3 on the sides, dance up through the top and face 1st corner position. Hello-Goodbye setting & turn RH to face out own sides for a Chaperoned Chain progression. There is no recording for this and as Ewan Galloway was playing the night I was in Nairn, I chose a track from his Grove Collection 1 CD called Jim's Tangents.

Making the most of our 5 couples we then reprieved **Alexander's Link** by Anne Macauley Miller (Hamilton, Ontario) which we danced to The Quincentenary Jig from Gordon Shand's Dancing Forth (15 John Drewry Dances) CD.

As I now have my copy of Book 54 and its accompanying CDs we then danced 2 from there. Pre-Covid, when we had 2 classes a month, I always reserved the September classes for the new RSCDS Book to ensure that we all tried every dance, even if only once (ever!). This new book has more in than most (18 dances) and the outright winner, in my opinion, is **The Darlington Dancer** by John Brenchley. A 40 bar dance in a 4-couple longwise set, twice in strathspey time, and twice in reel time, with an interesting progression - 3s & 4s start on opposite sides and then the second time through the new top 2 couples are on opposite sides. Neil Galloway and his Scottish Dance Band recorded the CDs, which definitely reflect the quality of Stuart Hamilton's expert production at Castlesound Studios.

Staying with Book 54, a strathspey from CD2 is for 3-couples - **Canadian Landscape** by Karen & Scott MacCrone - gives plenty of formation practice! 1s & 2s begin with a tourbillon. Then 3 couples Set & Link to lines across. 1s change RH up/down and cast right around a 2nd corner position as those corners change places. Then repeat (1s crossing & casting around 1st corner positions as they change on the diagonal) into lines across and 3 couples Set & Link to 2 1 3. The last 8 bars 1s progress to the bottom by dancing an espagnole with the 3s.

Another strathspey that was new to everyone was **Puffin John**, a tribute dance by Ian Brockbank for John Bowie Dickson who wrote Reel of the Puffins. It begins awkwardly as the instructions say that 1s & 4s (dancing couples) 1/2 turn into promenade hold to begin reels of 3 across as in The Luckenbooth Brooch. However, the diagram doesn't show that 1/2 turn and there is no music for it, so we ignored that bit, as you seem to be on the correct side without it. The Puffin reels are full diagonal reels of 4 for the corner positions (2s and 3s) and 2 x 1/2 "true Mairi's Wedding reels" for the 1s and 4s. It was in strathspey time and so we did master the reels and then challenged ourselves to dance **Reel of the Puffins** to Jim Lindsay's wonderful recording.

Another medley, this time in a square set, was **Crossing the Globe** by Francis Walduck, from his book From the Danube to the Liffey. This dance involves quite a lot of "moving on" but as it is in a square set, one always meets the same person at the same part of the dance, which helped considerably. The consensus was that we enjoyed it.

Finishing with a dance for 5 couples, **Win's Dance** by Roger & Elizabeth Cooper is dedicated to my great friend Win Balgarnie, who for many years ran "Interesting Dances" with very challenging programmes, which usually finished with **Midnight Oil**, the 5x48 jig by John Drewry. So this dance, a 5x32 reel, begins as Midnight Oil does, with 1s & 3s leading down, 3/4 turn, set, turn under the Man's arm & lead up to face 2nd or 4th lady. Now in promenade hold, dance Corners Pass & Turn with 2nd corners and then 1st corners. 1s & 3s then dance down, divide & cast up, dance up, divide & cast down. RH across (3-4-3) then 1s & 3s turn left to cast off one on own sides. I used the Jim Lindsay track for Raising the Anchor from TSC Recorded Highlights 1, as that dance was also one I learnt from Win.

Our next class is relatively early in September (7th), the day after the Wing Day School & Dance, where I could easily pick up a new dance or two, but if so then I will save them for October whilst we concentrate on Book 54. I have a very busy 3-4 weeks now as classes restart, with my Dancing Holiday in Norfolk from the 14th, and in amongst that I am heavily committed with family, so I will endeavour to get the September report out extremely promptly! :-)