

St. David's Day and the first day of Spring provided plenty of ideas for dances today. We had 13 dancers plus me so we decided that when possible we would practise a 7-couple set arrangement. Our first dance was **Ddraig Goch** (Red Dragon) by Paul Bond, published in the Ness House Collection 2. This was a nice little dances with 2 non-alternating tandem reels of 3 on the sides and nothing much else so it would be a good dance to introduce tandem reels. The dance doesn't have its own recording so I used the one by Gordon Shand & his Band for **The Dragon**, which is a John Drewry dance with a Morland connection.

Our next dance was a jig, and not so satisfying. **A Touch of Wales** is by Douglas Dean from his Rodney Rooms Dances, and is an exercise in pas-de-basque for 2s & 3s who don't do anything else except join in with setting with the 1s in lines. There also seems to be a mistake in either the crib (which is what I was teaching from) or maybe in the original instructions, which I have but haven't had time to get out. In the last 8 bars apparently, 2s+1s+3s set (2 bars), 1s turn 1 1/4 RH to 2nd place opposite sides (2 bars), then all set & 1s cross RH (the last 4 bars). The 1 1/4 turn in 2 bars was not possible, given that you needed to be out on the sidelines at the end of it. We felt that 3/4 LH would have worked.

We then reprieved the 8x strathspey from last month - **The Long Goodbye** by Sue McKinnell. This was written as a sad dance (the story is on Sue's website about her mother's dementia) but I didn't recount Sue's story. We danced it to her choice of music - **The Gypsy Weaver** from More Memories of Scottish Weekend - and we liked the dance. I am including it at Peterborough's Tea Dance at the end of March.

Later I wanted to try a Murrough Landon dance based on **Mrs Stuart Linnell**, one of my favourite dances, which was popular with TSC pre-Covid, so, once again, we were in a 7-couple set for this one. It went well - a great dance!

Just time for a 3-couple strathspey before tea and this was **David's Strathspey**, devised by Avril Quarrie in 2020. Another nice little dance finishing with a 2-couple Bourrel.

After tea it was time to tackle our "challenge dance" - **DAVID**, devised in 2017 by Murrough Landon for David Lieberman - David Admires Very Involved Dances - a 5x40 reel in a longwise set with 1s & 3s as dancing couples and the Mrs Stuart Linnell formation "1/2 reel, turn & change" danced on the diagonal. To unravel everyone there were 4 chases, all clockwise and at the same time, so at one point they did all appear to be in a circle/oval. Very clever dance. We walked it once & then tried dancing it once in strathspey time to get the geography but they decided it needed to be in reel time to actually get the timing right. After everyone had walked it from every position (and a couple of times danced it) I put the music on and let it run and it was successful. Not sure if we would do it again often, but I'm glad we tried it.

Another dance from last month is **Family Ties** by Anne Thorn of Helensburgh, written for David Oswald's family. This dance includes the Figure of Love, which depicts interlocking hearts on the floor, and was first devised by Violaine Eysseric in 2018 (I think - definitely in Paris, anyway!). A simple little dance which we danced to Ewan Galloway's We'll Meet Again, though I wouldn't normally use that track for anything other than the dance it was meant for. Eminently suitable for a Valentine's Day Dance programme.

And then we danced **Forty & Counting** again. We danced this quite a lot when it was first published by York & Humberside Branch (I was there for its "premiere"), and later by the RSCDS and it is a dance which needs practice. Jim Lindsay's music is great and we went all-out and had it 10x through so that everyone who wanted to got in the set.

From now until the next class on 19th April, I think I am away every weekend bar one, and three of those are Dancing Weekends (the other 2 are with family), so I am looking forward to a good Spring, and I hope you all have one too!

Future dates are:

19th April

10th May

7th June

12th July

No class in August

6th September

4th October

1st November

6th December