



KASS

Kent Association of Scottish Societies

Newsletter 80 – November 2023



KASS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A few years ago, when I only attended my local weekly classes and the occasional Saturday night dance, I often wondered how people had the time, when they told me they danced three, four and sometimes five times a week.

Since becoming the KASS Chairman two years ago, I have learnt that when you enjoy doing something, you just seem to find the time, and I too have now become one of those dancers who dances multiple times throughout the week. I think I may have caught the dancing bug! Over the last couple of years, I have managed to visit ten groups' classes, some more than once. I have enjoyed meeting and dancing with lots of different people and seeing how weekly classes are run in different groups. Unfortunately, I've not yet been able to attend Orpington & District Caledonians, RSCDS Tunbridge Wells and Tunbridge Wells & Crowborough classes as I find it difficult travelling the distance mid-week, after work, along with other commitments. I have also tried to attend most of the social dances around Kent, always being made to feel welcome. I think we have well and truly celebrated the RSCDS centenary year, I have enjoyed all the dances from the RSCDS 'Dances through the Decades' and eating some very tasty celebration cakes. I have loved dancing to the wonderful live music of The Caledonian Reelers, George Meikle, Strathallan Band, and Ian Muir of Prestwick.

In May, I travelled to The Lake District to attend my first dancing holiday. This consisted of five nights of social dancing with excellent live music from Chris

and Julie Dewhurst, and five morning workshops led by five different volunteers. The dancing programs were very varied, and I picked up a lot of new dances. I included two of them in the Autumn Tea Dance: Ecclefechan Feline and Sunshine and Sweeties Jig. The village seemed to be taken over by dancers, some camping at the local campsite and others renting local holiday cottages. There were a few local dancers who dropped in to join different sessions throughout the week. It was lovely to meet dancers from around the UK and two from the USA. Some had been attending for thirty-five years from when the holiday week first started. I met a couple of dancers who said, 'if you live in Kent do you know ...?' and much to their surprise I did!

The KASS walk took place in July at Trosley Country Park. Helen Knell planned two nice walks of varying difficulty to suit all abilities. Seventeen people came along. We met at the picnic area to eat our lunch, sitting outside in the sun. Unfortunately, it rained for a short time as we started the walk, but it soon dried up. We finished the afternoon with tea and snacks. Everyone enjoyed the walk and the chance to chat and get to know each other better.



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On the KASS website there is now a list of weekly classes which makes it easier for dancers to visit groups as the information is easily accessible. Please contact a group before visiting, just in case

they've had to cancel the class, or the arrangements are different.

I'm often told that clubs find it difficult to attract new dancers. What would attract you to try Scottish Country Dancing if you had never tried it before? Do we need to try and package our taster sessions in a different way?

Recently, I saw a 'Kent Golf' advert on Facebook for a ladies' social afternoon: a four-hour golf session which included a one-hour lesson, five holes on the golf course, finishing with Prosecco and nibbles. I'm not sure which bit of this attracted me most, but it seemed like a good deal to me and what did I have to lose? I would either enjoy the golf taster session and then want to play more and if it wasn't for me then I'd still have a fun afternoon with Prosecco and nibbles! Well, I did enjoy the whole afternoon: meeting new people, trying something new and enjoying the refreshments at the end. They haven't gained a new member yet, but I have played a few times since and you never know, I might just catch the golfing bug too!

We now have a KASS Facebook page (KASS-Kent Association of Scottish Societies) as another way for groups and members to keep in touch with what is going on. It is a public page, therefore any visitor to the page can have access to the KASS activities. There is also a link to the KASS website for further information about groups and dances. Hopefully with up-to-date news and photos of events, through this, we may attract some new members. It is important that we always have the consent of participants before posting photos. If you have any news, information, or photos you would like posted, please email the details to the KASS secretary and we will arrange the Facebook post. The advantage of a Facebook page is that it is free to use, giving us free advertising and promotion of Scottish Country Dancing.

We held our AGM, on Saturday 21st October at Lenham Community Hall. This was a morning meeting, open to all KASS members followed by a picnic lunch. The meeting was well attended with twelve groups represented. The Afternoon Tea Dance was attended by forty dancers from all around Kent, unfortunately a few dancers were unable to attend due to illness, nevertheless all clubs were represented. Thank you to all nine of the MC's who shared the programme and led us

through a very enjoyable dance. It was lovely to have a social gathering after the meeting.

The next KASS event is already arranged so make a note in your diaries.

Saturday 6th April – Committee meeting at 11.30am to 12.45pm

Dance Workshop 2.00pm to 5pm

As I continue the role of KASS Chair for another year, I would like to thank the KASS committee for all the work they do behind the scenes: Jane (Secretary) for all her help and support, especially over the last year when we have been trying out new KASS activities, Rhiannon (Treasurer) for her help in setting up online banking, Brian (Website Manager) for stepping in to manage the KASS website and keeping the diary updated, when we sadly lost Andrew Runnells, Dick (Newsletter Editor) for his interesting and informative bi-annual newsletters.

KASS allows for easier networking, the sharing of news and enables groups to have reduced insurance costs. Please consider joining the committee and help keep KASS going!

KASS TEA DANCE

Lenham 21st October 2023

The Autumn KASS Tea dance was held at Lenham Community Centre on Saturday 21st October. There was a good turnout attended by forty dancers from all the KASS clubs.



©Jane and Helen

Organised by Helen Cole and Jane Whittington it was a good afternoon enjoyed by all who attended. Luckily the mornings grey skies and pouring rain departed leaving a fine autumn afternoon. The programme consisted of sixteen well known dances and all were walked through by one of the MCs including Angela Campbell, Linda Byron, Pat Davoll, Brian and Helen Knell, Dick Barford, Joan

Kinnear, Simon Wales and Elaine Lloyd. Each MC was allocated two dances. However the reel Mrs



©Helen C,

Helen K, Joan, Angela, Dick, Elaine, Simon, Pat, Brian and Linda

Stuart Linnell being the last dance in the first half was not a popular dance to call but Simon took on the challenge and the dance was walked, talked and danced with no problems although plenty of laughter. Everyone agreed that the shared MC role was a good idea.

Tea, coffee and chocolate biscuits were served at the tea break which was followed by the raffle. Andrew Hebling from Canterbury was invited to draw the raffle which he did with his usual humour and jokes.



©KASS

All too soon the afternoon finished and dancers were able to make their way home in the daylight. The KASS tea dances which used to be held as part of KASS events are once again becoming popular as dancing in the daytime seems to be the way forward. Other KASS clubs are now choosing to hold some of their dances in the daytime too.

Jane Whittington

KASS Secretary

Editorial Comment:- Many of the articles in this copy of the KASS Newsletter celebrate the events of 28th November 1923 – the founding of SCDS later given the Royal Ascent to become RSCDS

1923-2023, THE RSCDS CENTENARY, A PERSONAL REFLECTION

One hundred years is a milestone to be celebrated. Nowadays, Scottish Country dancing is enjoyed worldwide and long ago spread beyond dancers of Scottish heritage, with dancing from the Americas via Europe and Africa to Japan. So how did it all begin? I'm sure you all recognise the names Jean Milligan and Ysobel Stewart. They both wanted to preserve and promote Scottish traditional dance - Miss Milligan through her work as a Physical Training lecturer, and Mrs Stewart as Girl Guide commissioner in Argyll. Mrs Stewart's plan to publish a book of dances led to a meeting with Miss Milligan and then to a public meeting in November 1923 in Glasgow. Book 1 was published in 1924 and the first Summer School followed in 1927. So by then there were dances, dance music and a teaching structure - pretty fast work! Overseas trips to spread the love of Scottish dancing abroad followed and the title 'Royal' was granted in 1951.

Traditional dances were the start but more recently devised dances followed, so dance titles celebrate not only Miss Milligan and Mrs Stewart, but other SCD greats from the early days to the present - Allie Anderson, Miss Gibson, John Drewry, and so many more.

My association with Scottish Country goes back nearly sixty years, from the time I went dancing with my mother in the 1960s in the south of England. Much of the time we danced the dances published by the Society and we danced to music researched and published by the Society. We were sometimes lucky to dance to musicians and bands but if not, the Society also published albums of recorded music. I scarcely knew about the RSCDS at the time, and it was only about 25 years later when I came to Kent in 1983 that I joined the Society. Yet without the RSCDS, where would the first half of my Scottish Dancing have been? I can truly say that my life has been shaped by dancing including wonderful opportunities to travel through Scottish dancing.

Whether like me you have danced for many years, or have started dancing more recently, I am sure that you too have derived fun, fitness and friendship through dancing. So, let's all toast the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

Pat Davoll

Adapted from the toast at our centenary Tea Dance

RSCDS TUNBRIDGE WELLS CENTENARY TEA DANCE, MAY 2023

The centenary of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society is being celebrated in throughout the dancing world, including many events in the South East. In May, RSCDS Tunbridge Wells hosted a celebratory Tea Dance in Pembury, attended by over forty dancers. Strathallan Band provided joyful music for us as we 'danced through the decades'. Maggie Talbot was MC, taking us through dances each representing a ten year period, supplemented with dances with local connections. Just for fun, we were invited to identify which dance came from each period and Kay Dunlop organised two rounds of 'Heads and Tails' instead of a raffle. Daphne Males masterminded the refreshments including the centenary cake and champagne to toast the RSCDS.



Pat Davoll toasting the RSCDS and Colin Simpson cutting the centenary cake.

Thank you to everyone who came, we hope you enjoyed yourselves!

NEWS FROM MEDWAY CALEDONIANS

We continue to dance on Monday afternoons at Bredhurst village hall and at St Thomas' church hall in Rainham on Thursday evenings.

Bredhurst had a break in August, but as we are able to open doors and windows in Rainham we continued to dance during the hot weather. Some sitting outside to enjoy their strawberries and cream!

A huge thank you to all the MCs who keep us dancing week after week with a wide variety of dances and a few imaginative sessions – becoming a cat or howling at the moon

Our St Andrew's tea dance is on November 26th at Bredhurst village hall. As it is free to members, the tickets were offered first to members. The price to non-members is £5.00 and please bring a plate of food to share. We would love to see you so please get in touch with Brenda on 07772730829

Medway will be one hundred years old in 2024 and we are planning a ball on April 20th. The venue will be St Mathew's community hall at 9 Drewery drive, Gillingham, ME8 0DP, with music by Robert Whitehead and his band. We are firming up the details and will forward them to everyone very soon. In the meantime, please put the date - April 20th 2024 - in your diaries!

KEEP DANCING!

Margaret Anne Robertson

CONGRATULATIONS TO CAROLYN TRAINING TO BECOME ANOTHER FULLY QUALIFIED RSCDS TEACHER.

I am very excited and so pleased that Carolyn (Canterbury chair) has passed the first three units of her teaching qualification with the RSCDS. She sat the theory in April (unit 1) and succeeded in passing with a very high mark (85%). A trip to St Andrews then followed this August for unit 2, her dancing assessment, and unit 3 which is the first part of the teaching qualification. Unfortunately I was unable to go to St Andrews this year due to ill health but we spoke regularly so she could keep me informed as to how it was all going.

Carolyn worked extremely hard to achieve this along with all her teaching responsibilities at school. She never seemed to mind when I pulled her up on her dancing technique at Canterbury on a Friday evening – I did struggle at first to stop her dancing in a very Irish fashion, ingrained in her

since childhood. It was also difficult doing it without letting anybody know as Carolyn refused to let me tell anyone what she was going to do!

For the next two years I hope to be mentoring Carolyn through unit 4 which is mentored teaching practice so that, hopefully, in 2025 she will be able to return to St Andrews to complete the final unit 5 and become a fully qualified RSCDS teacher. I think though she may go back in 2024 to St Andrews just to enjoy herself – I hope she does!

Pat Gill (Isle of Thanet and Canterbury)



Further to the article above it appears as though Carolyn's mentor needs to be congratulated for teaching the Isle of Thanet and Canterbury dancers for some years. Well done Pat

DANCE – AND SEW MUCH MORE!

The end of November and beginning of December 2022 was a busy time for us at Tunstall. We were invited to display a Christmas tree at Tunstall Church as part of their Christmas tree festival, as a way of advertising our group.

We rose to the challenge with an initial meeting to discuss what we could do. Elaine, our dance teacher knew how to make Christmas baubles so we set up a series of workshop afternoons, open to anyone who was able to give up a few hours.



What we didn't realise was how absorbing and rewarding the task would be and how many of us would catch the 'bauble bug', wanting Father Christmas to bring us our own bauble making equipment. It was also fun bonding over making the decorations, with cups of tea to keep us going.

Not being creative in any way, shape or form myself, words cannot express how proud I was

with my finished item, and I know everyone else felt the same about theirs. I had a small Scottish piper gathering dust in my house somewhere. She had to be at least 60 years old, but she was perfect to go on top of the tree, as long as her head stayed on!



© LK - TUNSTALL



After the dancing session at the beginning of December, some of our dancers went to the Church to have a look at all the trees on display. Some were extremely imaginative but ours also drew some positive comments, especially as all our decorations

were made by us.

A big thank you to everyone at Tunstall who contributed to our tree, either by making the decorations, supplying the base, helping to decorate the tree or by just going to visit the display at the Church.

With December 2023 fast approaching, I'm just wondering if we can use the same decorations or if we have to come up with new ideas. If so, I know they won't be coming from me, so everyone should start thinking. NOW!

Linda Kitson

Coordinator for Sheerness Scottish Heather Dancing Club, Tunstall group

MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

There can be few people who haven't heard about this debilitating disease, due in part to the high profile cases of Rob Burrows and the late Doddie Weir, to name but two. One of our Bredhurst dancers is very much involved with MND, working as a volunteer to raise funds. She has been persuaded to write a short piece about how we have got involved at Bredhurst and Tunstall, and how you can too.

This missive is to say the biggest thank you to all you marvellous Caledonian dancers, in particular Bredhurst and Tunstall (SSHDC) who gave so generously to support my book club sale to raise funds for the MND association. In total, £116 was raised, simply through the sale of new and nearly new books.



As we are now into Autumn, perhaps readers will be thinking of cosy evenings, curled up with a good book. Well

GUESS WHAT! The MND association can provide you with a selection, in a pack, priced at £15 for 20 books. These can be for personal use, or as happened at Bredhurst and Tunstall, new books can be sold individually to raise further funds for MND.

All the money raised goes towards equipment and grants that are very much appreciated by those who need help. The MND groups only happen thanks to the amazing volunteers who go the extra mile.

Keep well and KEEP DANCING!

Margaret Gibbons

Bredhurst Dance Group, Medway Caledonians

ORPINGTON & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY

After a summer break for 8 weeks, here at Orpington we have returned to dancing once again with enthusiasm. In April Ginny Colanbrander was elected as our new President, with Angela House as Vice-President, a new Treasurer, Jean Reeve, was also elected and we hope Di Lewis who has been our excellent Treasurer for 10 years will now have more time to enjoy her dancing.

We once again enjoyed our Summer Dance on the first Saturday in June, the dance was convened by Hadyn Davies, with music by Kenneth Martlew and Barbara Manning. The Society continued dancing with a variety of MCs until July 13th.

Our Monday lesson continues at Crofton Halls and on our second week we held an 'Open Evening', hoping to attract some new Members. We

welcome anyone in our area who would like to learn to Reel and dance Jigs and Strathspeys.

Our Display Dancers have already been in action since our return to dancing. On 6th October we danced at the Bromley Gateway Club, which is a social club for all adults with special needs and on Thursday 12th we danced for the Residents and staff at the Queen Elizabeth House for the elderly.

On Saturday 14th October, we held our Autumn Dance, and during it we celebrated the RSCDS Centenary, with a celebratory drink and a delicious cake. The evening which was enjoyed by all dancers attending was convened by Angela House with wonderful music by Ian Muir of Prestwick.

THANET & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY

The Tuesday dance class has resumed after the summer break. During the break some of the class met at the Westgate Sunken Gardens, we managed tea and biscuits and a lot of chat!

We were very sad to learn in August of the death of Anne Campbell our dance teacher, she had been unwell for 18 months. Some of you might remember her Haggis Supper Dances which were very well supported, Muriel and David were regular attendees. Along with the Caber Feidh Band.

Our next function is our St Andrew's Dinner (no dancing unfortunately) on the 2nd December followed in January with the Burn's Dinner/Dance and ceilidh style dancing

If you would like details of the dance class and events Contact Jenny on 07557882194

Jenny Humphries

NEWS FROM COBTREE

This has been a year of change at Cobtree as Dick Barford reluctantly stepped down as chairman due to health problems. Dick led the club very enthusiastically and efficiently for many years and we all knew his shoes would be hard to fill. After a long and fierce contest between the contenders (really?) I was elected as the new Chair though I would like to be known as Charlady. I am gradually getting used to what needs to be done when, with the help of gentle hints from Dick. His experience is extremely valuable. He continues to do some of the

“backroom” jobs which means that my role is not too onerous. He also continues as one of our regular MC’s. We are delighted to say that Dick and Esther continue to work with other organisations and raise funds for Maidstone MENCAP.

As Esther left the committee as well, though continuing to sell dance tickets, we now have a smaller but enthusiastic committee which includes an ex committee member who has thankfully returned to us.

Our first big job was to organise the summer dance. We had already booked the Grove Green Hall and the Caledonian Reelers so the rest fell into place fairly easily. Forty six dancers had a wonderful evening enjoying the Reelers lively music and the atmosphere was excellent.

We will be having our usual Christmas party for our members and an afternoon dance in February to recorded music. Our summer dance in 2024 will also be at Grove Green when we will dance to Strathallan.

We hope that we can continue the good work started by Peter and Phyllis Green, followed by John and Jan Day and carried on by Dick and Esther so that Cobtree remains a very active and friendly club. We would love to see you at our club nights and dances.

Helen Knell

SURPRISE VISIT IN RSCDS CENTENERY YEAR

We have just returned from a dancing holiday at Hetland Hall in Dumfries run by Mary Howard with Ian Muir (Prestwick) playing for us every night. It is always lovely to meet up with the friends we have made on these holidays and enjoy dancing to great music. We were surrounded by beautiful scenery and also had some good weather, what more could we ask for. Well, we were in for a surprise.

On the Thursday Ian said he was going to catch up with friends. Then in the evening after we had done a couple of dances he said he had a surprise visitor for us and William Williamson, Chair of the RSCDS and his wife Linda came in.

Ian had been telling them how Mary had started the holidays 20 years ago and how he has been

playing on them from the beginning. They said it would be lovely to pop along during the evening and asked if it would be OK. Of course he said they would be made most welcome.



©LB & KB

After Ian had introduced them William said a few words commenting on his vision for Scottish dancing in the Centenary year and said the most important thing is to get people up on the floor, smiling and enjoying the dancing whatever their ability.

During the evening he sang a couple of songs for us accompanied by Ian, which we all thoroughly enjoyed. Ian and William go back a long way and the banter between them brought lots of laughter, it was a wonderful addition to the evening.

People on the holiday asked them up to dance and they enjoyed dancing with the group and then they danced the last one together.

William thanked us for making them both so welcome, he said it had been lovely to come along and that music, friends and laughter are what makes Scottish Dancing so special, and to just keep doing what we are doing.

He is a great ambassador for RSCDS and Scottish Dancing.

So, we unexpectedly celebrated 100 years of the RSCDS in a very special way.

Kay, Fred and Linda - Meopham SDC

DANCING IN PERTH

As some of you know the three of us visited New Zealand and Australia earlier this year. We had a wonderful time.

Fred first visited Christchurch, New Zealand in 2000 and although only there for an overnight stop, fell

in love with the city in particular the Cathedral and the park. We were able to visit both and see how work was progressing on the Cathedral which was badly damaged in the earthquake in 2011. It is looking good but they expect it will be another 7 years before completion.

We then flew on to Wellington on the North Island for a few days before heading for Australia where our first stop was Melbourne. Our highlight there was a trip to Philip Island to see the penguins emerge from the sea and make their way to their burrows, then onto Adelaide before finally going to Perth where some of Fred's family live.

We knew there were Scottish dancing groups in Perth but our previous visits we have been in the summer when they do not dance but this time it was autumn. We took our shoes with us in the



hope of finding a group to go along to. We found one that said it was social dancing so we hoped their expectations would not be too high. It was an afternoon class, we parked in the car park and nobody else appeared to be about except for a car parked in the road. Looks like it is not on today we said, then Kay spotted someone through the window so in we went in. There were actually 3 people there and then another 4 arrived funnily enough they included a Fred and a Linda. We said to the teacher we did dance but were happy to watch if we did not know the dances. She showed us the list and luckily we recognised all the names. They made us very welcome and were pleased for us to join in. We thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. We then went along to the evening class where the numbers were still quite small but once again we were made very welcome. They were actually practising for a Tea Dance and the programme included Orpington Caledonians which they were not familiar with so we were able to help

out a little with the timing of the first 8 bars of the dance. We told them it was written for a local club to us and we did the dance quite often.

Linda, Fred and Kay - Meopham SDC

DANCING WITH COCKROACHES

I would imagine that each person's experience of Scottish country dancing is slightly different. Some will have started when very young and continued throughout their life, others may well have started, stopped for a multitude of reasons, and then resumed.

I had my first experience of Scottish Country dancing in the early 1950's at primary school in Stratford upon Avon. It was a small, 3 classroom school and, for dancing, a folding door between two rooms was opened, all the desks pushed aside and away we went with the aid of a radio programme, if memory serves. I recall learning Petronella and Swedish Masquerade.

Fast forward to the late 1970's. I was living in Mandeville, Jamaica. A Scot by the name of Ken Thomson came to Mandeville to run one of the banks in the town. He immediately started a Scottish Country dance group and recruited dancers from the local and expat community, no experience needed! Within a very few weeks he had us doing a demo for the local Kiwanis.

We had a lot of fun. The group met and danced at the Manchester Club, an old style colonial building with a large upstairs hall with a beautifully sprung floor.

One memorable weekend a dance workshop was organised with about 40 dancers from Mandeville and Kingston. We occupied Knox College, a boarding school in Christiana in the hills of central Jamaica, for the weekend and slept in the campus dorms, as I recollect with quite a few cockroaches for company. As the weekend handout stated those who bring flashlights will not regret so doing, and there was no promise of 4star luxury, which was very true. The whole event was extremely well organised, catering and workshop sessions well done. Scottish Country dancers seem to have a talent for providing wonderful food wherever they assemble! The floor of the hall was very hard, but we managed 4 hours tuition and a ceilidh in the

evening when the Mandeville group did a demo of The White gull of Tay.

We also had some fun sessions at a beach house courtesy of one of our members .Dancing in the sand in the tropical sunshine did not assist beautiful footwork, but the sea was there to cool off when it all got too much.

Sadly the political and economic conditions in Jamaica in the early 1980's meant that many dancers left the island and bit by bit the group dwindled until we could not even manage a 3 couple set .

Coming to Maidstone in 1986 the first thing I did was look for a SCD group and was lucky enough to find Cobtree practically on my doorstep, so was able to joyfully resume Scottish Country dancing.

Carolyn Walder
Cobtree

“NOT GOING OUT.”

For many years from the 1970s and into the 21st century, with a gap in the middle when family commitments and work took priority, Dick and I enjoyed attending dances all over the county of Kent and beyond. Most Saturday evenings there would be a dance somewhere which we would happily drive to and from. When he was chair of KASS, Dick was especially keen to support club dances and KASS events, even visiting other clubs on their weekly dance evenings.

We enjoyed meeting and getting to know other dancers and we would often meet the same people at a variety of events. It was great to be introduced to new dances and to become familiar with other clubs' favourites. Dancing to a range of music from different bands, either live or recorded, was very enjoyable but live bands usually gave us the extra lift, we found. KASS tea dances and walks used to be an opportunity to bring non-dancing friends or family members along and our son, when young, would join in the dancing and walking. (Sadly, he never kept up the dancing, though he is a keen walker). At KASS Balls we would join with maybe a 100+ dancers: men in kilts and jackets (usually black with silver buttons) and ladies in long dresses, which I loved to see. We also have fond memories of the delicious variety of food that 'Bring a Plate of Food' dances would produce for

the consumption of all. There was always plenty of choice and it never ran out!

Unfortunately, age and health problems began to take their toll and made restrictions on our dancing, and a long journey home, when feeling tired, became a worrying challenge. During Lockdown these problems continued and, although at first we hated not being able to meet and dance, we gradually got used to not going out. We had hopes and ambitions of resuming attendance at dances in our old manner but this was not to be. We still dance but limit how far we travel and how much we do, whether at a club night or a dance. Although we still miss the dancing, we now find that we are content to be not going out so frequently on Saturday evenings, and we have many happy times to look back on.

So a huge thank you to all those who have welcomed us over the years. Thank you to dancing partners, organisers, MCs and bands. We look forward to seeing at least some of you at the dances we can attend. Enjoy your dancing!

Esther and Dick Barford

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

If I am asked what are my favourite animal I always say dragonflies and damselflies. Dragonflies are larger and more sturdy while damselflies are far more delicate. As well as being beautiful they are extremely well adapted as carnivores both as adults flying around and as nymphs living in the pond.



The life cycle is fascinating, starting with the adults mating. The photo left shows damselflies mating. They stay together for some time before the female lays her fertilised eggs on the weed just below the surface of the pond.

The eggs hatch into nymphs which live in the pond for years. As they get bigger the nymphs have to moult many times to get rid of the exoskeleton which has become too small. The nymphs have many features which make them voracious hunters of almost any animals including tadpoles and small fish, photo right. They are dull coloured for

camouflage and their mouth parts are extremely efficient. The lower jaw has a flap called a mask which is armed with hooks and spines, I have heard it described as a mouthful of knives and forks. This can be shot out quickly to catch prey.

The nymphs of different species have different shapes, reflecting the shape of the adults.



Eventually the nymphs are big enough to change into adults. They climb up a reed and hold on, photo on left. The back splits and the adult crawls out with its wings folded. It stays still for a while until the wings have pumped up and dried then it flies away.



You can often see the empty exoskeletons, called exuvia, on reeds. The adults live for a few months usually, flying around at almost 30mph. They are adapted for hunting with huge compound eyes which take up most of the head and 80% of the brain used for vision. They hunt insects, catching the prey in mid-air and carrying them in a basket made by the legs to a perch where the prey is eaten.

I hope you will come to love these amazing creatures as much as I do.

Photos by Helen Knell, Amanda Brookman, Judith Hathrill, Val Rea.

AND FINALLY TO KEEP THE GREY MATTER BUSY.

How many dances can you find in this short extract from Margaret-Anne Robertson, Medway and District Caledonian Association.

Dressed in Nottingham lace and Highland plaid, her Luckenbooth brooch and cashmere shawl, there was none so pretty as Alison Rose. Lord Maclay, the Highlander, led her over Cramond Bridge and along the winding road surrounding Neidpath Castle. In the scotch mist they kissed – the flirt! – he was Peggy’s love!

The Website Manager asked an interesting question following the KASS Tea Dance held at Lenham where there were a number of different MCs.

His question is:-

What is the collective noun for Scottish Country Dancing MCs?

EDITORIAL

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of KASS or the Editor.

Thank you to the large number of ‘authors’ who have supplied quite an array of interesting articles for this edition. I look forward to receiving more interesting articles in due course for Newsletter 81.

