

Lethbridge Scottish Country Dance Club (LSCDC)
2 December 2020 email to LSCDC dancers and musicians

Contents

The Spurtles Music Session 18 November
Stirring Things Up
Brief History of RSCDS
Match the Dance to the Emoji Quiz

Our third LSCDC Zoom gathering held at 7 pm 18 November attracted 12 dancers from Lethbridge, 1 dancer from Calgary, plus our musicians **Lorraine and Peter McCormick, aka The Spurtles**. After the usual initial chit chat among early attendees, the floor was turned over to The Spurtles.

The Spurtles Music Session 18 November 2020

Having covered jigs and reels in their two previous sessions, we were all anticipating a treatise on strathspeys, and **The Spurtles** certainly delivered.

The term “strathspey” is shorthand for “the valley of the River Spey”. Initially the term was used as an adjective to identify a subset of reels known as strathspey reels that originated from towns along the River Spey. Over time, strathspey came to be used as a noun to distinguish this slower, rhythmically dotted form of 4/4 tunes from common reels. Lorraine demonstrated the difference by playing the tune “Logan Water” as a common reel and as a strathspey reel. It is now standard practice for SCD Ball Programs to be comprised of 1/3 jigs, 1/3 reels, and 1/3 strathspeys.

The earliest attested strathspey tunes date from the early 18th century. As an example of 18th century strathspey music still in the repertoire, The Spurtles played the tune “Gloomie Winter”, composed by Alexander Campbell in 1780. This has become the lead tune for three modern SCD strathspey dances: “Gloomy Winter”, “The Gloomy Winter”, and “Gloomy Winter’s Noo Awa’ ”.

For their finale, The Spurtles played the set of tunes they have chosen to accompany the dance “**Stirring Things Up**”, leading with “Dumbarton Castle”. Fiona Miller devised the dance in 2019 to recognize the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Lorraine and Peter. The dance is named after the McCormick’s personal slogan, in keeping with their use of spurtles (wooden stirring sticks for porridge) as their band logo.

We all look forward to dancing “Stirring Things Up” whenever we can gather together again. We then need to record a performance of the dance to show The Spurtles because they cannot watch us dance while they are busy playing. So, **study up on the dance**; it’s on the next page.

The next on-camera music session will be **7 pm Wednesday 16 December**, when The Spurtles will focus on **festive music** in the SCD repertoire.

Stirring Things Up

32 bar Strathspey for three couples in a four couple set

- 1 - 4** 1st couple set and cross giving right hands – stay facing out
5 - 8 1st couple cast behind 2nd couple and cross up (no hands) to own place – stay facing out
- 9 - 12** 1st couple dance down behind own line to below 3rd couple **WHILE** 2nd couple lead down for four bars
13 – 16 2nd couple followed by 1st couple dance up to finish 2nd couple in first place and 1st couple in second place
- 17 – 20** 1st couple set advancing to 1st corner and turn with both hands finishing with 1st lady between the 2s and 1st man between the 3s
21 – 24 1st couple set advancing to 2nd corners and turn with both hands finishing in second place on opposite sides
- 25 – 28** 2nd, 1st, and 3rd couples dance back to back with partner
29 – 32 1st couple turn 1 ½ times with both hands to finish in second place on own side

Repeat from new position

Devised to honor the 50th Wedding Anniversary of Peter and Lorraine McCormick, aka “The Spurtles”, who are always stirring things up.

Fiona S. Miller, August 2019

After the music session, Fiona presented a
Brief History of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

Although Scottish Country Dancing dates back several centuries and was widely danced throughout Scotland, no central organization existed until **26 November 1923** when a gathering of 27 interested people held a public meeting in Glasgow and formed the Scottish Country Dance Society (SCDS). The Royal designation was bestowed by King George VI in 1951.

Critical to the success of the fledgling Society were two formidable women. Mrs. **Ysobel Stewart**, a Guide Commissioner in Argyll, thought that it would be appropriate for Girl Guides to learn SCD. When she set about printing a book of dances that could be used as a syllabus by guiders, the publisher arranged for Ysobel to meet Miss **Jean Milligan**, a skilled teacher who taught physical training to students at Jordanhill Teacher Training College. One immediate result of the collaboration was the printing of Scottish Country Dance Book 1 in 1924, containing 12 dances.

Over the hundreds of years of Country Dancing in Scotland, the same dances appeared across the country, but each area had its own adaptations or regional variations. In order to make the dance book suitable for everyone, regardless of location, Jean Milligan felt that the formations had to be standardized and thus the SCD as we know it was formed.

Today there are still variations of country dancing from Scotland. The most common are:

Ceilidh Dancing – typically couple dances and round the room dances intended for all participants and usually “called” so that beginners can be involved with no prior knowledge. In Scotland this type of dancing is most common at weddings and parties.

Reeling – set dances, most of which are also on the SCD repertoire, but reelers do these dances with much less formality and precision. Dancers wear regular shoes so the steps are not exacting but the formations are familiar. Reelers use a more limited repertoire with more repetition of familiar dances.

Scottish Country Dancing – is the dancing that we do. More precise footwork with exact instructions so that no matter where in the world you dance you can join in because everyone is doing the same steps and formations.

The Royal Society Country Dance Society, whose head office is in Edinburgh, Scotland, has membership in over 50 countries throughout the world. There are 159 Branches and over 300 affiliated groups like ours, encompassing thousands of dancers. The RSCDS has now published close to 60 different books of dances since that first manual for the Girl Guides 97 years ago.

Fiona’s Emoji Quiz on the next page

We suggest that first you try to name the Emoji versions of the dances yourself before consulting the dance list for actual names. Let us know if you invent some unusual names.

Example:  Butterscotch and Honey



Find the dances that match the Emojis

12 of the 24 dance names below are depicted as an Emoji on the left

1. A Trip to Bavaria
2. Red House
3. The Happy Meeting
4. Catch the Wind
5. The Highland Rambler
6. Da Rain Dancin'
7. The Reel of the Royal Scots
8. Diamond Jubilee
9. The Ladies of Dunse
10. Round Reel of Eight
11. The Machine Without Horses
12. The Duchess Tree
13. The Kissing Bridge
14. The Australian Ladies
15. Magic Moments
16. The De'il among the Tailors
17. Sugar Candie
18. St Andrew's Fair
19. Frog in the Middle
20. The Wild Geese
21. Kiss under the Stairs
22. Blue Bonnets
23. Swiss Lassie
24. The Weathercock