

## Detailed Review

**1. Introduction** The six hours of teaching in this Detailed Review took place during the Autumn Term 2008. This *Scottish Country Dancing-Beginners`Adult Learning Evening Class`* has been running in Guildford for approx. ten years and has provided a steady stream of new dancers to local RSCDS clubs. I have taken over the teaching of it following the retirement of the previous teacher. Lessons are one hour long. Nineteen dancers enrolled this term but the maximum attending on any one session was seventeen, with the average being fourteen. All are adults, some are completely new to dancing of any kind, some have done other forms of dance and some have done a limited amount of SCD before, perhaps at school or while abroad. I use a CD player with variable speed and my own CDs.

Each lesson starts and ends with similar warm ups and cool downs along the following lines:

**Warm ups:** a) March time, usually in groups of 4 or 8 bar phrases eg. walking gently, walking more vigorously, marching, marching more vigorously. Variations are introduced eg. walking on toes or on heels, marching on the spot lifting knees and pointing toes, walking with extended legs, turning a partner RH for 4 bars & LH for 4 bars, turning a partner with two hands, increasing the number of people included in the turn until one large circle is formed. The class is encouraged to keep in time to the music and I usually count over the music to help them get used to hearing/counting/feeling four or eight bars. I remind them to think about their posture, to make eye contact with others as they pass by and about the correct use of hands in turning. I try to make this a lively start to the lesson and also try to engineer the formation of one large circle by the end so we can move seamlessly to:

b) Waltz time: starting by holding hands for balance we exercise feet ankles and leg muscles (96 bars).

I use *The Blackwater Collection CD; Ian Muir & the Craigellachie Band* because it contains a lively march and a pleasant waltz so I just have to change track and not CD between the two parts of the warm up. I have tried different marches and waltz tunes, but find these by far the best. The CD also contains a good selection of reels, jigs & strathspeys which means that I can often continue to use the same CD for the step practice immediately following the warm up. In addition, this is a band which frequently plays at local dances so the class can be informed that excellent live music can be heard without travelling far.

**Cool downs:** slow stretches to a haunting slow waltz tune (1min 49) from *Gaan Wae The Flow; The Selkies*. This tune slows us down and calms us down and I find it is just the right length.

## 2. Details of Teaching

### Lesson 1, 17.9.08

**Aims:** To move in time to march time and jig time. To learn *skip change of step*. To learn *lead down & back*, *turning ptnr RH & LH*, *stepping up*, *bow & curtsey*. To dance a 4x32 jig.

Activity	Teaching Points	Music
<b>Warm up</b> Rpt the routine used to march time in jig time. Encourage class to walk randomly around hall and not in a circle. Clap and/or count the rhythm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen to the music</li><li>• Listen to instructions</li><li>• Posture, walk tall</li><li>• Acknowledge others as you pass</li></ul>	<i>Blackwater/6 (3x32J)</i> Same CD as march-time so only need to change track
<b>Formation practice:</b> In pairs, walking in circle to jig time. Move men on one place after each movement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead round and back (4+4)</li><li>• Turn ptnr RH (4) then LH (4)</li><li>• Put these 16 bars together</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shake hand hold, waist height for leading</li><li>• Look at ptnr bar 4 at change of direction</li><li>• Shake hand hold, W-shaped arms for turns</li><li>• Return to `sidelines` after each turn</li></ul>	<i>Blackwater/6 (3x32J)</i>
<b>Walking Dance*:</b> Explain how sets are made up. Form 3, 4 or 5cpl sets depending on numbers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walk through dance for each cpl (no music): 1cpl lead down &amp; up, 2C rpt, 1C &amp; 2C turn RH then LH, 1C lead to foot, others step up, all turn RH.</li><li>• All walk through continuously to music</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain what `sets` are and how to form them</li><li>• Gently remind about same teaching points as above</li><li>• Count rhythmically as they walk to the music</li></ul>	<i>RSCDS Bk 40 &amp; Children`s Bk</i> This CD has a good choice of 3x32, 4x32, 5x32, & 8x32 jigs so a track could be chosen according to numbers present

<p><b>Step practice:</b> <i>skip change of step</i> Change ptnrs and form circle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain &amp; dem step (8 bars)</li> <li>• Class tries (8 bars)</li> <li>• Break step down, class practising at each stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hop at start</li> <li>• Straight leg</li> <li>• Close in T shape</li> <li>• Emphasise rhythm: hop, step, close, step</li> </ul>	<p><i>RSCDS Bk 40/6 (8x32J)</i> A lively tune. It is important for new dancers to hear the best music available.</p>
<p><b>Dance:</b> Reform sets as before.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise bow &amp; curtsey</li> <li>• Practise stepping up</li> </ul> <p>Repeat the same dance as above but this time using skip change of step.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bow &amp; curtsey in time to the chord at start &amp; end</li> <li>• 2 bars to step up; step, across, step, close</li> <li>• Continue to count rhythmically</li> </ul>	<p>As above for when the dance was walked.</p>
<p><b>Dance:</b> <i>Rabbie`s Reel (4x32R, Bk 40)</i> One walk through for each cpl followed by dancing four times through (or according to numbers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention briefly that this dance is in reel time so they may notice a slight difference in the rhythm</li> <li>• Aim to be back in place on sidelines after each 4 or 8 bar phrase</li> <li>• Enjoy the dance!</li> </ul>	<p><i>RSCDS Bk 40/7 (4x32R)</i> The correct tune, an excellent one as an introduction to SCD.</p>
<p><b>Cool down</b></p>		

[\*Walking Dance: 32 bars from page 12 of *Syllabus for Teaching Beginners (RSCDS,1993)*

**Assessment:** 15 present so I danced throughout to make an even number and 2x4cpl sets. Changing the warm up music to jig time helped the class to `feel` the rhythm needed for dancing. Walking the formations and the dance to music helped them understand and practise the patterns before concerning themselves with the step. I used the *Introductory Lesson* from *Syllabus for Teaching Beginners (RSCDS,1993)* as the basis for this lesson and found it to be ideal. Most of the class managed to dance the rhythm of skip change correctly which was my emphasis for this first lesson. Other points will be emphasised in later lessons. I was pleased that I kept the pace of the lesson going so managed to fit everything in, including *Rabbie`s Reel* at the end. This is an ideal dance for a first lesson- lots of skip change practice, timing and phrasing, the re-inforcement of *leading down* and *stepping up* and the clapping which emphasises the importance of counting and allows for thinking time before the next cpl starts. It is a fun dance which is easily mastered by new dancers. A good way to end.

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**3. Review of the Music** This has been included above in the third column of the lesson plans. I spend a lot of time beforehand listening to the music and choosing tunes which I think the class will enjoy dancing to and which will help and inspire them to dance well. I do still need to perfect my use of the CD player as I am aware that time spent searching for the correct track or even particular bars can slow down the pace of the lesson to its overall detriment.

**4. Self evaluation** I enjoy planning my lessons and think that the individual sections are well constructed. However, I do not give enough thought to the lesson as a whole. I must ask myself – what will the class have gone home thinking? I must endeavour to always make it positive. I know that on occasion I have `caught up` with aspects not completed the previous week without adding much new to their learning. I am now working on keeping the pace of my lessons faster and ensuring that something new and challenging is added each week. I enjoy teaching formations, and providing I remember not to bore the class with too many walk throughs, think that I can explain & demonstrate these well. I am less confident with teaching steps and will continue to attend local classes and Day Schools and will ask the teachers there to advise me and correct any faults with my own footwork. I have realised that I do not demonstrate the **dancing** of formations and movements within a dance often enough, and that when I do, things become much clearer to the class. It is easy to assume they will know where to go & how fast to get there, but as beginners, they often do not. I now try to **dance**, even without music, more often. I now realise that the choice of dances is crucial to the success or otherwise of a lesson and I am now more aware of the type of dance that beginners can cope with & therefore enjoy. Attempting too complicated a dance can result in a feeling of discouragement all round –

something to be avoided. I feel that my ability to observe and correct faults has improved since passing Part 1 and I hope to continue to improve this by specifically reminding myself to do so on my lesson plans, by observing other teachers at work and by discreetly watching other dancers at club, class or social evenings. Perhaps my greatest fault is thinking that I can manage on my own – but I do now realise that I must ask and take advice from the many experienced teachers in my area and I look forward to the challenge of improving my teaching skills in the coming months and years.