

## The Imperial Dances of the ISTD

March 2022

**Judy Valvona, with musician Ian Robertson, discussed and taught a selection of dances originally published by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and now published by the RSCDS and available at: <https://www.rscds.org/shop/?s=imperial>**

### **Introduction by Joan Desborough 25 March 2022**

On Sunday afternoon Judy Valvona took everyone through a varied selection of dances originally published by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and now published by the RSCDS. Judy did a considerable amount of research and selected dances that nearly all contained formations to challenge our thinking. If you want to teach any of these dances the two Imperial Books are available from the RSCDS online shop.

Many thanks to Judy for taking the class and then doing a detailed report for us to enjoy. Ian Robertson provided lively music to keep us dancing and on this occasion he had an almost free choice of tunes because, unusually, there was only one dance with a named tune.



### **A trip down memory lane and a bit about me, Judy Valvona**

I was brought up in North Harrow and first experienced SCD as a wet weather option on games afternoon in primary school. I remember dancing De'il Among the Tailors and The Dashing White Sergeant.

I went to Senior School (no SCD there) in 1968 and started Highland Dancing on Saturday mornings with The Balmoral School of Highland Dancing at Lyon Hall which was only a short walk from where I lived and cost me 2/6d. In 1969 the teacher, Mary Hosker, started a SCD class on Friday evenings. We worked towards passing the exams in highland and

SCD with ISTD (and highland with BATD). How lucky was I to be a young teenager totally preoccupied by Scottish Dancing when the ISTD was at its peak! In 1973 when I was 16yrs I moved with my mother & brothers to the Isle of Wight and that was the end of Highland dancing for me, but I've been Country Dancing ever since and gained my RSCDS teaching certificate in 1997 under the tutorship of Bruce Frazer.

I kept a diary until October 1970 of all competitions, highland games, dancing displays and exams I did, and made a note of all the adjudicators and examiners; names such as Margaret Howard, SJW Lockett, Jessie Keddie, Sadie Simpson, William Milligan, Andrew Sutherland, Edna Russell, Jean Telfer, SJD McConnick, Valerie P Geddes, Margaret Ogilvie, Evelyn McLaren, Jessie S Stewart, R Watson and Janet Cook. (I used to travel to Bobby Watson's monthly highland classes in Baker Street where Janet Cook and Malcolm Lay were fellow pupils).

### The Imperial Dances with Ian Robertson accompanying

For the serTA workshop I wanted to include dances from each of the ISTD volumes and by a variety of devisers, but I especially wanted a Janet Cook and an Edna Russell dance because they are people from my past. I had not danced any of these dances myself so was not entirely sure how many we might achieve in a 2 hour session and inevitably we managed fewer than I'd hoped. When we finished each dance I asked those present what **mark out of 10** they would give the dance.



1. **The Travelling Tinker (J8x32) Volume 3, by Margaret Henderson.** This dance proved to be more difficult than I had thought. After the initial 4 bars there was a 12 bar pattern where the tinker travelled in a clockwise direction. The phrasing was crucial. Then the pattern was repeated while the tinker travelled for 12 bars in an anticlockwise direction and the dance finished with all 3 couples dancing 4 bar turn by the right. **Mark 7**
2. **Morgan Lundi (S3x32) Section 6, by Pamela Johnston.** The highlight of this dance was the crossing over with partner at the beginning of the dance, with 1 forward step and fleetingly back to back before 1 retiring step. Having mastered the footwork the chemistry between the dancers crossing over and looking at their partner again made this a special movement. The dance finished with a slightly unusual movement as the 3s changing in the sidelines with the 1s danced up to circle left with the 2s. **Mark 10**
3. **The Blanket Preacher of Yarrow (H2x64) volume 4, by Janet Cook.** This square set Hornpipe was in 3 sections, pousette & chase (24 bars) follow the leader, a fugal section where a pair of dancers danced a 12 bar pattern (24 bars) and turn & chase (16 bars). More of a display dance than one for a dance programme. **Mark 9**

*Janet Cook later confirmed that in bars 1-4 and 9-12 both Men and Women should start the pousette figure on the Right foot.*

4. **King Edward's Jig (J4x32) section 6, by Mervyn Short.** This is one of the few dances with a named original tune, Miss Farquahar of Invercauld's Jig, which Ian played. A four couple dance with the 3s and 4s crossing to the opposite side on the 2nd chord, the essence of this dance was the phrasing and spatial awareness within the set. The dance was devised to flow throughout and into the next time through. **Mark 10**
5. **Castle Brae (S8x32) Volume 1, by Edna Russell & Jack McConachie.** The first 8 bars of the dance put the 1s on opposite sides and flowing into a ladies chain which was unusually across the dance. The promenade reel of three in 7 bars was difficult to achieve, finishing with 1 retiring step to the sidelines. The progression in the dance was in the final eight bars, which is the case for a few of the Imperial Dances I've noticed. **Mark 10**
6. **St. Andrew's Castle (R8x32) section 6, by Alan Cottle.** This dance was fun, quick to learn and could easily go on a social dance programme. The unusual movement was turning partner, 1st

corner, partner, 2nd corner, but in fact that was less hectic than CPCP would have been! One of the few Imperial Dances finishing with 6 hands round and back **Mark 10**



My thanks to Ian Robertson for providing fabulous music for the dancing and to Lynda Hughes for the cooldowns afterwards.

### **Judy Valvona 25 March 2022**

You can purchase Imperial Dances, now published by RSCDS and available from the RSCDS shop online at: <https://www.rscds.org/shop/?s=imperial>

See below for a timeline of the ISTD and dance instructions for this afternoon's dances.

### **A timeline of SCD in the Imperial Society**

**(My précis of the Introductions written by Mervyn Short in The Imperial Book of SCD Vols 1-3 and Jim Healy in Vols 3,4 & more.)**

**1904** The Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) was formed and subsequently became one of the leading examining bodies in the UK.

**1953** The SCD branch of ISTD was formed.

**1966** ISTD published Vol 1 (Imperial Book of SCD), all dances devised or interpreted by Edna Russell & Jack McConachie.

**1967** Jack McConachie died.

**1968** ISTD organised an annual competition in Jack McConachie's memory for members to devise a SCD with a new formation or variation on an existing formation. The prize was a Wilkinson Sword. These dances rarely had original tunes assigned.

**1969** ISTD introduced highland exams

**1971** Vol 2 (SCD) was published

**1977** Vol 3 (SCD) was published

**1984** Vol 4 (SCD) was published. During the 80's the popularity of exams declined.

**1993** Vol 5 (SCD) was published

**1993-2000** SCDs have been designated as section 6 in the recent RSCDS publication\* of Imperial SCDs 4,5 and more.

**2014** After more than 60 years the SCD branch of ISTD discontinued. RSCDS with copyright published the Book of Imperial Dances Vols 1-3 (47 dances) with revised wording to reflect current terminology. A tremendous amount of work was put into this in order to preserve these dances.

**2019** RSCDS published Imperial SCDs Vols 4,5 & more\* (54 dances)

**Total 101 Imperial Dances**



## Warm Ups

### THE TRAVELLING TINKER (J8x32) 3C (4C set)

M Henderson Imperial 3.03

- 1- 8 1s set, cast 1 place into middle & dance RH across (Lady with 2s & Man with 3s)
- 9-16 1s+1st corners in prom hold (corners on outside) dance across clockwise to 2nd places & dance RH across 1/2 way (corners to places) **while** 2nd corners chase round clockwise to places, 1s continue turn RH into middle BtoB (Man facing up & Lady down)
- 17-20 1s dance LH across (Man with 2s & Lady with 3s)
- 21-32 1s+2nd corners in prom hold dance across anticlockwise to 2nd places & dance LH across 1/2 way **while** 1st corners chase anticlockwise, 1s continue turn LH to 2nd place own sides & 2s+1s+3s turn RH (4 bars)

Mark 7

### MORGAN LUNDI (S3x32) Imperial Book 6.05 Pamela Johnston

Mark 10

### THE BLANKET PREACHER OF YARROW (R2x64) Sq.Set J Cook Imperial 4.16

- 1- 8 All dance (holding 2H) to Ladies corner, 1/4 turn right & dance to next pl anticlockwise, all Ladies dance LH across as Men chase clockwise 1/2 way
- 9-16 With 'new' partners repeat bars 1- 8
- 17-24 All dance 1/2 Grand Chain & set (in original places)
- 25-32 1L+3L dance in & set, 1/2 turn RH while 2L+4L dance in & all Ladies (in circle) set
- 33-36 1L+3L cast to partners original places & set while 2L+4L 1/2 turn RH as 1M+3M dance in & 2L+4L+1M+3M all (in circle) set
- 37-40 2L+4L cast to partners original places & set while 1M+3M 1/2 turn RH as 2M+4M dance in & 1M+3M+2M+4M all set
- 41-48 1M+3M cast to partners place & set while 2M+4M 1/2 turn RH & set to each other, 2M+4M cast to partners place (all now in partners orig pl)
- 49-56 1s+3s dance in & 3/4 turn opposite person RH to end in line of 4 across (Ladies BtoB & 1M/3M between 4s/2s), 1M & 3M turn right about & cast right to original places followed by other partner
- 57-64 2s+4s repeat bars 49-56
- 65-128 repeat with new partners

Mark 9

**King Edward's Jig4/4L · J32 + original music. Imperial Book 6.03** 3c & 4c start on opp sides

1- 1M+2c & 4M+3c dance Reels3 across 1M/4M Lsh to 2W/3W but on [4] join P in promhold, complete the reel into two lines across, 1c/4c between 2c/3c facing dn/up

9-- All set | A&R{4} | 2c & 3c set to P **while** 1c & 4c dance into line of 4 across, Rsh to opp person

17-- 1c+4c ½ Reel4 across, on [8] 1W & 4W pivot R to face P ; 1c & 4c turn RH ½, W facing out, M behind P | 1c/4c cast R to 1pl/3plx (2,1,4x,3x)

25-- 1c+4c set | ½ RHA (to 2,4,1x,3x) ; 2M+4M & 1M+3M turn RH **while{4}** 2W+4W & 1W+3W turn LH

**Mark 10**

**CASTLE BRAE (S8x32) Imperial Book 1.06 Edna Russell & Jack McConachie**

**Mark 10**

**ST ANDREWS' CASTLE (R8x32) 3C (4C set) Imperial Book 6.15 Alan Cottle**

1- 8 1s set, cast (2s step up 3-4), dance down NHJ between 3s, cast up to 2nd place own sides

9-16 1s turn RH to face 1st cnr, turn 1st cnr LH, ptrn RH, 2nd cnr LH to finish 1M between 2s all facing down, 1L between 3s all facing up

17-24 All Set+Link; all set, all change places RH with partner

25-32 2s+1s+3s circle 6H round and back

**Mark 10**

**Cool downs**