

Newsletter of the Bush Dance & Music Club of Bendigo Inc.

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Coo-ee!



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Newsletter contribution deadline is Tuesday 9th September before the Friday Mail-out.



ADVANCE NOTICE

Dinki Di Ball September 20th Eaglehawk Town Hall 7pm till late. Period dress optional, otherwise neat casual ball attire. Sumptuous supper, music by Emu Creek & Gay Charmers. This is a heritage style ball with a balance of traditional Old Time and Colonial Dances. Lots of Fun and social interaction. Bring your families and friends for a gay old time in the old fashioned way and 'trip the light fantastic toe'!

And a notice re this function from President Dianne:-

As our annual Dinki Di Ball is next month I am looking for helpers to supply some supper for the ball. You will be paid for your ingredients that you use so please keep your receipts. Supper that is needed are loaves of mixed sandwiches; these need to be white or wholemeal sandwich bread, large or small cakes, slices and still some sausage rolls.

Also tickets are available at \$18.00 each if purchased before Wednesday 17th September. Please let me know either at the next dance, phone or email me. Thanking you in anticipation. Dianne Pearse.



Next Bendigo East Hop – Saturday August 16th 8pm at Bendigo East Prog. Hall Lansell St.

Admission. Members \$5 Non-members \$8 and Children under 16 Free A Plate of Supper to share is always appreciated and enjoyed.

Memberships Subscriptions are Now Over Due. Family \$30 and Single \$18 A few members have still not paid their membership, also some members that get the newsletter by email haven't paid so please check with Mary or this could be your last Newsletter. Memberships were due in February it is now August.



Next General Meeting Wednesday August 27th 7.30pm at Bendigo Neighbourhood House 21 Neale Street Kennington. Job's on, your attendance is required!



August Birthdays Geoff Coutts 24th, John Williams 28th. Well just two birthday boys for this month, one to twinkle his toes and one to rattle his bones, sorry, washboard. A big happy birthday to Geoff and John.

Wedding Anniversaries Still bleak like the weather, no anniversaries.

Reports from the **July General Meeting**

1 Bendigo East Hall floor was fine for dancing on the birthday night, but Doug noticed some whitish powder when mopping up after supper.

2 A letter from Elaine Martin thanking the club members and committee for the fun and friendship she and Ken Austin have had over the years. Elaine has down- sized and moved to Melbourne to be near family.

3 Entertaining the ‘Old Folks’ There were about 28 residents at Mirridong who received the dancing entertainment really well, but at this venue once again, no afternoon tea was supplied. It’s also been suggested we need a small banner to help staff remember the name of the club.

4 Bendigo East Dance in June, the floor was dreadful and too slow and the crowd was small. The curtains made a great difference to warmth for the band (and acoustics?)

5 The club PA (speaker) was non-functional at the birthday dance creating many problems and frustration. It will be taken for repair/service. Mary will ask Kevin Long for the person he recommended a few years ago.

6 The Christmas Party will be held at Sedgwick Hall on Saturday 13th December and Mary will source quotes from Rankins and one other caterer as well as checking availability of the date.

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TSDAV functions coming up: - The **TSDAV** conducts a series of monthly dance workshops, under the name of - **“Dancing at the 11th Hour”** and continues for this year. Dates are the **1st Sunday of the Month:** - the next being **7th September** at the Eleventh Hour Theatre Hall cnr Gore & Leicester Sts Fitzroy 2.00-5.00 pm. Enquiries Norm Ellis 9888 5332 or <http://tsdav.vicnet.net.au/>

REMINDER Old Time Tea Dance with Gay Charmers, TSDAV Sat. 23rd August 4.30 – 9.30 pm St Andrews Uniting Church Hall 74 Melville Re, Brunswick West (Between Victoria & Hope Sts Melways 29C6. \$20 at door or \$15 pre-paid Information: <http://tsdav.vicnet.net.au> Denise Hibbs 9878-6267, Marion Stabb 9439-7100 Bendigo: Carol Rowe 5443-2571 Gay Charmers: Stu Simms 5457-9222. Further details and programme in our last (July) newsletter.

Retirement Village Dance Displays

St Laurence Court Kangaroo Flat Wednesday 13th August 1.30 - 2.30pm and Friday 14th November 1.30 - 2.30 pm

At the time of this newsletter going to print, there’s a tentative just arrived, Carshalton House, Stoneman Street, on Tuesday 26th August - 1.30pm.

If you are interested in helping, your support would be very welcome and appreciated, please contact Margaret Dean 5439 6246 or Julie Manypenny 5439 6317 for details.

Report on the July Birthday Dance by Doug Pearse

A good number at our birthday dance with the choir and some extras for a birthday party. Many joined in and tried to do the dances and most did a good job and had plenty of fun trying. There was plenty of supper for the large crowd. The Gay Charmers played very well and the MC Carol did a great job despite having problems with the sound system (which is now in for repairs).

Chris spent a lot of time decorating the hall with balloons etc. Esma made the 35th birthday cake which was cut by the president after the crowd sang happy birthday to the club.

The choir sang along with the band while we danced as well as a couple of items by themselves (This was a first for our dances.) It was very well received by all that were there.

A few dressed up in International costumes for the theme for this dance. Thanks to all who helped make the night a success.

Dance Classes: - by the time you receive this newsletter, the first class will have been conducted as: - Our first 'learn to dance classes' for a few years commenced on Thursday August 7th and will go until Thursday September 25th from 7.30pm sharp till 9.30 at the Uniting Church Hall in Forest St. (The hall is half way up the first block on the left, if you are turning right or left from the City Family Hotel in High St.)

All club members are invited to attend without fee and this assistance is not only very welcome but is essential to making the programme run smoothly and help new comers be at ease. When we conducted Continuing Education Classes in the past, it was of great assistance if club members who were able could attend to help partner and lead off couple dances for the learners as well as making up numbers in set dances.

Peter Ellis is conducting the class series and please remember that there can only be one teacher and please do not interrupt or run individual conversation and show steps or figurework while he is actually instructing. Individual tips and instruction is of course useful once the dance has been demonstrated and when actually dancing.

The lessons will commence with the basics of waltzing, Foxtrot, Pride of Erin and Barn Dance as well as how to 'swing' with simple sets such as Galopede and Strip the Willow as in Virginia Reel. As the course progresses other old time sequence couple dances and the polkas such as Princess and Varsoviana and advanced sets such as Waltz Cotillion, Waves of Tory, Alberts and Lancers will be introduced, a couple of figures at a time. It would be helpful if you could let Mary know if you are interested in helping out. Also please pass the message around to interested people who might not get email or who might not have seen the advertisements.





Photographs above from our birthday dance in July courtesy of Liesbeth van Emmerick and Julia Dawn

Thirty Fifth Anniversary Just Past. Doesn't time go when you're having fun?

I thought I'd take this opportunity to write a little of the club history and what we're about, although it's been written before, but however there are many newer members in the club who may not have seen this.

In the early 70s there was a core group of us that attended the Bendigo Old Time Dance Club nights at Spring Gully on the second Wednesday of the month, as well as Saturday night dances regularly between Spring Gully and Lockwood South, and travelling afield of a Friday night to district balls when in season. In the late 70s we discovered family dances in a circuit based around St Arnaud, namely Paradise, Slaty Creek and Kooreh. Later Slaty Creek moved to Coonooer Bridge and Bealiba started up. As well as that Old Time Dance Clubs had commenced at Wedderburn, then Charlton and we attended these when we could. Additionally some of us were doing Ballroom Dance medals (New Vogue) in Melbourne under the leadership of Les Rankin and assisting him sometimes three times a week at Bendigo learn to dance classes and training debutantes.

Several significant things happened at that time. The Wedderburn Oldtimers Orchestra had formed in 1975 and we followed them all round as the instrumentation was older or different to the usual piano, sax and drum combination, or even sometimes electronic organ. The Oldtimers had seized on a revival of the really old dances they remembered in the Woolsheds and Barns in the bush in the 1920s and largely for the first time, we were able to enjoy three or four sets in a night, Lancers, Alberts and Waltz Cotillion, and occasionally such as at Fenton's Creek, the First Set. They played acoustically on fiddles and squeezeboxes with piano, drums and tin whistle, and this was quite different to anything we'd encountered before. The Old Timers as part of their job prescription always included dances like Varsoviana, Polka Mazurka, Highland Schottische and Polka which except for one or two occasionally at special old time nights on a Friday at Lockwood South, we'd never seen at ordinary old time balls; but we were right into these, they were lively and fun. We were also into the Swing Waltz and some of the other Newer Vogue dances of the period and actually taught these to the folk at Paradise.

This Oldtimers' revival was phenomenal at the time and I can recall an Old Time Ball at Maryborough with 750 dancers crammed into the rather small Town Hall, and so crowded it wasn't actually pleasurable, shoulder to shoulder, rising and falling together in the smallest allowable steps of the Veleta or Pride of Erin. Waltzing Competitions were also a major revival and attraction at balls conducted by the Oldtimers.

Likewise we had come across Harry McQueen's Old Time Dance Band, a veteran player who knew all about the old dances and tunes we were becoming interested in. Then at Yarrowalla we struck the Gay Charmers and on enquiring about the Royal Irish, Morrie played some jig style set tunes for us.

Also Maldon Folk Festival had commenced and the dances then were in the Castlemaine Town Hall to a 'Ceilidh Band' of mainly fiddles and a squeezebox or two and banjo and tin whistle. They introduced us to dances like Virginia Reel, Dashing White Sergeant and Waves of Tory.

So the ring leaders of touring around these various dances and balls, namely Maurie Rayner, Mary Smith, Muriel Brown and I came up with the idea of trying to interest the Bendigo Old Time Dance Club (we were members) in reviving all these old dances that were so much fun. The OTDC did put on a set of Alberts from time to time for us and a token Varsoviana or Polka Mazurka, but it really was a New Vogue Dance Club and that was their prime interest. At their nights we mainly danced the Joyette, Evergreen, Margo, Tracy Leigh, Yvonne, Lucille, Charmaine, Merrilyn, Irene etc etc. Maurie in suggesting we needed to attract young people convinced the OTDC to conduct a 'Square Ball' at Eaglehawk. This was quite successful and a lot of fun, every second dance a square dance alternating with an old time dance. But it didn't continue and we could see we

really needed to form our own club if we wished to revive the older tradition and attract younger people and families, as was the tradition around St. Arnaud.

Steps were put in place for this to occur, at first through the Old Time Dance Club for a trial of 3 months, commencing with a Dinki Di Ball at Spring Gully on Australia Day evening 1979. We made contact with Shirley Andrews and a few from Melbourne and Ballarat attended; Maurie and I travelled all around to Castlemaine, Ballarat, Daylesford, dropping off flyers. We attracted a patronage of 160 people which was unanticipated and marvellous. However numbers settled down to about 70 on the subsequent trial nights and the OTDC was no longer interested.

We decided to form our own club on the 14th June 1979, becoming The Sandhurst Dance Club (Colonial and Olde Tyme). The Inaugural members at that meeting were, Muriel Brown, Esma Barker (Pennington), Maurie Rayner, Arthur Griffin, Colin Silk, Bev Wells (Filbey), Dos & Jim Grotto, Cheryl Burton, Neil Neumann, Mary Smith and myself. Colin and Ila Silk were interested in what we were doing, apart from being ballroom and old time dancers, they had also followed a little of Scottish Country Dancing and had been at dances at Ottrey's Barn at Muckleford where Harry McQueen played to raise money for the kilts for the Castlemaine Pipe Band. At these dances a mix of the real old time occurred alongside dances such as Virginia Reel or Sir Roger de Coverley, Strip the Willow and Dashing White Sergeant. There was even a set of the Prince Imperials Quadrille one night at Muckleford which both the Silks and Harry McQueen remembered well, and our new Sandhurst Dance Club members were instrumental in reviving it and demonstrating one Saturday night at Lockwood South at Colin's request, and at a ball at St. Arnaud at Ron McNally's request.

Colin taught one Colonial style dance such as Virginia Reel at the Lockwood learn to dance classes each week, in preparation to help attract dancers to our functions when we formed. We also held several dance practises together at Spring Gully Hall on a weekend afternoon in preparation ahead of formation of our dance club.

When we did form we ran 'Learn to Dance' classes and a Colonial Debutante Ball. All very successful. Coming out of the classes we attracted several families, Ottery's, Lawry/Pennington's, Russell's and Blandford's. Having the children from these families join us was tremendous and as the young grew up, they really could dance. Also at this time we had come into contact with Nariel and several of the families annually trekked across to the Nariel Folk Festival and dances between Christmas and just after New Year for quite some years.

However despite this, it was difficult to maintain sufficient visitor dancers to keep our numbers up, as well as not being able to afford to continue paying for a band - even passing the hat around to pay for advertising.

Emu Creek formed as a club band as a result of this and with considerable support from Harry McQueen. But by the time the band was up to par, our dances were no longer running and the club went into recess for most of the year, but we continued meeting socially having Pub Tea nights. In 1989 when we were able to revive the dances at Spring Gully, Emu Creek was then good enough to play most things, although the Charmaine and Progressive Jive were beyond us for some months to go.

In the main everything has run fairly well till recent months when due to illness and other factors we've lost several of our key dancing couples who were able to lead the older lesser known dances off.

How to maintain the things we formed to conserve and promote becomes an even bigger challenge with a mainly ageing organisational infrastructure. But this is across the board with many organisations.

I once wrote we were not an Old Time Dance Club and were never intended to be, we were not a Colonial Dance Club, we were not a Bush Dance Club or a Folk Dance Club, but that in fact we were a composite of

each of those things. Whilst a prime aim has been on the heritage side of dance, particularly those of our own tradition, we are not museum piece. In fact the main aim has been to enjoy ourselves and have fun, and that has always been our strong point at demonstrations, whether at the Old Folks Homes or the National Folk Festival, demonstration in Melbourne at the ABC venue or more recently the Centenary of the Hustlers Mine Disaster at the Boundary Hotel.

The Dinki Ball was instigated by the band nearly 20 years ago; Alan Russ had pressed for something to be done to commemorate the veteran dance musicians and MCs after seeing one old player turn up almost in a wheel chair to play on stage at Nariel, he'd hired a taxi both ways from and to Tumbarumba. I suggested to Alan that we should style it on the original Dinki Di Ball that led to the club's formation in 1979 and that we approach the three remaining traditional bands in our region to play for it and to include a mix of the real old dances and the old time favourites that all enjoy. Of course the band didn't have the resources to run a ball, something I think Alan was a bit oblivious too, so I had to call on Mary Smith, Helen Bramley and Wayne Blandford to bail us out, while John Williams spent the school holidays helping as much as he could in the organisation of it.

But can we keep it and the club going? That is the big question, hopefully our new dance classes might bring in some new blood. The hardest thing is to get people to have a go at MCing and calling, we can't conduct our dances much longer in the old way without that expertise.

Dance filming for You Tube, Surrey Hills August 3rd. Last Sunday we successfully filmed the Swedish Country Dance, Tommy's Quadrille and Highland Fling Schottische progressive. We appreciate the assistance of the Melbourne folk, George Ansell's English dance group, Coral Eden's Colonial dancers and the TSDAV in helping us in this. Don and Julie travelled down to operate the camera and Doug and Dianne Pearse, Dorothy Jalland, Phil Johnson, Carol Rowe and Eric Robinson accompanied them and danced well in the performance. The Scottish Reel remains a challenge, but we're working on it. The Taradale Club Cotillion and Liverpool Plains Waltz Cotillion remain to be done another time as well as the Scottish Reel.

Teaching Tim Minchin concertina I've just returned from an hour's session at the ABC studios Elsternwick helping notable actor Tim Minchin learn to play the Irish Jig Humours of Donnybrook on my concertina. This is a part he has to play in the 1810 section of the film of Secret River based on a novel that is under production. More next edition, but what is it that playing squeezeboxes catalyses the most amazing facial expressions, even from actors that should be able to put on any face? He was playing the tune by the way when the hour was up.

Bush Dance & Old Time Dance References via the National Library of Australia's Trove & Digitised Newspapers Please *Note*: - apparent typos in Digitised Newspaper references from Trove (National Library of Australia) are from the original newspaper sources and are quoted verbatim as this is a normal procedure.

Townsville Daily Bulletin Sat. 19th Oct. 1935 An Aboriginal Dance. Modern and Ball Room.

MUNGINDI, 14th Oct. Last Tuesday week a novelty entertainment took place in the Elite Hall when the aboriginals gave a dance with an attendance of about 60 aboriginals from Moree, Boomi, Neeworra, Toomelah and Mungindi. Both modern and old time dancing was indulged in and the music was supplied by an accordion player of some quality, accompanied by the good old Gum leaf, which was really excellent and quite as good as our expensive bands to dance to. During the evening a corroboree was held, while an exhibition of step dancing was given; also Scotch reels. It was explained owing to an attack of 'flu' a colored friend from Brisbane was unable to present the Rumba as previously announced.