

The Jacobite Scottish Country Dance Club

A Scottish Country Dancing 'Trail'
by Stuart Mackenzie

To trace the origins of the Jacobite
Scottish Country Dance Club and
track its development over 6 or 7
years takes us back some 60 years
to Shettleston in the east of
Glasgow in 1959.



Prince Charles Edward Stuart



A Jacobite Scottish Country Dance Team

The Jacobite Scottish Country Dance Club

In the late 1950's, John Elder, the Principal Teacher of Physical Education at Eastbank Academy in Glasgow, began teaching his pupils Scottish social and ceilidh dances in advance of the annual Christmas Party. The dances included the Gay Gordons, St Bernard's Waltz and Dashing White Sergeant.

One group of senior pupils was particularly enthusiastic, and in 1957 Mr Elder began to show them Scottish country dance steps, formations and dances. He was an excellent ballroom and country dancer with great posture and fluency of movement. One of his pupils, Alexander (Sandy) Mackenzie, was appointed school captain in 1960. He worked closely with Mr Elder to encourage other senior pupils to join the Scottish country dance group.

The group met regularly after school under Mr Elder's tuition and learned a variety of dance forms including ceilidh dances, as well as Scottish country dances. They were also taught the etiquette of partnering, and information about Scottish country dancing festivals and competitions. Some of the dances enjoyed at that time included The Glasgow Highlanders, The Lea Rig, Reel of the 51st Division, Mairi's Wedding, Duke of Perth, Bonnie Anne and Rouken Glen. Sandy recalls that the first demonstration by the 'country dance team' was at a School Concert in 1961.



Sandy Mackenzie (circa 1960)

The 'Jacobites'

Sandy left school in 1961 and Mr Elder retired a few years later. It could all have ended there. However, there was a strong nucleus of senior pupils/ dancers who wanted to pursue their interest and enthusiasm for Scottish country dancing. They decided to form a group to continue dancing after leaving school, and Sandy took on the responsibility as group leader. The 'core' membership of the group at that time were ex-Eastbank Academy pupils, including Noreen Morrison, Irene Roach, Doreen Singer, Vivienne McKenzie, and Elizabeth Fielding (pianist) as well as Sandy Mackenzie, Alan Jackson and Robert Burns.

The 'Jacobite' name was chosen by Sandy, having been inspired by the exploits of 'Bonnie' Prince Charles Edward Stuart and the historical events of 1745/46. He recalls, "I wanted a name that was strongly Scottish, with perhaps a hint of youthful enthusiasm, independence and rebellion. We operated separately from the membership arrangements of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) at that time, so we felt like the young pretenders"! The name was never officially registered, but it gave the club a distinct identity, especially at dance demonstrations and when competing with RSCDS teams at Music Festivals.

A place to meet

The group, which now formed itself into The Jacobite Country Dance **Club**, applied to the Shettleston and Tollcross community centre (operated by the City of Glasgow Further Education Department) for a place to meet. The 'warden' of the centre, Arthur Smart, was keen to encourage young people and offered the use of the General Purposes room on a Sunday evening, free of charge. In return, Club members agreed to participate in community centre events and activities. Gratitude is due to Mr Smart for his vision, enthusiasm and support during the years the club was based at the centre.



Irene, Sandy and Noreen demonstrating The Shepherd's Crook at the Community Centre St Andrew's Night Concert in 1962.

Recruitment

Stuart Mackenzie (Sandy's younger brother) joined the Club in 1962. The following year Robert Burns held his 21st birthday party at the Plaza Ballroom in Glasgow. As well as the team members, Robert also invited his ballroom dancing partner Anita McGinley. Anita started dancing (stage, tap and ballet) when she was just 2 years old, and learned Scottish country dancing at St Bride's primary school near her home in Cambuslang. Anita joined the 'Jacobites' early in 1964.

Later that year, Sandy and Anita were invited to an audition, and to join the Glasgow RSCDS demonstration team by the Glasgow branch teacher Miss Molly Mackay. Soon after, Anita's friend Grace McGinty joined the Jacobite group. Willie McKee, Isobel Welsh and Morag Baird, another three Eastbank Academy former pupils also joined. Maureen McLaughlin – a former school friend of Anita's – also joined the group. Later, Norman Reid became a member. Norrie was a ballroom dancer with Sandy in the Jim Graham ballroom dancing formation team.

Stuart Mackenzie attended teacher training at the Scottish School of Physical Education at Jordanhill College in Glasgow from 1964-67. This proved to be a valuable recruiting ground for other young male dancers, including Miller Milloy and Stuart Scott. PE students were taught Scottish country dancing as part of their course. Miller and Stuart both qualified as teachers of Scottish country dancing with Miss Jean Milligan as the visiting examiner. Miss Milligan is well-known as one of the co-founders of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

Dances and demonstrations

While the Club was based in the community centre, Sandy took the lead as teacher, reading out the instructions from the RSCDS published books. In the main, he was looking for dances that were suitable for demonstrations. Some of these were previously taught at school by Mr Elder, and Sandy emphasised the key teaching points on steps, formations and covering.

The most popular dances at that time included:

- Bonnie Anne
- The Hebridean Weaving Lilt
- Rouken Glen
- The Glasgow Highlanders
- The Shepherd's Crook
- The Lea Rig
- Mairi's Wedding, and
- Maxwell's Rant

Some dances were taken from the well-known 'Book of Scottish Country Dances' collected by Mrs Mary Isdal Macnab. In addition, the group

learned more dances from the new RSCDS books published annually by the Society during the 1960's. While the music was sometimes provided by our pianist Liz Fielding, we often used recorded music, creating tracks suitable for demonstrations using a record player linked to an old style 'reel to reel' tape recorder. This meant we could start and finish with a chord and demonstrate each dance two or three times.

During this period, the club gave many demonstrations in local church halls (women's guilds and church socials) community centres and at events to raise funds for charitable organisations. As well as enjoying learning the dances and the friendship and camaraderie within the group, these promotional performances were the main purpose of the Jacobite Country Dance Club. Moira Kerr, a professional singer, would join us, and Vivienne McKenzie performed highland and ladies' step dances during some of these events. Jacobite dancers and other performers are shown at a St Andrews Night Ceilidh concert in November 1967, (featured in the 'Rutherglen Reformer' Newspaper).



'Smiling Faces at the Ceilidh' (1967)

Competing in Festivals

Jacobite teams participated in numerous music festivals and competitions in the west of Scotland during the 1960's, e.g. Knightswood Community Centre in Glasgow and Greenock and Ayr Town Halls. On many occasions the group competed against RSCDS teams from Glasgow and Ayrshire, with adjudicators from the RSCDS. The Jacobite teams always received positive feedback and encouraging comments from the adjudicators.

The Club was fortunate to be based at Shettleston and Tollcross Community Centre, where the Camera Club members were always keen to use our colourful outfits for photography practice! Grateful thanks are recorded to Tom Montague and his colleagues.



Stuart, Sandy and Miller outside the Community Centre (1966)



Morag, Isobel, Grace and Anita ready to dance in a Music Festival (1966)

Wedding Bells

Has anyone ever researched how many people met their future partners in life through dancing, particularly Scottish country dancing? If the Jacobite team is anything to go by, then the ratio must be very high. No fewer than 5 couples met at or through the club and subsequently married:

- Sandy and Grace
- Stuart and Anita
- Miller and Morag
- Robert and Vivienne, and
- Gordon and Liz!

The 'White Cockade' dancers



Margaret Mackenzie (circa 1960)

A group of young female Scottish country dancers was brought together by the Jacobite Club to encourage them, improve their dancing and use the group's experience to support their development. Margaret Mackenzie, Sandy and Stuart's younger sister, was a member of this group and has fond memories of this time.

Margaret recalls, "All the girls started Scottish country dancing at classes in Shettleston and Tollcross Community Centre in the late 1950's and early 1960's. I was only 8 when I started. The class was held on a Saturday morning with Miss Walsh as teacher. The team took part in Music Festival competitions in community centres across Glasgow, including Pollock and Knightswood.

When these classes came to an end, the Jacobite Club members took over responsibility. The group was formed with the name 'The White Cockade Dancers' – juniors to the Jacobite Country Dancers".

The 'White Cockade' is a knot of white ribbon, used as an emblem in support of Prince Charles Edward Stuart and the Jacobite uprising.

Margaret recalls that the group met at the Community Centre on a Sunday evening (from 6-7pm) before the Jacobite Club meeting. Stuart and Anita taught the group for a while, and later Kathleen O'Hagan took over as teacher. Members of the group included: Sheena Frew, Anne Jenkins, Dianne Veryan, Janice Ross, Fiona Frew, Margaret Miller and Margaret Mackenzie.

During this time, the White Cockade group danced at several school functions – all the girls attended Eastbank Academy. They also performed at church groups and local clubs. Margaret recalls: "I always danced 'as a man' with The White Cockade dancers, and I really enjoyed 'filling in' as a woman in the Jacobite team when I had the opportunity."

Conclusion

The Jacobite Scottish Country Dance Club ceased to exist by mutual consent in 1968, when everyone involved decided to go their separate ways to pursue their careers, raise families, etc. It is interesting to note that now, some 60 years later, some of the Jacobite dancers are still involved in Scottish country dancing.

That, as they say, is another story....

Meantime, there were some memorable experiences for members of the Jacobite Country Dance Club which are worth highlighting.

Some Memorable 'Jacobite' Experiences

Story 1 – 'Dancing on Television' – 1964 & 1965

Uniquely perhaps, Sandy and Stuart Mackenzie found themselves dancing on television at the same time, although in different circumstances.

In 1964, **Stuart** attended an audition at Jordanhill College for men to dance in the St Andrew's Night BBC TV show featuring the singer Kenneth McKellar. Stuart was one of 6 physical education students selected to dance under the tutelage of the well-known choreographer Bruce McClure. All the other performers were professional stage dancers.

Stuart recalls: "The rehearsals were held in an old church hall at the corner of Byres Road and Great Western Road in Glasgow. It is now better known as part of the Oran Mor! I was chosen by Bruce to be 'first man' for the Hebridean Weaving Lilt. The show was pre-recorded in the BBC TV studios at Queen Margaret Drive, so I was able to watch the transmission at home with my family."



Sandy

Meanwhile, in another part of Glasgow, **Sandy** joined the Jim Graham Ballroom Dancing Formation Team. He was one of 16 dancers – the men in full black tie and tails, and the women in ballroom dresses. They rehearsed regularly and perfected their routines. The original 'Come Dancing' programme was broadcast on BBC Television, and each week two teams of amateur dancers from different parts of the UK would compete in Ballroom and Latin American dances.

The programme also included formation teams. In 1965 the Jim Graham team won the right to represent Scotland in several of these TV programmes. Sandy recalls: "It was great fun, but very demanding. Jim Graham was a hard taskmaster, but that's what enabled us to represent Scotland so successfully!"



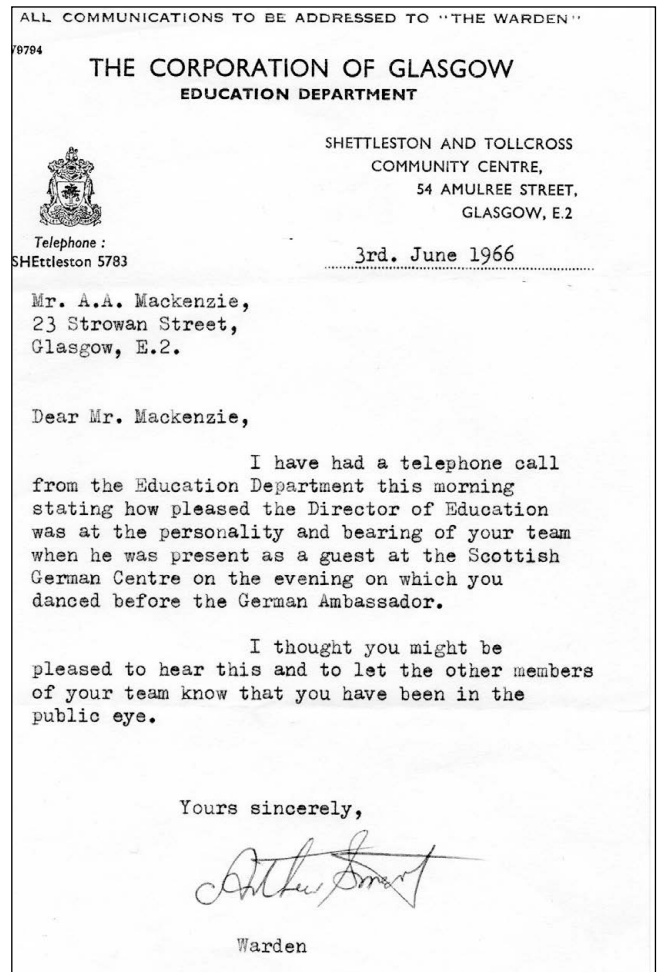
Stuart

Story 2 – Scottish-German Links – 1966

As the 'Jacobite' reputation developed, the young dancers were invited to more prestigious demonstrations and events.

Early in 1966 an invitation was received from the Scottish-German Society in Glasgow to attend one of their events and give a display of Scottish music and dancing to promote cultural links between the two countries. Following the Second World War, governments in the UK and West Germany were keen to encourage positive community and cultural relationships. Local authorities in Scotland developed twinning links with partners in Bavaria, Southern Germany.

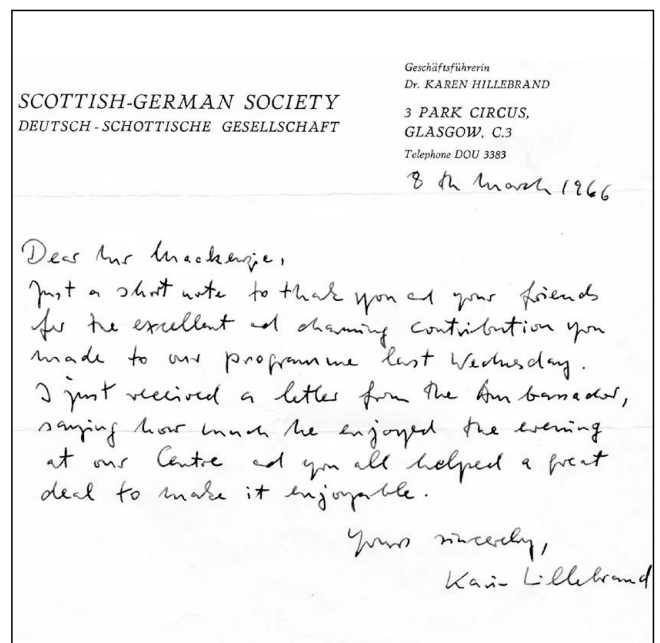
After the event, Sandy received a letter from Mr Smart of the local community centre. He had received a message from Glasgow City Council Education Department stating: 'How pleased the Director of Education was at the personality and bearing of your team when he was present as a guest when you danced before the German Ambassador'.



Mr Smart's letter

The Glasgow event was organised by Dr Karen Hildebrand, of the Deutsch-Schottische Gesellschaft.

Following the event a letter of thanks was received from her 'for the excellent and charming contribution you made to our programme'. She confirmed she had received a letter from Herr Herbert Blankenhorn, the West German Ambassador based in London, saying how much he enjoyed the evening and the Scottish country dancing performance.



Dr Hildebrand's letter of 8 March 1966

Story 3 – The Ambassador’s Ball – 1966

However, this story did not end there! Later in 1966 the Club received an invitation from the German Ambassador’s office inviting the ‘Jacobites’ to a Ball! The event was the Christmas Ball held annually in London by the Ambassador for his staff and their families who could not go home for Christmas. Dr Hildebrand confirmed, “The Ambassador’s trip to Glasgow gave him his first opportunity to see Scottish country dancing, and he was delighted with the performances. Now he would like his London staff to enjoy the dancing”.

The Ball was held on Saturday 17 December 1966 and 8 dancers from the Club were flown to London ‘all expenses paid’. The dancers stayed at the Embassy as guests of the Ambassador for the whole weekend. On the Saturday afternoon they entertained the children of the Embassy staff at the Christmas party. Their favourite ‘Scottish country’ dance was the ‘Jacobite’ version of The Grand Old Duke of York!

The evening performance was a more formal event and the demonstration was well received by the Ambassador and his staff. This proved to be an amazing experience for the young dancers and is fondly remembered by all involved.



Embassy asks young Scots dancers to a Ball

Story 4 – World Pipe Band Championships - 1967

The reputation of the ‘Jacobite’ dancers continued to grow, and in June 1967 the team was invited to give a dancing display at the World Pipe Band Championships held in Oban. This event was organised by Pipe Major William Sloan of the Scottish Pipe Band Association, based in Glasgow. The dance demonstration, held in the centre of the arena, was a great success and enjoyed by a large audience.

Story 5 – International Folk Festival in Italy - 1967

Once again, that was not the end of the story. Later in 1967, Pipe Major Sloan invited the Jacobite Club to supply four dancers to accompany the City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band to attend an International Folk Festival in Salerno, Southern Italy.

The dancers were invited to represent Scotland, with other participants from Italy, Germany and the USA. This festival was linked to the impending anniversary of the Allied Forces landing on the beaches of Salerno in 1943 during the Second World War.

The visit involved Sandy, Grace, Anita and Stuart and took place from 19th-22nd September. The Scottish participants were accommodated in the beautiful Hotel Raito, high on a cliff above the village of Vietri Sul Mar on the Italian west coast.

On the first full day of the Festival the Scots enjoyed a guided tour of the resort of Amalfi and visited the Cathedral, which is dedicated to Saint Andrew. It is a magnificent edifice set above a broad steep stairway.

The afternoon was spent rehearsing for the evening performances, unintentionally coinciding with a wedding reception being held in the hotel. The wedding party was delighted to have this unexpected Scottish entertainment, and the dancers were invited to join the reception!

The evening Folk Festival performances were held at four locations across the city of Salerno and the Scots were allocated a promenade area near the city centre. As the pipe band and dancers entered the stage area, they were greeted by more than 1500 people, with more flocking to hear the music when it started.

The programme consisted of many popular and stirring pipe tunes, such as 'The Black Bear', interspersed with highland and Scottish country dances, including 'The Foursome Reel' and 'Highland Fling'. The show was so well received it proved difficult to bring it to a conclusion. The Pipe Major organised a 'march past' and as the crowd parted the Scots marched past them and on to the



Dancers on the steps of Amalfi Cathedral

waiting coach!

The second day of the Festival started early for the Scottish contingent. It was 6am on the 21st September 1967, exactly 24 years since Allied Forces – including many Scottish soldiers – landed on the beaches of Salerno during the Second World War. The Scottish party took the opportunity to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery near Salerno. Following observance of a minute's silence, Pipe Major Ronnie Lawrie played a Scottish lament as the mist lifted over rows and rows of white headstones. It was a very emotional experience for everyone present.

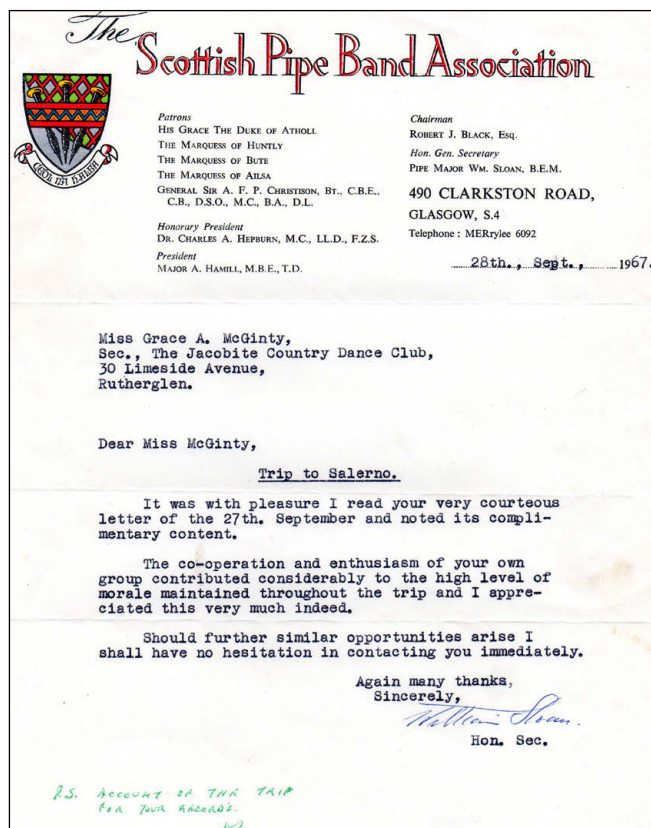
During the afternoon, all the Festival performers were invited to a Civic Reception at the City Chambers, which offered the opportunity to meet the musicians and singers from the other three countries - Italy, Germany and the USA. All the performers received a plaque and a commemorative scroll as mementoes of the visit. This was followed by the massed bands, singers and dancers marching through the city, providing an impressive and colourful spectacle!

The final evening performance was largely a repeat of the previous one, although this time the Scottish performers were positioned in the central square, outside the City Chambers. With the crowds attending even greater than before, the police closed the streets to traffic!

The planned 90-minute programme was extended to two and then two and a half hours. Band members and the 'Jacobite' dancers received gifts from the audience. This festival will always be remembered by those taking part, and (it is hoped) by the people of Salerno.



Pipe Major Ronnie Lawrie and Drum Major William McLean with Anita and Grace in Amalfi



Letter from Pipe Major Sloan (1967)

The conclusion reached by Pipe Major Sloan, who organised the Scottish visit, thanked the 'Jacobite' dancers 'for their co-operation and enthusiasm, and the high level of morale throughout the trip!'

Another comment summed up the success of the International Folk Festival: "If the purpose of these Festivals is to bring the people of the world closer together, then this one was a great success! Scotland can be well pleased and just as proud of its ambassadors on this occasion, as they are of their Scottish ancestry."