

It seemed a long time coming, the April session of The Sunday Class. and it was - 7 weeks after the last one!

We had good numbers - the perfect 16 - except that I had a handful of 5 and 3 couple dances which I wanted to try. :-)

I took the opportunity to try some dances which I have devised and hope will soon get recordings for. I know that I have said that for the last 8 years but now I feel it is "now or never" - crunch year for me. I wrote a dance for my first grandchild when she was about 18 months old, Miss Avery Rose. Avery is now nearly 9, and I have 4 other grandchildren, so I felt that I should, maybe, devise some dances for them, before I got any complaints of favouritism! My youngest granddaughter, Cassidy Joy, was born last August - an unexpected addition to our family who was nonetheless a joy to her parents when they found she was expected. For her I have devised an 8x32 bar jig called Jig For Joy. Cassie likes to be held & carried, so in this dance first couple are in tandem for two reels, with 1L always in front. The music I used was Beach Dancer from the Atlantic Firth CD Ready, And ...

We then moved into reel time, and as I had two 4-couple sets, I strayed from the programme and we danced The Lass From Stonehaven, a Neil M Grant dance for Christine Grant (no relation) for her "significant" birthday in 2024. This dance finishes with a chaperoned chain progression and I chose a Gordon Shand track, The Dragon, which is great tunes but maybe a tad fast for this dance with today's dancers. I will consider slowing it down by a percent or two before we try it again.

My 4-couple version of City of Belfast, Lucy Mulholland's Strathspey, was next. This is probably the most popular of my dances, and consequently the one driving me to get a CD recorded. At the moment I use the Nicol McLaren recording for The Sleeping Warrior (with the second chord removed) as the fourth tune, Lament for the Death of the Rev Archie Beaton, is my chosen lead tune for the dance - this is the second tune on Marian's original recording for City of Belfast.

Back to my grandchildren, and the middle 3 are all boys, roughly a year between each, and they love to play as pirates so I have written a 3-couple dance called The Three Buccaneers. This is still a work-in-progress. I would like it to be danceable in reel time, maybe as a medley (3 times strathspey, then 3 in reel time) but some movements which work in strathspey time are too quick in reel time, and conversely, adding extra bars to make the reel time work then doesn't work in strathspey time, And, doing that on the fly, messed up the progression, so I will work on it.

We then needed something familiar to fill the small gap before tea, and what better than Blooms of Bon Accord?

We lost a couple of dancers after tea and so we restarted with the 3-couple strathspey City of Wisteria which is included on the new Marian Anderson CD produced in March by Peter Marshall for the Saitama Branch 25th Anniversary - I should have copies available for sale in a couple of weeks time. The dance, devised by Peter in 2018, begins with his version of a 3-couple Espagnole (which is significantly different from the one in The Tall Ship Glenlee) where you lose your partner, but are reunited in a 3-couple Bourrel later. It is a really nice dance, with a lovely video, and now its own recording. No excuse for not learning it.

Now we came to the one pre-requested dance, the 5-couple Murrough Landon longwise set reel, The Northern Rockhopper, dedicated to Anselm Lingnau. This dance is fugue-like to begin, with 5th couple starting after 4 bars with almost identical movements to 1st couple, but at the other end of the set of course. There is a 4 bar "thinking time" phrase (All Do-Si-Do) before the last 8 bars which often caught us out, but otherwise we did more-or-less get it, so we will definitely try it again.

Something more familiar for the last half hour! Loch Fitty Jig by Alison Austin of Dunfermline is one of my new favourites and we danced it in a 7-couple set but without the optional variation.

That saw off another 2 dancers so we decided to finish with Never At Sea, always popular, with its "Trip to Bavaria progression".

Our next class is in 3 weeks time, the 10th of May - my eldest granddaughter's birthday so we may have to dance Miss Avery Rose - which was named with a nod to Derek Ivory's dance Miss Alison Rose (his 2 year old daughter) who, when in her early 40s, asked for the Miss to be dropped and so is now known everywhere as just Alison Rose. We may also take the opportunity to practice some of the lesser known dances from the Duns Weekend programme which is the following week.