

22 Wantage FDC, Tea Dance, 2.30pm, Steventon VH, The Green, OX13 6RR. John Turner with Pete & Sue Hall. Contact: Linda & David on 01235 831482.

March 2015

7 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Ian Ludbrook. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.

7 North Oxford FDC, Dance, 7.45pm, Wolvercote VH, OX2 8BD. Brian Lyons with John Graham & Friends. Contact: Colin on 01865 779417.

14 St Andrew's Assembly ECDC, Dance, 2.30pm, Cumnor VH, Leys Road, OX2 9QF. Christine & Norman Haynes with St Andrew's Assembly. Contact: Ken & Ruth on 01235 831409.

21 Oxfordshire Folk Association, Music Workshop, 10.00am, Stonesfield VH, Field Close, Stonesfield, Witney, OX29 8HA. Music leader: Chris Dewhurst. Contact: Peter & Sheila on 01865 372344. To be followed by an evening dance at 5.30pm.

April 2015

4 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Ian Ludbrook. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.

11 St Andrew's Assembly ECDC, Dance, 2.30pm, Cumnor VH, Leys Road, OX2 9QF. Alan Davies with St Andrew's Assembly. Contact: Ken & Ruth on 01235 831409.

25 Oxfordshire Folk Association, St George's Day Dance and Workshops, 7.30pm at Steventon VH, The Green, OX13 6RR. Ted Morse with Stradivarius. Contact: Peter & Sheila on 01865 372344. Workshops: International Dance 3.00-4.00pm; Rapper 5.00-6.30pm; tickets in advance.

**Contributions for the May 2015 edition of
Wroughton Rant should be with Rob Dawson by
Wednesday 15 April 2015 or earlier.**

WROUGHTON RANT

Wroughton Folk Dance Club's Newsletter



January 2015

Number 109



Chairman's Jottings

The club lost a valued and respected member when Frank passed away in November. A long service career in the RAF saw Frank travel worldwide and it was in the early 1980s when he was posted to Lyneham that Frank and June settled in Swindon.

In 1986 he was to play one of the leading roles in helping to set up and run our club. For many years Frank shared the calling duties on club evenings as well as holding the post of club Treasurer. He gave a great deal of encouragement to new members who were learning the dance steps and movements and as time progressed, he was always willing to help and inspire those of us who decided to try our hand at calling, providing us with advice, dance notation and suitable music. He made many friends in the world of folk dancing, not only in Wiltshire but across the neighbouring counties as well. He was a talented singer and musician, the instruments that he played included concertina, harmonica and guitar. Some of us will, I'm sure, recall the humorous play that he directed at a New Year Party in the Church Hall in Wroughton.

Our club along with the other organisations to which he belonged will miss him.

The rousing appreciation shown to Les at the end of his final evening of calling on December 3rd bears testimony to the

Francis

On Saturday 15 November, Pat, Rob, Roma, Ian, Jean B and I all went to the Bristol Playford Ball.

The caller was Mark Elvins and the music by Focus Pocus, all excellent. The dress was "Period or Formal".

It was fun to dance real Playford dressed in 17th century clothes with the dances mainly slower, the ladies in long and elegant dresses and the men in fancy shirts, waistcoats and breeches. The caller and the musicians also dressed for the occasion. Our outfits were very different but all "correct" and looked and felt good. It was also nice to view the fabulous dresses and the detail and variety of the men's costumes



too. To dance in costume is something special - I've now done it 5 times; twice at the Bristol Playford Ball, and three times at Halsway Manor, all with Jean as my dance partner (many thanks, and for putting me right sometimes), and with Ian and Roma and / or Pat and Rob. The evening started with a sherry reception at 7:15pm for a



January 2015

- 1 Wantage FDC, Tea Dance,** 2.30pm at Stevenon VH, The Green, OX13 6RR. Ivan Aitken with 3D. Contact: Linda & David on 01235 831482.
- 3 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance,** 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Barry Reeves & Geoff Elwell. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 10 St Andrew's Assembly ECDC, Dance,** 2.30pm, Cumnor VH, Leys Road, OX2 9QF. Madeleine Smith with St Andrew's Assembly. Contact: Ken & Ruth on 01235 831409.
- 18 Frenchay FDC 50th Anniversary Tea Dance,** 2.30pm, at Hanham Community Centre, 118-124 High Street, Hanham, Bristol, BS15 3EJ. Peter Howarth and the Weston Country Dance Band. Contact: John & Lynne Griffin on 0117 9409508.

February 2015

- 7 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Brian Lyons. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 7 Stonesfield FDC, Dance**, 8.00pm, Stonesfield VH, Field Close, Stonesfield, Witney, OX29 8HA. Mark Elvins with Julia & Shane. Contact: Peter B on 01608 810184.
- 14 Westbury FDC, Valentine Dance**, 7.30pm, Westbury Leigh Church Hall, Westbury, BA13 3SQ. Ian Ludbrook to recorded music. Contact: Ann Polden on 01225 776766.
- 14 St Andrew's Assembly ECDC, Dance**, 2.30pm, Cumnor VH, Leys Road, OX2 9QF. Peter Bridgman with St Andrew's Assembly. Contact: Ken & Ruth on 01235 831409.

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- 22 Wroughton FDC, Spring Dance, 2.00pm, Royal Wootton Bassett Memorial Hall, SN4 8EN. Frances Oates with The Weston Country Dance Band. Contact Francis Hobbs on 01793 812282.**

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Dance of the Month

Red House (January)

A longways dance first published in 1721, it has several versions, including a Scottish one, but the version we shall do is the one you are most likely to meet elsewhere. It incorporates a 'chase', led by each man closely followed by his partner ending in progressed places. This is followed by the second man heying with the first couple, then his place being taken by the second woman. Colin Hume has described it as a flirtatious dance!

Picking Up Sticks (February)

This dance for three couples was first published by John Playford in 1670 and it has the typical introductions to the three parts. The first part is then a series of zig-zag changes by first the men and then the women until everybody is home.

The second part has a brisk move performed by two couples while the third couple dances round the whole set. The rest of the third part is a sheepskin hey (a weaving move, not a hey at all) which is also brisk and performed in turn by the men and then the women. This is the only dance in which a sheepskin hey appears.

Dance with a Travelling Star (March)

This is a move which occurs in various ways, either as half stars started by the top couple progressing down the set, or as whole stars done with one adjacent couple, then the couple at the other side in a longways set or a Sicilian Circle. The technique depends on making stars as hand-shake holds with the diagonally opposite person and being able to identify the hand to look for in the next star.

Charlene's Celebration (April)

A 4-couple dance composed by the American Gary Roodman to music by Charlene Thomson called the Elizabethan Tango Man. It is a favourite of many dancers and well worth learning so that you can join in enthusiastically.

As this dance is in a lively tango rhythm national caller, Ron Coxall, usually encourages dancers to "wiggle and steam"!!

dancing start of 7:30 - 9:00 before a three course meal chosen from the menu when booking. Then there was dancing again until 11:30pm and a drive back down the M4 to get home. The ticket came with a list of 23 dances the caller would choose from, and we must have done almost all of them. Most of these we knew. To name a few: Jamaica, Mr Isaac's Maggot, Portsmouth, Red House, Fandango and Hole in the Wall.

We recognised a good number of people who come to our club dances or who we've seen at other events. The music, calling, dancing and food were all excellent so am looking forward to the next special Playford occasion, probably at Halsway Manor towards the end of March.

These events are precious in keeping our traditions alive, as well as being great nights out.

Alan



Keeping English Country Dance Alive

There are some key people who put a lot of time and effort into ECD; those who went to our autumn dance at Wootton Bassett met one of them – Chris Turner. He started the magazine Set & Turn Single because the magazine published by the English Folk Dance and Song Society did very little of interest to ECD people. There have been 90 editions, one every two months. He and his wife, Elaine, are also great supporters of Halsway Manor, the national residential centre in Somerset for the folk arts owned by EFDSS; see their website for the events diary www.halswaymanor.org.uk or pick up a leaflet from the display Clive puts out on Wednesday evenings.

Another key person is Hugh Stewart who has published two books – ‘Elements of English Country Dance’ (the blue book) and ‘The Country Dance Club Book’ which is aimed at callers; I almost look upon it as a text book because of the range of information it contains, including his opinion on how difficult a dance club is likely to find each of the 100+ dances in the book. You will be pleased to know that our club can cope with almost all of them.

Dave Leverton was recently given the English Folk Dance & Song Society’s Gold Award for his contribution. He organises the National Youth Folklore Troupe of England, NYFTE, (pronounced Nifty), which is a group of young people from all over the country who are interested in music, song and dance. If you go to Chippenham Folk Festival, you have probably seen them as they perform there every year. They need money to help them to continue and the club’s committee recently decided to make a donation on your behalf.

Pat

Skint

After driving around the Peak District for the afternoon and having some excellent beer and pub food, what's a better way to spend Halloween than a weekend of French folk dancing?

This was my second time dancing French and Scandinavian Balfolk and here I really learned, through a variety of volunteer-run workshops, how to do them. Five and eight time waltzes and the Polska were amongst my favourites.

Skint festival is so named because the whole event including hall space, sleeping quarters and food costs you thirty pounds. There is a small committee which organises it, books the hall and sells tickets; but the music, cooking, workshops, setting up of tables and washing up of dishes are all done by the dancers and musicians who attend.

On Friday evening we arrived, set up a sleeping bag and mat in a small side room, and joined the other hundred or so people for a meal and chat, around tables with carved pumpkins and peppers, then started dancing. Until one in the morning.

Saturday and Sunday consisted of waking up very grudgingly after a few hours of sleep, having breakfast and reading the day's events on the whiteboard. I attended Balfolk basics, unusual-time waltzes, how to Polska, and Contra and Playford workshops!

Each evening from about eight thirty there was a Bal until midnight, then the musicians would move to a smaller room, and the dancers who didn't go to bed carried on dancing. On Saturday, it was quite amazing to listen to an intermezzo of scary stories accompanied by live music and dance in a small dimly lit room, where musicians outnumbered dancers!

If we felt like we needed some refreshment, we went into a side room and had cheese and wine and beer.

A thoroughly enjoyable weekend with spectacular music, sensual dances and lots of friendly, funny people.

Dan

Keep to the Music

How many different dance rhythms can you think of? Well there are jigs, reels, hornpipes, waltzes, step-hops to name but a few, most of which will fit those dances that have no set tunes. Then there are all the Playford dances and modern equivalents to which you wouldn't dream of using anything but the set tune, although I have danced “Newcastle” to the tune of “Won't you come home Bill Bailey”.

Whatever dance is danced and whatever tune is used the most important thing is to listen to and KEEP TO THE MUSIC. There is no point whatever in rushing to get through the dance because you think that you know it and finding that your partner will hold you back because they have been listening, this can be very frustrating for all involved. Dances in waltz time, step-hops, hornpipes and many slow Playford type need to be considered fairly carefully if you are going to get the timing right and get the maximum enjoyment from your dancing.

Happy Timing.

Frank

These dance notes from Frank were originally published in 2007.