

KASS

Kent Association of Scottish Societies

Newsletter 61—May 2014

EDITORIAL

You will be aware that Alan French relinquished the reins of the KASS Newsletter after the November 2013 edition. Well Alan is a hard act to follow and to date we have not found another editor for the Newsletter. It was agreed at the KASS AGM in October that the KASS Chairman & KASS Secretary would produce a shortened version of the Newsletter until an editor could be found. This is it!!

I hope this serves to bridge the gap for the time being. The KASS diary (previously on the back page of the newsletter) can be found on the KASS web site <http://www.kass.org.uk/>

2014 is a significant year for Medway & North Kent clubs. Medway celebrate the 90th anniversary and North Kent the 75th — here's to many more years.

Nigel Hewitt, Hon. Secretary KASS

From the KASS Chairman

I may have had the idea for this shortened newsletter but the work has been done by Nigel for which I extend my thanks.



While Dick has been visiting clubs on their club night Tom and I have been going to club dances. Despite some long journeys and sometimes getting lost, we have really enjoyed attempting new dances. As Dick has written there is a core of dances all clubs do and then area specific ones.

There have been excellent suppers— it is fascinating how “bring a plate of food to share” produces such interesting and varied meals with a different selection at each club.

We have attended four Burns Suppers, 2 formal and 2 informal, each one different and all enjoyable. We may have to leave haggis off our menu next year though!

Before October we plan to visit more club dances, our apologies to any we were unable to visit where dates clash with other commitments.

Now we look forward to the May Highland Ball and

dancing to Ian Muir of Prestwick and the KASS walk in June organised by David How.

Finally I would like to extend a warm welcome to our two new members, Tonbridge Scottish Dancers and Hythe Scottish Dancing Group. KASS now has 19 affiliated groups.

Wendy Carter (Chairman KASS)

From the KASS Vice Chairman 12/19^{ths} of the way there.

When I became Vice Chairman of KASS I set myself a target to achieve before the end of my term of office; that target was to visit all of the KASS member clubs or societies on their club night. I realise that the target involved quite a lot of driving from my home in Maidstone to the east and west ends of the county as well as from the north of the county almost to the south of it. So far I have managed to visit 12



of the 19 member clubs and societies. I am sure you all know that our farthest north club is Sidcup & District, whereas the farthest south club is the recently formed Hythe Club. For information the farthest east club is Thanet Caledonians and the farthest west club is Orpington & District.

The clubs I have visited have been extremely welcoming and, in some cases, actually glad to see me, as I have arrived just in time to prevent a set from sitting the dance out. There have been one or two instances when I have been greeted by “Oh goody, another man!” It is always a delight to see faces of dancers whom I've normally seen at a Saturday night dance in their ‘home’ surroundings. In addition, I have enjoyed meeting club members who do not manage to attend Saturday evening dances.

The clubs are generally taught by one or two experienced MCs who organise the weekly programmes and make the music selection from either their own or the clubs CDs. Going around it is very apparent that notice is taken of dances published in other KASS club dance programmes. It is always great to know that I am not alone in trying to decipher dance

instructions for a new dance from a hand-written or published crib sheet. It was good to discover how a 'targe' was actually danced. None of us can possibly know all of the Scottish Country dances that are available, so at some point we all get confronted with the unknown.

The vast majority of the clubs I have been fortunate to visit so far, take pity on their members by organising a break interval. In many cases I was provided with a drink and in some cases a biscuit as well. I was lucky enough to arrive at a few clubs where someone was celebrating a birthday and had provided a birthday cake. Scottish dancers really know how to care for the inner self and how to keep energy levels high enough for dancing.

All of the clubs that I have been to show a great deal of concern and care for their members knowing which dancers can only do strathspeys for example, or who has just had some personal or family trauma to deal with. Scottish Dancers are clearly a caring group of delightful people.

The other amazing fact about the Scottish Dance clubs in the county is how certain dances are 'native' to certain areas. There is a common core of dances done throughout the county, but there are definitely 'area danced' dances. KASS did bring some of these area dances together during the Autumn Dance of 2013. Perhaps if other area specific dances were included in future, folk might be encouraged to spread their wings. However it is possible that some dancers would be put off from attending as there were "some dances I don't know".

I look forward to attending the seven clubs I have not managed to get around – actually getting to the clubs that meet on a Wednesday might cause a conflict of interest, but I am sure the MCs of Cobtree will manage admirably without my interference.

Dick Barford (Vice Chairman KASS)

News from the KASS Groups

Tonbridge Scottish Dancers A Remarkable Event

Some things take a while to happen! At its AGM in 2012 Tonbridge Scottish Dancers set itself the challenge to organize its first public event. By the AGM in 2013 we had in place a small working group and the strands of ideas. The outcome was a ceilidh on Valentine's Night 2014 at St Stephen's Church in Tonbridge. Some 110 people attended and judging by the feedback, it was a happy event, very much enjoyed. The venue lent itself to attractive decoration and contributed to the friendly atmosphere.

It was surprising to discover how many unknowns there were to arranging such an event for the first time. How many people may come? How would we feed them? Where would we seat them? How many sets could the dancing space take? Should we have a band or recorded music? How might we decorate the venue? How should we promote the event? How much should we charge? Was there enough car-parking space in the vicinity? The list goes on and on.

One thing we had not anticipated was that 90 minutes before the start of the ceilidh there would be a cloudburst. Within a few minutes there was a small river running down the street gutter beside the church – just where people would park their cars. Many of the TSD members, arriving to help set up, were soaked through. Getting the food safely inside through the torrential rain and gale force winds was a challenge. Even so, only one plate of egg mayonnaise sandwiches was lost in a gust of wind!

And would you believe it? By the time guests were arriving, the rain had stopped. We did lose 20 members of a choir who withdrew at the last minute. Maybe they feared being swept into the Medway? The only other 'casualties' were the KASS Vice-Chairman and his wife. They made a valiant attempt to reach us, but failed and had to return home.

Who would come apart from ourselves? We thought that if each member invited two other folk, and there was a bit of support from other clubs, we might make an attendance of 60. We did however have some exceptional promotional material and an unexpected spread in the local newspaper.

What really surprised us was when local contacts put together parties of families and friends. Please could we have six tickets? Please could we have eight tickets? Very soon we reached what we thought was the most we could manage. Still the requests came in. One Friday evening, Maureen, our ticket lady, arrived home to find requests on her telephone for 28 tickets. Deciding on an absolute maximum was a problem we were excited to have.

In all, a remarkable evening that created many happy memories. The group was ably led by our remarkable Mistress of Ceremonies, Angela Campbell. The resulting team spirit was brilliant. What next? Will it take another two years? Wait and see!

Jacquie Richards (Tonbridge Scottish Dancers)

Hythe Scottish Country Dancing Society Scottish Dancing starts at Hythe

Our group, one of the newest in KASS, started in October 2013, under the initiative of two Hythe couples, Dougal and Penny Hutchison and David and Evelyn Paignton. We were a mixture of complete beginners and some experienced dancers, and we

are learning something new every week, whether a new dance or a new movement, under the patient direction of Penny and Evelyn, with occasional assistance from outside teachers. We now have getting on for twenty dances in our repertoire. Although we work hard on improving our dancing, the emphasis is on enjoying it and we certainly do that!

We meet on Thursday evenings at the Methodist Hall on Rampart Road in Hythe and welcome new members of all abilities and experience. Please contact us via the 'contact' link on the KASS Homepage if you would like more information.

Anne Petrie (Hythe Scottish Country Dancing Society)

Sevenoaks Reel Club

Our club nights are on Tuesdays and we meet from October until May. Our club venue is a rather fine Church hall with plenty of parking on site.

We organise a Saturday evening dance twice a year, and since next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the club, we are planning a bigger than usual event for 7th November 2015. We hope to see many of our old friends at the event and maybe also some new ones. Live music from the Strathallan band will accompany the dancing.

A small but energetic committee runs the club and we have a faithful membership who attend club nights – but in common with other clubs, we find it difficult to attract new members, despite pestering family and friends to come along to join us, and advertising locally. Any good ideas for boosting membership would be gratefully received.

Orpington and District Caledonian Society

Orpington continues to thrive and offers many chances to dance during the week. The Monday afternoon group run by John Cottrell is followed in the evening by our class for beginners and improvers expertly taught by Angela Campbell, with attendance in the high thirties. We now have 2 monthly Wednesday groups taught by Angela and Don Ward, where smaller numbers, 8/12 members, strive for perfection, often with a great amount of amusement. Thursday is our social dancing night, always an enjoyable evening for the 40 or so dancers attending.

Before Christmas we held several very enjoyable functions, the Autumn Dance, the Monday Evening Class Birthday Dance and the St Andrew's Dance, all evenings of great fun.

This year we held a superb Hogmanay with family and friends, as well as a revitalised Burns Supper at the

Alexandra Suite, Swanley, where there were 3 very good speeches. In the Immortal Memory, Mike Talbot partly considered Robbie Burns' role as a civil servant while Angela described the characteristics of some of our male dancers, I mention just a few:- there is the Mouse, scampering around, always looking worried; the Elephant, solid, reliable, but slow to move; and the Monkey, arms and legs flailing in all directions. All these, amongst others, can usually be seen at our Thursday night meetings!

In February, at our Ceilidh, we discovered many hidden talents of our members, amongst others we enjoyed 16 of the well-known Kentones singing Barbershop harmonies, an 'alternative' Bavarian dance and the most bizarre, yet hilarious, version of Cinderella.

Our March On Dance, as always, had a fun, relaxed atmosphere, with all the dances being walked through to encourage newer dancers.

After the Newsletter has been produced we will have repeated our KASS Tea Dance at the end of April and will be looking forward to our Summer Dance on June 7th.

Dancing at Orpington continues until Thursday 24th July and recommences on Thursday 4th September.

Deidre Wilden (ODCS)

Meopham Scottish Country Dance Club OUR HAGGIS SUPPER

Meopham SCDC holds an annual Club Haggis supper every year at Meopham Village Hall on the nearest Monday to Burns night. Originally this event was devised by the late Jim McQuillan past chairman for club members to enjoy some haggis without all the arrangements required for a full blown Burns Night supper.

The Haggis is purchased locally (McSweens of course) and the tasks involved in producing the meal are allocated to willing club members.

Over the years the amounts of potatoes and swede required have been recorded. The mashed potato is usually prepared by two volunteers as peeling and mashing a large amount is a bit of a task. We cheat with the swede (neeps) by buying it frozen and already chopped from the local Farm Food stores the only place where this is available. It certainly saves a lot of hard work. We always have Clapshot which is a mixture of mash, neeps and onion. The food items are prepared and cooked at

home by volunteers and bought along hot and put in the oven to keep warm until half time when we serve the meal. One of our dancers makes wonderful short-bread to serve with coffee or tea. The meal is eaten on one long table so we can all sit around together. We also have an easy dance programme so we can get through the evening without too much effort especially after eating a large portion of haggis!

One of our dearest club members Dr. Bob MacDonald has for some years addressed the haggis but due to ill health was unable to attend and fill this role this year. We were extremely pleased when one of his sons Alistair offered to stand in for his Father. We were all touched by a little speech made by Alistair saying how he was extremely honoured he was to stand in for such a wonderful man. Alistair performed the role perfectly and thoroughly enjoyed the evening along with his wife Cathy who came along to support him. They also joined in the dancing, and whist not complete newcomers to Scottish dancing had a little help from club members.



Chairman Bob Hunt Alistair MacDonald and Sue Mortley

We keep this event for club members and regular visitors only as we are aware that if it was to get too big the cooking requirements could not be met by club members. However I can thoroughly recommend it for clubs to include in their diary if they are of course lucky enough to having those willing club members who put in a lot of effort and hard work to make the evening a success.

Jane Whittington (Meopham SCDC)

Tonbridge Wells & Crowborough

We have had a very successful year including a great Christmas Party and Hogmanay Party. Despite the low numbers for the October dance, a good time was had by all.

Our classes are held in St. Mark's Church Hall in Tunbridge Wells. It is located in Bayham Road, off Birling Road ,off Frant Road.....NOT the Church Hall near St.Mark's Church. All dancers are very welcome. Dick managed to find usthat's Dick Barford, not Dick Barton Special Agent of radio fame! We hope that he enjoyed his evening with us as much as we did. Emmett's Chase was a good laugh as some of us were not as familiar with it as Dick was. He was very helpful all evening. Dick explained that he likes to visit the clubs in Kent. We just made it because we are very close to the Sussex border. As we belong to SASS as well as KASS our loyalties clash sometimes. During June and July our numbers swell when other clubs have finished for the Summer.

Do other clubs have difficulty in getting Committee members? We have 36 members but many of them are already involved with other clubs, not only with Scottish Country Dancing. Our Chair, Lies Daly is due to retire from our Committee in May.....she will be greatly missed.

In 2016 it will be the 60th anniversary of the formation of the club, so there will be a lot of planning ahead!

Kathleen Allcorn (Tunbridge Wells & Crowborough)

MEDWAY CALEDONIANS CELEBRATE 90 YEARS

The origins of the Medway and District Caledonian Association have become lost in the mists of time: legend has it that it all began with a football team of Scots, during or just after World War 1, but our first written records date from 1923, so in the 2013-14 season we have been celebrating becoming Nonagenarians.

In the "old days", before the closure of Chatham Dockyard and the loss of many military connections, there were many Scots in the Medway towns: now there are fewer, but we are always happy to welcome non-Scots, and indeed the Association could not function without them! We run three meetings per week: a social "tea dance" on Monday afternoons, a flourishing Beginners' teaching class on Tuesday evenings under the expert guidance of Harry Robertson, and our social dancing "club night" on Thursdays. We also celebrate Hogmanay with a big party, the birthday of Robert Burns with a dinner and dance, and St Andrew's Day with an informal dance, and each year we have a ceilidh, which has been run by Mike Gould for coming up for its own twenty years mark, as well as other occasional events. Last autumn, for instance, we bade a sad farewell to our Junior class, tirelessly organised and taught by Margaret-Anne Robertson for 20 years with a dance when the final students were presented with their last

examination certificates, and a number of the “old girls”, now, of course poised young ladies, joined in the celebration of the good times they had had.

Our celebration of 90 years’ existence (it is only a rumour that some of us were founder members) took the form of a Ball at Dance Junction in Rochester, dancing to the excellent music of Ian Muir (Prestwick) and his band. All the 130 tickets were taken up and it was wonderful to see a hall full of dancers, all dressed in their best, enjoying the supper and dancing. Some of the “old girls” gave a short demonstration – this time in short tartan skirts and black tops, instead of the traditional white dresses. Who says we don’t move with the times? We were delighted to see so many of our old friends, as well as some new ones: two of our newest dancers who didn’t feel ready to take the floor even came simply to watch and take in the atmosphere. It was lovely to catch up with a number of our “old” members, some of whom had travelled a considerable distance to help us celebrate.



There was, of course, the traditional cake, piped in by Len Rose and carried in by Ann Keeble and Stuart King, representing the afternoon group and the Tuesday class respectively. The cutting ceremony was performed by the President, Julian Grayland, and his wife Elaine. Past Presidents and their spouses posed for photographs, and there were, of course, many more formal and informal pictures taken during the evening.



A huge thank you must go to all the very willing people who helped in so many ways to make the Ball such a success, and special thanks to our President Julian Grayland, who worked tirelessly organising it and for being a very genial Host on the night. The many e mails and cards we have received thanking

us for a wonderful evening have made it all worthwhile.

As you can see, the Medway Caledonians are still going strong at 90 – here’s to the Centenary!!

Julian Grayland (Medway & District Caledonian Association)

Sidcup & District Caledonian Association

Attendance at the Wednesday practice evenings and the monthly dances continues to be good. At our Burn’s Night the immortal memory was given by James Doyle, the Toast to the Lassies was given by Don Ward and the reply by Cath Watson. Rene Farthing is planning another of her popular holidays in October to Shropshire.. The president’s Dance will be held on 28th June at St John’s Church Hall Sidcup. Our teacher and MC, Loraine Chase is to be an MC at the KASS Highland Ball together with Alison Ede from North Kent.

Our club is a source of friendship and fun which adds to the enjoyment of the dancing. Our distinguishing of left from our right is improving, although Loraine may disagree.

Wendy Carter (Sidcup & District Caledonian Association)

Making Socials Fun

Here at Tunbridge Wells we decided a while ago that our regular Social Dancing evenings needed something to make them more fun and a little more special with a theme to the evening, so in 2012 following on from the Queen’s Jubilee and the Summer Olympics, our end of year Social had a celebratory feel with a cake and decorations in red, white and blue. This was such a success that we have continued with many different themes throughout the year. A St Andrew’s night Social with a Quiz to test our knowledge of all things Scottish, a Christmas Party with games and funny hats and of course party food with plenty of Mince Pies and we still managed to fit in some dances as well!

The next event of the year was Valentine’s Day and we couldn’t let that pass unnoticed, so what could we do? We came up with the idea of dances with the initial letter of the name spelling out Valentine! With heart shaped food and red hearts as decorations it was a very romantic evening!

Our next Social happened to fall on April Fool’s Day so a very good excuse for a party, but what

could we do to make it special? And then someone had an inspiration, of course, **Silly Dances**. We had **Snoopers Jig** (Hooper's Jig), **Shooting Goblins** (Shifftin' Bobbins), **The Whale Among The Sailors** (The De'il Among The Tailors), **Mrs Stewpot's Jig** (Mrs Stewart's Jig) and many more on the same theme, and as always party food!!

So as you can see we have fun here in Tunbridge Wells. The next Social to look forward to is on Tuesday 20th May followed by the end of year one on Tuesday 24th June, the themes have not yet been decided but it's bound to be something special. So come along and find out for yourselves, we can guarantee you an enjoyable evening's dancing and maybe a few surprises.

Don't forget we also have other dances and the next is our Autumn Dance on 18th October at Mascall's School Paddock Wood.

For more details, contact : **George Daly on 01892 534512:**

Jan Cook
Tunbridge Wells.

North Kent Scottish Association 75th

We recently celebrated our 75th Anniversary. 77 people (including the KASS Chairman & Vice Chairman, President from Orpington and Chairman from Tonbridge Scottish Dancers) attended for what was an enjoyable evening. Robin Ellis & his band played, we had excellent catering and an enjoyable



dance programme. The celebratory cake was cut by the North Kent President accompanied by 6 past Presidents, KASS Chair & KASS Vice Chair.

Nigel Hewitt (North Kent)

KASS WALK 22nd June 2014

I know that many dancers are also keen walkers so if you do not know this neck of the woods please join us at Hollingbourne Village Hall (ME17 1TR

TQ834546) on Sunday 22nd June—Directions are on the KASS website. I remember when we used to have 80-100 walkers and it is a wonderful opportunity to meet & socialise with fellow dancers/walkers.

The hall will be available for your use from 1.00 pm with walks (approximately 2.5 or 5 miles) starting at 2.00 pm. The longer one will have lovely views of Leeds Castle. Afterwards, stay to enjoy your picnic tea and there may be an opportunity to do some Scottish country dancing, so PLEASE BRING YOUR DANCING SHOES..

Tea coffee & squash will be provided and there will be a charge of £1 per head. Dogs are welcome—except in the hall.

David How

Letters/emails to the Secretary

Sadly the Rev David Dunster, who was a member of various Scottish Associations died in April and I am sure will be missed by many.

E-mail etiquette

When you send emails to a string of recipients, some of whom may not be known to each other, it is advisable to insert all the addressees in the 'Bcc' line (Blind carbon copy) rather than the 'To' line or the 'Cc' line. You can put your own address in the 'To' line in order to be sure that the message has been sent.

This means that each recipient cannot see the addresses of all the others, and is helpful in limiting the spread of spam mail, which can sometimes get into one person's system, then follow leads into a whole list of other people's inboxes.

Josephine Ellis (Sevenoaks Reel Club)

Ticket Offers

Interested in other forms of dance and/or the arts?

Do you know that there is usually a 2-for-1 ticket offer for English National Ballet productions at the London Coliseum (just a couple of minutes walk from Charing Cross Station).

The offer is in conjunction with Southeastern Railways, so you need to travel to London by train. Details of this offer - and dozens other London theatres, exhibitions and attractions - are all to be found in a booklet you can pick up at railway stations throughout the Southeastern area. It's called *London attractions; 2for1 offers when you go by train*.

Josephine Ellis (Sevenoaks Reel Club)

This Newsletter will be available on the KASS web site and further copies can be printed from there as needed. Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition.

Nigel Hewitt—Hon Secretary KASS