Scottish country dancing and the Internet Anselm Lingnau
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Reporter: Gordon Anderson
Photo: Stephen Webb

An interesting SERTA workshop took place at Finchampstead Memorial Hall on the 16th March 2014 led by Anselm Lingnau. Anselm is responsible for the software feature development and database of **Strathspey Server** and recently has begun supporting the RSCDS with their web site and database development. Outlining his enthusiastic interest in many aspects of Scottish country dancing, his tremendous commitment to the cause soon became evident and infectious as he talked and used some interesting dances to invigorate the mind.

The morning session looked at the various **Scottish Country Dance Resources** now available on the internet; how you might go about setting up your own website and publishing information on it. He emphasised that setting up a web site is now relatively cheap and easy BUT maintaining it becomes an essential but onerous chore if

the information is going to be valued by others. "There is nothing worse than an out-of-date site!"

"The internet can be made to work for you in three major ways: keeping in-touch, publishing reference information and selling stuff". Anselm quickly reviewed typical SCD related web sites which exemplified his point: The RSCDS site, The Strathspey Server, The Grand Chain, Social Media, a map of SCD group locations world-wide, event calendars, and You-Tube videos, to name a few.

While being very positive about the gains to be achieved he also warned of the responsibility to respect the legalities such as copyright, the use of images without permission, ensuring information is sustainable, accurate and up-to-date. The content must also be *backed-up* securely when you consider the extensive time and effort that has been expended entering data.

Information is entered on people, dances, tunes, publications, albums, and formations in the form of databases which lend themselves to tabulating and reproducing related information for use by Dancers, Teachers, Musicians, and Event Organisers, while archiving information for eternity. Even music can be documented using formatting tools such as "ABC" to easily scribe musical notation in a form similar to sheet music.

As recording techniques have moved on there are valuable assets available to Scottish country dancing that reduce the burden of preparing dance sessions. There is the ability to find appropriate sheet music and pre-recorded tracks with associated information, and to "rip" them into mp3 files on portable memory sticks or computer tablets. Such facilities enable any club to source and play their music at the appropriate tempo with the minimum of equipment, **but** he warned, you must still invest in quality loudspeakers to reproduce the sound.

The afternoon session drilled down into the details of the topics overviewed during the morning session, and highlighted the current

data entry commitment and future opportunities that might be achieved with a few more volunteers researching and entering data into the Strathspey Server.
(www.strathspey.org) If you are interested in such tasks for the good of *Scottish country dancing* then please approach Anselm and offer your services via the Strathspey Server. Much of the work involves rationalising information, reviewing videos and does not necessarily require technical expertise.

Gordon Anderson

Talk on SCD and the Internet Talk on the Strathspey.org database