

Miss Dow's Strathspey

Miss Dow's Fancy

composed by J. Reid.



Margaret Mary Dow, usually known as Meta Dow was born in Port of Menteith in October 1888 and died in Perth in December, 1955. In 1923, when the Scottish Country Dance Society (later the RSCDS) was founded, Miss Dow was on the staff of the Dundee Teacher Training College as an instructress of physical education. In 1925 she was at the founding meeting of the Dundee Branch of the SCDS and was invited to become a teacher.

Miss Dow did much work for the SCDS through teaching Dundee Branch classes, teaching at the Society's Summer Schools and serving on the Executive Council of the Society for many years. But perhaps her greatest influence on the expansion of Country Dancing was through her work as a lecturer at the Training College, by introducing student teachers to Country Dancing and encouraging them to continue and maintain an interest in the Country Dance after leaving the College.

In the course of her SCD activities, Miss Dow became a friend of John Reid of Newtyle, the renowned Angus "Dancie". John Reid composed a strathspey for her,

called Miss Dow's Fancy and it was first played on the 14th of December, 1936 by John Reid's orchestra at a Dundee Branch dance in the Training College hall as an accompaniment for "The Glasgow Highlanders". In the early 1990s, when I was the honorary RSCDS Archivist I decided to write a dance as a tribute to her work in developing and supporting the work of the Society during her lifetime. The dance is included here with John Reid's tune as arranged by Winifred Byrd-Mathew, a Dundee musician who was Miss Dow's pianist for her Branch classes.

Alan Macpherson



Miss Dow

Miss M. M. Dow was on the Physical Education staff of Dundee Teachers' Training College in 1925, and was for that reason invited to the meeting held in February to discuss the founding of a Branch of the SCDS (later the RSCDS) in Dundee. The meeting was addressed by Mrs Ysobel Stewart of Fasnacloich, who co-founded the Society with Miss Milligan, and as a result the Dundee Branch was formed.

Miss Dow, along with a Miss Mitchell and Miss J. Kirk (who was the last surviving member of the original Committee, dying in the late 70s, I think), agreed to put themselves forward to be tested as teachers of Dancing. The RSCDS Headquarters archive shows a (handwritten!) report of the Test for Teacher's Certificate (Dundee), held on 9th February 1925. The examiners were Mrs Stewart & Miss Sharp (from Balmuir, Dundee – a member of the Sharp jute-mill family, & an acquaintance of Mrs Stewart through teaching Guides to dance). Miss Mitchell passed, while both Miss Dow & Miss Kirk passed with what appears to be Merit/Distinction – there is a star by each name! It was obviously a sound move to involve a College lecturer in teaching the dancing, as Miss Dow could pass on her expertise to schools.

Miss Dow taught dancing in Dundee & elsewhere from then onwards. In 1929 she was asked to look over the proofs of the Society's *Book 6*, and in the next few years she organized one or two evenings of *Thé Dansants* at which 'Dancie Reid', one of the last 'Dancing Masters' played; according to Miss Isbie Dow, Miss Dow's niece, they were good friends, & **Dancie Reid¹ wrote a tune for her**. In 1936 she was appointed (along with Miss Kirk) to the Stewards' Committee of the Dundee Music Festival, and in the same year she is pictured with Mrs Stewart & other ladies at University Hall, during the St Andrews Summer School.

Some time after this, Miss Dow left Dundee & went to work in the Borders somewhere. She continued to dance & teach dancing until she became too ill to dance.

¹ These Dancing Masters traditionally played the fiddle while teaching dance-steps. Mrs Stewart, in Alastair MacFadyen's booklet about her, describes how wonderfully Mr Reid dances while playing his fiddle.

Miss Dow's Strathspey

**A 32 bar strathspey for
3 couples in a four couple set**

**Music: Miss Dow's Fancy by John Reid
(arranged by Winifred Byrd-Mathew)**

Bars

1 - 4 1st and 2nd couples set and giving right hands cross over, and face out.

5 - 8 2nd couple followed by 1st couple dance down the sides, and in and up around 3rd couple. 2nd couple lead to the top, cross and face out in first position. 1st couple lead to centre of the set in second position facing up.

9 - 16 1st, 2nd, and 3rd couples dance reels of three on the sides; 1st man with 2nd and 3rd women, and 1st woman with 2nd and 3rd men. To begin the 1st couple dance up and out, the 2nd couple out and down, and the 3rd couple out and up. 2nd and 3rd couples finish in first and third places respectively, on their own sides by looping into place, while 1st couple finish in second place on their opposite sides.

17 - 20 1st man with 3rd couple, and 1st woman with 2nd couple, dance three hands round to the left. On bar 20 1st couple pass by their right to change circles*.

21 - 24 1st man with 2nd couple, and 1st woman with 3rd couple, dance three hands round to the right. On bar 24 1st couple pull back left shoulders to face one another in the centre of the set; man facing down woman facing up.

25 - 28 1st couple set to one another and dance a Petronella turn to second place on their opposite sides

29 - 32 2nd, 1st and 3rd couples turn with both hands to places; 1st couple turning once and a half.

Repeat from new positions.

* 2nd and 3rd couples retain their partner's hand, and the shape of the formation while 1st couple change circles.