

We were a convenient 10 last Sunday and so were able to do some 5 couple dances for a change, though we started with an 8x32 jig by Gill Jennings - **Viv-a-Voom** is from a Sutton Coldfield leaflet of 5 Simple SCDS so that broke us in gently ...

Our next dance was **Seeing Stars** from the Glasgow 100th Anniversary book, a 5x40 reel in a longwise set with 1s & 3s as dancing couples. Now, I admit that I didn't have the full instructions in front of me but the crib downloaded from SCDBB, but they explicitly said for bars 17-24: 1s&3s lead down the middle & up to face 1st corners (2s & 4s step up **bars 23-24**). This is what we did but the set moved further and further down the room as the dancing couples, coming back up, were stopping short as the corners were still stepping up. I remember the old rule, that unless specifically told otherwise, couples step up in time to leave a gap which the dancers can aim for - particularly useful on a crowded dance floor, and you've been down 2 sets or more! We felt that stepping up on 19-20 would have been much better. Maybe someone will tell me if that is, in fact, what the full instructions say ...

Our first strathspey was **Peter Price's Strathspey** by Gaye Collin. This worked fine and the dancers liked the 3-couple Set&Rotate but there seemed nothing to link each 8 bars with the next, so it was a little bit of a memory test.

We then had a departure from any plan which I might have had - always only a vague plan anyway! - as I had overheard a conversation about **Forty & Counting**, from Book 49. I have special memories of this dance as I was at the Ball for the York 40th anniversary where the dance was demonstrated for the first time and we all the danced it - Malcolm Brown did give us 2 walk-throughs! York have now had their 50th anniversary and the dance was again on the programme, though sadly Malcolm is no longer with us (one of his sons deputised in the dem set!). So, it is a dance I know well and love to dance. Having been adopted by the RSCDS is/was the only way it will ever reach a wider audience, and there is hope, though it is challenging until you really know it. Our 2 newest members decided to watch, so we were a 4-couple set, though in fact having watched it, they do want to give it a go another time. Obviously the 2 chaperoned chain progressions on the diagonal are the challenge; the first 8 bars just to get 1s facing 1st corners; the centre 8 bars (17-24) a "breathing gap" of Hello-Goodbye setting; and the last 8 bars (2 x 1/2 diagonal reels of 4) just returning corners home again. In the chain progression it is important to keep in mind whether you are a chaperone - in which case you will dance clockwise around the set and finish where you started - or on the working diagonal, which means you will finish on other end of that diagonal line. 1s have it easy, as such, in that they just keep returning to the middle of the set. After the first one, corners are not opposite their partner - the ladies are in 1st place and men in 3rd place. After all of those instructions, plus 4 walks, we - they - danced it nigh-on perfectly!

A nice little 5-couple square set reel, as a change from Fisherman's Reel, is **Gordon's Cider Press**. Rh across at the top, LH across at the bottom, RSh reels up & down, LSh reels across. Then the progression is, with the Man leading in each couple, 5s in tandem change with 1s, who then change with 4s, etc. so that the 2s finish in the centre. For music I used All Things Nice from Jim Lindsay's recording on Formation Foundations Blue CD.

After tea we had 4 couples and I taught the **Reel of the Dandy Ninth** for the first time. This dance was written by Robert Senior for Ian Gray, whose grandfather & great uncle were in the 9th Highland Division (and as they the only kilted regiment in the Royal Scots their nickname was the Dandy Ninth). The dance is becoming popular in our area and appearing on Dance programmes, so it will be Dance of the Month in both Peterborough and Stamford next month. The recommended music for this is The Shetland Fiddler, played by Chris, Julie & Nick Dewhurst.

As I've said before, I like Murrough Landon's dances, with their variations on standard formations. This month we tried **Between Two Lakes**, written for a couple who divided their time between Annecy and Geneva, both cities with lakes. The last 8 bars of this dance - a strathspey, by the way, with 3s & 4s on opposite sides - are "Through the mirror Rondels". Rondels at either end of the set, with dancing couples meeting in the centre after going under an arch on bar 1, then instead of crossing they 1/2 circle to the Left, to join the other Rondel. All other bars and movements are as standard. The problem - other than you really have to be very good with your timing & phrasing to get a Rondel to work properly - was that for the dancing couples getting out of the circle onto the sidelines to join with the other person for the next arch on 4, they really needed to concentrate on the timing. The Rondel is a formation I have never liked, partly because of the arches, and partly because the 1-4-7 timing is not natural in SCD. So. unless class members request it, I doubt we will see many Rondels.

We finished with a great track from Gordon Shand for the reel **L'Ete a Paris (Summer in Paris)** by Shigeyoshi Kobayashi. The dance is only so-so, in my opinion, with a strange movement called Japonaise - 3 couples in promenade hold all facing down, dance up the Ladies' side (3 bars), slip step into the middle (1 bar) then turn partner RH (4 bars) - but for me, not dancing it, I could enjoy the music!

The next class is right at the beginning of February, so hope to see lots of you there, and I will find some interesting dances for you - we could well be doing Forty & Counting again if that is popular.