

**An Exploration of How Various 'Cultures of Dance'  
Construct Experiences of Health and Growing Older**

**APPENDICES**

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# Focused Coding

## Narrative Theme: Forming a Sense of Belonging through Dance Focused Coding from Circle Dance Narrative Style Interviews

### *Getting Involved in Retirement*

- Starting Circle dance in retirement (1.C.1)
- Started Circle dance when retired (1.C. 3)
- Getting involved in Circle class in retirement (2. C.1)
- Starting Circle dance a few months ago in retirement (2.C.1)
- Got involved in Circle dance through a class when she retired (2. C. 3)
- Prefers free and Circle dance now retired (2.C.3)
- Currently does tap and Circle dance in retirement (2.C.4)
- Started tap and Circle dance in retirement (2.C.5)
- Circle dance as a physical activity in retirement and no partner needed (2.C.6)
- Introduced to Circle dance in retirement by neighbour (2.C.7)

### *Getting Involved through Friends/Family/Other Reasons*

- Reluctant to go Circle dancing, invited by a friend (1.C.2)
- Shared narrative of husband and wife getting involved in Circle dance through family and friends (1.C.4)
- Church friend introduced her to Circle dance (1.C.5)
- Story of being introduced to the first Circle dance group by joining the second Circle dance group (1.C.6)
- Story of always wanting to dance (1.C.6)
- Finds it difficult to talk about herself but loves Circle dance (1.C.6)
- One lady joined the second Circle dance group and heard the first Circle dance group was better (1.C.8)
- Lady who introduced first Circle dance group to lady with a hearing loss as the teacher was good (1.C.8)
- Met Circle dance teacher when swimming/invited to attend two Circle sessions free/ enjoyed first session (1.C.9)
- First saw young people with learning difficulties doing Circle dancing (1.C.10)
- Introduced to Circle dance in retirement by neighbour (2.C.7)
- Friend invited her to join a Circle dance group (2.C.9)

### *Getting Involved on Holiday/Memories of Circle Dancing*

- Involved in Circle dance when on holiday in Greece (1.C.3)
- Drawn into Circle dance when touring with ballet company in Greece (1.C.5)
- Lady who joined Circle dance group on holiday after her mother's death (1.C.8)
- Involved in Circle dance on holiday in Greece (2.C.1)

### *Dancing as a Child/Young Adult/Other Dance Forms*

- Dancing as a child (1.C.1)
- Interest in dance as an adult (1.C.1)
- Involved with dance socially as an adult (1.C.2)
- Danced as a child (1.C.3)
- Did not do much dance when married/working (1.C.3)
- Husband loved music and dance as a child (1.C.4)
- Dancing as a child (1.C.5)
- Story of why she left the first Circle dance group as a professional dancer (1.C.5)
- Danced as a child/young adult (1.C.6)
- Own children impressed by her dancing (1.C.6)
- Dancing as a child, going to dancing college after the war and working as a dance choreographer whilst raising a family (1.C.7)
- Details of various shows she choreographed or danced in (1.C.7)
- Dancing the can-can without her frilly knickers on (1.C.7)
- Being a cat and singing lying down (1.C.7)
- All three ladies did dance at school (1.C.8)
- Third lady used to do ballroom and Scottish but Scottish too energetic for her now (1.C.8)
- Doing ballroom dancing with her brother at the end of World War Two when she was a teenager (1.C.9)
- Dancing as a child/young adult (2.C.1)
- Did not have time to dance when at work (2. C.2)
- She is pleased that she can dance as she has not danced since she was a teenager (2.C.2)
- Highland dancer as a child but now prefers free and Circle dance (2.C.3)

- Does tap and Circle in retirement/ did Salsa and disco as a teenager (2.C.4)
- Loves tap dancing as it lifts her into her dreams (2.C.4)
- Remembers country dancing as a child and did some jazz as an adult (2.C.5)
- Danced as a child but not a dancer (2.C.6)
- Did ballroom dancing when young (lived in Argentina) (2.C.8)
- Knee injury meant she gave up Tai Chi and started Circle dance to do something to move (2.C.8)
- Danced as a child (2.C.9)

### *Reactions to Circle Dance Culture*

- First impressions of Circle dance unpleasant (1.C.2)
- Wife's sister re-acted against the candle, flowers and sending energies in Circle dance, whereas wife adjusted to them (1.C.4)
- Story of why she left Circle dance as a professional dancer (1.C.5)
- Circle dance provides amusing conversations about sending the light (1.C.6)
- Likes and dislikes about the candle in Circle dance (1.C.8)
- Engaging with Circle dance through music, movement and emotion, besides a community of dancers who are positive about growing older (2.C.1)
- Philosophy of Circle dance as away from the pressures of the modern world (2.C.2)
- Pleasure of Circle dance but problems with the candle (2.C.7)

### *Gender Issues*

- Gender causing problems with Circle dance (1.C.4)
- Husband's problem of dancing with women (1.C.4)
- Discussion about wife or husband doing Circle dance alone (1.C.4)
- Circle dance perfect as you do not need a partner (1.C.6)
- Circle dance as physical activity in retirement and no partner needed (2.C.6)

### *Clothes*

- Wears flamboyant dance clothes (1.C.1)
- Theme days for Circle dance and dressing up (1.C.3)
- Wears ordinary clothes for Circle dance (1.C.6)
- Dresses in sparkly clothes for Circle dance (2.C.3)
- Wears trousers and t-shirts for Circle dance (2.C.4)
- Dresses casually for Circle dance (2.C.5)
- Wears light layers (2.C.6)
- Wears flat comfortable shoes due to condition of floor and trousers (2.C.7)
- Wears ordinary clothes, flat shoes, does not like to be barefoot on floor (2.C.8)
- Teacher has slacks and bare-feet for dancing (2.C.9)

### *Music*

- Dance and music as a spiritual experience (1.C.1)
- Dance and music as putting you in touch with a younger self (1.C.3)
- Husband loved dance and music as a child (1.C.4)
- Enjoying music from different countries (1.C.4)
- Music puts you in touch with your emotions (1.C.4)
- Husband finds dance adds to enjoyment of music for mind and body (1.C.4)
- Music as facilitating emotional expression (1.C.6)
- Some dance music reduces her to tears, importance of feeling grief as well as happiness (1.C.6)
- Dance and music important for everyone as facilitates emotional expression (1.C.7)
- Loves the music, movement and togetherness in dance (1.C.9)
- Circle dances tell stories about ordinary events through lyrics rather than steps, in order to facilitate group-bonding (1.C.10)
- Teacher of very first group very good and importance of music, exercise and being in a circle with others, besides dances from other countries (1.C.8)
- First lady more of a musician than a dancer (1.C.8)
- Circle dances tell stories about ordinary events through lyrics rather than steps, in order to facilitate group-bonding (1.C.10)
- Modern choreographers aim to reproduce the emotional or spiritual experience the music or the lyrics have generated in them (1.C.10)
- Variety of music draws her to Circle dance (1.C.10)
- Circle dance facilitates emotional expression through music (1.C.10)
- Listens to a piece of music to find the emotions it arises in her (1.C.10)

- Music and dance touch the spirit (1.C.10)
- Engaging with Circle dance through music, movement and emotion, besides a community of dancers who are positive about growing older (2.C.1)
- Story of emotionality of music and Circle dance (2. C.1)
- Philosophy of Circle dance as away from pressures of the modern world/music (2.C.2)

### *Sense of Community*

- Circle dance positions her in an international community (1.C.2)
- Circle dance facilitates community through activity (1.C.2)
- Likes variety of dances from different countries (1.C.3)
- Wife's story of a community of dancers (1.C.4)
- Got involved in a Circle dance group ten years ago and found instant friendship (1.C.10)
- Engaging with Circle dance through music, movement and emotion, besides community of dancers who are positive about growing older (2.C.1)
- Philosophy of Circle dance as away from the pressures of the modern world/music (2.C.2)
- Teacher of first Circle group very good and importance of music, exercise and being in a circle with others, besides dances from other countries (1.C.8)
- Circle dances tell stories about ordinary events through lyrics rather than steps, in order to facilitate group-bonding (1.C.10)

### *Differences between Professional and Social Dancing*

- Story of why she left the Circle dance group as a professional dancer (1.C.5)
- Dancing as a child, going to dancing college after the war and working as a dancer/choreographer whilst raising a family (1.C.7)
- Details of various shows she choreographed or dance in (1.C.7)
- Dancing the can-can without her frilly knickers on (1.C.7)
- Being a cat and singing lying down (1.C.7)

## **Focused Coding from Circle Dance Ethnography**

### *Descriptions of Circle Dances*

- Emotional Negro spiritual dance "I say Grace" (C1, 15.6.07)
- Metaphor of Greek dance as macho with testosterone (C1, 13.7.07)
- Hand-hold of Greek dance a metaphor for resisting the Turks (C1, 14.9.07)
- Descriptions of Aspen Flower and Cowboy dances (C1, 14.9.07)
- First impressions of the second Circle dance group similar to the first (C2, 8.10.07)
- Second Circle dance group has simpler, light-hearted dance in comparison with the first group, and does not seem as deeply emotional, although there is laughter (C2, 8.10.07)
- Teacher talks about doing a Circle dance with two Russian girls (C2, 8.10.07)
- Dances from different countries and teacher getting confused with the steps (C2, 29.10.07)
- Description of various Circle dances such as River dance, Lucky and an Armenian dance (C1, 2.11.07)
- Different style of teaching from the first group but still sense of togetherness shown through physical proximity, smiles and laughter (C2, 5.11.07)
- Members of the second Circle dance group sometimes impatient with forgetful teacher (C2, 5.11.07)
- Second teacher's difficulty with CD player resolved by group member (C2, 5.11.07)
- Community feelings promoted by Israeli dance through physical contact and movements to shower blessings on bride and groom (C2, 19. 11.07)
- Sense of community facilitated by doing an Italian dance "Thanks for Life" (C2, 19.11.07)
- Rumanian dance facilitates sense of community even though teacher struggling (C2, 26.11.07)
- Smiles and community feel created by close physical contact and movement in Turkish dance (C2, 21.1.08)
- Sense of community when the dancers performed the Greek dance with two concentric circles in unison (C2, 21.1.08)
- Details of the movement "Grand Chain" which promoted a community feel through the holding of hands and smiles (C2, 28.1.08)
- Dancing to folk song about donkey-riding facilitated community through changing partners, holding hands and laughing (C2, 28.1.08)
- Details on two meditative dances, the bells of Norwich and a Russian one, which had also been taught by the first Circle dance teacher (C2, 4.2.08)
- Seasonal dance "March Hare" where the steps represent a hare kicking (C2, 3.3.08)

### *Music*

- Dress, music and snake-like dance (C1, 18.5.07)

- Community of older dancers promoted by holding hands, keeping time to music (C1, 18.5.07)
- Beautiful clothes and music at the Greek dance workshop (C1, 27.8.07)
- Retired professional dancer finds Circle dance/music more pleasurable than her aerobic-exercise/music class (C1, 12.10.07)
- Teacher's love of music connected with her love of dance (C1, 12.10.07)
- Beauty and sadness of music for Russian dance with difficult timing so hard to learn the steps (C1, 12.10.07)
- Second Circle dance group has simpler, light-hearted dances in comparison with the first group, and does not seem as deeply emotional, though there is laughter
- Relaxing atmosphere and music important (C2, 29.10.07)
- Experienced Scottish dancer interested in other dance forms and opera-singing (C2, 19.11.07)
- Dance "La Louette" performed to a French song created a feeling of fun and community (C2, 25.2.08)

### *Clothes*

- Teacher and class members brightly dressed (C1, 25.5.07)
- Discussion re shoes or bare-feet for dancing (C1, 8.6.07)
- Beautiful clothes and music at the Greek dance work-shop (C1, 27.8.07)
- Teacher beautifully dressed, gracefully taught dances from various different countries (C1, 14.9.07)
- Colourful clothes (C1, 28.9.07)
- Flowing clothes (C1, 5.10.07)
- Casual dress in comparison with first Circle dance group (C2, 28.1.08)
- Lady who had told me in her interview she had not done much exercise before, wearing a new pair of sparkly blue character shoes (C2, 17.3.08)

### *Sense of Community/International Community*

- Circle dances from different countries (C1, 8.6.07)
- Circle dances from different countries (C1, 13.7.07)
- Warm hands of community of dancers rising to a higher level (C1, 4.5.07)
- Setting up Circle dance session with members of the group (C1, 18.5.07)
- Community of older dancers promoted by holding hands, keeping time to music (C1, 18.5.08)
- Dancing in a circle enhances community whether holding hands or not (C1, 8.6.07)
- Physical proximity promotes togetherness in jazz dances (C1, 15.6.07)
- Sense of community amongst the smiling dancer in the beautiful garden at the stately home (C1, 27.8.07)
- Meditative Russian dance promoted a sense of community before the final act of blowing out the candle (C1, 28.9.07)
- Welcoming atmosphere of second Circle dance group similar to the first, with togetherness promoted by holding of hands (C2, 8.10.07)
- Teacher facilitated community, inviting group members to remain holding hands and to reflect after each dance, and sending light to lady whose husband had just died (C2, 29.10.07)
- Different style of teaching from the first group but still sense of togetherness shown through physical proximity, smiles and laughter (C2, 5.11.07)
- Front basket-hold shows importance of touch in a continuous circle for a sense of community (C2, 5.11.07)
- Community feelings promoted by Israeli dance through physical contact and movements to shower blessings on bride and groom (C2, 19. 11.07)
- Sense of community facilitated by doing an Italian dance "Thanks for Life" (C2, 19.11.07)
- Rumanian dance facilitates sense of community even though teacher struggling (C2, 26.11.07)
- Smiles and community feel created by close physical contact and movement in Turkish dance (C2, 21.1.08)
- Sense of community when the dancers performed the Greek dance with two concentric circles in unison (C2, 21.1.08)
- Details of the movement "Grand Chain" which promoted a community feel through the holding of hands and smiles (C2, 28.1.08)
- Dancing to folk song about donkey-riding facilitated community through changing partners, holding hands and laughing (C2, 28.1.08)
- Community feel through a snake-like line with an opportunity to smile at other dancers (C2, 17.3.08).
- Some favourite dances created a sense of fun and community in different ways (C2, 17.3.08)

### *Visualising the Sick/ Sending the Light/ Mind, Body, Spirit*

- Dancers moving from mind and body to spirit (C1, 4. 5.07)
- Healing power of Circle dance and visualising sick members (C1, 4.5.07)
- Healing power of Circle dance and visualising sick members (C1, 8.6.07)
- Blowing out candle, sending energies to sick members (C1, 4.5.07)
- Blowing out candle, sending energies to sick members (C1, 25.5.07)
- Sending the light to Greece due to an arson attack (C1, 17.8.07)



- Teacher organises group members to bring in candle and centrepiece and sends out light to whoever needed it (C2, 8.10.07)
- Teacher facilitated community, inviting group members to remain holding hands and to reflect after each dance, and sending light to lady whose husband had just died (C2, 29.10.07)
- Therapeutic Israeli dances and crowding round the candle to send out the light (C2, 12.11.07)
- Centre-piece and candle and sending the light to whoever needed it (C2, 19.11.07)

#### *Retired Professional Dancers*

- Travelling on bus with retired professional dancer (C1, 18.5.07)
- Flexibility in dance styles needed as you get older says retired professional dancer (C1, 25.5.07)
- Retired professional dancer laughs as she reminisces about her career (C1, 25.5.07)
- Ethnographic interview with retired ballerina who had left the first Circle dance group and her reasons for leaving (C1, 4.6.07)
- Retired professional dancer contrasts professional dancing with Circle dancing (C1, 15.6.07)
- Retired professional dancer explains one of the flower dances (C1, 13.7.07)
- Retired professional dancer met her husband ballroom dancing and she is aware she is slowing down in her own dancing ability due to age (C1, 16.11.07)

#### *Other Dance Forms and Gender Issues*

- Lady who moved from ballroom to Circle dance after the death of her husband (C1, 22.6.07)
- Group member positions Circle dance as being about a range of emotions, whereas Scottish dance is about fun and laughter (C1, 28.9.07)
- Retired professional dancer met her husband ballroom dancing and she is aware she is slowing down in her own dancing ability due to age (C1, 16.11.07)
- Lady who does not want to be interviewed says how she moved from ballroom and line-dancing to Circle dancing after her husband's death (C2, 17.3.08)

#### *Dance Workshops and Social Aspects*

- Invited to day of 20 Greek dances by the teacher in the garden of a stately home and visitors fascinated (C1, 27.8.07)
- Hand-hold of Greek dance a metaphor for resisting the Turks (C1, 27.8.07)
- Sense of community amongst the smiling dancer in the beautiful garden at the stately home (C1, 27.8.07)
- Beautiful clothes and music at the Greek dance work-shop (C1, 27.8.07)
- Sending the light to Greece due to an arson attack (C1, 27.8.07)
- Story about the age of trees (C1, 27.8.07)
- Greek dance workshop not cheap (C1, 27.8.07)

### **Focused Coding from Narrative Style Interviews (Ladies' Step, Scottish Country)**

#### *Getting Involved and Remaining involved through interest in History, Culture and Music*

##### *as Dancers with Expert Status*

- Older man had memory and his wife had grace, a 'team' in Scottish dance (1.S.1)
- Long story about the history of Scottish dancing (1.S.1)
- Cultural artefacts are important as he gets out his dance books/many sub-cultures of Scottish dance and music (1.S.1)
- History of Ladies' Step/ introduction of book he is writing on Ladies' Step (1.S.1)
- Difficulty of writing about Ladies' Step (1.S.1)
- Continues with history of Ladies' Step and multiple interpretations of dances (1.S.1)
- Dance is an important part of his life/ sad that Scottish dance is in decline (1.S.1)
- Two older ladies got involved as a child/young adult (1.S.7)
- Their current involvement in Scottish dance/ doing teacher training (1.S.7)
- Importance of music and similar formations in English and Scottish dance (1.S.7)
- Gender issues in Ladies' Step (1.S.7)
- Scottish family and enjoyment motivate you to continue dancing (1.S.7)
- Importance of skirts and correct shoes (1.S.7)

#### *Lady involved in Ladies' Step, Second Scottish Country Dance Group and Second*

##### *Circle Dance Group with Expert Status as a Dancer*

- Always enjoyed dancing and music, got involved in Scottish dance because you do not need a partner and she loves Scotland (2.S.6)

- She eventually joined the second Scottish dance group and even goes to dances out of area where different dances are on the programme (2.S.6)
- Questions me and explains how Scottish Country dance is good mental and physical exercise so men enjoy it as much as women (2.S.6)
- Very involved in music and singing before trying several forms of dancing, with Scottish being the best as you do not need a partner and only need to buy special shoes (2.S.6)
- Getting involved in Circle dance when retired but finding it less energetic than Scottish dance, though enjoys the music (2.S.6)
- Tells a very long story about international folk dancing and how the numbers of young language students attending has declined in recent years (2.S.6)
- Finds Ladies' Step difficult as does not have a ballet background and discusses gender issues (2.S.6)
- Teacher of second Circle dance group does not always fit dances to the music but the timing is more complex than in the Scottish (2.S.6)
- Composing dances, demonstrations and very complex dances (2.S.6)
- Clothes have become more informal in Scottish dance but proper shoes are important (2.S.6)
- Events organized by second Scottish group, lack of younger people (2.S.6)
- Never wanted to teach dance, though involved in occasional demonstrations (2.S.6)
- Love of Scotland and dance generally (2.S.6)

## **First Group of Scottish Country Dancers**

### *Getting involved /Involvement in Other Forms of Dance*

- Involved in international dancing at university in Canada/ friend introduced her to Scottish dance (1.S.2)
- Fell in love with Scottish dance/ social and physical aspects (1.S.2)
- Got involved through an evening class as did Scottish dance when younger, besides ballroom, Latin and rock and roll (1.S.3)
- Scottish dance is sociable/ interest in other forms of dance (1.S.3)
- Laughs at memories of her father disapproving of Maypole dancing when she was a child (1.S.3)
- Dancing as a child/saw advert for Scottish dance classes (1.S.4)
- Uncomfortable with young dancers in ballroom/likes mix of ages in Scottish (1.S.4)
- Lady involved as a child/through an evening class (1.S.6)
- Man used to do Morris dancing which was painful but sociable (1.S.6)
- Getting involved as a child and later as an adult (1.S.8)
- Wanting exercise suitable for her joint problems (1.S.8)
- Ballroom dance and cycling as a younger adult (1.S.8)

### *Culture of Scottish Country Dance, Music, Clothes and Sense of Community*

- Scottish country dances are written for occasions, people and places (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish dance as not as way out as creative dance (1.S.2)
- Fell in love with Scottish dance/ social and physical aspects (1.S.2)
- Scottish dance is sociable/ interest in other forms of dance (1.S.3)
- Scottish dancing in Scotland much wilder than the evening class (1.S.6)
- Different music for Morris dance and Scottish dance/playing an instrument (1.S.6)
- Various levels of energy in dance (1.S.6)
- Discussion on ordinary clothes versus national dress (1.S.6)
- Importance of skirts and correct shoes (1.S.7)
- Wears a skirt and comfortable shoes (1.S.8)

### *First Group Scottish Country Dance Teachers*

- Wife's parents were Scottish dancers and she introduced it to her husband (1.S.5)
- Significance of husband getting a kilt (1.S.5)
- Continued Scottish dance through-out their married life/ set up classes (1.S.5)
- Stories behind the Scottish dances (1.S.5)
- Important relationship between music and dance (1.S.5)
- Differing views on Scottish music (1.S.5)
- Problem that Scottish dancing is not so popular at present (1.S.5)

### *Scottish Country Dance Teacher from First and Second Groups*

- Getting involved in Scottish dance through school and then joined the second Scottish group (2.S.7)
- Social aspects of Scottish dancing, getting involved on committees and in teaching, even doing workshops with other forms of dance (2.S.7)
- Got involved in music when she could not dance due to a serious accident (2.S.7)

- Explains about the various different styles of Scottish dance (2.S.7)
- Formal dress for demonstrations, informal dress for social dancing, importance of shoes (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance takes up a lot of her life and she is fascinated by the history of Scottish and English dance (2.S.7)

## **Second Group of Scottish Country Dancers**

### *Getting Involved, Other Dance Forms, Music and Gender Issues*

- Getting involved for exercise/ moved from first to second group as bored of step practice and involved in music (2.S.1)
- Dancing as a young adult (2.S.1)
- Scottish dance/music as a large part of her social life (2.S.1)
- Tried Scottish dancing several times and thought it wonderful, but not able to attend regularly until after the death of her second husband (2.S.3)
- Prefers Scottish dancing as it is more sociable than other dance forms and it is international (2.S.3)
- Tried tap-dancing but co-ordination difficult (2.S.3)
- No money to dance as a child though she wanted to dance (2.S.3)
- Getting involved in Scottish/English Country dance as a young adult/student and continuing for the rest of his life with his wife (2.S.4)
- Explains how they changed from English to Scottish Country Dance as they did not like the continual calling of the dance in English (2.S.4)
- Wife did ballet and tap as a child, started Scottish as an adult (2.S.5)
- Husband active in sport, got involved in Scottish dance when living abroad (2.S.5)
- Husband and wife do ballroom and Argentine tango together and met when doing Scottish dance (2.S.5)
- Always enjoyed dancing and music, got involved in Scottish dance because you do not need a partner and she loves Scotland (2.S.6)
- She eventually joined the second Scottish dance group and even goes to dances out of area where different dances are on the programme (2.S.6)
- Getting involved in Scottish dance through school and then joined the second Scottish group (2.S.7)
- Got involved in music when she could not dance due to a serious accident (2.S.7)
- Explains about the various different styles of Scottish dance (2.S.7)
- Formal dress for demonstrations, informal dress for social dancing, importance of shoes (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance takes up a lot of her life and she is fascinated by the history of Scottish and English dance (2.S.7)
- Got involved with her husband through a combined international dance and Scottish dance group, and continued Scottish dance in Kenya (2.S.8)
- Explains the differences between international folk dance and Scottish dance in terms of music and steps (2.S.8)
- Did Scottish dance as a child and later as an adult as you do not need a partner (2.S.9)
- Scottish dance is her main social activity, you do not need a partner and it is low-cost (2.S.9)
- Getting involved in Scottish dance through a neighbour, doing Indian dance as a child/young adult (2.S.10)
- Indian dance requires more effort in body language and facial expressions, Scottish dance emphasizes simply a smiling face (2.S.10)
- Likes to be invited to dance but concerned about cultural and gender issues getting in the way (2.S.10)
- Dance has always been important in her life (2.S.10)

### *Cultures of Scottish Country Dance: Music, Clothes, Sense of Community and Gender*

#### *Issues*

- Getting involved for exercise/ moved from first to second group as bored of step practice and involved in music (2.S.1)
- Wears a long skirt but no make-up as sweats a lot (2.S.1)
- Different styles in the first and second Scottish groups (2.S.1)
- Scottish dance/music as a large part of her social life (2.S.1)
- Prefers Scottish dancing as it is more sociable than other dance forms and it is international (2.S.3)
- Husband and wife discuss the Scottish clothes they wear for dances (2.S.5)
- Importance of the community of Scottish dancers and this is international (2.S.5)
- Always enjoyed dancing and music, got involved in Scottish dance because you do not need a partner and she loves Scotland (2.S.6)
- Questions me and explains how Scottish Country dance is good mental and physical exercise so men enjoy it as much as women (2.S.6)
- Very involved in music and singing before trying several forms of dancing, with Scottish being the best as you do not need a partner and only need to buy special shoes (2.S.6)
- Got involved in music when she could not dance due to a serious accident (2.S.7)
- Explains about the various different styles of Scottish dance (2.S.7)

- Formal dress for demonstrations, informal dress for social dancing, importance of shoes (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance takes up a lot of her life and she is fascinated by the history of Scottish and English dance (2.S.7)
- Got involved with her husband through a combined international dance and Scottish dance group, and continued Scottish dance in Kenya (2.S.8)
- Explains the differences between international folk dance and Scottish dance in terms of music and steps (2.S.8)
- Informal dress for social dancing, formal for balls and demonstrations (2.S.8)
- Special clothes for public performances (2.S.9)
- Wears skirt/dress for comfort (2.S.9)
- Indian dance requires more effort in body language and facial expressions, Scottish dance emphasizes simply a smiling face (2.S.10)
- Wears a sari for Scottish dance, wonders if people object to this (2.S.10)
- Sharing Indian dance at Scottish social events (2.S.10)
- Details of teaching members of the second Scottish group an Indian folk dance with sticks and Indian dress for the ceilidh (2.S.10)
- Likes to be invited to dance but concerned about cultural and gender issues getting in the way (2.S.10)

### *Involvement in Organising Scottish Country Dance/Wider Social Concerns*

- Involvement on committees of second Scottish group (2.S.3)
- Organises the entertainment for the St. Andrew's Night Ceilidh (2.S.3)
- Concerns about younger people not getting involved (2.S.3)
- Organization of the Second Scottish Country dance group, first post as chairman, intends to dance every dance on the programme when he is the caller (2.S.4)
- Organization of the weekly dances of the second Scottish group allows different people to plan the programme and there is consideration for the older members such as themselves (2.S.5)
- She has been involved in the second Scottish group nearly 30 years and tells me their history which is broader than just dancing (2.S.8)

### *Indian Lady as a Scottish Country Dancer*

- Getting involved in Scottish dance through a neighbour, doing Indian dance as a child/young adult (2.S.10)
- Indian dance requires more effort in body language and facial expressions, Scottish dance emphasizes simply a smiling face (2.S.10)
- Wears a sari for Scottish dance, wonders if people object to this (2.S.10)
- Sharing Indian dance at Scottish social events (2.S.10)
- Details of teaching members of the second Scottish group an Indian folk dance with sticks and Indian dress for the ceilidh (2.S.10)
- Likes to be invited to dance but concerned about cultural and gender issues getting in the way (2.S.10)
- Dance has always been important in her life (2.S.10)

## **Focused Coding from Scottish Country Dance Ethnography**

### *First Scottish Country Dance Group (Ladies' Step)*

- Teacher demonstrates steps for the dance "The Village maid" and explains it is her own interpretation as Ladies' Step was an oral tradition S1., 21.4.07.
- My childhood memories of ballet classes as I go through the ballet positions S1., 21.4.07.
- Written choreographic text for "The Village Maid" does not capture the emotional grace of the teacher's performance S1., 21.4.07.
- Older man made cakes for tea-break S 1., 21.4.07.
- Different interpretations of the steps, and the teacher discusses this with the older man in Ladies' Step S1., 16.9.07.
- Older man in 70s wearing a kilt S 1., 16.9.07.
- Ladies' Step dance can be mentally and physically challenging for both the teacher and older people S 1., 16.9.07.
- Ladies' Step as very demanding brainwork S1, 28.10.07.
- Going to the Ladies' Step class together provided an opportunity for several of the older ladies to meet up for lunch S 1., 2.12.07.
- Holding hands in the dance and the usual afternoon tea facilitated a sense of community S 1., 2.12.07.
- Japanese teacher for Ladies' Step workshop at a venue with a very hard floor S 1., 2.1.08.
- Mainly retired women at Ladies' Step, and an older man talks about the book he is writing on Ladies' Step S 1., 2.1.08.
- Step practice put me in touch with a younger self S 1., 2.1.08.
- Description of dancing a Ladies' Step dance in a triangle which created a supportive feel S 1., 2.1.08.
- Two older ladies involved in English Folk dance and Scottish dance displays. Wear white dresses and tartan wraps for Scottish displays S 1., 18.4.08.

### *Fosse and Drewry Group for Expert Dancers*

- 71 year old man taught very complex Fosse and Drewry dances to a small group S 1., 14.10.07.
- Three older ladies in 60s-70s and one 79 year old man doing Fosse and Drewry dances S 1., 14.10.07.
- Details on the complexity of formations and the energy of these Fosse and Drewry dances S 1., 14.10.07.
- My reflection on the importance of Scottish dance in providing a cultural and social identity for older people together with younger people S 1., 14.10.07.

### *Beginners' and Improvers' Scottish Country Dance Class*

- Teacher facilitates sense of community through disciplining beginners' class to warm-up using various balletic steps S 1., 26.4.07.
- Sense of community promoted by the style of Scottish Country dances S 1., 26.4.07.
- Changing partners after every dance adds to the community feel S 1., 26.4.07.
- Humorous as women had to dance as men S1., 26.4.07.
- Importance of correct footwear i.e. ballet shoes, for performing the "Allemande" and the "Setting Step" correctly S1., 26.4.07.
- Announcements about other Scottish dancing social events S 1., 26.4.07.
- Importance of correct footwear for Scottish dance S 1., 3.5.07.
- Canadian Barn dance as a progressive couple dance promoted a sense of community and laughter as women were dancing as men S1., 3.5.07.
- Sense of community promoted through a children's dance "The Dunn" S1., 3.5.07.
- Gender issues provide amusement when most of the male roles were danced by women and the formations disintegrated S 1., 3.5.07.
- Practising the "Allemande" step facilitates a sense of community, initially through dancing gracefully with a partner in an arching pattern of couples, and later through laughter when each individual dances clumsily backwards S 1., 10.5.07.
- Practising the formation of "Rights and Lefts" creates a community feel through holding hands and moving round a square S 1., 10.5.07.
- Several class members wearing black Scottish shoes S 1., 10.5.07.
- Complex patterns even though a children's dance S 1., 10.5.07.
- Sense of community through dancing the "Duke of Atholl's Reel" in terms of touch, patterns, changing partners and the discipline of the dance S 1., 10.5.07.
- Older lady in her 60s talks about the history and social significance of Scottish dance in terms of bringing a community together S 1., 10.5.07.
- Importance of warm-up, balletic steps, posture and touch S 1., 17.5.07.
- Practising balletic Strathspey setting step and Reel of Three S 1., 24.5.07.
- 50 year old man and his girl-friend do not dance together as everyone swaps partners all the time S 1., 7.6.07.
- Teacher tells the history of the Reel of the 51st Division S 1., 7.6.07.
- Teacher does stretching exercises at end of class and announces about dancing at a stately home S 1., 7.6.07.
- German lady sings, does Scottish dancing for fun and used to do ballroom as a teenager S 1., 10.6.07.
- Details of dancing the "Duke of Perth" which facilitated co-operative and community feelings among the dancers S 1., 14.6.07.
- Warm-up and practising steps and reels of Three S 1., 21.6.07.
- Women dancing as men causes much laughter S 1., 21.6.07.
- Everyone changing partners creates a sense of community S 1., 21.6.07.
- German lady's story of being dropped by her partner in ballroom dance S 1., 21.6.07.
- Complex dance by modern Japanese choreographer mentally and physically relaxing but facilitated laughter and togetherness S 1., 21.6.07.
- Teacher explains how dances passed on by oral tradition so difficult to know what original dances were like S 1., 12.7.07.
- Interesting names of dances "Montgomery's Rant", "Sugar Candie" and "Deil among the Tailors" S1, 27.9.07.
- Sense of community of Scottish dance class with people laughing at their attempts to practise the Strathspey setting step as gracefully as the teacher S 1., 25.10.07.
- Formations of Scottish dance promote a sense of community S 1., 25.10.07.
- Sense of community promoted through touch and eye-contact S 1., 25.10.07.
- Militaristic overtones of Scottish dance such as dance written to commemorate the soldiers of World War One S 1., 8.11.07.
- Dance written by the mathematician Fosse and the idea that dancing and mathematics go together S 1., 8.11.07.
- Formations such as reels of four stimulate smiles and laughter and a sense of community among dancers S 1., 8.11.07.

### *Social Dance Events*

- Description of a tea-dance in a school hall on a Saturday afternoon S1, 27.5.07.
- Older man in Highland dress, older women in loose skirts S1, 27.5.07.

- Beginners joined in dances they knew at a garden dance as it can be embarrassing to mess up a set S 1., 10.6.07.
- I danced in bare-feet on the grass at a stately home for fear of slipping, but the teacher wore ballet shoes S 1., 10.6.07.
- Other dancers were helpful at the dance at a stately home and a young man in a kilt guided me through the complex patterns of one dance S 1., 10.6.07.
- Social event of dancing in a garden and sharing food for a birthday S 1., 12.7.07.
- Teacher talks about summer school of Scottish dancing as an international event and problems finding a teacher for a local class S1, 8.11.07.

### *Second Scottish Country Dance Group*

- Dance is for sheer pleasure, keeping you fit and the brain active S2, 31.5.07.
- Second Scottish group emphasises the pleasure of Scottish dance and there is no teaching of footwork S 2., 20.9.07.
- Second Scottish group expect their members to know the dances as there was only a brief walk-through S 2., 20.9.07
- Variety of interesting names of dances on the notice board S 2., 20.9.07.
- Description of dancing with the second Scottish group S 2., 20.9.07.
- Complex patterns but varying ability amongst the 16 dancers S 2., 20.9.07.
- These older dancers helped me through a dance S 2., 20.9.07.
- Dances more challenging to the memory than the ones taught in my class but there was no concern for correct footwork S 2., 20.9.07.
- Happy, supportive atmosphere amongst these older dancers of all shapes and sizes, and any late-comer was included S 2., 20.9.07.
- Many older women had to dance as men S 2., 20.9.07.
- Welcoming feel of tea-break and members chatting, money collected for the session and tickets sold for a Scottish dance S 2., 20.9.07.
- Members of the second Scottish group take it in turn to call the dances which are different from those of the first Scottish group S 2., 27.9.07.
- Several members of the second Scottish group do folk-dancing too S 2., 27.9.07.
- Older dancers in second Scottish group wear ballet shoes or Scottish shoes but there is the problem of slipping S 2., 27.9.07.
- Help older lady make the tea and notice she has a very creative and logical mind, giving me a book of poems/cards she has made S 2., 27.9.07.
- Welcomed by second Scottish group as they needed another dancer to make up a set of 12 for 'Pelorus Jack' S 2., 25.10.07.
- Custom of changing partners after each dance in Scottish and there were more retired women than men S 2., 25.10.07.
- Older lady started Scottish dancing as a child/young adult and picked it up again in retirement S 2., 25.10.07.
- Sense of community with laughter and smiles amongst retired older people dancing in a shabby church hall S 2., 8.11.07.
- Group members preparing entertainments for their Ceilidh, such as Indian dancing S 2., 8.11.07.
- Announcements about social events, such as a Ceilidh, opera and the death of a member S 2., 22.11.07.
- Second Scottish group has a New Year's party and I met the older lady who has been attending several other dance groups involved in my research S 2., 3.1.08.
- Party finger foods, party games and dancing, besides a demonstration of the Highland Fling, all facilitated a sense of community S 2., 3.1.08.
- Detailed description of a very complex dance in a set of ten people, where other dancers helped me and an 85 year old man who was struggling S 2., 3.1.08.
- Washed up with older lady who then organised a music quiz S 2., 3.1.08.
- Warm welcome and I was lent a pair of Scottish shoes S 2., 10.1.08.
- Doing a dolphin dance with an 85 year old man where moves of the dance are a metaphor for the dolphin surfing over the waves S 2., 10.1.08.
- Scraping bottom of Scottish shoes as not allowed to use slip-stop S 2., 10.1.08.
- Older man was master of ceremonies, calling the dances, and he chose a special one for Valentine's Day, which provoked much laughter S 2., 14.2.08.
- Sense of community was promoted by holding hands and moving round in a slow strathspey S 2., 14.2.08.
- Tea-break provides an opportunity to socialise, hear about other Scottish dances and recruit another interviewee S 2., 14.2.08.
- Lady in her 50s calling the dances to a group of 18 older people S 2., 27.3.08.
- Lady who taught children Scottish dance complains about the slippery floor and advises me which class to attend S 2., 27.3.08.
- Lady who taught children Scottish dance argues with the caller about the meaning of "cast down" S 2., 27.3.08.
- Father Connelly's Jig very fast and complex with much laughter S 2., 27.3.08.
- When there was live music for Scottish dancing, there was a party atmosphere and dancers dressed up smartly S 2., 27.3.08.

- When appealing for a Scottish dance teacher, the older lady ridicules the first Scottish group for doing step-practice S 2., 27.3.08.
- Retired lady who plays a fiddle in the band as she can no longer dance S 2., 3.4.08.
- Detailed description of the complex patterns of Hamilton House S 2., 10.4.08.
- Older man who was losing his sight came and sat at the edge of the hall as he could no longer dance S 2., 10.4.08.
- AGM highlighted the number of social events and charities supported by the second Scottish group S 2., 8.5.08.
- Discussion about the problem of the slippery floor S 2., 8.5.08.

## **Narrative Theme: Learning to Dance**

### **Focused Coding from Circle Dance Narrative Style Interviews**

#### *Older Peoples' Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- Takes time to learn a dance (1.C.1)
- Difficulty of verbalising about dance (1.C.1)
- Finds it easy to learn Circle (1.C.2)
- Finds it easy to learn Circle dance (1.C.3)
- Challenge of the particular Circle dance group (1.C.4)
- Wanting to dance with confident people and a mixture of ages (1.C.4)
- Difficulty learning to dance (1.C.4)
- Husband found wife tripped him up (1.C.4)
- Initially found Circle difficult but easier now she knows the steps (1.C.6)
- Difficulty of verbalising about dance (1.C.6)
- Finds Circle dance difficult to learn due to a poor musical ear and poor memory (1.C.9)
- Does not worry about learning the steps (2.C.1)
- Found it difficult at first to learn the steps/importance of memory (2.C.2)
- Positions Circle dance as easier to learn than Scottish (2.C.3)
- Circle dance easy to learn but difficult to remember (2.C.4)
- Contrasts learning Circle dance with learning tap dance (2.C.5)
- Pleasure in learning to dance (2.C.5)
- Learning Circle dance is easy when the dances are simple (2.C.6)
- Difficulty learning things/pleased when she manages a dance (2.C.7)
- Finds it easiest to learn the repetitive dances but she is not so quick (2.C.7)
- Easy to learn a Circle dance if the step pattern is easy (2.C.8)

#### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment.*

- Mind/body split (1.C.1)
- Metaphor of brain disciplined as a child to learn dance (1.C.2)
- Talks of mind-body split (1.C.3)
- Need to concentrate (1.C.4)
- Talk of mind/body split and when dance becomes embodied (1.C.4)
- Need to concentrate and know what you are doing (1.C.6)
- Memory is important (1.C.6)
- Talks in terms of mind-body split (1.C.6)
- Found it difficult at first to learn the steps/importance of memory (2.C.2)
- Memory is important for learning/better when dances become embodied (2.C.6)

#### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Teacher modifying steps for the older person (1.C.3)
- Aware that she is slower at learning than when younger (1.C.6)
- Modification of dance for balance problems/turns (1.C.6)
- Finds Circle dance difficult to learn due to a poor musical ear and poor memory (1.C.9)
- Memory problems due to growing older (2.C.1)
- Repetition helps her learn Circle dance but she has an ageing memory (2.C.5)
- Enjoys being able to learn something new as she grows older (2.C.6)
- Laughs about her poor memory (2.C.7)
- Important to exercise your memory as you get older (2.C.8)

#### *Strategies for Learning*

- Used to looking at feet and copying (1.C.3)
- Music helps memory (1.C.3)
- Deaf lady longed to do ballet as a child and feels ballet in her muscles when she watches it (1.C.8)

- Deaf lady's story of using visualisation to learn the steps (1.C.8)
- First lady learns dance through the pattern of the music and she has to concentrate on it (1.C.8)
- Importance of memory discussed amongst all three ladies (1.C.8)
- Learns by watching one of the better dancers (1.C.9)
- Uses counting to try memorise the steps a bit (1.C.9)
- Recognises the importance of memory but does not worry about it (1.C.9)
- Positions memory as more important in Scottish than in Circle (2.C.3)
- Repetition helps her learn Circle dance but she has an ageing memory (2.C.5)
- Enjoyment of the music helps learning (2.C.5)

### *Evaluation of Teachers' Contribution to Learning*

- Importance of teachers (1.C.4)
- Boring teacher emphasises getting the steps right (1.C.4)
- Husband talks of poor teachers (1.C.4)
- Value of present Circle dance teacher developed in detail (1.C.4)
- Teacher really good/supportive/attends two classes a week (1.C.6)
- Third lady positions the teacher of the first Circle dance group as better than the teacher of the second Circle dance group (1.C.8)
- Different Circle dance teachers have different styles (2.C.3)
- Importance of the teacher and different teaching styles (2.C.5)

### *Professional Dancers' Experiences of Learning*

- Left the Circle group because she was a professional ballerina (1.C.5)
- Not learning the steps to her own satisfaction (1.C.5)
- Perfectionism in professional ballet (1.C.5)
- Dance as embodied (1.C.5)
- Experience of her body as a ballerina (1.C.5)
- Career as a professional ballerina (1.C.5)
- Rehearsing ballet steps with her fingers (1.C.5)
- Has always been a dancer/special status of being a ballet dancer (1.C.5)
- Difficult to learn Circle initially as a new style (1.C.7)
- Likes the flowing dances but difficulty remembering the names of dances (1.C.7)
- Legs and feet will not go as fast as they used to (1.C.7)
- Fluent on the names of steps (1.C.7)
- Circle dance helps her short-term memory problems due to ageing as it stimulates the brain (1.C.7)

### *Teachers' Perspectives: First Circle Dance Teacher*

- Trained through Steiner home and dance workshops (1.C.10)
- Teacher unable to teach dances with alien rhythms and emotions (1.C.10)
- Teacher plans sessions with a mixture of traditions as this is most enjoyable (1.C.10)
- Finds doing one style overuses one set of muscles, one set of emotions and one sound of music (1.C.10)
- Teaches each dance in chunks rather than step by step (1.C.10)
- Once people have grasped the steps, she talks about moving other parts of the body and finally emotion (1.C.10)
- Importance of own memory as a teacher/frustration of group if teacher cannot remember (1.C.10)
- Plans next session when lying down after current session (1.C.10)
- Uses visualisation to rehearse dances because of problems with arthritis (1.C.10)
- She is in her body and emotions when she demonstrates in front of the group/ she is out of her head when she demonstrates but she uses her head to rehearse (1.C.10)
- Feels satisfied because she has facilitated others to move their bodies and laugh (1.C.10)
- Importance of learning Circle through the spirit, body and emotions rather than the brain (1.C.10)

### *Teachers' Perspectives: Second Circle Dance Teacher*

- Difficult to learn Circle dances but easier if you teach it (2.C.9)
- Circle dance as the "non-dancers dance", accessible via the music (2.C.9)
- Participation more important than getting the steps right (2.C.9)
- Influence of experience, mood and teacher on learning (2.C.9)
- Experiences problems with her ageing memory in lesson planning (2.C.9)
- Importance of repetition and observing for problems when teaching dances (2.C.9)
- An infinite number of steps in Circle dance and these engender well-being (2.C.9)
- Both pleasure and problems in teaching a Circle dance class (2.C.9)
- Problems of teaching Circle dance as an older person (2.C.9)



## Focused Coding from Circle Dance Ethnography

### *Older Peoples' Experiences of Learning, Ease/Difficulty*

- Some dancers move easily, some struggle to co-ordinate their feet (C1, 18.5.07)
- Feet beating in time to the music, but difficult when rhythm complex (C1, 27.8.07)
- Welcoming group and deaf lady learning to dance through watching the teacher (C1, 28.9.07)
- Experienced Scottish dancer found the Circle dance very easy (C2, 29.10.07)
- Experienced Scottish dancer did not feel so challenged by Circle dance as by Ladies' Step in the Scottish (C2, 29.20.07)
- Difficulty of 70 year old lady in remembering steps and getting brain to co-ordinate feet (C2, 12.11.07)
- Circle dance is relaxing, let your body absorb it, whereas Scottish dance is more brainwork (C1, 17.12.07)
- Various levels of dancing technique but still a sense of community (C2, 7.1.08)
- Experienced Scottish dancer talks about the competitive nature of Scottish dance (C2, 14.1.08)
- Difficulty remembering the sequences of steps for all the dances from different traditions (C2, 21.1.08)
- Dancer from one of the first Circle dance teacher's group's led a session of Greek dances (C2, 18.2.08)
- This dancer taught a variation of steps and the Greek dances and music were beautiful (C2, 18.2.08)
- Difficult timing and wailing in Rumanian dance, people out of breath and laughing at end (C2, 25.2.08)
- Experienced Scottish dancer's feet flew through the steps in comparison with some of the other dancers (C2, 3.3.08)

### *My Own Experiences of Learning*

- Problem of getting my brain to co-ordinate my feet (C1, 4.5.07)
- Difficulties of learning new dances (C1, 8.6.07)
- My own difficulty remembering all 14 dances contrast with the teacher who taught largely from memory (C1, 22.6.07)
- I do not need to concentrate so hard as steps seem embodied in my feet (C1, 13.7.07)
- I use visual cues to dance (C1, 28.9.07)
- Footwork more complex in Circle dance than in Scottish dance (C1, 5.10.07)
- Difficulty hearing beat and keeping time to the Palestinian song (C1, 5.10.07)
- Haunting pipe music helps me remember an American Indian dance (C2, 5.11.07)
- Bouncy Irish dance particularly sticks in my mind (C1, 16.11.07)
- Experienced Scottish dancer criticises my technique and timing (C2, 7.1.08)
- Repeated "The Bells of Norwich", a dance that I feel I have absorbed into my body so I can move easily (C2, 3.3.08)
- Difficulty remembering dances to write about them in detail (C2, 10.3.08)

### *Teaching Methods: First Circle Dance Teacher*

- Works from memory (C1, 4.5.07)
- Finds Circle dance fulfilling (C1, 4.5.07)
- Works from memory (C1, 18.5.07)
- Teacher's sense of humour as teaches dance about picking lemons C1, 25.5.07)
- Physical and mental challenge of Indonesian dance which did not fit the music, teacher's expression of surprise and despair as she demonstrates this dance, and her story of doing the dance outside and Africans joining in (C1, 25.5.07)
- Works from memory (C1, 8.6.07)
- Teacher uses visualisation to mentally rehearse dances (C1, 8.6.07)
- Demonstrates a humorous wiggling of the hips (C1, 8.6.07)
- Sense of humour about needing a good bra due to bouncing up and down in Bulgarian bridal dance and she is 14 and a half stone (C1, 29.6.07)
- Jokes about doing teaching plans lying down so session energetic (C1, 29.6.07)
- Uses amusing rhyme for rhythm of steps (C1, 29.6.07)
- Uses the metaphor of putting your nipples in line with the central candle (C1, 13.7.07)
- Jokes about doing teaching plans lying down so session energetic (C1, 12.10.07)
- Details of informal network of dance teachers training each other but who obtain insurance through their magazine (C1, 27.8.07)
- Uses metaphor of driftwood to describe movement (C1, 27.8.07)
- Teacher jokes about dress code for men (C1, 27.8.07)
- Overweight teacher demonstrating gracefully both energetic and reflective dances (C1, 28.9.07)
- Metaphor of 'slice of cake' for steps (C1, 28.9.07)
- Demonstrates and explains how an energetic Israeli dance is really pleasurable (C1, 12.10.07)
- Demonstrates and explains a noisy Turkish dance with 16 sequences of steps (C1, 12.10.07)

- Sense of humour and use of metaphor as she teaches steps (C1, 12.10.07)
- Beauty and sadness of music for Russian dance with difficult timing so hard to learn the steps (C1, 12.10.07)
- Tells humorous story about the music of “River-dance” but emphasises her belief in the discipline of dance (C1, 2.11.07)
- Explains how an Armenian dance is difficult to learn due to stylised steps (C1, 2.11.07)
- Uses letters of the alphabet as metaphors for different arm positions (C1, 2.11.07)
- Humorous style facilitates fun and community among the class as she teaches the “Kilted Leprechaun” (C1, 16.11.07)
- Said your body will remember the steps of the complex Hungarian dance but your memory will not (C1, 16.11.07)
- Body talk about relaxing shoulder blades to prevent tension in arms going round circle (C1, 17.12.07)
- Taught a Turkish dance using a dualist approach (C1, 17.12.07)

#### *Teaching Methods: Second Circle Dance Teacher*

- Giving instructions for seaweed and tango in a confusing manner (C2, 12.11.07)
- Use of metaphor by teacher (C2, 12.11.07)
- Each dance is always taught in Circle but not in Scottish (C2, 12.11.07)
- Has problems remembering dances and demonstrating effectively (C2, 19.11.07)
- Difficulty fitting steps to music of Turkish dance and experienced Scottish dancer does steps correctly (C2, 26.11.07)
- Humorous words to describe movement “face to face” or “bum to bum” (C2, 7.1.08)
- Acknowledges the experienced Scottish dancer’s ability (C2, 7.1.08)
- Talks about no right steps in Circle dance, only variations, letting your body capture the spirit of the dance (C2, 21.1.08)
- Told story about Julian of Norwich as performed a dance about her and used metaphors to describe movements in lively gypsy dance (C2, 4.2.08)
- Difficulty dividing class into two lines as she needed experienced dancers at the ends of each line (C2, 25.2.08)

## **Evaluation of Teachers by Group Members**

### *First Circle Dance Teacher*

- Finds Circle dance fulfilling according to married couple (C1, 4.5.07)
- Used to go to second Circle dance group, but teacher used to forget the steps (C1, 14.9.07)
- Energetic teacher does fast dances whereas teacher at second group forgets the steps (C1, 28.9.07)

### *Second Circle Dance Teacher*

- Laughter pronounced when teacher has problems interpreting instruction “180 degrees” in Greek dance (C2, 7.1.08)
- Laughter and smiles despite the teacher having difficulty interpreting her notes (C2, 4.2.08)
- Use of metaphor in fast Rumanian dance provides opportunity for a joke (C2, 25.2.08)
- Experienced class member took over demonstration of “Circle Tango” as teacher had difficulty interpreting instructions (C2, 25.2.08)
- Experienced class member teaches a dance that promotes a community feel (C2, 3.3.08)

### *Retired Professional Dancer’s Experience of Learning*

- Uses visualisation to rehearse dances (C1, 18.5.07)
- Superior technique but has memory problems due to age (C1, 15.6.07)
- Used to go to second Circle dance group, but teacher used to forget the steps (C1, 14.9.07)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- Deaf lady emphasises importance of practice in order to improve your dancing (C1, 15.6.07)
- Details of the step “squashing the cockroach” (C2, 28.1.08)
- Use of metaphors to describe movements in lively Russian gypsy dance (C2, 28.1.08)
- Music important for keeping dancers in rhythm (C2, 28.1.08)

## **Focused Coding from Narrative Style Interviews (Ladies’ Step)**

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- Claims his memory is the best in town although his footwork is not very good (1.S.1)
- Proud of his own memory in comparison with average Scottish dancers (1.S.1)
- Learning Ladies’ Step is different from learning Scottish Country dance (1.S.7)

- Finds Ladies' Step difficult as does not have a ballet background and discusses gender issues (2.S.6)
- Difficulty learning long dances and Ladies' Step as she has got older (2.S.7)

#### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- Claims his memory is the best in town although his footwork is not very good (1.S.1)
- Proud of his own memory in comparison with average Scottish dancers (1.S.1)

#### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Difficulty learning long dances and Ladies' Step as she has got older (2.S.7)

#### *Strategies for Learning*

- Learning Ladies' Step is different from learning Scottish Country dance (1.S.7)
- Finds Ladies' Step difficult as does not have a ballet background and discusses gender issues (2.S.6)

## **First Scottish Country Dance Group**

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty, Other Dance Forms*

- Importance of repetition for learners but memory may not be so important for experienced dancers due to non-verbal cues (1.S.2)
- Easy to learn dances she did as a child/ new dances are more difficult (1.S.3)
- Scottish dancing is something she can do quite well compared to others (1.S.3)
- Learning Scottish can be easy or complex/no partners required (1.S.4)
- Memory/technique not as important in Scottish as in other dance forms (1.S.4)
- Mentally challenged by complex dances in Scottish (1.S.4)
- Ability to learn varies/different ways of learning, doing versus walking through (1.S.6)
- Scottish dance as mentally rather than physically demanding (1.S.6)
- Exhilaration if gets a dance right but technique may be poor (1.S.6)
- Similarities and differences in learning English and Scottish Country dance (1.S.7)
- Learning the dances is difficult but she can laugh about this (1.S.8)

### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- Separates brain and feet when talking about learning these dances (1.S.2)
- Importance of repetition for learners but memory may not be so important for experienced dancers due to non-verbal cues (1.S.2)
- Importance of memory and difficulty describing dances in words (1.S.3)
- Memory/technique not as important in Scottish as in other dance forms (1.S.4)
- Mentally challenged by complex dances in Scottish (1.S.4)
- Importance of memory/thousands of Scottish dances/individual feedback (1.S.5)
- Scottish dance as mentally rather than physically demanding (1.S.6)
- Memory for dances varies according to context/ even teachers use books (1.S.6)
- Good footwork and interaction with music enhances appearance of dancers (1.S.6)
- Processes of learning Scottish Country dance (1.S.7)
- Importance of different sorts of memory (1.S.8)

### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Importance of repetition for learners but memory may not be so important for experienced dancers due to non-verbal cues (1.S.2)
- Easy to learn dances she did as a child/ new dances are more difficult (1.S.3)
- Explain how they teach Scottish dances/ harder to learn as you get older (1.S.5)
- Importance of repetition, particularly for an ageing memory (1.S.6)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- Importance of repetition for learners but memory may not be so important for experienced dancers due to non-verbal cues (1.S.2)
- Easy to learn dances she did as a child/ new dances are more difficult (1.S.3)
- Importance of memory and difficulty describing dances in words (1.S.3)
- Importance of memory/thousands of Scottish dances/individual feedback (1.S.5)
- Discussion on whether non-verbal cues are useful or not/covering techniques (1.S.6)
- Importance of repetition, particularly for an ageing memory (1.S.6)
- Strategies for memorizing dances/reading instructions/learning different units/concentration/enough memory for 32 bars/music/teamwork (1.S.7)

## Second Scottish Country Dance Group

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- Easy to remember dances as her mind can learn strings of instructions (2.S.1)
- Accessing information is important and people who cannot learn should give up (2.S.1)
- As an experienced dancer she still uses cribs to jog her memory (2.S.1)
- Different levels of remembering dances (2.S.1)
- No problem with timing/listening to music but finds it difficult remembering names of dances and specific dances (2.S.2)
- Second Scottish group expects you to know dances but she makes mistakes (2.S.2)
- Learning to Scottish dance takes time (2.S.3)
- Dances which fit together easy to learn, ridicules first Scottish Country dance group for teaching dances which do not fit together (2.S.4)
- Wife finds learning the steps and dances easy but has difficulty remembering the dances, as there are so many of them. Her husband agrees (2.S.5)
- Memory is important and older people may have problems remembering dances in comparison with the young (2.S.6)
- Memory is very important when learning Scottish dance, as she has got older she finds it more difficult to learn new dances and dances are becoming more complex (2.S.7)
- Never had formal dance classes, learnt through various groups (2.S.8)
- Difficulty of the dance and personal tiredness influence learning (2.S.8)
- No walk-through of dances at balls, just cribs on tickets (2.S.8)
- Took a while to re-learn the formations as an adult (2.S.9)
- Still learning Scottish dances and worries about making mistakes though Indian dance is more difficult (2.S.10)

### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- As an experienced dancer she still uses cribs to jog her memory (2.S.1)
- Different levels of remembering dances (2.S.1)
- Importance of memory (2.S.2)
- Importance of memory, easier to remember when younger (2.S.3)
- Difficulty answering my question on memory, but music can be a useful prompt in Scottish, and definitely is in English Country dance (2.S.4)
- Memory is important and older people may have problems remembering dances in comparison with the young (2.S.6)
- Memory is very important when learning Scottish dance, as she has got older she finds it more difficult to learn new dances and dances are becoming more complex (2.S.7)
- Importance of memory, knowing the commands, music as a prompt and verbal and non-verbal cues (2.S.8)
- Memory is important, use of patterns to remember, sometimes it is more difficult to remember (2.S.9)
- Memory important for each group of Scottish Country dancers to function (2.S.10)

### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Younger people learn steps and figures quickly but lack precision (2.S.3)
- Importance of memory, easier to remember when younger (2.S.3)
- Memory is important and older people may have problems remembering dances in comparison with the young (2.S.6)
- Memory is very important when learning Scottish dance, as she has got older she finds it more difficult to learn new dances and dances are becoming more complex (2.S.7)
- Difficulty learning long dances and Ladies' Step as she has got older (2.S.7)
- Took a while to re-learn the formations as an adult (2.S.9)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- As an experienced dancer she still uses cribs to jog her memory (2.S.1)
- Strategies for learning (2.S.2)
- Doing a dance the best way to learn (2.S.3)
- Use of visual cues and verbal prompts (2.S.3)
- Learning dances from Piling, written instructions and cribs, with dances slowly migrating from one part of the country to another (2.S.4)
- Difficulty answering my question on memory, but music can be a useful prompt in Scottish, and definitely is in English Country dance (2.S.4)
- Positions second Scottish Country dance group as helpful to beginners and explains the differences in anticipation and non-verbal cues when dancing with beginners or a display team (2.S.4)

- Use of cribs and non-verbal and verbal cues to jog memory (2.S.5)
- More discussion of non-verbal and verbal cues and cribs (2.S.5)
- Learns the dances through classes, repetition, partly by the music and non-verbal and verbal cues (2.S.6)
- Strategies to help remember dances such as a walk-through, cribs, dancing fractionally slower than other dancers, interpreting body language (2.S.7)
- Importance of dancing as part of a team (2.S.7)
- Strategies for learning dances, written instructions or Piling (2.S.8)
- Importance of memory, knowing the commands, music as a prompt and verbal and non-verbal cues (2.S.8)
- Memory is important, use of patterns to remember, sometimes it is more difficult to remember (2.S.9)
- Strategies for learning dance, knowing the terminology and structure, using visualization (2.S.10)
- Importance of practicing dance but one class teacher complained she could not see if her footwork was correct due to the sari (2.S.10)

### *Evaluation of Teachers' Contribution to Learning*

- Processes of teaching Scottish Country dance (1.S.8)
- Quality of teacher and performance of dance important (2.S.5)
- Importance of practicing dance but one class teacher complained she could not see if her footwork was correct due to the sari (2.S.10)

## **Teachers' Perspectives**

### *First Group Scottish Country Dance Teachers*

- Taught Irish set dance informally/taught international dance to children in PE (1.S.2)
- Teaches simple dances to learn basic steps then dances for the next ball (1.S.2)
- Importance of repetition for learners but memory may not be so important for experienced dancers due to non-verbal cues (1.S.2)
- Separates brain and feet when talking about learning these dances (1.S.2)
- Summer school useful for teacher training (1.S.5)
- Explain how they teach Scottish dances/ harder to learn as you get older (1.S.5)
- Importance of memory/thousands of Scottish dances/individual feedback (1.S.5)
- Teaching steps by demonstration and words (1.S.5)
- Difference between beginners, elementary and advanced dancers (1.S.5)
- Feeling of physical/mental exhaustion after teaching an evening's class (1.S.5)
- Mental/physical challenge of learning/teaching Scottish dance/ health and safety issues (1.S.5)
- Teacher needs to tell a class member if they do not seem fit enough (1.S.5)
- Wife's father taught an energetic white-haired man who was 93 (1.S.5)
- Confidence of the teacher shown in body language to facilitate good posture in class members (1.S.5)

### *First and Second Scottish Group Country Dance Teacher*

- Memory is very important when learning Scottish dance, as she has got older she finds it more difficult to learn new dances and dances are becoming more complex (2.S.7)
- Strategies to help remember dances such as a walk-through, cribs, dancing fractionally slower than other dancers, interpreting body language (2.S.7)
- Difficulty learning long dances and Ladies' Step as she has got older (2.S.7)
- Strategies for teaching Scottish Country dance (2.S.7)
- Importance of dancing as part of a team (2.S.7)

## **Focused Coding from Ethnography (Ladies' Step and Fosse and Drewry)**

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- My childhood memories of ballet classes as I go through the ballet positions (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Memory problems when teaching and learning Ladies' Step (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Older lady who is my partner laughs about her poor technique, saying she has dance for many years because of the social aspects (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Class disciplined and concentrate hard when learning Ladies' Step, but joke and laugh in between sequences (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Difficulty remembering the pattern of steps in a Ladies' Step dance (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Everyone did the balletic warm-up easily, including those in their 70s (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Ladies' Step dance can be mentally and physically challenging for both the teacher and older people (S.1, 16.9.07)
- The 79 year old man at the Fosse and Drewry session was finding it physically more difficult as he got older, he liked a hobby where you have to think (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Details on the complexity of formations and the energy of these Fosse and Drewry dances (S.1, 14.10.07)

- 71 year old man helped me to do a complex Strathspey at the Fosse and Drewry session and I responded to non-verbal cues from other dancers (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Physical and mental challenge of the step practice for Ladies' Step dance "The Dusty Miller" (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Seven older ladies managed to do the step-practice for "Shedding" balletic ally" (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Ladies' Step as very demanding brainwork (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Ladies' Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Laughter as it was difficult to do the waltz step in a diamond in Ladies' Step (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Older lady got dizzy after a spot turn but recovered and carried on dancing (S.1, 2.12.07)
- 'Collapsing Deckchair' movement too painful for the older man's arms and shoulders but he modified the movement (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Older ladies struggling with balance and one of the steps, "The Shuffles" (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Step-practice put me in touch with a younger self (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Complex sequences challenged brain and body and I sometimes sat out, as did some of the others (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Description of dancing a Ladies' Step dance in a triangle which created a supportive feel (S.1, 2.1.08)

### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- Memory problems when teaching and learning Ladies' Step (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Difficulty remembering the pattern of steps in a Ladies' Step dance (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Ladies' Step dance can be mentally and physically challenging for both the teacher and older people (S.1, 16.9.07)
- The 79 year old man at the Fosse and Drewry session was finding it physically more difficult as he got older, he liked a hobby where you have to think (S.1, 14.10.07)
- 71 year old man helped me to do a complex Strathspey at the Fosse and Drewry session and I responded to non-verbal cues from other dancers (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Physical and mental challenge of the step practice for Ladies' Step dance "The Dusty Miller" (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Ladies' Step as very demanding brainwork (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Ladies' Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Older lady and teacher position Ladies' Step as requiring a lot of memory work (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Complex sequences challenged brain and body and I sometimes sat out, as did some of the others (S.1, 2.1.08)

### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Example of 84 year old man who lived in a nursing home and went Scottish dancing, even though he could only walk the steps (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Two ladies in their 70s have been dancing many years but people who start Scottish dancing in middle age often have to give up as their bodies cannot cope (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Debates on interpretation of steps and modifying steps for older dancers (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Ladies' Step dance can be mentally and physically challenging for both the teacher and older people (S.1, 16.9.07)
- The 79 year old man at the Fosse and Drewry session was finding it physically more difficult as he got older, he liked a hobby where you have to think (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Ladies' Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Older lady got dizzy after a spot turn but recovered and carried on dancing (S.1, 2.12.07)
- 'Collapsing Deckchair' movement too painful for the older man's arms and shoulders but he modified the movement (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Older ladies struggling with balance and one of the steps, "The Shuffles" (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Complex sequences challenged brain and body and I sometimes sat out, as did some of the others (S.1, 2.1.08)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- Teacher demonstrates balletically, explaining balance can be difficult if you are older but can be achieved with practice (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Teacher disciplined class to follow her every move, using repetition to reinforce learning and inviting questions so individuals could improve their technique (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Class disciplined and concentrate hard when learning Ladies' Step, but joke and laugh in between sequences (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Debates on interpretation of steps and modifying steps for older dancers (S.1, 16.9.07)
- 71 year old man helped me to do a complex Strathspey at the Fosse and Drewry session and I responded to non-verbal cues from other dancers (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Teacher told us how to simplify the step "The Shuffles" (S.1, 28.10.07)

### *Teachers' Strategies*

- Teacher demonstrates steps for the dance "The Village Maid" and explains it is her own interpretation as Ladies' Step was an oral tradition (S.1, 21.4.07)

- Teacher demonstrates balletic ally, explaining balance can be difficult if you are older but can be achieved with practice (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Teacher like a professional ballerina with her graceful posture (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Memory problems when teaching and learning Ladies' Step (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Written choreographic text for "The Village Maid" does not capture the emotional grace of the teacher's performance (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Teacher disciplined class to follow her every move, using repetition to reinforce learning and inviting questions so individuals could improve their technique (S.1, 21.4.07)
- Two teachers taught one Ladies' Step dance to 11 older women and one older man as this dance was done in pairs (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Even one of the teachers had problems remembering the dance in Ladies' Step (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Different interpretations of the steps and the teacher discussed this with the older man in Ladies' Step (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Ladies' Step dance can be mentally and physically challenging for both the teacher and older people (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Teacher told us how to simplify the step "The Shuffles" (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Older lady and teacher position Ladies' Step as requiring a lot of memory work (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Teacher graceful like a ballerina and did balletic warm-up and step-practice (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Importance of good teacher illustrated by example of bad teacher when I interview two older ladies' from Ladies' Step ethnographically (S.1, 18.4.08)

## First Scottish Country Dance Group

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- Tension between trying very hard and laughing at their own efforts amongst class members (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Beginners' class had difficulty keeping steps in time to the music (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Co-operative feeling as class members help each other out with complex moves such as the "Pousette" (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Balletic style of teacher in Watson's Reel contrasted with class members who were struggling to keep time to the music and laughing (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Geometrically distinct patterns in Watson's Reel which I am struggling to remember (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Grace of teacher in comparison with clumsiness of class members (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Reflections on the differences between experienced dancers and beginners at tea-dance (S.1, 12.5.07)
- Teacher laughs with the class at poor technique (S.1, 7.6.07)
- Problems for beginners as they talked about dancing with more experienced dancers at the dance at the stately home as steps not always walked through, lines of dancers not always in mirror image and feeling embarrassed if they messed up a set (S.1, 14.6.07)
- Smiles and laughter at mistakes alternating with serious expressions of concentrating hard (S.1, 14.6.07)
- Falling over feet and laughing in fast dance with hello-goodbye setting (S.1, 12.7.07)
- Step-practice was quite aerobic and some class members got out of breath (S.1, 20.9.07)
- Class members found it difficult when individuals were singled out by the teacher for praise or criticism of their technique (S.1, 27.9.07)

### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- Difficulty remembering details of the next three dances but able to recall details of the "pas de bas" and "allemande" steps (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Laughter but also serious expression of concentrating hard when trying to remember patterns using both arms and feet (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Lady in her 40s having a complete memory lapse (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Mentally challenging to remember the patterns of the dances (S.1, 10.5.07)
- All dancers suffered memory lapses rather than physical problems dancing "Strip the Willow" (S.1, 17.5.07)
- The two men cause problems with their hand-holds, either pulling too hard or not giving enough resistance (S.1, 14.6.07)
- Difficulty of learning a complex formation, a full Strathspey pousette in a diamond, and getting our brains to co-ordinate our feet (S.1, 25.10.07)
- Difficult to know exact interpretation of steps of a very old dance (S.1, 25.10.07)
- Complexity of Ladies' Chain which needed a lot of brain-power to co-ordinate (S.1, 25.10.07)
- Difficulty remembering Strathspey pousette in a diamond initially, but eventually the sequence of movements became imprinted on our minds and bodies (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Class members mentally and physically exhausted as teacher had pushed the class hard (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Class concentrating hard during the practice of the Strathspey travelling step, performed with various levels of skill (S.1, 8.11.07)
- Teacher uses the manual to teach a complex sequence, the tournee, with a group of four people (S.1, 8.11.07)

- Tension between serious expressions when concentrating hard, trying to perform a formation well, and laughing at mistakes (S.1, 8.11.07)

### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Memory the main problem with learning Scottish dancing if you are older (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Older lady looks serious and has to concentrate hard in “Rights and Lefts” as she is partially deaf and cannot hear the instructions (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Detailed description of dancing a “Military Two Step” with an older lady in her 60s who alternated between serious expressions as she concentrated hard and smiles as we did the heel-toes (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Older lady in her 60s danced “Strip the Willow” daintily, alternating between serious and smiling expressions (S.1, 17.5.07)
- Grace of 60 year old lady contrasts with the clumsiness of two men who pulled on their partners’ arms (S.1, 14.6.07)
- When dancing with a lady in her 70s, she has problems memorising the pattern of the poussette (S.1, 21.6.07)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- Step-practice and metaphor of basic step as a graceful version of the “Wizard of Oz” step (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Survival strategy of finding a more experienced dancer who would push you in the right direction at tea-dance (S.1, 12.5.07)
- Skill more important than body weight or shape (S.1, 24.5.07)
- Teacher emphasises importance of good technique during step-practice, when rehearsing spin turns with elbow holds (S.1, 7.6.07)
- Practised hello-goodbye setting which incorporated into two dances (S.1, 12.7.07)
- Learning another dance ‘Sugar Candie’ using the Strathspey Setting step for the annual dance (S.1, 27.9.07)
- Learning the complex and unusual variation of reels of three for a particular dance (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Details of practising the formation, the tournee, which was then put into a dance (S.1, 22.11.07)

### *Teachers’ Strategies*

- Teacher disciplined class to follow her every move, using repetition to reinforce learning and inviting questions so individuals could improve their technique (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Expertise and grace of the teacher contrasted with the difficulties of members of the beginners’ class (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Teacher emphasises being in the right place at the right time is more important than technique (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Teacher uses music sheets with steps (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Teacher emphasises the importance of smiling at your partner as you take their hand and exchange places in “Rights and Lefts” (S.1, 3.5.07)
- Teacher demonstrates the ideal of a disciplined and balletic body performing graceful movements in perfect time to the music (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Teacher explains there are thousands of Scottish dances but she only knows about six without looking up the steps (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Teacher says the dance is aerobic, she has lost her fitness since she has been teaching (S.1, 10.5.07)
- Balletic and disciplined style of the teacher who reprimands the class for uneven sets (S.1, 14.6.07)
- Teacher challenges memory with complex patterns and the German lady says it is the first time she has learnt the poussette properly (S.1, 21.6.07)
- Teacher demonstrates Strathspey step and bootlace step (S.1, 12.7.07)
- Teacher emphasises importance of technique, as we were no longer beginners, during step-practice (S.1, 20.9.07)
- Teacher strict with class about poor techniques when practising balletic steps, formations and learning a dance (S.1, 27.9.07)
- Teacher complained as we kept making mistakes and laughing (S.1, 27.9.07)
- Teacher advocates balletic technique as we rehearse the slow Strathspey step (S.1, 27.9.07)
- Teacher using metaphor of a ‘fish-hook’ for a sequence of movement (S.1, 27.9.07)
- Teacher taught us two dances using a full Strathspey poussette in a diamond (S.1, 25.10.07)
- Teacher taught us a dance using the Strathspey poussette in a diamond (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Teacher taught a new formation, the Rondelle, using four people (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Teacher taught a dance using both the Strathspey poussette in a diamond and the Rondelle, which provoked laughter (S.1, 1.11.07)
- Teacher reinforces learning by teaching a dance which incorporates the tournee (S.1, 8.11.07)
- Teacher’s metaphor of a four-leafed clover for half a diagonal reel of four (S.1, 8.11.07)
- Teacher taught two dances from the programme for the end of term dance (S.1, 22.11.07)



## Second Scottish Country Dance Group

### *Experiences of Learning, Ease and Difficulty*

- Details of two 85 year olds walking or shuffling through steps, the older man having continued after the death of his wife (S.2, 27.9.07)
- Lady in her 50s helps me to do a Strathspey dance ‘The Gentleman’ (S.2, 27.9.07)
- Older man in his 70s graciously teaches me a complex dance which I did not know (S.2, 8.11.07)
- Older man in his 70s helped me to do a dance with one word cues or gently pushed me in the right direction (S.2, 22.11.07)
- My set of dancers had great difficulty with one dance, and an older lady reprimanded me for not following her closely with my eyes (S.2, 10.1.08)
- My set of dancers had great difficulty with one dance, and an older lady reprimanded me for not following her closely with my eyes (S.2, 10.1.08)
- Mirror the movements of the 50 year old lady and respond to her one word commands as I have not learnt the dance (S.2, 14.2.08)
- 85 year olds were shuffling through the steps but some dancers were balletic (S.2, 14.2.08)
- One set of older people performed perfectly, one set got lost and one older lady was particularly disappointed (S.2, 27.3.08)
- Community feel as these older dancers helped each other when struggling to remember the names of the dances (S.2, 3.4.08)
- Older man helps me dance a Strathspey with one word prompts and pushes, reprimanding me for cutting in front (S.2, 10.4.08)
- Mathematical complexity of a Strathspey required a lot of concentration (S.2, 10.4.08)

### *Experiences of Learning, Separating Mind and Body, Embodiment*

- The patterns of the dances seem to have become embodied by the older dancers in the second Scottish group, although one dancer acknowledged memory lapses (S.2, 27.9.07)
- Good posture and the ability to stand still important according to lady in 50s (S.2, 25.10.07)
- Scottish dance is a lot of brainwork, with lots of different patterns, and older lady says you really need to know what you are doing at a ball (S.2, 25.10.07)
- Performing Scottish dance as an embodied process (S.2, 25.10.07)
- My set of dancers had great difficulty with one dance, and an older lady reprimanded me for not following her closely with my eyes (S.2, 10.1.08)
- Mirror the movements of the 50 year old lady and respond to her one word commands as I have not learnt the dance (S.2, 14.2.08)
- Older lady organising tea wanted to know exact numbers, reflecting the mathematical precision required for Scottish dance (S.2, 27.3.08)
- Community feel as these older dancers helped each other when struggling to remember the names of the dances (S.2, 3.4.08)
- 85 year old lady says you need a mathematical brain to learn these dances and uses Piling diagrams and practises the moves with black and white counters (S.2, 3.4.08)
- Mathematical complexity of a Strathspey required a lot of concentration (S.2, 10.4.08)

### *Learning and Growing Older*

- Details of two 85 year olds walking or shuffling through steps, the older man having continued after the death of his wife (S.2, 27.9.07)
- The patterns of the dances seem to have become embodied by the older dancers in the second Scottish group, although one dancer acknowledged memory lapses (S.2, 27.9.07)
- 85 year olds were shuffling through the steps but some dancers were balletic (S.2, 14.2.08)
- One set of older people performed perfectly, one set got lost and one older lady was particularly disappointed (S.2, 27.3.08)
- Community feel as these older dancers helped each other when struggling to remember the names of the dances (S.2, 3.4.08)

### *Strategies for Learning*

- Details of two 85 year olds walking or shuffling through steps, the older man having continued after the death of his wife (S.2, 27.9.07)
- Lady in her 50s helps me to do a Strathspey dance ‘The Gentleman’ (S.2, 27.9.07)
- 77 year old lady calling the dances and had produced word-processed crib sheets (S.2, 4.10.07)
- 85 year old lady reads a crib for a dance and then does it perfectly (S.2, 4.10.07)
- I was able to keep up with the dance by following my partner’s movements as I have difficulty remembering the patterns (S.2, 25.10.07)
- Good posture and the ability to stand still important according to lady in 50s (S.2, 25.10.07)

- Scottish dance is a lot of brainwork, with lots of different patterns, and older lady says you really need to know what you are doing at a ball (S.2, 25.10.07)
- Older man in his 70s graciously teaches me a complex dance which I did not know (S.2, 8.11.07)
- 85 year old lady revises a dance from diagrams and then performs it with the group (S.2, 8.11.07)
- Older woman emphasises technique (S.2, 8.11.07)
- Older man in his 70s helped me to do a dance with one word cues or gently pushed me in the right direction (S.2, 22.11.07)
- Older lady explains you can cope in a set of eight dancers if a couple of people do not know a dance, but not if six people do not know it (S.2, 22.11.07)
- My set of dancers had great difficulty with one dance, and an older lady reprimanded me for not following her closely with my eyes (S.2, 10.1.08)
- Mirror the movements of the 50 year old lady and respond to her one word commands as I have not learnt the dance (S.2, 14.2.08)
- My partner, an older lady in her 50s, prompted me with single words (S.2, 14.2.08)
- Community feel as these older dancers helped each other when struggling to remember the names of the dances (S.2, 3.4.08)
- 85 year old lady says you need a mathematical brain to learn these dances and uses Piling diagrams and practises the moves with black and white counters (S.2, 3.4.08)
- Older man helps me dance a Strathspey with one word prompts and pushes, reprimanding me for cutting in front (S.2, 10.4.08)

### *Evaluation of Teachers*

- Lady who taught children Scottish Country dance argues with the caller about the meaning of 'cast down' (S.2, 27.3.08)
- Caller instructs our group to modify this complex dance and just to walk it (S.2, 3.4.08)
- When appealing for a Scottish dance teacher, older lady ridicules first group for doing step-practice (S.2, 3.4.08)
- 85 year old lady helps me to do the next dance and there was a co-operative feel among the dancers (S.2, 10.4.08)

## **Narrative Theme: Psychological Health, Sense of Belonging and Growing Older**

### **Focused Coding from Circle Dance Narrative Style Interviews**

#### *Psychological Benefits, Well-Being, Love of Dance*

- Loves dance (1.C.1)
- Circle dance lifts her mood by stimulating mind and body (1.C.2)
- Wife sees Circle dance as good for the whole person (1.C.4)
- Wife feels the need to Circle dance (1.C.4)
- Husband loves the dance (1.C.4)
- Circle dance gives her the confidence to reprimand a bus driver who positioned her as lazy (1.C.6)
- Circle dance gives her the incentive to get up and go out two mornings a week (1.C.6)
- Circle dance makes her feel better in herself, gives her a lot to think about (1.C.7)
- Circle dance gives her something to look forward to, now she is retired (1.C.7)
- Learning to dance has made the deaf lady feel good about herself (1.C.8)
- First lady finds dance mentally up-lifting (1.C.8)
- Self-acceptance provided by Circle dance, even though has difficulty with rhythm (1.C.9)
- Circle dance lifts her mood if she has had an emotionally hard week (1.C.9)
- Her male friend encourages her to go Circle dancing, and laughs with her about making shapes (1.C.9)
- Infers she has an active mind and likes to be engaged all the time, such as with studying and Circle dance (1.C.9)
- Positions Circle dance as very attractive (1.C.9)
- Enjoys wearing long skirts and dancing with others (1.C.9)
- Positions dance as always important in her life, with her brother and now Circle dance (1.C.9)
- Circle dance as pleasurable and as good for her mental health (2.C.1)
- Circle dance as really enjoyable (2.C.1)
- Surprised that Circle dance tiring initially/physical and mental health benefits (2.C.2)
- Dance gives her a sense of well-being and sets her free (2.C.3)
- Special psychological benefits of dance (2.C.3)
- Circle dance lifts her mood and makes her feel like a child again (2.C.4)
- Circle dance is good for her mental health (2.C.4)
- Personal pleasure in Circle dancing (2.C.5)
- Sense of well-being from exercise (2.C.5)
- Sense of well-being from Circle dance (2.C.5)

- Exercises at the gym but has a love-hate relationship with it (2.C.5)
- Does not think there is any psychological benefit in Circle dance (2.C.6)
- Exhausted but happy after a Circle dance class (2.C.8)
- Circle dance as beneficial on many levels (2.C.9)

### *Psychological Benefits, Emotional Expression*

- Different body movements express different emotions (1.C.3)
- Dance as a chance for self-expression (1.C.3)
- Dance as emotional expression within a community (1.C.3)
- International dances to express a range of emotions (1.C.4)
- Husband finds Circle dance puts him in touch with his emotions, sometimes tears (1.C.4)
- His wife wanted physical exercise but this is good for her emotional health (1.C.4)
- When staying with her daughter who had cancer, she wished for a Circle dance group (1.C.6)
- Getting involved in Circle dance after her husband's death (1.C.7)
- Circle dance makes her giggle, especially the dance about tomatoes (1.C.7)
- Self-expression as a health benefit (1.C.8)
- Supportive community of Circle dancers when she was going through personal tragedies in her family (1.C.9)
- Crying during a Circle dance session and teacher positioning this as helpful for others (1.C.9)
- Spirituality of dance when whole group dances in unison, reminds her of when her brother took control in ballroom dance (1.C.9)
- Dance as therapy as it enables her to work through troubling emotions (1.C.10)
- Enjoys the social and therapeutic aspects of Circle dance (2.C.7)
- Spiritual aspects of Circle dance (2.C.9)
- Psychological benefits of Circle dance and importance of touch/emotion (2.C.9)

### *Music*

- Dance and music as a spiritual experience (1.C.1)
- Dance and music puts you in touch with a younger self (1.C.3)
- Enjoying music from different countries (1.C.4)
- Music puts you in touch with emotions (1.C.4)
- Wife finds dance and music important for emotional expression (1.C.4)
- Husband finds dance adds to enjoyment of music for mind and body (1.C.4)
- Music as facilitating emotional expression (1.C.6)
- Some dance music reduces her to tears, importance of feeling grief as well as happiness (1.C.6)
- Dance and music important as facilitates emotional expression (1.C.7)
- Loves the music, movement and togetherness in dance (1.C.9)
- Circle dance facilitates emotional expression through music (1.C.10)
- Listens to a piece of music to find the emotions it arises in her (1.C.10)
- Music and dance touch the spirit (1.C.10)
- Story of emotionality of music and Circle dance (2.C.1)

### *Psychological Benefits, Growing Older*

- Dance does not make her think much about age (1.C.1)
- Feels positive about retirement (1.C.2)
- Does not think much about growing older (1.C.6)
- Dance enables you to grow old wisely (1.C.8)
- First lady's metaphor of grey cells dancing (1.C.8)
- Circle dance makes her feel young (1.C.9)
- Perceives herself as young and beautiful and deeply satisfied when she has been demonstrating the dances in front of the group (1.C.10)
- Circle dance means making a difference as an older person (2.C.3)
- Spirituality and emotionality of Circle dance, too old for Scottish dance (2.C.3)
- Does not feel aware of growing older and likes her life (2.C.3)
- Pleasure of dance in retirement (2.C.5)
- Loves dance and does not think about old age (2.C.5)
- Does not think about growing older when doing Circle dance (2.C.7)
- Does not think about Circle dance in relation to growing older (2.C.8)

### *Psychological and Social Benefits*

- First teacher really good and supportive (1.C.6)
- Introduced friend to Circle dance/ Circle dance gives social support (1.C.6)
- Positions teacher as creating a relaxed and supportive atmosphere (1.C.6)

- Social benefits of dance (1.C.8)
- Enjoys meeting people through Circle dance (1.C.9)
- Importance of friendship/social aspect of Circle dancing (2.C.5)
- **Enjoys the social and therapeutic aspects of Circle dance (2.C.7)**

#### *Professional Dancers and Cultural Artifacts*

- Special status of being a ballet dancer (1.C.5)
- Getting involved in Circle dance after her husband's death (1.C.7)
- Reflects on her wonderful career in dance as she shows me her photograph album (1.C.7)
- Dance as an obsession (1.C.7)
- Lucky as combined dance with professional dance career (1.C.7)
- Circle dance makes her giggle, especially the dance about tomatoes (1.C.7)

#### *Circle Dance Holidays and Healing*

- Circle dance holidays attract people with mental health issues. (1.C.4)
- Large dance groups can absorb mental distress, small groups cannot. (1.C.4)
- Husband found it difficult when wife spoke Dutch with another man on a Circle dance holiday. (1.C.4)
- Wife positions a dance holiday as a healing place as people can talk. (1.C.4)
- Teacher did Circle dance day (unsuccessful) at local mental hospital. (1.C.4)
- Wife's story of teacher as good at affirming those with problems. (1.C.4)
- Wife's story of how a Circle dancer may invite a friend who needs psychological support. (1.C.4)
- Explains about the Flower Remedy dances (1.C.7)
- Deaf lady sees dance as a healing process (1.C.8)
- Positions the pain of osteoarthritis going away when she dances as a miracle (1.C.10)
- Dance as therapy as it enables her to work through troubling emotions (1.C.10)

## **Focused Coding for Circle Dance Ethnography**

### *Psychological Benefits, Growing Older*

- Older lady with memory problems enjoys the dance (C1, 18.5.07)
- Deaf lady stresses importance of keeping trying to dance (C1, 18.5.07)
- Thank you card from a sick member (C1, 18.5.07)
- Teacher's notice about parking restrictions stimulates jokes about memory problems (C1, 8.6.07)
- 80 year old lady has difficulty remembering the steps (C2, 8.10.07)

### *Psychological Benefits, Well-being, Love of Dance*

- Dancers use imagination and visualization when dancing to songs (C1, 13.7.07)
- Male teacher finds Circle dance mentally uplifting (C1, 27.8.07)
- Dance about the "Four Seasons" took on a trance-like quality (C2, 10.3.08)

### *Psychological Benefits, Emotional Expression*

- Teacher positions dance as important for emotional expression, particularly if you live alone (C1, 14.9.07)
- Older lady explains how Circle dance is about the full range of emotions whereas Scottish dance is about fun and laughter (C1, 28.9.07)
- Teacher explains how dance is important for expressing yourself through your body (C1, 2.11.07)
- Laughing and struggling to keep steps in time to the music for one dance (C2, 19.11.07)
- Teacher cancelled interview as her mother died but remained cheerful and taught the next Circle dance session (C2, 14.1.08)
- Teacher energetic in Greek dance "Misolou" despite her mother's very recent death (C2, 14.1.08)
- Teacher's energy in Greek dance "Agape Noo" and smiling dancers (C2, 14.1.08)
- Laughter about the group being noisy and the central candle going out (C2, 25.2.08)
- Laughter in Greek dance as arms twisted and bodies rubbed against each other (C2, 25.2.08)
- Laughter when repeated the dance about donkey-riding (C2, 25.2.08)
- French dance "Le Printemps" facilitates community through fun and laughter, especially when doing a Grand Chain (C2, 10.3.08).
- Laughter amongst group as teacher nearly fell into the candle when sending the light to those in need (C2, 10.3.08)

### *Psychological and Social Benefits*

- Discussion on book club as support for all stages of life (C1, 15.6.07)
- Pleasant physical contact and sending energy to members of the group (C1, 29.7.07)
- Sharing a picnic, poetry and feelings of rising to a higher level as we danced (C1, 27.8.07)

- Sense of community enhanced by sharing vegetables and fruit, smiles and laughter and holding of hands (C1, 5.10.07)
- Members of this dance group support each other (C1, 2.11.07)
- Interest in film, theatre, music and creative arts amongst dance group members (C1, 2.11.07)
- Supportive atmosphere amongst older ladies who share problems about illness (C2, 7.1.08)
- One lady tells me about her rambling group when everyone chatting before the start of class (C2, 28.1.08)
- Teacher announces session of Circle dance in her mother's garden (C2, 10.3.08)
- Happy atmosphere as older ladies chat round beautiful centre-piece (C2, 17.3.08)
- Teacher announces other Circle dance events (C2, 17.3.08)

### *Circle Dance and Healing/Sending Energies*

- Aspen flower dace as remedy for neurotic fears (C1, 14.9.07)
- Retired professional dancer tells me about taking Bach rescue remedy before her husband's funeral (C1, 14.9.07)
- Relaxing meditative dance with symbolic use of hands to absorb energy, give energy to the world and your own body (C1, 5.10.07)
- Second group supports it's members by thinking of those in need (C2, 12.11.07)
- Circle dance offers activity and support for people with sick relatives (C2, 7.1.08)
- Group supportive and sending the light to whoever needed it (C2, 7.1.08)
- Circle dance group supports teacher over the death of her mother (C2, 14.1.08)
- Circle dance relaxing and flower remedy dance about the Elm Tree (C2, 18.2.08)
- Teacher did a Greek dance on the spot as a de-stressor when waiting with her mother at the hospital (C2, 25.2.08)

## **Focused Coding from Narrative Style Interviews**

### *Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance Promote Well-Being*

- Physical and mental health benefits of Scottish dance (1.S.1)
- Enjoyment more important in Ladies' Step than being a good dancer (1.S.1)
- Enjoys the physical and social activity of Scottish Country dance (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish dance as good for your stress management and fitness (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish dance as her social group, recreation, health and mental health programme (1.S.2)
- MSc Research on dance and stress management/ dance also created stress (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish music as up-lifting (1.S.4)
- Everyone feels happy after a Scottish dance class, "chocolate-like endorphins" from the activity/music (1.S.4)
- Concentrating on dance a break from thinking in words (1.S.4)
- Dance as a means of self-expression (1.S.4)
- Pride in having excelled at Scottish dancing (1.S.5)
- Scottish dancing is enjoyable and good exercise (1.S.6)
- Scottish dance makes you feel wonderful, mentally, physically and socially (1.S.6)
- Scottish dance music lifts you mentally (1.S.6)
- Dance is a vital part of their lives (1.S.7)
- Scottish dance is fun, good for mind and body and sociable (1.S.8)
- Scottish dance as uplifting and fun through music and social aspects (1.S.8)
- Scottish dancing has boosted her confidence (2.S.1)
- Scottish dance provides enjoyment, company and especially exercise (2.S.2)
- Scottish dance is good for laughter, enjoyment and relaxation (2.S.2)
- Scottish dance keeps you alert as mental and physical exercise, performing and fitting the dances to the music (2.S.3)
- Scottish dance good for physical fitness and mental health (2.S.5)
- Both feel positive about the physical and mental health benefits of Scottish Country dance (2.S.5)
- Scottish dance is enjoyable and sociable, keeping you mentally and physically agile (2.S.6)
- Scottish dance is better for health than Circle dance, keeping her mentally and physically agile, with the music urging her to dance (2.S.6)
- Dancing keeps you on your toes mentally (2.S.6)
- Feels a confident, competent dancer who can liaise with others (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance as good mental and physical exercise (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance is good for mental and physical health (2.S.8)
- Simply enjoys dance (2.S.8)
- Mental and physical health benefits of Scottish dance (2.S.9)
- Expands on how dancing is good for her mental health (2.S.9)
- Scottish Country dance is healthy, pleasurable exercise though less strenuous than Indian dance (2.S.10)

- Scottish dance is enjoyable, sociable and good exercise and she is encouraged by people saying she looks good in a sari (2.S.10)
- Scottish dance is fun, she likes the formations (2.S.10)

### *Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance and Emotion/Music*

- Enjoyment more important in Ladies' Step than being a good dancer (1.S.1)
- Positions Scottish music as up-lifting (1.S.4)
- Everyone feels happy after a Scottish dance class, "chocolate-like endorphins" from the activity/music (1.S.4)
- Scottish dance music lifts you mentally (1.S.6)
- Scottish dance as uplifting and fun through music and social aspects (1.S.8)
- Scottish dance provides enjoyment, company and especially exercise (2.S.2)
- Scottish dance is good for laughter, enjoyment and relaxation (2.S.2)
- Scottish dance keeps you alert as mental and physical exercise, performing and fitting the dances to the music (2.S.3)
- Dance/music as international and important for emotional expression (2.S.3)
- Singers are not good dancers, now enjoys dance more than singing and attends many dance groups (2.S.6)
- Scottish dance is better for health than Circle dance, keeping her mentally and physically agile, with the music urging her to dance (2.S.6)
- Scottish music is uplifting and makes you want to dance and sing (2.S.9)

### *Social Benefits of Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance*

- Enjoys the physical and social activity of Scottish Country dance (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish dance as her social group, recreation, health and mental health programme (1.S.2)
- She likes the teamwork of Scottish dancing and rowing (1.S.2)
- Scottish dance is teamwork, sociable and boosts her confidence (1.S.4)
- Scottish dance makes you feel wonderful, mentally, physically and socially (1.S.6)
- Scottish dance is sociable, facilitating better relationships with others (1.S.6)
- Dance helps you recover from cancer and bereavement, a community of friends (1.S.7)
- Scottish dance makes her feel unfit but it makes her feel good physically and socially (1.S.8)
- Scottish dance is fun, good for mind and body and sociable (1.S.8)
- Scottish dance as uplifting and fun through music and social aspects (1.S.8)
- Scottish dance provides enjoyment, company and especially exercise (2.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance keeps you younger, partly due to social aspects (2.S.3)
- Dance/music as international and important for emotional expression (2.S.3)
- Scottish dance is enjoyable and sociable, with health benefits being a by-product. It appeals to people all over the world (2.S.5)
- Scottish dance is enjoyable and sociable, keeping you mentally and physically agile (2.S.6)
- Feels a confident, competent dancer who can liaise with others (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance as social, physical and enjoyable exercise (2.S.7)
- Scottish dance is enjoyable, sociable and good exercise and she is encouraged by people saying she looks good in a sari (2.S.10)
- Scottish dance is fun, she likes the formations (2.S.10)

### *Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance and Growing Older*

- Younger people at work amazed at what an older person can do (1.S.2)
- Unaware of growing older/ sees herself doing Scottish dance when older (1.S.4)
- Denial of own ageing but wonderful to see older people Scottish dancing (1.S.6)
- Tries to be positive about going dancing as an older person, in contrast with her retired friend who worries about her health (2.S.3)
- Not conscious of growing older (2.S.4)

### *Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance as Therapy*

- Scottish dance as therapy (1.S.5)
- Dance helps you recover from cancer and bereavement, a community of friends (1.S.7)
- Importance of touch and keeping active as he is a widower and retired (2.S.4)
- She is unwell but still trying to dance as dance is pure enjoyment (2.S.7)

### *Creative Aspects of Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance*

- History of Ladies' Step/ introduction of book he is writing on Ladies' Step (1.S.1)
- Shows me poems she has written (2.S.3)
- Scottish Country dance she wrote about the tide (2.S.3)
- Friends she has made doing Scottish Country dance and she wrote a poem for one of their 65<sup>th</sup> birthdays (2.S.3)

- Explains how he composed a dance but it was rejected for publication by the second Scottish Country dance group (2.S.4)
- She does not compose dances but some people do (2.S.8)

### *Death and Bereavement in Ladies' Step and Scottish Country Dance*

- Working to keep Ladies' Step alive in loyalty to his wife (1.S.1)
- Health benefits in exercise/walking and wanting to die on the dance floor (1.S.1)
- Wife's story of her step-father dancing to death (1.S.5)
- Dance helps you recover from cancer and bereavement, a community of friends (1.S.7)
- His wife died a couple of years ago but he wants to keep active (2.S.4)
- Importance of touch and keeping active as he is a widower and retired (2.S.4)
- Problem of injuries/sudden death in Scottish dance and dancing on hard floors (2.S.5)
- Story of two people who died on the dance floor (2.S.7)

## **Scottish Country Dance Ethnography Focused Coding**

### *Ladies' Step Dance and Fosse and Drewry*

- Older lady who is my partner laughs about her poor technique, saying she has danced for many years because of the social aspects (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Tea-break at Ladies' Step with home-made cakes and discussion of Scottish dance as good for health in terms of mobility and social contact (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Older man enjoys keeping the tradition of Ladies' Step alive in memory of his wife (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Laughter as it was difficult to do the waltz step in a diamond pattern (S.1, 2.12.07)
- I felt mentally and physically up-lifted by the balletic movements of Ladies' Step (S.1, 2.1.08)
- One older lady talks about her grand-daughters learning Scottish dancing (S.1, 18.4.08)
- 79 year old man was finding it more difficult to do the Fosse and Drewry dances as he got older, but he likes a hobby where you have to think (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Everyone was smiling and laughing while doing the Fosse and Drewry dances (S. 1, 14.10.07)
- 71 year old man happy, forgot about pain in his hip, resplendent in his Scottish outfit and using his wife's dance books (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Older man smiles as he talks about writing his book on Ladies' Step in memory of his wife (S. 1, 14.10.07)

## **First Scottish Country Dance Group – Mental Health Benefits**

### *Sense of Well-Being*

- Older lady in her 60s talks about the sense of well-being from dance (S.1, 10.5.07)

### *Laughter and Physical Contact*

- Older lady starts laughing and the laughter spreads round the whole class (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Many different shapes in one dance which aroused much laughter (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Dancers seem comfortable holding each other closely in the "promenade" and "allemande" (S.1, 17.5.07)
- Slow steps to Strathspey music with many different ways of holding hands, promoted eye contact and smiles (S.1, 17.5.07)
- Lady in her 50s laughing and smiling as we did the "Gay Gordons" (S.1, 20.9.07)
- Laughing with the new lady as we danced the 'Military Two Step' (S.1, 20.9.07)
- Friendly atmosphere at Scottish dance class with lots of laughter, particularly when people made mistakes (S.1, 22.11.07)
- Lots of laughter as dancers get lost in a complex, progressive dance performed in a set of ten (S.1, 22.11.07)

### *Laughter at Mistakes*

- Dancers laugh at their mistakes in dances with complex patterns (S.1, 24.5.07)
- Much laughter as class members make mistakes in 'Sugar Candie' (S.1, 27.9.07)

### *Laughter about Gender Issues*

- Man in his 50s laughs as his line of "men" chases the ladies (S.1, 21.6.07)
- Much laughter as women dancing as men and women giving flirtatious glances to men during "The Flowers of Edinburgh" (S.1, 20.9.07)

### *Dancing in Life-threatening Situations and Dancing to Death*

- My reflection on dancing in life-threatening situations (S.1, 7.6.07)

- Heard several mentions of older people literally dancing themselves to death (S.1, 7.6.07)

### *Dancing to Cope with Bereavement*

- Man in his 50s and his girlfriend find dancing helpful for their emotional health when going through a bereavement (S.1, 6.7.07)
- 71 year old man happy, forgot about pain in his hip, resplendent in his Scottish outfit and using his wife's dance books (S.1, 14.10.07)

## **Second Scottish Country Dance Group – Mental Health Benefits**

### *Laughter and Physical Contact*

- Older people from the second Scottish group were doing Scottish dancing for sheer pleasure and as social dancing, so keeping up with the music and formations were more important than technique (S. 2, 27.9.07)
- Dancing together physically and mentally supportive for these older people (S. 2, 27.9.07)
- Lady in her 50s who was singing as she was dancing was looking after elderly parents (S. 2, 27.9.07)
- Older man in his 70s laughs as he tells me the story of a dance he has written and then does the actual dance with me (S. 2, 4.10.07)
- Laughter as dance the older man's version of the 'Flowers of Edinburgh' though I feel embarrassed at my mistakes (S. 2, 4.10.07)
- Gentle and friendly use of touch in 'Flowers of Edinburgh' with dancers smiling and laughing (S. 2, 4.10.07)
- Lady in her 50s laughs at my efforts but gets me to do a complex dance with her (S. 2, 4.10.07)
- Older people really enjoying themselves and smiling and laughing as they danced at this second Scottish group (S. 2, 25.10.07)
- 85 year old lady chats to me and tells me the dance makes her happy (S. 2, 8.11.07)
- Older man emphasises enjoying dance (S. 2, 8.11.07)
- Feel happy and relaxed in myself the day after Scottish dancing (S. 2, 14.2.08)
- Laughter as people dance complex patterns in sets of six, some of these patterns were metaphors for the work of blacksmiths (S.2, 27.3.08)
- Welcome of holding hands of these older people, smiles and grins, as we dance a slow Strathspey with complex formations (S. 2, 27.3.08)
- Several of the ladies in their 50s are working and looking after elderly parents and so are too busy to give me an interview (S. 2, 3.4.08)
- Feel tired myself but mentally uplifted (S. 2, 3.4.08)
- Details of complex patterns in Iona Cross which caused a lot of laughter as all the dancers got in a muddle (S.2, 10.4.08)

### *Creative Aspects*

- Older man in his 70s laughs as he tells me the story of a dance he has written and then does the actual dance with me (S. 2, 4.10.07)
- 71 year old man happy, forgot about pain in his hip, resplendent in his Scottish outfit and using his wife's dance books (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Older man smiles as he talks about writing his book on Ladies' Step in memory of his wife (S. 1, 14.10.07)

## **Narrative Theme: Sense of Belonging, Growing Older and Physical Health Focused Coding from Circle Dance Narrative Style Interviews**

### *Health Benefits of Circle Dance/Exercise for the Older Person*

- Exercise of dance good (1.C.1)
- Circle dance as good exercise and can be modified (1.C.3)
- Circle dance good exercise, good for her husband's back (1.C.4)
- Positions dancing as not influencing her health (1.C.5)
- Advised to exercise due to a heart-bypass (1.C.6)
- Found keep-fit boring but does walking, gardening and housework (1.C.6)
- Circle dance promotes her health through exercise (1.C.6)
- Exercise of dance is good for her as she has high blood pressure (1.C.6)
- Aware that you can do Circle dance for a long time as an older person (1.C.6)
- Circle dance keeps her healthy as it keeps her moving (1.C.7)
- Circle is energetic, good for heart and circulation (1.C.7)
- Physical benefit of Circle dance loosening shoulders (1.C.8)
- Circle dance as enabling you to appreciate your capabilities (1.C.8)



- Circle dance as showing you the benefits of losing weight (1.C.8)
- Circle dance as enabling people to bounce back from illness such as strokes (1.C.8)
- Circle dance fits with her awareness of physicality, cycling as a child and enjoying teaching PE as a primary school teacher (1.C.9)
- Circle dance helping her control movement in everyday life/dance (2.C.1)
- Positions herself as a healthy person who plays tennis (2.C.2)
- Surprised that Circle dance initially tiring/physical and mental health benefits (2.C.2)
- Story of enjoying the fluid movement of Circle dance (2.C.3)
- Both Scottish and Circle dance are good for physical health (2.C.3)
- Always a dancer and the importance of the spiritual nature of dance (2.C.3)
- Circle dance good for her physical health/no injuries (2.C.4)
- Circle dance therapeutic in old age, potentially good for all age-groups (2.C.7)
- Circle dance has enabled her to trust her problematic knee more (2.C.8)
- Circle dance can be adapted for old age (2.C.9)

### *First Circle Dance Teacher's Beliefs in Healing Power of Dance*

- Older people recover from illness and dance again (1.C.3)
- Circle dance as enabling people to bounce back from illness (1.C.8)
- Has advanced osteoarthritis but when she dances the pain goes away (1.C.10)
- Dance heals the bodies of those who have had major illness/surgery (1.C.10)
- Circle dance generates energy (1.C.10)
- The sick are visualised and sent the energy (1.C.10)
- Candle symbolises life/spirit but is also a repository for energy generated by dancers (1.C.10)
- Lady undergoing chemotherapy finds this energy beneficial (1.C.10)
- Circle dance has enabled her to trust her problematic knee again (2.C.8)

### *Experiences of Growing Older*

- Dance does not make her think about age (1.C.1)
- Physically fitter now than when working (1.C.3)
- Older lady who enjoyed watching Circle dance (1.C.3)
- Aware that you can Circle dance for a long time as an older person (1.C.3)
- Neighbour with arthritis makes her realise she must dance while she can (1.C.7)
- Deaf lady spoke of need for activity when retired (1.C.8)
- Deaf lady found a music and dance group but they did not project well (1.C.8)
- Circle dance as enabling people to bounce back from illness such as strokes (1.C.8)
- Positions herself as healthy for her age though may get stiff (2.C.5)
- Keeping active a protective factor in old age, though she may not always be able to dance (2.C.5)
- Circle dance can be adapted for old age (2.C.9)

### *Experiences of the Ageing Body*

- Dance does not make her think about age (1.C.1)
- Body slowing down (1.C.1)
- Always a dancer, aware of posture (1.C.1)
- Circle challenges her body (1.C.2)
- Circle dance makes her move her whole body (1.C.3)
- Aware that growing older has affected her balance/ability to run (1.C.5)
- Thinks about Circle dance in terms of improving her mobility rather than her body (1.C.6)
- Enjoys Circle dance as it keeps her body moving (1.C.7)
- Problem of putting on weight when stopped professional dancing (1.C.7)
- Has the body of a dancer and Circle dance keeps her moving (1.C.7)
- Circle dance can be modified for the ageing body (1.C.8)
- Positions herself as restless and liking to keep active, doing Keep-Fit, walking, doing housework (links with her active mind) (1.C.9)
- Modifies Circle dance to cope with her problem ankle (1.C.9)
- Circle dance makes her focus on her whole body (1.C.9)
- Enables her to put her hands up in the air (1.C.9)
- Copes with dizziness at home through taking control (1.C.9)
- Very aware of her body as she has had children (1.C.9)
- No injuries from Circle dance and a dance form that can be adapted and enjoyed as you grow physically older (2.C.1)
- Does Circle dance even though has a heel spur (2.C.3)
- Circle dance makes her aware of her posture and other dancers (2.C.5)

- Physically finds she gets more tired than she expected (2.C.6)
- Another deaf dancer challenged her to overcome her dizziness on turns (1.C.9)
- Positions her brain/ear tubes as re-organising themselves through actually doing the turns (1.C.9)
- Circle dance makes her conscious of bodily symmetry (2.C.9)

### *Risks of Injury*

- Injury in Scottish dancing meant she moved to Circle dance (1.C.1)
- No injuries from Circle dance but a back injury from putting dustbin out (1.C.6)
- No injuries from Circle dance though has had a problem with her knee and back when tap-dancing (1.C.7)
- No injuries from Circle dance (1.C.9)
- No injuries from Circle dance and a dance form that can be adapted and enjoyed as you grow physically older (2.C.1)
- Does Circle dance even though has a heel spur (2.C.3)
- Circle dance good for her physical health/no injuries (2.C.4)
- No injuries from Circle dance (2.C.5)
- No injuries from Circle dance apart from a pulled tendon (2.C.7)
- Old knee injury not causing problems in Circle dance (2.C.8)
- Only had one injury from Circle dance (2.C.9)

### *Modifications of Circle Dance for the Ageing Body*

- Circle Dance as good exercise and can be modified (1.C.3)
- Circle dance can be modified for the ageing body (1.C.8)
- Modifies Circle dance to cope with her problem ankle (1.C.9)
- No injuries from Circle dance and a dance form that can be adapted and enjoyed as you grow physically older (2.C.1)
- Circle dance can be adapted for old age (2.C.9)

## **Focused Coding from Circle Dance Ethnography**

### *Health Benefits of Circle Dance for the Older Person*

- Loveliness of gliding Russian dance which teacher danced despite arthritic pain (C1, 15.6.07)
- Retired professional dancer put a lot of energy into the dance (C1, 15.6.07)
- Deaf lady is a good dancer and her steps are in time to the music (C1, 29.6.07)
- Teacher and retired professional dancer explain importance of arm and shoulder exercises as you get older (C1, 13.7.07)
- Retired dancer's frozen shoulder and Circle dance motivating her to exercise (C1, 13.7.07)

### *Modifying Circle Dance for the Ageing Body*

- Hand-holds can be modified for painful shoulders (C1, 13.7.07)
- Teacher advises lady with back injury how to modify dance (C1, 13.7.07)
- Deaf lady misses some turns (C1, 28.9.07)
- Modification of Circle dance if problems with ageing body (C1, 12.10.07)
- Modifying basket hand hold so that those with painful arms could dance (C2, 19.11.07)

### *Risk of Injury*

- Interviewee happy with transcript and repeated information on Five Rhythms and slipped disc in Scottish (C1, 15.6.07)
- Older lady told me how to improve my technique when spinning round so as to avoid injury (C1, 22.6.07)
- Older lady who has had a back injury has returned to dancing (C1, 12.11.07)

### *First Circle Dance Teacher's Beliefs in Healing Power of Dance*

- Teacher's story of healing power of dance and example of man who had recovered from strokes (C1, 22.6.07)
- Visualisation of lady who had had a stroke and her return to dancing in the group (C1, 5.10.07)

### *Experiences of the Ageing Body*

- Small lady anorexic as a teenager but worries as she is overweight now (C1, 27.8.07)
- Detailed description of doing a light-hearted cowboy dance, initially with the man who had had a stroke (C1, 14.9.07)
- Retired professional dancer does not feel old, only slowing down a little (C1, 28.9.07)
- Older lady dancing despite medical problems (C1, 8.10.07)
- Challenge of Israeli dance for older dancers who were out of breath at the end (C1, 12.10.07)

- Man who had had stroke perfectly co-ordinated in the “Kilted Leprechaun” (C1, 16.11.07)
- One lady with hurt leg requests slower dances so did Greek dance “Thalos” (C2, 21.1.08)
- Turkish dance with heel digs which got faster so some older ladies sat out (C2, 21.1.08)
- Balance can be difficult as you get older (C2, 4.2.08)
- Some older ladies out of breath when repeated fast Turkish dance (C2, 3.3.08)
- Older lady with fibromyalgia/arthritis sat out several dances even though she could dance gracefully (C2, 3.3.08)
- Talk about problematic body parts (C2, 10.3.08)
- I sat out of the sad Macedonian dance as the front basket hold was difficult for my painful arms (C2, 10.3.08)

## Focused Coding from Scottish Dance Narrative Interviews

### *Health Benefits of Scottish Dance/Exercise for the Older Person*

- Physical and mental health benefits of Scottish Country dance (1.S.1)
- Health benefits in exercise/walking and wanting to die on the dance floor (1.S.1)
- Enjoys the physical and social activity of Scottish Country dance (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish Country dance as good for your stress management and fitness (1.S.2)
- Positions Scottish Country dance as her social group, recreation, health and mental health programme (1.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance is her only form of exercise/good for physical/mental health (1.S.3)
- Scottish Country dance makes her see herself as reasonably fit (1.S.4)
- Wife has joint and hip problems but Scottish Country dance good aerobic exercise (1.S.5)
- Older Scottish Country dancers can pace themselves/ dances can be adapted (1.S.5)
- Scottish Country dance provides some exercise and this can be tiring (1.S.6)
- Scottish Country dance is enjoyable and good exercise (1.S.6)
- Scottish Country dance makes you feel wonderful, mentally, physically and socially (1.S.6)
- Scottish Country dance makes her feel unfit but it makes her feel good physically and socially (1.S.8)
- Scottish Country dance is fun, good for mind and body and sociable (1.S.8)
- Problem that Scottish Country dancers are older but she herself is fit (2.S.1)
- Scottish Country dance provides enjoyment, company and especially exercise (2.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance good for physical fitness and mental health (2.S.5)
- Both husband and wife feel positive about the physical and mental health benefits of Scottish Country dance (2.S.5)
- Scottish Country dance is better for health than Circle dance, keeping her mentally and physically agile, with the music urging her to dance (2.S.6)
- Scottish Country dance as good mental and physical exercise (2.S.7)
- Scottish Country dance is good for mental and physical health (2.S.8)
- Mental and physical health benefits of Scottish Country dance (2.S.9)
- Despite her body being injured by Scottish Country dance, the cardiovascular effects are beneficial (2.S.9)
- Scottish Country dance is healthy, pleasurable exercise though less strenuous than Indian dance (2.S.10)
- Scottish Country dance keeps her fit and she does not feel old (2.S.10)

### *Experiences of Growing Older*

- Has seen people dancing at a Scottish ball who were in their 80s (1.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance can be done by people in their 80s (1.S.5)
- Older Scottish Country dancers can pace themselves/ dances can be adapted (1.S.5)
- Need to adjust standard of dancing as you get older/ older dancers are helpful with their knowledge and non-verbal cues (1.S.5)
- Older dancers’ knowledge means they can compensate for some disability (1.S.6)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for the injured/ ageing body (1.S.7)
- Intention to carry on dancing as they grow older/ they know how to prevent stiffness (1.S.7)
- No injuries from Scottish Country dance but aware of growing older (1.S.8)
- Problem that Scottish Country dancers are older but she herself is fit (2.S.1)
- Hopes Scottish Country dance will keep her fitter as she grows older (2.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance keeps you younger, partly due to social aspects (2.S.3)
- Not conscious of growing older and Scottish Country dance helps his posture (2.S.4)
- Wife talks about difficulty of Highland and Ladies’ Step for older people (2.S.5)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for older people (2.S.5)
- Dances mainly in the evenings so retirement has made no difference apart from giving her more energy (2.S.6)
- People can do Scottish Country dance into their 80s with adaptation of dances and seeing this takes away her own fear of ageing (2.S.7)
- Positive image of older people doing Scottish Country dance (2.S.8)
- Dances on grass in summer but this is harder as you get older (2.S.9)

- You can modify the steps as you get older (2.S.9)
- Scottish Country dance keeps her fit and she does not feel old (2.S.10)
- Older people enjoy Scottish Country dance as they can modify the steps (2.S.10)

### *Experiences of the Ageing Body*

- In touch with her body/gradually realised a dancer can have any kind of body (1.S.2)
- Less anxious about her body in Scottish than in other dance forms as less emphasis on perfection and the physical distance between partners is comfortable (1.S.4)
- Problems of wife's ageing joints (1.S.5)
- Wife has joint and hip problems but Scottish Country dance good aerobic exercise (1.S.5)
- Husband is conscious that he cannot dance so much as five or ten years ago (1.S.5)
- Wife is aware they are slowing down/ dancing together is comfortable (1.S.5)
- Older Scottish Country dancers can pace themselves/ dances can be adapted (1.S.5)
- Scottish Country dance can make you sweaty or give you bruises (1.S.6)
- Problem of "dancing feet" (1.S.6)
- Scottish Country dance enhances body-image in terms of functionality (1.S.6)
- Older dancers' knowledge means they can compensate for some disability (1.S.6)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for the injured/ ageing body (1.S.7)
- Intention to carry on dancing as they grow older/ they know how to prevent stiffness (1.S.7)
- No injuries from Scottish Country dance but aware of growing older (1.S.8)
- Scottish Country dance has made her feel better about her body (1.S.8)
- Problem that Scottish Country dancers are older but she herself is fit (2.S.1)
- Does not feel differently about her body and her weight has increased since starting Scottish Country dancing (2.S.1)
- Scottish Country dance has not changed her experience of her body (2.S.2)
- Scottish Country dance teaches you how to stand still and hold your body upright (2.S.3)
- Not conscious of growing older and Scottish Country dance helps his posture (2.S.4)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for older people (2.S.5)
- Neither husband nor wife feel Scottish Country dance has changed their relationship with their body as they have always done a lot of exercise, the wife is aware her body is slowing down (2.S.5)
- Not aware of dance having changed her relationship with her body (2.S.6)
- Importance of body language when dancing with a deaf person (2.S.7)
- People who are deaf, blind or disabled in some way can do Scottish Country dance (2.S.7)
- Dance has made her conscious of the different parts of her body and more spatially aware (2.S.7)
- Scottish Country dance is good for her body in terms of mobility (2.S.8)
- Dances on grass in summer but this is harder as you get older (2.S.9)
- You can modify the steps as you get older (2.S.9)
- Scottish Country dance keeps her fit and she does not feel old (2.S.10)
- Older people enjoy Scottish Country dance as they can modify the steps (2.S.10)
- Scottish Country dance helps to keep her body in better condition (2.S.10)

### *Modifying Dance for Older People*

- Older Scottish Country dancers can pace themselves/ dances can be adapted (1.S.5)
- Need to adjust standard of dancing as you get older/ older dancers are helpful with their knowledge and non-verbal cues (1.S.5)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for the injured/ageing body (1.S.7)
- Intention to carry on dancing as they grow older/they know how to prevent stiffness (1.S.7)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for older people (2.S.5)
- People can do Scottish Country dance in their 80s with adaptation of dances and seeing this takes away her own fear of ageing (2.S.7)
- Importance of body language when dancing with a deaf person (2.S.7)
- People who are deaf, blind or disabled in some way can do Scottish Country dance (2.S.7)
- Wears shoes with heels due to a knee problem (2.S.8)
- You can modify the steps as you get older (2.S.9)
- Older people enjoy Scottish Country dance as they can modify the steps (2.S.10)

### *Risks of Injury*

- Problems with her feet due to wearing a support for her Achilles tendon (1.S.2)
- Minor injury such as stiff calves occasionally/ severely injured in ballroom (1.S.4)
- Both husband and wife say they have no injuries from Scottish Country dance apart from the occasional pulled muscle (1.S.5)
- Scottish Country dance can make you sweaty or give you bruises (1.S.6)

- Problem of “dancing feet” (1.S.6)
- Injuries from Scottish dance/ importance of good technique as prevention (1.S.6)
- More problems with injuries as they grow older (1.S.7)
- Modifying Scottish Country dance for the injured/ ageing body (1.S.7)
- Intention to carry on dancing as they grow older/ they know how to prevent stiffness (1.S.7)
- No injuries from Scottish dance but aware of growing older (1.S.8)
- Pulled a leg muscle when she forgot to warm-up (2.S.2)
- Legs, feet and knees ache from Scottish Country dance (2.S.3)
- His joints do not creak too much but he has pulled muscles, once quite seriously, so Scottish Country dance is bad for your health (2.S.4)
- Problem of injuries/ sudden death in Scottish Country dance, and problem of dancing on hard floors (2.S.5)
- Problem of dancing on hard and slippery floors (2.S.6)
- Minimising the risk of injury and finding a suitable hall (2.S.6)
- No injuries from Scottish Country dance, Ladies’ Step or Circle dance (2.S.6)
- Injuries from dancing on hard or slippery floors, debates about the value of warm-ups and injuries from incorrect hand or arm holds (2.S.7)
- Wears shoes with heels due to a knee problem (2.S.8)
- No injuries from Scottish Country dance but discusses issues relating to warming up and slipperiness or hardness of the floor (2.S.8)
- Problem of injuries and sticky or slippery floors (2.S.9)
- Hip injury from work means she has pain when dancing (2.S.9)
- Despite her body being injured by Scottish Country dance, the cardiovascular effects are beneficial (2.S.9)
- No injuries from Scottish Country dance and she is very fit (2.S.10)

## **Focused Coding of Ethnographic Notes from Scottish Dance**

### *Health Benefits of Scottish Dance/Exercise for the Older Person*

- Myself and two members of class feeling hot and physically challenged by the dance although it was relaxing (S.1, 12.5.07)
- Lady with ME became distressed when she forgot the steps and went home (S.1, 17.5.07)
- Warm-up and complaints about health problems not caused by dancing (S.1, 7.6.07)
- Teacher believes health benefits of Scottish Country dance outweigh the risk of injuries (S.1, 6.7.07)
- Tea-break at Ladies’ Step with home-made cakes and discussion of Scottish dance as good for health in terms of mobility and social contact (S.1, 16.9.07)
- 84 year old man who lived in a nursing home and went Scottish Country dancing, even though he could only walk the steps (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Ladies’ Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)

### *Experiences of Growing Older*

- Two ladies in their 70s have been dancing many years but people who start in middle age often have to give up as their bodies cannot cope (S.1, 16.9.07)
- 84 year old man who lived in a nursing home and went Scottish Country dancing, even though he could only walk the steps (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Debates on interpretation of steps and modifying steps for older dancers (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Lady in mid 60s from Ladies’ Step likes the Circle dances but complains the Circle dance group is very elderly (S.1, 28.10.07)

### *Experiences of the Ageing Body*

- Informal chat about body shapes and stretching at the end of class to prevent stiffness (S.1, 26.4.07)
- 50 year old lady dances as gracefully as the teacher even though she is overweight, and she corrects me on my technique (S.1, 24.5.07)
- Lady in her 70s from the Ladies’ Step group told me she only stopped doing the Highland fling last year due to problems with her knees (S.1, 27.5.07)
- Scottish Country dancing is energetic but several ladies in their 50s who were overweight managed all the steps (S.1, 7.6.07)
- My visit to the physiotherapist with injured arms/shoulders and she recommends carrying on Scottish Country dance (S.1, 21.6.07)
- Everyone did the balletic exercise in the warm-up for Ladies’ Step easily, including those in their 70s (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Two ladies in their 70s have been dancing many years but people who start in middle age often have to give up as their bodies cannot cope (S.1, 16.9.07)
- 84 year old man who lived in a nursing home and went Scottish Country dancing, even though he could only walk the steps (S.1, 16.9.07)
- Debates on interpretation of steps and modifying steps for older dancers (S.1, 16.9.07)

- Ladies' Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Laughter at afternoon tea but everyone very tired by the end of the Ladies' Step session (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Three ladies in their 30s-50s whose Scottish Country dancing technique was good, even though they were overweight (S.1, 22.11.07)
- 85 year old man shuffling through the steps of a dance with a complex formation (S.2, 22.11.07)
- Older lady got dizzy after a Spot Turn in Ladies' Step but recovered and carried on dancing (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Collapsing Deckchair movement in Ladies' Step too painful for the older man's injured arms and shoulders but he modified the movement (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Older ladies struggling with balance in Ladies' Step and one of the steps, the Shuffles (S.1, 2.1.08)
- 85 year olds shuffling through the steps but some dancers were balletic (S. 2, 14.2.08)

### *Risks of Injury*

- Informal chat about body shapes and stretching at the end of class to prevent stiffness (S.1, 26.4.07)
- Lady in her 40s had to stop Flamenco dance due to back problems, but was doing Scottish Country dance (S.1, 10.5.07)
- My visit to the physiotherapist with injured arms/shoulders and she recommends carrying on Scottish Country dance (S.1, 21.6.07)
- Teacher believes health benefits of Scottish Country dance outweigh the risk of injuries (S.1, 6.7.07)
- Younger dancers involved in collisions in one of Fosse's frenzied dances but there were no injuries, although the risk of injuries seemed high (S.1, 14.10.07)
- 79 year old man discusses injuries and injury prevention in Scottish dance (S.1, 14.10.07)
- Ladies' Step physically demanding, older people out of breath and several complaining of pulled calf muscles (S.1, 28.10.07)
- Collapsing Deckchair movement in Ladies' Step too painful for the older man's injured arms and shoulders but he modified the movement (S.1, 2.12.07)
- Older lady from Ladies' Step with tubigrip has inflamed tendon from dancing on hard floors, but dances gracefully and easily (S.1, 2.1.08)
- Older lady from the Ladies' Step group has a metatarsal injury from dancing on hard tarmac in soft shoes (S.1, 18.4.08)

## Circle Dance Field Notes

### First Circle Dance Group 4.5.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm

I have been attending Circle dance classes for six weeks with two retired friends. P., the dance teacher, has given permission for my research. She will introduce me and give out the information and consent sheets for participant observation to the whole class next week. She told me that she thinks I should talk to the dancers rather than herself about the benefits of Circle dancing because she is biased as the teacher! I may have to use ethnographic interviews only with P., the teacher of the class, if she is unwilling to give a fuller length interview. So this week I have chatted informally with P., about circle dancing. She taught 14 different circle dances this week, including jazz, such as "Raindrops keep falling on my head," an Israeli dance about blessing the well, and Irish, Greek, Russian and Serbian dances. As I was helping her carry her sound system out to her car, she explained to me that during the first half of the session, she was teaching dances about mind and body and that during the second half, she was teaching dances about spirit. She specifically said, "Circle dancing is about mind, body and spirit."

During the break, she talked about the importance of circle dancing for healing and spoke in detail about one member of the group who had recently suffered illness but found that the dancing uplifted her. She also spoke about one older man in the group who had recently suffered a stroke but had the motivation to recover due to the healing power of dance. It was significant that during the last two dances, P., asked the class to visualise these two people who were in need of healing as they performed the dances. These two dances were the "Everdance" and the "Donna nobis."

Even though I have done Circle dancing for a few weeks, I still find I am struggling to get my brain to control my feet. P., the teacher, demonstrates the sequence of steps for each dance in the centre of the circle, allows everyone to walk through the sequence of steps a few times and then switches on the music so that everyone can perform the dance in a circle, usually holding hands but sometimes letting go and dancing alone in the circle. I feel my brain struggling to co-ordinate my feet in the complex patterns and to keep time with everyone else. I had to concentrate very hard, watching how P., the teacher, performs the steps, or sometimes one of the group members. Sometimes, my immediate neighbours give me a gentle shove in the right direction. I appreciated the feeling of belonging to a community of dancers, and the warm touch of my neighbours' hands when we danced in a circle. The sense of rising to a higher level was maintained by the selection of dances, especially the final two, Ever-dance and Donna Nobis. The raising of the hands in the air during the Donna Nobis really conveyed a sense of looking up to heaven. I felt a deep sense of relaxation and inner peace through my whole body. The supportive community of the dancers was confirmed as all the dances were performed around a lighted candle in the centre of the floor. The final act of blowing out the candle when all the dancers were huddled together linking arms over shoulders, was described by P., the teacher, as a way of giving energy to the two members of the group who were sick.

On the way back in the car, my two retired friends told me how P. "Never took a holiday from teaching dance (last week was the only holiday she had taken in years)....She finds the dancing gives her enough fulfillment as it is something she really wants to do. She teaches three classes every week and she even said in class that she will not be having another holiday for ten years.....that was really funny! You know, she has been giving me some information about how to do the steps for flower dances as I have a friend who is training as a flower therapist, a kind of aromatherapist, and I thought she would be interested....." "Does P. have a training curriculum?" I asked. P. has all the different dances written and filed in alphabetical order." replied one of my friends. I reflected how P. had taught all 14 dances from memory. She demonstrated the sequences of six to eight steps for each dance without using any of the ring-binders she had bought with her, containing choreographic notation. I considered how P., the dance teacher, has created a powerful sensation of community support and healing. As a researcher, I do not wish to disturb the supportive atmosphere which she has created, and I wondered whether it would be better to work purely ethnographically, in the style of a dance anthropologist, rather than try to record narrative interviews with the teacher and the members of this group.

### 14.5.07 Phone-call from P., the first Circle dance teacher.

I had missed the class on May 12th but the teacher phoned me to enquire about a Scottish dancing contact as she knows someone who was interested in lessons. This gave me the opportunity to discuss giving out participant observation information and consent sheets next session. I told her about several people having come forward to be interviewed and explained that I was using a narrative style. I explained that it would be useful for my research to interview her later on as I am interested in learning about circle dancing too. She agreed.

### First Circle Dance Group 18.5.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm

My friend has changed classes due to other commitments so I had to travel on the bus instead of getting a lift in the car. This turned out really well as I returned home on the bus with J., a retired professional dancer and dance teacher. Ballroom dance and modern sequence had especially been her favourite styles until the death of her husband. I arrived early

and the hall was empty – a rather dark hall with deep orange curtains hanging at the windows, plastic chairs and small tables against the walls. Members of the group arrived at 10.00am and were chatting amongst themselves in a relaxed and friendly way. P., the dance teacher, arrived a few minutes late. Several members of the group, including myself, helped carry parts of the music system, the white-board with the list of 14 dances and the flower arrangement with a white candle was placed in the centre of the floor. P., the teacher, lighted the white candle.

I find it difficult to remember the steps for all the 14 dances we did without P. the teacher being here to demonstrate. So I am just going to write about my general impressions of the Circle dances and obtain the details of the steps from P., the teacher. Most members of the group had taken off their shoes and socks so as to be dancing in bare-feet. Some members wore special dance shoes, such as J., who wore black character shoes whilst several others wore black ballet shoes. Members of the class were dressed in loose skirts or trousers, often with colourful tops.

P., the teacher, put on some middle-eastern sounding music and led the first dance in a snake-like line in a circular movement around the candle, tapping and crossing her feet in time to the music. Members of the group joined the line, taking the hands of their immediate neighbours. P., the teacher, never uses notes for the steps but teaches from memory. She plunged straight into this first dance without demonstrating the steps. Usually, P., the teacher, demonstrates the steps several times in the centre of the circle and gets us to walk through the steps several times before putting on the music for the actual dance. Occasionally, she has a lapse of memory and clasps her hands to her face as if in despair. When she has a lapse of memory, she always repeats the sequence of steps until she has perfected the movements. She taught all fourteen dances, with different sequences of steps which are repeated in the dance again and again, completely from memory. As J., the retired professional dancer told me on the way home, P., the teacher, has a repertoire of over 200 dances.

D., the lady in her 70s who has done some ethnography for an Open University MSc in Sociology, explained to me how memory is the greatest difficulty for her in Circle dancing although she tries to cope.

“Now, I don’t let my memory worry me.....I just go with the flow. Every dance is like a new dance to me, whether we have done it before, a week ago or a year ago. I just have to re-learn the steps every single time.” She waved her hands in the air and broadened her wrinkled face into a laugh. She is a petite lady. She is my partner in one of the jazz dances with an inner circle and an outer circle, and she laughs and smiles as we dance together, as if we are long lost friends.

Most of the dances were done in a circle holding hands. This really promoted a sense of community and togetherness through physical touch and the physical sensations of all dancing the same movements at the same time. People would often change places spontaneously at the short breaks in the music so as to dance near other friends. The group is all female, 60 plus in years. Some of the dances were performed in concentric circles with partners, and those in the inner circle would move forward one space to dance with a new person after each sequence of movement. This was a good opportunity for smiles, as new partners welcomed each other. Sometimes the outer circle of dancers would lift their joined hands over the heads of the inner circle of dancers, forming one circle of dancers with arms weaved closely between each other like straws in a basket.

It was pleasant to feel the many different types of hands: - some hands were warm, some hands were cold, some hands were smooth, some hands were dry, some hands were soft and some hands were wrinkled. But all hands eagerly clutched the hands of the other dancers, a physical expression of unity in diversity. The very act of keeping time to the music with your feet promotes the experience of being a community of dancers, even when many individuals do not perform with the same ease and grace as P., the teacher or J., the retired professional dancer. Even when jazz dances, such as “Raindrops are falling on my head” were performed without holding hands, a sense of belonging to a community of dancers was maintained as people jauntily stepped along in time to the music and turned themselves around on the spot.

P.’s bare-feet glide along the floor as she steps in various patterns in time to the music and J.’s black character shoes seem to leap through the movements with great agility. For myself and D., who danced next to me for some of the class, it is a struggle to hold in our minds what the next steps should be, even though the patterns of steps are repeated again and again. As D. says “I have to think and tell my feet what to do.” Even though P. and J. sometimes have memory lapses, they perform with a skill which shows how dance steps can become embodied so that the body moves with a fluidity of its own. J. told me (when we were on the bus going home) that she had occasional memory lapses for the steps but I did not notice her making a mistake during this class. J. stressed the importance of memory in dance and how before a performance, when she was working as a professional dancer, she would always rehearse the particular sequence in her mind whilst in the dressing room, waiting to go on stage.

At the break, the group was very enthusiastic about my research when I gave out the information sheets and a number have offered to be interviewed. J., the retired professional dancer in her 70s told me how she gave up ballroom and modern sequence dancing when her husband died. As she said

“I used to go ballroom dancing four times a week. In fact I used to teach ballroom dancing. But you have to be flexible as you get older and find different styles of dance. I keep myself fit, dancing keeps you fit, more children should learn to dance because of rising obesity. I go to a Keep Fit class and I come Circle dancing. I’m tired now (towards the end of class) but I’m not the sort of person who can sit for long. I taught some tap dancing for the U3A (University of the Third Age) but I had to



give that up because my back was troubling me. I'm very supple though from all the dance and you've just got to find a style that you can still do. I'll keep active all my life and I haven't really got any health problems to speak of."

J.'s friend who was sitting with her told me "You have to keep trying to dance as you will get there in the end. I was having trouble due to deafness but now that I've had a cochlear implant, it's a different story. I'm glad that I've persisted with dancing." At one break between dances, P. the teacher put a small card next to the central candle saying "From D. who is unwell. She thanks you for all your cards. She has a lot of spirit and I'm sure she'll be back as soon as she can." I reflected how much Circle dancing seems to be about mind, body and spirit.

### **First Circle Dance Group 25.5.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I travelled by bus with G., the retired professional dancer. She laughed a lot as she reminisced about her theatrical career, about the differences between British and American tap. She used gestures to show how the American style of tap concentrated more on tapping the feet whereas the British style focused more on the arms and the legs. She explained how she had been continually learning new styles of dance, such as Indian, throughout her career. She had done ballet in her training and was lucky with point work as her big toes were the same length as her second toes and this made it easier to stand on point. As she spoke, she gesticulated to her painted toe-nails in her open sandals. She laughed a lot, obviously enjoying her reminiscences. She also talked about the many shows she had seen with her son in London such as Billy Eliot. She had done tap dancing, can-can and modern dance for musicals and shows rather than ballet performances. She described how she once had to sing dressed up as a cat, lying on the stage with her legs curled up and there were no microphones on stage.

As usual, there were 14 different dances on the white board which P. taught. Due to difficulty memorizing all the dances, I have chosen to write about two as I cannot hold all 14 dances in my brain as P. the teacher can. Ba Purdeu is an Israeli dance about picking lemons. P., the teacher, has such an expressive face when she teaches us a new dance such as this one. Her eyes open wide and she alternates between smiling and quizzical expressions especially when teaching this Israeli dance. There seems to be a real sense of humour in this dance, looking aghast at your hands raised in the air when you have just dropped the lemons which you picked! P., the teacher, demonstrates the lilting steps which are danced individually on the spot forward and backwards and then forwards to pick the imaginary lemons, turning to drop these imaginary lemons into a basket behind your back, and then picking more lemons and dropping them, looking aghast at your hands before moving to face outwards from the circle. The whole group was a mass of colours swirling as individuals moved round.

Many of the dances seemed to have stories, providing an interesting multi-cultural dimension to the classes, besides involving an element of humour, a non-verbal commentary on the trials of everyday life. The complexity of the Indonesian dance, Takety-T-Boom provided a physical and mental challenge that A., a lady in her late 60s with gold-rimmed glasses, termed "The Alzheimer's dance," laughing as she said the words. P., the teacher, twisted her face into expressions of surprise and despair as she demonstrated the complex tapping of the feet which she declared "Bore no relation to the music, so all you can do is count!" She shook her head in comic despair. Even though P., the teacher, is a large lady, she glides across the floor in diagonal steps, easily shifting her weight from foot to foot as she points to each side. She is amazingly graceful despite her cumbersome body-weight. She is dressed in bright floral shorts and cotton t-shirt with her feet bare. She frequently tells stories about other circle dance teachers when teaching us a new dance. For Takety-T-Boom, she told how L., a teacher in the North, was demonstrating the dance outside, when a load of Africans joined in which made this particular dance the best dance of the whole day! A Circle dance teacher from another town, N., danced with our group to-day. He explained how he taught Circle dances at a wedding. He told me to look up Circle dancing on the inter-net as I would find a useful definition. P., the teacher, talked a lot about S., who had taught her Takety-T-Boom.

It is a warm day and most class members are dressed in bright cotton skirts and tops, all colours of the rainbow. The room feels warm and I notice when we hold hands in a circle, everyone has sweaty palms. We laugh and joke about feeling hot. The small lady in her 60s dancing next to me comments "It's difficult to hold the movement in your brain and tell your feet what to do when it is so hot!"

A lot of people have volunteered for interviews. A., a lady in her 60s who is hard of hearing and lip-reads during much of the session has offered to set up a group at her house with two others for sharing stories about dance. This sounds like a fantastic opportunity for story-telling. I left with G. for the bus during the last dance when the teacher asked the group to visualize two members who were sick.

### **4.6.07 Ethnographic Interview with retired ballerina in her 70s who left the First Circle Dance group**

This lady had been a professional dancer with a ballet company for 13 years. She had happy memories of doing informal circle dancing when staying at the city of Athens when on tour with the ballet company in Greece. These circle dances consisted of hovering movements, in amongst the fun of street life. She had devised a Circle dance for a Seder meal at her church. She used Israeli music tapes and she had brought prayer and movement together in worship as a medical missionary. She had been involved with folk groups and worship and movement weekend retreats. A friend invited her to

Circle dancing and she was very much in favour of Circle dancing but she found after six sessions that she was not really enjoying it because:-

She was trained as a dancer and a performer.

She wanted to learn the steps properly before she did the Circle dances as she wanted to be on top of the dancing.

She did not socialise with the group very well and did not make friends.

As a professional dancer, she found it irritating when people on either side dragged on your arms.

She was not enjoying it.

She did not like being with all older people as she has friends who tend to be younger than herself.

She felt miserable after the Circle dance sessions.

As she spent over an hour discussing these issues with me, I asked if she might record an interview for me the following week. She had originally said that she would only take her a couple of minutes to explain why she had left Circle dancing.

### **First Circle Dance Group 8.6.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

The healing power of dance was really emphasized by P., the teacher, during this session. At the end of class, she talked about the importance of visualization for athletes and professional dancers who were injured. Through mentally rehearsing their routines, these injured athletes and professional dancers could actually stimulate the appropriate muscles and this was supported by research. She spoke of the importance of group members visualizing sick members actually dancing with them for helping those people actually return to the group and dance again. She cited the example of C., a lean man in his 70s, who was now dancing with the group again after having spent a long time in hospital following a stroke. The group had been regularly visualizing him dancing among them on P.'s instructions. He was now dancing with the group again with well co-ordinated footwork. The previous week, which I had missed, had been his first week back after his illness, although his wife had tried to continue coming to the Circle dance classes as often as possible. This older man, C., was still experiencing some difficulties with his speech following his stroke (expressive dysphasia).

P., the teacher, asked the group to visualize two women in their 70s who were currently unable to attend the group due to illness. One had suffered a series of strokes and one had suffered two fractured ribs after falling off a ladder. She advocated the belief that these ladies could be restored to health and coming dancing again through visualization as the circle of dancers crowded round the candle at the end of the session and blew it out, sending the light to those who were sick. P., the teacher explained how she mentally rehearsed the circle dances whilst lying in bed, another use of visualization. I noticed that she teaches most of the dances completely from memory through demonstrating the steps. She performs the sequences with such ease that it really seems as if the movement has become embodied and she is performing automatically. Only occasionally does she have a memory lapse, and twisting her expression into a frown of concentration, she looks up the choreographic instructions in her folders.

A., the 71 year old lady I interviewed, and another lady in her 70s with an Australian accent, discussed the difficulties of trying to learn some of the new dances.

"It's about getting the dance-steps into your mind in order to tell your body what to do." said A. The lady with the Australian accent nodded in agreement. A. was wearing white trousers, pink t-shirt and light white trainers with soft soles while the other lady wore a loose blue floral skirt and brown t-shirt and her feet were bare. There was a discussion on whether it was better to keep your feet bare or to wear shoes, especially if your feet were cold. The lady with the Australian accent explained, "It's important to stimulate the soles of your feet with the movement and like reflexology, it will keep you healthy." I noticed how P., the teacher, dances with bare-feet. This week, as she demonstrated the steps for each dance, I noticed that she had painted her toe-nails purple, to match her purple trousers.

It is difficult to remember all 14 dances. As usual, the latter ones included more jazz, such as the song "Seduced," besides spiritual dances. The earlier dances included ones such as Takety-T-Boom from Indonesia, besides Russian, Greek and Armenian folk dances. P., the teacher, has given me permission to write openly about her actually teaching the dances in order to explore how she interprets the choreography. I shall probably start doing this in the autumn. However, I managed to remember a few details of how she taught Takety-T-Boom, an Indonesian dance, this session. This was a fun dance. P., the teacher, made it appear impossible by demonstrating it with pronounced wiggling of the hips! She explained the technique – the trick is to put your weight on one foot and lightly point the toe of the other foot, jerking the hip on the side of the pointed toe. P., the teacher, seems to be like a real performer in a pantomime. Despite her heavy weight, her feet seem to fly easily through the steps. With a jaunty expression on her face, she smiles and gesticulates her hands as she 'chucks' one of her buttocks in an upwards direction. Her large blue eyes gleam cheekily. With smiles we all imitate her humorous movements.

Such humour is also reflected in the jazz dance "Seduced." After each dance, group members laugh and chat for a brief moment in twos and threes. There is a real welcoming community feel that seems to be enhanced through dancing in a circle, either holding hands or dancing individually for the modern dances in the second half of the class. One of the dances in the first half of this particular class involved a basket hold for three people, hands holding and criss-crossed across the front of

the body, with the person on the right leading the group of three. All these different patterns of using space and touch created a feeling of togetherness, even when dancers were moving alone.

At the end of the session, P., the teacher, gave a reminder about parking restrictions for the next week. There were lots of jokes about memory problems. Was it better to give out notices one week before the event or a few weeks before the event? A., a lady in her 60s with gold-rimmed glasses and dangly earrings said her husband joked with her about marbles being all over the floor in their house! She told me that she felt relaxed and tired after the session and glad that her husband was taking the dog for a walk this afternoon!

### **First Circle Dance Group 15.6.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I travelled on the bus with G., the retired professional dancer in her 70s. She talked about her dancing career, especially in tap, her favourite style. She had been to stay with her son in London the previous week and had seen the musical “Wicked” which she found disappointing. Details such as the actual yellow brick road were poorly portrayed on stage. She laughed as she spoke about her own career, obviously enjoying the reminiscences. She talked of the glamour and glitter of her stage costumes which were a contrast to the plain beige trousers she often wore for Circle dancing. She complained that these trousers were now too long for her as she must have shrunk in stature due to age. She told me how she had learnt every different style of dance during dance training. She had even danced the dance of the cygnets from the ballet Swan Lake and she had done some Scottish dancing. I told her how my shoulders were painful from the Scottish dancing I had done yesterday when some of the male beginners had been pulling too hard. G. explained that professional dancers develop a lighter touch, saying she noticed that when you clapped both your hands with someone-else’s hands during the Circle dancing, the other person (who was invariably not a professional) would clap too hard against your hands.

Throughout the class, I noticed G., dancing with a grace and ease which illustrated superior skill in comparison with the other Circle dancers. Her character shoes glided through the steps with an air of confidence and her whole body and arms and legs rippled with expression which matched the beat of the music. Whenever I got lost in any of the 14 dances, it was G. who I followed. Her grace seemed to exceed that of the teacher although as I have recorded earlier, P., the teacher, was extremely graceful despite her large body size. On the way home on the bus, G. explained to me that she found it more difficult to remember the sequences of steps as she got older and that sometimes she had a lapse of memory during the Circle dance class. I have only once noticed her making a mistake – when she turned the opposite way round from everyone else. G said that P., the teacher, did not always allow enough time to learn a new dance sequence.

There were 18 retired women at the class to-day. R., the first lady I had interviewed from the Circle dance group, told me she was very happy to have received the transcript of the interview. She gave me some information from the Internet on the Five Rhythms. She repeated the story of how she had slipped a disc doing Scottish dancing.

“It was more painful than childbirth... So I gave up Scottish dancing.” I reflected that I must use the prompt “Any injuries from dancing?” during interviews with dancers. During the break, R. talked about her book club which had been running for forty years. The members had seen each other through all stages of life – marriage and young children, divorces and now loss of husbands as they age. I reflected how this dance group acts as a support group for older women, many of whom had been widowed. The Australian lady in her 70s had brought in a book by C.S.Lewis about the final stage of life for women which she gave to another lady, who commented on the unusual fact of a man having written such a book.

A. the deaf lady in her 70s commented on how I was improving, in an Israeli dance with lots of grapevine steps where I actually managed to keep in time to the music. A. explained to me how learning to Circle dance is like learning to hear again, as she has had to do after her cochlear implant. You have to keep practicing. When we did Takety-T-Boom, I actually felt I knew the steps without thinking about them. The movement was becoming automatic or embodied. P., the teacher, did a jazz dance in the first half of the session, a Negro spiritual “I say Grace” which was unusual as she usually put such dances in the second half of the session when she moves from “Mind and Body” to “Spirit.” This was a moving dance, performed without holding hands. The dance had a leisurely pace as we glided from foot to foot, pointing each foot in turn, raising our hands upwards and then turning around doing flowing movements with our hands in the direction of our turn. At the end of the dance, P., the teacher explained to the class

“ ‘I say Grace’ means ‘I say thank you.’ The world would be a better place if we all said ‘thank-you’ more often.” She repeated this dance in the second half and at the very end of the class, when we all crowded around the candle in the centre of the floor to blow it out, she continued “Each of you think of something for which you are grateful.” I thought how grateful I am for the support of this group and G. told me on the bus how she had been thinking of her gratitude for such a long life.

We did a Russian dance holding hands in a circle. P., the teacher, explained how the style of movement meant continually bending the knees so as to glide along, rather than “bob up and down.” She said that she was going to do the dance even though she could “feel her knees” because it was so lovely. P., the teacher, was hinting that she was suffering with pain from arthritic knees. We did many jazz dances after the break and repeated the dance “I say Grace.” The closing dance was to the music of John Denver. We huddled together, all holding hands with arms and shoulders touching as we swayed from side

to side. We took two small steps to the left and one small step to the right with feet parallel. Half way through the song, these steps were reversed so that we took two steps to the right and one to the left. A real feeling of togetherness was created amongst this group of retired women.

G. ate a nutri-grain bar while going home on the bus, saying that the dance had used up a lot of energy and it would be a long time before she got home for lunch. She said she would have a rest in the afternoon as she was tired. I reflected how much energy she had put into the dance compared with the others and yet she had at the same time performed with so much grace and expression.

### **First Circle Dance Group 22.6.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

We did 14 dances as usual but I can only remember a few:-

- Poisedon – a Greek dance
- Takety, Takety Boom – an Indonesian dance
- I want to be seduced – English jazz
- I say Grace – Negro Spiritual
- I want to love you till the end of love – Leonard Cohen

At the end of the session, we did a very prayerful dance in a long line coiling round the candle in a tighter and tighter knot with two steps forward and one step back to 4/4 music like Bach which was very repetitive and spiritual. For this dance, we each rested one hand on the shoulder of the person in front. The other dances this session were done in circles :- sometimes holding hands, sometimes individually, sometimes with a partner so there was an inner circle and an outer circle. P., the teacher, demonstrated the steps for the 14 dances largely from memory. She only occasionally looked something up in her folders when she had a memory lapse. She told me there are no training videos of Circle dancing or videos of public performances of dancing. She is pleased that I have a paper on Circle dancing accepted at the British Society of Gerontology conference.

A., the lady who did Irish dancing told me how you should hold your partner with your weight forward so that you did not injure your arm when you spun round. I had explained to her about my arm pain during Scottish dancing. I chatted with A., a lady with grey hair in her 70s at break. She is keen to be interviewed and made a date. She used to do ballroom-dancing but after the death of her husband, had to find another form of dance. She said P. is a very good teacher and that a lot depends on her. At the end of the session, P., the teacher talked to me about the healing power of dance, citing C. as an example.

“He has had two massive strokes and yet he is here with the class dancing as well as anyone else to-day.” I saw with my own eyes that P.’s words were true, as his feet did seem perfectly co-ordinated in the sequences of steps. He still had problems with his speech however.

### **First Circle Dance Group 29.6.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

The bus was very late so I arrived at 10.20am. There were only 15 older women in the class to-day (excluding myself). The group was in the middle of rehearsing the Bulgarian Bridal dance. As P. the teacher says “You need a good bra because of all the bouncing up and down when you do several jerky steps up on tip-toe then back down on flat feet.” She over-emphasised the bounce when she demonstrated the step. “It’s quite difficult if you are fourteen and a half stone.” she said with her face creased into laughter. “You need to wear your good bras girls. I apologize about all the dances being so energetic to-day! It gets better in the second half after break. The problem is that I plan next week’s dances when I’m lying down after this session. It was only when I was running through the steps this morning that I realized how many energetic dances I had chosen. Sorry about that!”

“Next time you need to plan the class standing up or sitting down.” said R., the 71year old lady I had interviewed. She looked lovely in a long blue sparkly skirt and top, with her long grey hair swept up into a loose bun with a comb. Her red cheeks were glowing and she smiled broadly.

P., the teacher, used a rhyme to teach the rhythm which your feet beat on the floor for one particular dance “The birds in the trees wear dungarees.” (Slow-slow-quick-quick- quick-slow-quick-quick-quick).

As usual, my memory for the dances fails me although P., the teacher, taught them all from memory, only occasionally looking something up in a folder. I can remember the names of a few of the dances :- Poisedon, Takety- Takety-Boom, Singing in the Rain, I want to be Seduced, Californian Cowboy. I danced next to A., the deaf lady, for Californian Cowboy. She is amazing. She told me how she had been doing Circle dancing for five years. She moves with skill and grace and puts so much expression into each step. She glides from foot to foot in the grapevine steps with a precision and confidence that matches that of P., the teacher. She wears black character shoes. At the appropriate moment she digs her heels in the floor or points her toes, always in perfect time to the music. I follow her steps closely for the first sequence as this dance is new for me. A. laughs as we turn to face each other and click our fingers in front of our faces before moving round the circle to repeat the dance with a new partner. The jaunty music ends when I get all the way round the circle to A. again. She laughs and tells me she is pretending to have two guns in her hands besides saying she is wearing a cowboy’s hat. She tells me how she

visualizes Gene Kelly swinging round lamp-posts when we do "Singing in the rain" as a dance. For "I want to be seduced." another lady tells me how she visualizes a man sitting in a pub with a pint of beer singing this song.

A. and her friend have offered to be interviewed together but she explains how Sh., another lady who had originally offered to be interviewed with them, has decided not to be interviewed as she is concerned she will get too emotional due to the recent death of her grandson. I reflected how it is wonderful that Sh. still comes dancing regularly – she is here to-day and although she looks serious some of the time, she laughs a lot too, such as at P.'s explanation of the need to wear a good bra for the Bulgarian Bride dance due to all the bouncing up and down!

There was a nice sensation of touch through-out the session. Many dances involve holding hands and sometimes dancers stay holding hands at the breaks in the music, when P. demonstrates the steps for the next dance. This physical holding of hands promotes a sense of togetherness among the dancers. When blowing the candle out at the end of the class, with our arms in basket formation behind each other's backs so that our shoulders are touching, P. sends the light to all of us. "Take the energy you need." she says. I notice how my body feels pleasantly relaxed from the dancing.

### **First Circle Dance Group 13.7.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

As with the Scottish dancing, I am being careful not to 'crowd' the dancers who are involved in my research and so I had missed the previous week as I was feeling very tired. I travelled on the bus with G., the retired professional tap-dancer. P. the teacher explained about the importance of exercising the arms and shoulders in the dances.

"No pain, no gain. From the age of 25, the muscles in your upper arms and shoulders get shorter so you need to exercise them more to retain function." She gesticulated to her own shoulders and upper arms as she spoke these words. "When you raise your arms above your head, you need to challenge yourself to push your arms that little bit further back. No pain, no gain." G., the retired professional tap-dancer replied

"We do this exercise at Keep Fit to strengthen arm and shoulder muscles. You place one hand behind your neck and push the bent elbow upwards with the other hand." She demonstrated as she spoke with a smile. She explained how hand-holds could be modified for painful shoulders for example, in Greek dance instead of holding in an upright W formation with elbows bent, the arms are thrust forward with elbows bent.

We did a mixture of Greek and Russian Circle dances, with a modern style of Scottish dance as well. The Russian dance involved gliding steps. One of the Greek dances was meant to be very macho, performed by men with strong steps. Part way through the class, A., the lady whom I had interviewed who had injured her back pushing out the wheelie bin, came and sat watching the class for a couple of dances. When it was break, P., the teacher, came to speak with A., who explained why she had missed several classes. P. told her which movements would be difficult, demonstrating how any movement which involved jerking the hips or sudden turns would put strain on her lower back and her abdominal muscles. She warned A. to be careful in dances that used such movements. I noticed Sh., the lady who had recently lost a grandson, did most of the dances and laughed and joked with the others during the break. There were about 20 older women in the class to-day and the one older man, C.

The use of metaphor by P., the teacher, was important. For one of the Greek dances, she spoke thus

"Lots of testosterone in this dance, girls. Strong macho steps performed by Greek men with bare chests and lots of medallions."

Indeed, P., the teacher, used body parts as metaphors for the direction of movement. For example, P., the teacher said

"Line your nipples with the candle in the centre... I know C.'s body intimately."

C. was the one man in the group and P., the teacher, walked up to him and pressed two fingers against his chest to indicate the position of his nipples. Smiles and laughs were exchanged and even C. was grinning.

At the end of the session, I travelled home on the bus with G. who has agreed to be interviewed next week after class. She had missed last week's dance class due to a frozen shoulder which she treated with a tens machine. She explained that she had never had a frozen shoulder before. G. told me about the importance of the group for motivating her to exercise. She never does exercises on her own at home. G. told me about the flower dances which P. sometimes teaches, and how they all have stories. We had done a dance about a willow tree to-day, with arm movements like a weeping willow. I noticed how I had found the dancing easier this week. The steps seemed to have become embodied in my feet more easily and I did not need to concentrate so hard.

### **Greek Dancing with the First Circle Dance Group at a Stately Home 27.08.07 at 10.30am-16.30pm**

P., the teacher, had left a message on my answer machine about this event. Due to the summer holidays, I had not been Circle dancing on Fridays for a few weeks. P., the teacher, told me to wear pink, lilac or purple for this event. I travelled by train. It was a lovely sunny day and 15 dancers, all retired women, some from the Friday group and some from the Monday group, P., the teacher and N., a man in his 50s who taught Circle dancing in a nearby town, assembled by a large tree near the river, bringing picnic food to share. Tables were under the tree for spreading out food. The grass was wet and we moved out from the shade of the tree to form a Circle in the morning sunlight. Holding hands, P., the teacher, walked us through the

steps of the first dance which was associated with the Greeks resisting the oppression of the Turks as shown by the upward W formation of the arms when holding hands in the circle. Most dancers wore sandals or light shoes as the grass was so wet but gradually as the sun got warmer, a number of the dancers removed their shoes.

We worked through the programme of 20 dances, with P., the teacher, demonstrating and calling out the sequence of steps at the start of each dance and getting us to rehearse each sequence several times before putting on the music for us to do the whole dance. A number of visitors to the gardens watched in amazement as we performed and a number of people set up their picnics on the other side of the river in order to watch us. Smiling faces surrounded me as we danced. It was a real feeling of community and the beautiful setting, with the river, grass and trees in full leaf, radiated warmth from the sun. As D., the small lady with glasses in her 70s told me

“I just love it here. Doing the dancing. P., the teacher, books a stately home every year for our dance workshop. Someone asked us one year if we were a cult!”

At the coffee break, N., the teacher from a nearby town, explained the importance of Circle dance in his life.

“When I was going through a difficult time, I went Circle dancing nearly every evening of the week. The dance helps to lift you up. I now teach my own group but I never teach a new dance without first having seen it taught by another teacher. That’s why I come to P.’s classes – to learn new dances. Grapevine (the magazine) provides us insurance as teachers. I just use the choreographic notation to teach the dance. I haven’t been on a formal teacher training course.” P., the teacher, told me

“The class is really interested in your research and enjoying the interviews. I’ve had good feedback. I’m happy to be interviewed at the end of October when I am not so busy.”

D., the lady in her 70s with glasses explained to me why she only took half a biscuit with her coffee.

“I used to be anorexic when I was a teenager. It was during the war when there was not much food. I eat plenty now, I have a good dinner in the evening, but I only have half a biscuit or quarter of a slice of bread with my coffee. My grand-daughter laughs as my biscuit barrel is full of half-eaten biscuits!” D. is a small lady and she continues with a smile “I’m five foot tall but I worry about my weight as I am overweight for my height now.”

We danced for another hour, our feet treading the grass down as they beat time to the lilting music, forming a darkened circular shape on the grass. The music seemed to carry us along as we rotated in unison in our large circle. P., the teacher, drummed out all the dances with her feet initially, and our feet mimicked her movements. Some of the dances had extremely complex rhythms such as “Madcap daughter” which was in 9/8 and the feet had to beat three very rapid steps at the end of each sequence of movement in order to keep in time. When teaching Poisedon, P., the teacher, used a metaphor “Imagine you are a piece of driftwood floating at the edge of the sea” for the steps rocking backwards and forwards. She also made a number of jokes with sexual overtones, for example, she joked with N., the other Circle dance teacher, who was the only male in the group

“The dress code for the ladies is purple, lilac and pink but the men have to go naked.”

We stopped to share a picnic in the shade of the tree and to read bits of poetry such as “Albert and the Lion” and “Now we are sixty,” chosen by individual members of the group who read their choice out loud. Then we danced again, feeling that we were rising to a higher level as we moved round the central candle and flowers. As there had been a number of people killed in Greece that day due to arsonists, when the candle was blown out, the light was sent to Greece. Before going home, we all had a drink and a little more to eat as P. said “we might be too spaced out to drive safely.” N., the teacher, told the story about the age of trees being shown by the width of their trunk. If more than three people could link arms round the trunk, then the tree dated from the time of Stonehenge or even earlier. It took four and a half people to link arms round the tree we were dancing under in the afternoon, in order to be in the shade rather than the open sunlight.

The clothes were beautiful. One lady had made a silk purple tunic that she wore with brooches, another wore a flowing pink sari, another lady wore a long purple skirt and straw hat with purple ribbon. D., the lady with glasses in her 70s, was busily taking photos. Many of the ladies wore dangly earrings, for example, P., whom I had interviewed, had large hoops with purple beads. P., the teacher, wore a purple top with long sleeves, black leggings and Grecian style thong sandals. One of the ladies who was very musical gave me a lift home. The music seems to be a very important part of the dancing, capturing the mood of each dance. This was not a cheap day as you had to pay £15 each for the dance workshop, £10 if you wanted a CD of the music and £5 for a sheet with the choreographic notation for the steps for 16 of the 20 dances. P., the teacher, will give us details of getting the other four via e-mail.

### **First Circle Dance Group 10.00-12.00**

I travelled to the class on the bus with G. She was so pleased to see me as I had been away on holiday. She grinned and hugged me. I reflected that I need to be aware of emotional involvement. There were 20 older people in the Circle dance group to-day, all women apart from one man, C., who was recovering from a stroke. P., the teacher, was dressed in a pale green top with a green swirling skirt. She was dancing in bare-feet and her toe nails were painted red. Even though she was a large and rather heavy lady, she demonstrated the steps very gracefully at the start of each dance. We did a variety of different

dances from various countries. First was an Israeli dance about a boy who wanted to steal a kiss from a girl at a well. Next was an Aspen flower dance that was a Bach remedy for 'neurotic fears' as P., the teacher, explained, "This dance involved wiggling the hands in-front of the face in order to release fears" she said "You also need to think about strong mental states and say to yourself "I can challenge the world" or "I have a safe place inside."

This Aspen flower dance was appropriately followed by the Greek dance involving resisting the oppression of the Turks, a dance that the group had performed on previous occasions. A comical and light-hearted cowboy dance followed, which I danced initially with the man who had recovered from the stroke. He could dance perfectly but he had difficulties with his speech, only managing to stutter the odd word that was often not what he was really trying to express. This cowboy dance encouraged me to visualize a cowboy salon and pistols. The whole group seemed to get into the light-hearted spirit of being cowboys. We formed two circles, an inner and an outer circle, and facing our partners, clicked our hands to the right and the left in time with the jaunty music. Then each individual in the outer circle moved onto the next person in the inner circle and clicked hands to the right and the left. This sequence was repeated again and then each pair who were now facing each other, joined hands and right slip step, left slip step, right slip step, left slip step, grapevine with right foot and dig right heel in front, grapevine with left foot and dig heel in front, then two "lurches." (bending movements with the body whilst keeping the feet still, like a cowboy swaggering from side to side). The whole dance was repeated again and again. Everyone exchanged grins as this was such a happy dance.

At the break, P., the teacher, explained to me, "Dance is very important for emotional expression, particularly if you are living alone. Many members of this group live alone. I live alone but I have my music." After ten minutes' rest, she launched into a dance from Uzbekistan and used a metaphor to describe how to wiggle the hands in front of the face, "snake-like." G. left the session with me a few minutes early in order to catch the bus. G. discussed the flower remedies as Bach remedies that are available in the health food shop, Holland and Barretts. She repeated the story she had told me earlier: "I keep some Bach rescue remedy at the back of the fridge. You add a drop to some water and drink it. Such a remedy is meant to lift you up. I took some before my husband's funeral." She also told me about her grand daughter and the other Circle dance class she used to attend. She said: "I used to go to the second Circle dance class but it was not very good as the teacher used to forget the steps. Many people in P.'s class have moved from this other class because it was no good." I reflected that perhaps I could use this other class as a contrast group for the research.

### **First Circle Dance Group 28.09.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I travelled with G. on the bus. She told me about the Keep Fit class. She goes every week in her local village hall. She commented

"I am so lucky. I don't feel old and I don't have any physical problems with growing older, other than some arthritis pain in my wrists that I noticed when I was doing some yoga at the Keep Fit class. So many people have poor health. The only thing is I can't walk as far as I used to. I used to walk six miles comfortably but now I can only walk three miles. But I enjoy walking and still go with my son when he comes to visit."

There were about 20 people at class, including two men, C., who was recovering from a stroke, and N., who was a dance teacher from the next town. J., the older lady from Australia, told me

"Circle dancing is about the full range of emotions whereas Scottish dancing is just about fun and laughter. The Five Rhythms, identified by Deborah Roth, incorporate different emotional states. Our teacher includes expression of the full range of emotions in the dances that she teaches. So there are dances which correspond to the left side of the brain in terms of structure and there are dances which correspond to the right side of the brain in terms of emotionality and creativity."

I really feel I have been welcomed into the group and given a lot of emotional support. A., the deaf lady, grinned at me warmly when we did the warm-up dance in a snake-like line round the corner, taking one, two or three steps to the right and then doing a stamp-stamp with our right and left foot or alternatively taking one, two or three steps to the left and then doing a stamp-stamp with our left and right foot. A., the deaf lady, when P., the teacher, started to demonstrate the steps, said to herself "Must concentrate." When C., the lady with short grey hair and glasses, admired my blue swirling skirt, she hugged me. She was wearing a cream and maroon embroidered flowery jacket and dark trousers herself. These were the kind of ethnic clothes that a number of the women enjoy wearing. B., whom I had interviewed earlier, was wearing a brown, yellow and purple swirling long top, black leggings, long necklace and dangly earrings. In contrast, A., whom I had also interviewed, was wearing a white top, white trousers and white canvas shoes. People seem to dress for comfort and fun.

P., the teacher, was wearing a t-shirt with the words "Choose Love" and black leggings and black soft suede boots. Even though she was very overweight, she demonstrated the sequences of steps for the various dances with immense grace and fluidity. Many of the dances, such as those from Bulgaria, she performed at great speed with immense energy but she also included more reflective dances, such as the "Bells of Norwich" which focused on the revelation of divine love to Julian of

Norwich and included movements such as raising the hands to heaven and crossing the hands over the heart. One dance, the Wanderer, included some complex moves in and out of the Circle. In P.'s words

“Pretend you are cutting a slice of cake. You are traversing the trajectory. You are going diagonally in, then changing direction, moving back diagonally out. Retrace these steps in the opposite direction.”

Throughout the session I used visual cues from the other dancers in order to keep up with the complex sequence of steps. I danced next to A., the deaf lady, and I noticed that she watched the rhythm of P., the teacher, beating her feet, very closely. She seemed to dance perfectly but missed out some of the repetitive turns, as P., the teacher, said “These give you vertigo.”

The retired professional dancer said P., the teacher, is 70 years old and positions her as very energetic for her age. She told me the Circle dance teacher at the other group keeps forgetting the dances. This is the second time she has told me about this. One of the ladies, J. (C's wife) complained that she was finding it difficult to remember the steps as many of the dances were so fast to-day. It was the speed of the steps that was problematic. Probably because the weather was cold, P., the teacher, was trying to warm people up.

The final dance was a Russian dance that really promoted a sense of community. It was danced very slowly and meditatively with sinking steps into the ground, and arms held in a W formation. It provided a powerful atmosphere for the final act of huddling together in a circle and blowing out the candle.

### **First Circle Dance Group 5.10.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I went on the bus alone, G. was not there this week. P., the teacher, would like a copy of my BSG talk and gave me her e-mail address. There was a very friendly and welcoming feel in the group and I really seem to have been accepted as a group member. Even D., the lady in her 60s with black hair and glasses, who had had back problems earlier in the year, seemed to welcome me. She had seemed a little suspicious about my research but now chatted freely to me about different types of dance. I have been dancing with this group of older women since January (although I have missed a few weeks due to holidays or illness). The friendships among group members seem to spread across the whole group. A., the lady in her 70s with gold-rimmed glasses, brought a spare curly green lettuce from her vegetable delivery that she said anyone could take. Someone else brought green apples from their garden to share. There was a real sense of community among the smiling, laughing, wrinkled faces. This sense of community was particularly enhanced by the holding of hands in a circle for most of the dances. Some hands were warm, some cold, some rough, some smooth, but all hands clutched each other in a sense of unity.

It was lovely to see D., the lady in her 70s, who had suffered a stroke, back dancing with the group again. She had been away for six months and P., the teacher, had frequently asked us to visualise her dancing amongst us in the more reflective dances at the end of the session. P., the teacher, had also named her as one of the people to whom we would send out the light when we blew out the candle at the end of the session.

The footwork in Circle dancing seems much more complex than in Scottish. Even more complex than my Scottish lessons which emphasise the five ballet positions. P., the teacher, demonstrates the steps in the different sections of the dances, such as the one “Palestine Sunshine” by a modern choreographer. Whereas Scottish seems more concerned with the patterns for the whole body, Circle emphasises the patterns of the feet, and sometimes the hands and arms too. The “Palestine flick” in the “Palestine Sunshine” dance was a special step designed by the modern choreographer. With weight on the right foot, you do heel-toe with the left foot then hop onto the left foot and bend the right knee, raising the right lower leg and foot behind the body with a “flicking movement.” The music for this modern dance was a warbling Palestinian song and it was very difficult to keep time as it was hard to hear the beat and the feet moved in a series of complex patterns whilst hands were held to form a circle. P., the teacher, gave verbal prompts for the movements:

“A right slip-step, a left slip-step, heel-toe and flick, grapevine to the left to the count of seven, release hands and shuffle feet diagonally to the candle in the centre. Reverse backwards and repeat the pattern.”

Some of the members of the group were dressed in flowing clothes such as long loose skirts. P., the teacher, wore a long brown top with a swirling yellow pattern and long loose sleeves over black leggings. Her feet were bare. Many of the ladies wore long dangling earrings such as S., whom I had interviewed with A. and P., who wore pierced earrings comprised of small blue beads on a wire. As she danced, they swung gently.

I felt very tired and relaxed after the final dance which was a symbolic meditative dance about taking energy from the earth. Dancers stood in a circle without holding hands but instead walked forwards with their hands stretched out in front and palms down to the earth, in order to absorb energy from the earth. P., the teacher, demonstrated how to walk backwards and turn your hands over, raising them over your shoulders with palms facing outwards, in order to give energy to the world. Then the hands were brought across the body, either to the heart, stomach or lower regions, symbolic of giving energy to your own body.

### **First Circle Dance Group 12.10.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I travelled on the bus to the dance session with G. She told me all about the various classes she had joined over the last three years. She told me how the Circle dance group was not very good because the teacher U. kept forgetting all the steps.



She also told me how she finds the aerobic exercise that she goes to in her village boring in comparison with Circle dance classes that are fun. She feels pleased as she has just joined another Keep Fit class in her village that focuses on dance-like movements to relatively modern music. She finds the music at the aerobic exercise class is boring as it is all '60s stuff that she knows inside out. In contrast, the international flavour of the Circle dance music is something she finds really beautiful.

P., the dance-teacher, told us how she plans the Circle dance classes when she is lying down. It was only when she was going through the dances late last night that she realised that she had put too many energetic dances on the programme. So she removed a couple of the dances but the remainder were still energetic, for example "Sunshine in Palestine", a lively dance that we had done the previous week.

"Never mind, it's good for you." she said, as she demonstrated an Israeli dance, usually performed by 17 year old boys, living in a kibbutz. "The Israeli grapevine step uses the whole body, which produces a really pleasurable sensation. The body lurches diagonally forwards and backwards as the feet cross over in the grapevine steps" she continued. This was a very energetic dance with lots of hops as the weight was transferred from one foot to the other in the complex pattern of steps. For example, in a series of steps to the right, the weight was transferred each time onto the right foot with a hopping movement, lurching the whole body to the right at the same time. Most of the dancers were out of breath at the end of the dance. I noticed that I was not out of breath, maybe due to the fact that I do a lot of cycling that is very aerobic. D., the older lady in her 70s who had returned to the group about six months after having had a stroke, sat out for the dance, and so too did C., the older man in his 70s who had also had a stroke. I noticed A., the slim lady who suffered from heart problems and had given me an interview, also sat out of several of the dances. When we did dances which involved full turns on the spot, I noticed that these three just moved from side to side. P., the teacher, had suggested this modification as a way of preventing dizziness.

We did a very noisy Turkish dance about butchers that involved 16 sequences of steps. P., the teacher, demonstrated each sequence in turn and we all practiced each sequence of steps one by one. Some of the steps were quite amusing. There was one step where we walked forwards and backwards, bending one knee and kicking one foot whilst shouting the obligatory "Hey!" P., the teacher, said the "Hey!" was obligatory in this dance. A., the lady with curly grey hair and gold-rimmed glasses, told me how P., the teacher, had said most of these Circle dances were often performed when drunk. This Turkish dance certainly sounded and appeared like a drunken crowd, with the loud singing on the recorded music. We held hands in a line that was looped round the candle in an elliptical shape. One of the sixteen sequences of steps involved little steps forward which were done in a shuffling manner. P., the teacher, used the metaphor "penguin steps." Calling one of the ladies by name, she warned us to take small steps or this lady would "burn her toes on the candle." At one point, where we crossed legs tightly, she used the metaphor "as if you can't wait to go to the toilet." One particular movement of the foot she termed "brush" which meant lightly brushing the ball of the foot on the floor next to the other foot and usually swinging it round the back into a grapevine step. G. told me on the bus how the aerobic exercise teacher had said that the grapevine step was banned in her classes. G. felt that she could not understand this as she said the grapevine step is so important in dance.

During the break, P., the teacher, gave out leaflets about a Shostakovich concert. She sang out the praises of various musicians who were going to play in the concert. I reflected how the love of music is intimately connected with the love of dance. P., the teacher, especially facilitates the inter-twining of the two as creative expression. For example, after the break we did a Russian dance and P., the teacher, talked about "icicles" in the music. As she explained

"There are lots of icicles in the introduction. The music is difficult because it is 6/7 time. You want to move your feet to the beat when you are learning the dance but the steps don't quite fit. Once you have learnt the steps, you can appreciate the beauty of the music." The music is very haunting and the steps glide along the floor, almost sinking into the ground, a mixture of grapevine steps, slip-steps and lifting one foot across the other. There is a deep sadness and beauty about this dance that nearly reduced me to tears.

P., the teacher, had kept to her usual plan of focusing on mind and body in the first half and spirit in the second half, with the more meditative dances. I find the dances in the first half are great for giving you a mental and physical lift and those in the second half particularly facilitate emotional expression. I had been feeling sad to-day, worrying about my family because of my various health problems. The first half raised me up physically and mentally whilst the second half facilitated me to express both sadness and joy. It was really supportive to link arms with all these older people and huddle together round the candle to send out the light. I went home on the bus with G. and I felt tired and relaxed but uplifted.

### **In-process Memo**

I was unable to attend either of the Circle dance groups on Monday October 15th or Friday October 19th due to a cold/throat infection. Monday's group has also been cancelled for October 22nd. I really miss the dancing and my mood is low due to my own health problems. I have developed mild lymphoedema in my left hand and arm due to the surgery I have had for cancer.

## First Circle Dance Group 2.11.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm

I had not been to this Circle dance group for several weeks due to a cold and feeling tired. I got a wonderful welcome from P., the teacher, as we did the first dance in a long line like a snake, winding our way round the candle as we held hands. P., the teacher, grinned at me. Her whole face lit up as she raised her eyebrows and said, "Sue, I feel so guilty. I've been meaning to ring you to arrange an interview." I reflected how being absent from this group for a couple of weeks had been really useful in facilitating my acceptance as a researcher. People do not like being watched constantly. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." I reflected. The teacher arranged to meet me for coffee in town at 10.00am on the very next day, in order to record an interview.

Before going into class, I had been welcomed by D., one of the older ladies with dark hair and glasses who was in her 70s and had injured her back. I had noticed her on previous occasions frequently kneeling on the floor when there were breaks in the dances, obviously trying to stretch out her back. She explained that she was early because she had been to the doctor's. She was sitting on a bench at a garden table, drinking a mug of tea. She smiles widely as she said, "Go into the kitchen and make yourself a drink. I brought my own tea bag. The light switch is on the far side of the kitchen." I made a mug of coffee and returned to join her. She was reading a book on the history of maths and explained that she was doing an Open University course, like D., the small lady in her 70s with round glasses. Several other ladies arrived and joined in the conversation. One of the ladies, B., who was in her seventies with short dyed blond hair and long earrings, a brown floral top with long sleeves and black leggings, was explaining that her male partner was stuck in bed and on painkillers with a large bruise on his back. The painkillers were making him drowsy all the time. The others listened supportively. I reflected how this dance group acts as a support group for its members. There is a real feeling of community among these older people, created by dancing together.

As usual, we did about 14 different Circle dances with a 10-15 minute break in the middle. There were 18 older ladies at the group to-day, in their 60s and 70s. As usual, there was a lighted candle in the centre of the floor, this week with a variegated ivy arrangement. The teacher, P., who was in her 70s, taught the dances completely from memory, as usual tapping out the different patterns with her feet in the centre at the beginning of each dance so that we could learn them. She would then put on the music and join in the Circle for the actual dance. Initially, she was wearing soft black boots with long tassels but for the second half of the session, she danced with bare-feet like many of the other women in the group.

My brain feels full of swirling patterns of feet as I try to recall the particular dances. I can only remember a few to write about in any kind of detail. However I feel that if I try to sit out of the dances and take notes openly, I will disturb the spiritual atmosphere of the dances. It is as though the dancers are raised up to a higher level, especially in the more reflective dances which involve floating arm movements, raising the arms above the head and then from side to side.

Some of the dances had a humorous element such as "River-dance." P., the teacher, explained how this music was recorded using the Irish bagpipes but because the Irish bagpipes were louder than any other instrument, the player had to sit outside in the toilet playing them during the actual recording session. P., the teacher, used the metaphor of "ducks' feet" to describe the footwork that involved very small steps bending from the instep. In contrast, "Lucky" was a beautiful floating dance to rippling music, with lots of twists and turns in the footwork. At the end of the dance, P., the teacher, said how beautiful it was to see everyone dancing in unison. She explained how she was politically incorrect, because she believed in the importance of discipline in Circle dance, with everyone doing the same thing at the same time. She disagreed with the sentiment "there are never mistakes in Circle dancing, only variations."

Next was an Armenian dance "Genhuga." P., the teacher, warned us that this was a vigorous dance done by drunken men. She later told me that she was inventing the drunken bit and explained how the steps of Armenian dances were so stylised that she found them difficult to learn and teach. The movements in Armenian dances were completely different from Greek and Israeli dances. She did not know the meaning of "Genhuga." The footwork involved a pattern of digging alternate heels into the ground, sometimes once, sometimes twice, as people danced round in a circle holding hands in a W formation. P., the teacher, explained the difference between the W and the V formation. The shoulders were tense and elbows bent when hands were held in the W formation. The shoulders were relaxed when the hands were held low in a V formation. This was an example of the use of letters of the alphabet as metaphors for arm positions.

There were a couple of more modern dances such as "Raindrops are falling on my head" and "The Charleston." At the break, P., the teacher, told me a story about a Rudolf Steiner village where dance was used with very disabled and traumatised people who were able to become uninhibited and expressive with their bodies in dance. She talked about the importance of dance as a child in order to dance as an older adult. You need to develop the ability to express yourself with your body.

Much of the conversation at break focused on film and theatre trips or U3A classes that group members were attending. G., with whom I travelled home on the bus, said she had seen the film "As you like it." She had played Rosalind once and found the lines ever so difficult to learn. She had really enjoyed the film. She had also seen "The History Boys" at the

theatre. She commented how modern writers such as Alan Bennett are as important as Shakespeare. This dance group seems to attract people who are interested in theatre and music, and the creative arts.

### **First Circle Dance Group 16.11.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

I travelled on the bus with G. She talked about ballroom dancing. She had met her husband through ballroom dancing when he already had his silver medal in ballroom and was working for his gold. She talked about "Strictly Come Dancing" and how she heard from her grand daughter, who was involved behind the scenes of the show, how the whole event was rigged and the most popular people rather than the best dancers always won. On the way home, G. told me that she would not be going to the all day Circle dance workshop on Sunday Dec. 2nd as she found dancing all day at her age was just too much. She said

"My legs have slowed down. They're just not as fast as they used to be. I feel tired after the Circle dance class. Dancing all day at that workshop would just be too much. Yesterday at my Keep Fit class, I did the exercises slowly as I find the teacher moves too fast."

She smiled and laughed as she demonstrated how fast the teacher had been moving her feet.

Two dances really stick in my mind from the 14 dances done in class. There were two teachers, P. and her friend N., the male teacher who comes from a neighbouring town. N., who was a short man in his late 40s with short red hair, just joined in the dances like everyone else. The first dance I particularly remember was the "Kilted Leprecon." This was a bouncy dance to Irish music which P., the teacher, said had to be performed with three "Yips" as a shout at random points in the dance.

"Anyone not producing three 'Yips' will have to perform the dance on their own at the end", she said with a wicked grin that lit up her whole face. We performed as if we were a riotous group of school children. I was holding C.'s hand on the left, the man who had had a stroke and had difficulty getting his words out, and D.'s hand on the right, the small lady with glasses in her 70s who has agreed to be interviewed. D. said she had not heard the name of the dance as she is deaf. As we did slip-steps to the right with alternate feet and then into the middle, we raised our hands from the low V hold and lifted them up to our shoulders. C., the man who had had the stroke, was perfectly co-ordinated with his feet and arms. There was a real sense of fun and laughter as we danced together, letting out random "Yips." Such dances are great for promoting a sense of community among dancers.

P., the teacher, demonstrated the steps for the Hungarian dance "The Castle." N., the other teacher, also joined in the demonstration. So both teachers were demonstrating the dance in the centre of the circle round the candle, with the circle of class members watching. As P., the teacher, said

"The steps are easy but there are many different sequences. It's an easy dance but you will find it hard to get the steps in your memory. Your body will remember the dance but your memory won't. We did it last week." There was uproar from the class in response to these words. "This is an easy dance" she re-iterated "only it gets faster and faster." Indeed one sequence of steps P. described with a metaphor "like the battlement of a castle" as this was the pattern the steps traced on the floor.

On the bus, on the way home, G. told me she did not think of mind and body as separate in dancing

"Once you know a dance, it's automatic and you just do it."

### **First Circle Dance Group 7.12.07 at 10.00am-12.00pm**

C., a lady in her 60s with long grey hair and glasses, has problems with her right hand and arm so she uses a green scarf to link with the next person rather than holding hands directly. I realise that she is the woman whom P. has told me has just had a course of chemotherapy for cancer as she has only been back at this group for several weeks. She was with the group for several weeks earlier in the year when I was first setting up the research, before I had started writing. She latched onto me as she noticed I was wearing a support on my left hand so we held the scarf between us for the first circle dance. I thought about Wendy Seymour's article in "Qualitative Health Research" November 2007, that discussed how her presence as a researcher with a disabled body when working ethnographically with disabled people, actually facilitated the research. In a similar manner, my own embodied presence as a researcher with a problematic hand and arm facilitated my relationship with this lady. The fact that we both had cancer and were linking our hands with a scarf because of lymphoedema (swelling caused by damaged circulation) was never verbalised fully. C. simply said

"I see someone with a similar problem." When in a closer hold for the next dance, shoulder to shoulder with elbows linked, I was aware that our problematic arms were rubbing against each other. I am the youngest dancer in the group, in my 40s, and I have not wanted to tell this group of older ladies that I have been treated for cancer because I do not want the research to become focused on me. However I am reaching a point where my own health problems are becoming apparent because of my swollen arm. I am an embodied researcher with my own body perceived and touched by those with whom I am doing research. I noticed that C. sat out from a number of the more strenuous dances, and at one point, took some pills with her lemonade. She could only raise her right hand in front of her face whereas I can raise my left hand right above my head, even though I am wearing a support. C. was wearing a long, loose sleeved top but no hand support.

C. was happy for me to write about the dancing and chatted to me about the dancing for my research.

“It’s so important for making you feel relaxed. P.’s solstice day of Circle dance, just before Christmas, is important for relaxation before a busy time. You just let your body absorb Circle dancing without thinking about it. Scottish dancing is more brainwork. When I do a pas de bas step with K. at the Tuesday class, I notice she lifts her feet much higher because of doing Scottish sword dancing as a child.”

P., the teacher, gave us what she termed a short body-talk

“Your shoulder blades are really important. Can I borrow your body?” She said this to the older lady, A., with gold rimmed glasses, on her left. “Your shoulder blades are here.” She pointed on A.’s back. “You need to relax your shoulder blades so that you are holding hands in a V formation in the circle. If tension builds up in one shoulder blade, you start to raise the arm, like this.” She demonstrated. “This means the next person is forced to raise the arm so the tension passes on round the circle. If you sense your neighbour’s arm rising, you need to gently pull their arm down.”

P., the teacher, taught the Turkish circle dance with 16 different sequences using a dualist approach. She demonstrated the dance and then got us to remember the patterns of the steps in the verses by reciting them after her, for example “Castle-castle-chardash-castle-chardash-castle” or “One-one-two-one-two-one” as P. said. A similar pattern of steps was repeated through all the verses of the dance, although different steps were also used. The teacher simply demonstrated the steps for the dance all the time from the centre of the circle, because the dance was so complex.

## **Second Circle Dance Group 8.10.07 at 1.45-3.15pm**

On first impressions, this group seemed very similar to the first circle dance group. There were about 20 older women in the 60 plus age range and one older man, who had come with his wife. The hall for this second group was much brighter and more spacious than the hall for the first group. There was the same emphasis on dancing in a circle holding hands or linking arms around a central candle surrounded with greenery and yellow berries. Copies of the Circle dance magazine “Grapevine” and posters about other Circle dance meetings, were available on the table for anyone to take. There were many of the same dances, such as “The winds on the Tor” or the Russian dance about a girl whose mother had forbidden her to see her lover and so had hidden her snow boots. The teacher told the stories behind the dances for example “The winds on the Tor” was composed about the church tower in Glastonbury, which was on a hill, in 1977 when Circle dancing started becoming popular. Although the teacher shared the other teacher’s interest in the stories behind the dances, she lacked the charisma in telling them.

Indeed the teacher seemed rather absent-minded and kept forgetting the steps of the dances. She constantly had to refer to her filing cards where cribs of the various dances were written. She performed many of the dances clutching the appropriate filing card for that dance and she sometimes had difficulty interpreting the crib and ended up teaching the steps incorrectly. In one Greek dance, which comprised several sequences of pointing each foot in front or behind, she got mixed up as to whether the foot should be in front or behind. She demonstrated the steps quietly from her place in the circle, rather than standing in the centre of the circle to demonstrate the steps boldly as the other teacher does. Several class members commented on the teacher’s problems. “She doesn’t know the steps!” commented L., a lady in her 60s with grey hair and glasses.

However the atmosphere seemed similar to the first circle dance group. It was very friendly and welcoming and after the Greek welcome dance, which was performed with arms crossed, the teacher got each individual to introduce their neighbours and themselves by name. People laughed and smiled and it was nice to be holding all these different hands, some warm, some cold, some rough, or smooth. Dancing in a circle does bring a feeling of togetherness amongst the members.

The teacher was happy for me to be a researcher in the group. I had arrived a few minutes early and shown her the information and consent sheets for participant observation and narrative interviews. I have discovered it is best to set up ethnographic research face to face. I announced in full about my research at break and people seemed interested in being involved and took the information sheets.

The dances taught at the session were much simpler than many of the ones P. does as the teacher was catering for beginners in the group too. One lady, L., in her 80s, seemed to have great difficulty learning the steps. As she said

“It’s getting it into your mind that’s difficult!” We were partners for a Welsh dance which involved doing a star formation for eight steps, first with the right hand, then with the left hand, in groups of four. We then joined hands with our partner and faced the other pair, going underneath their joined arms. The other pair then went underneath our joined arms and we went underneath their joined arms, progressing round the dance floor to meet a new couple. At one point, L. got totally lost and ended up in the wrong group. There was a lot of laughter during this dance and indeed, all the dances seemed light-hearted, lacking the deep emotionality of the other teacher’s session. The teacher asked me to dance between L. and another new person as I had done Circle dancing for six months. I do not feel an expert at Circle dancing in P.’s class but I do in this class. The teacher said she sometimes goes to P.’s class in a nearby village. She told a story about dancing “The Winds on the Tor” with two Russian girls at Glastonbury in the mist and how this was very moving. This dance consisted of two waltz steps, turn to the right, cross left foot over right, then grapevine to the left and finally repeat the sequence. The teacher explained how she has taught circle dancing in Russia and how the Russians love Circle dancing.

E., the older lady with grey curly hair and glasses, sat out for some of the dances. So did one of the ladies with short dark hair. E. told the teacher at the end of the session, when the teacher asked if anyone had a medical condition that she needed to know about, "Just call an ambulance if I become unwell."

The teacher appointed one lady to be secretary who would take any phone calls from group members. She also asked someone to bring in next week's candle and the piece for the centre. At the very end of the session, everyone linked arms round the candle to send out the light but the candle had already blown out! The teacher asked us to imagine sending the light to whoever needed it.

### **Second Circle Dance Group at 29.10.07 1.45am-3.15pm**

I gave out the information sheets about the research observation again as there were several newcomers. A number of people have offered to be interviewed later on. Everyone seems happy about the observation although the teacher wondered if I would be writing about her forgetting the steps. D., the thin lady in her 70s with short grey hair and glasses, who was at the Ladies' Step class in the Scottish yesterday, said she found the dances 'relaxing' but a lot easier than the Scottish. Indeed the teacher commented on how easily D. danced and she had only attended two classes! D. said that she had actually done some Greek dances before. I reflected how there are obviously transferable skills from one type of dance to another.

The whole atmosphere was relaxing and in many ways, similar to P.'s session. There was no charge for the course apart from the flat rate of £45 which people paid to join the organisation and then they chose as many courses as they wished. The teacher herself was retired, but still taught music. Indeed she talked about the importance of beating out the rhythm of each dance with your feet and her feet were bare like those of some of the class members. She identified that L., a lady in her 70s, was musical, as L. noticed that one of the patterns was off the beat. So music is an important part of this Circle dance group too. The teacher organised a member of the group to do the flower/leaf arrangement with a candle each week to provide a focal point. She created a sense of community as she assembled us in a circle holding hands, suggesting that we remained holding hands at the end of each dance to facilitate a moment of reflection. She smiled and everyone in the group smiled and laughed too. There was a sense of warmth and when we sent the light out at the end of the session, as in P.'s group, we sent the light to a lady from the group who was not present because her husband had just died. The teacher said she would bring a card for us to sign and send to this lady next week, but believed that the lady might be back herself in person by then.

We did several Greek dances, a South American dance, a modern Indian dance, the "Winds on the Tor" to a German piece of music and a dance about the autumn. The steps were simpler than in P.'s class but the teacher needed to refer to her note-cards and frequently got muddled. Indeed several members of the group seemed to memorise the sequence of the steps more easily than the teacher and performed them with greater fluidity. D. said it was nice not to be so challenged as in Ladies' Step. She explained how K., the teacher for Ladies' Step, and R.'s daughter, who were both in their forties, had been doing Ladies' Step for years, since childhood, which explains why they are so good at it.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 5.11.07 at 1.45-3.15pm**

There were 20 people in the group, all older women apart from one older man. The centre piece which one of the group members had brought in was beautiful, a large round green candle in a pottery dish surrounded by brown and red autumn leaves. The teacher organised everyone to link elbows in a horse shoe shape round the candle for the first dance. She did not demonstrate the dance first but instead started teaching the forwards and backwards steps from her position at the end of the horse shoe. There was a feeling of togetherness as people huddled together with shoulders and elbows, smiled at each other and laughed. However there were moments in the session when group members got impatient as the teacher seemed to have difficulty remembering the steps and frequently referred to her notes on cards. She seemed unable to teach the steps in a flowing manner. Indeed, when performing the actual dances, some members of the group seemed to perform the sequences of steps more fluently than the teacher. One of the dances involved the front basket hold. The teacher showed the group how to stand with both arms open so that you took the hands not of your immediate neighbours, but of the people on either side of your neighbours. The joining of hands in such an interwoven circle created a real feeling of togetherness. The teacher reprimanded me because I let go of one hand during this dance. The older lady who was clasping my left hand was quite short. It was difficult for me to reach her right hand with my left hand. Touch in a continuous circle through the holding of hands is obviously constructed as very important for group bonding.

The dances came from many different countries such as the Balkans. At several points, the teacher had difficulty with the CD player and in fact for one dance, members of the group could not get it to work either. So one dance had to be completely abandoned and could only be performed when one of the group members found another CD player in an adjacent room. This particular older lady was all smiles and welcomed a small round of applause from the group when the music actually started. Indeed many eyebrows had been raised when the teacher had been unable to find the music for the dance she had just taught. None of the dances particularly stick in my mind apart from an American Indian one that was performed to haunting pipe music. It comprised crossing the left foot over the right foot three times, the right foot over the left foot twice, then left foot over right foot once and right foot over left foot once. This sequence was repeated again and again.

At the end of the session, we huddled round the candle to think of those who needed our thoughts. The teacher had brought a card for us to sign for the lady whose husband had recently died. As the group broke up, people talked about other classes they were doing or the production of "The History Boys" which some of them had seen. The afternoon had been pleasant but I did not come away with the feelings of deep relaxation and being uplifted that I experienced after P.'s class.

## **In-process Memo**

I missed the first Circle dance group on Friday November 9th so that I could write up notes from the two Scottish groups I had attended on the Thursday evening. I have to be aware of my own boundaries and I have been too tired from attending too many dance sessions in a week. So I have decided to attend the first Circle dance group and the second Scottish dance group on alternate weeks.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 12.11.07 at 2.00-3.15pm**

I arrived 15 minutes late. I was immediately welcomed into the group and joined the circle of about 20 older ladies and one older man. The act of holding hands was warming and confirmed feelings of togetherness. Smiles were exchanged as the teacher was having difficulty with the CD player and had to be rescued with technical help from the older man. We launched into a tango dance in the circle, moving first to the right, slow-slow-quick-quick-slow, and swivelling round to the left, slow-slow-quick-quick-slow. Then a slow step to the left, pointing the right toe, two grapevines to the right and then start the sequence of movement all over again. People in the circle took a little while to synchronise the steps. The teacher was dancing in the circle clutching a card with the steps written on. Indeed before trying to sort out the music, the teacher had walked through the steps, one by one from her position in the circle. This was confusing for me and the other people on the opposite part of the circle as she was not doing them in mirror image.

The dance "Seaweed" involved various grapevine steps and moving diagonally into the centre and then back out diagonally, as if "cutting a slice of cake" according to the teacher. She used the metaphor of "seaweed being washed around on the shore" to describe the movement of the dance. Again she read the steps from cards to teach the dance step by step. The teacher complained, "I'm in a dither about the steps. I make notes about a dance then have difficulty interpreting them." As L., a lady in her 70s said, "I can't remember the steps in circle dancing and I can't get my brain to co-ordinate my feet."

I similarly find it difficult to remember all the dances in the session but I do manage to write about four dances. The last two dances stick in my mind well. These two were simple Israeli dances with side steps and steps forward and back. The teacher taught both dances in immediate succession, using her note-cards, step by step. The two dances were then performed in quick succession to lilting Israeli songs. The atmosphere was very therapeutic and relaxing. The teacher showed us how to crowd round the candle shoulder to shoulder so that we could all fit round as there were about 20 of us, and 'send out the light.' I went home on the bus feeling tired and relaxed. I spoke with D., the lady in her 70s who was also a Scottish dancer, acknowledging that my lack of experience in Scottish dancing meant that I had decided to attend the Foss and Drewry society just the once for my research. She nodded in agreement. Scottish dancing seems quite hierarchical. It is important to give my research participants space and not attend every dancing event. Circle dancing seems less hierarchical than Scottish. Anyone can join in the Circle dancing as each dance is always taught.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 19.11.07 at 1.45-3.15pm**

There were about 20 older women in the class. One of the older ladies had brought a centre piece, a large brown candle positioned on a white cloth with green holly leaves and whole brown walnuts around the candle. The candle was lit for the whole of the session and at the end, we all grouped round the candle, shoulder to shoulder and sideways to the centre, so that we could all participate in blowing out the candle and sending the light to whoever needed it.

The teacher had the steps written on little cards that she would use as prompts for teaching the dances step by step to the class. Sometimes she would remain in the centre of the circle and demonstrate the whole dance first, instead of teaching the dance from her position in the larger circle. "Someone always has the disadvantage of being opposite me in the Circle" she said "Like someone is always bottom of the class, although they needn't be, they can move." The teacher tried to get us to do a range of different hand holds in the circle. For example, the basket hold involved each person standing with both hands apart so as to link hands with people on the left and right in front of the body. This hand hold proved problematic for a number of the older ladies due to painful arms so it had to be modified. Instead of doing this hand hold in a circle, it was done in a long line with the person with the most painful arm at the end. So everyone was facilitated to dance.

L., the lady in her 70s, seemed to have great difficulty remembering the steps, which involved rocking backwards and forwards on alternate feet, criss-crossing each foot over the other in turn, and then bringing the left foot to the right foot with a 'stamp.' There was much laughter as members of the group struggled to keep up with the lilting music which got faster and faster. Only D., the lady in her 60s who also did Ladies' Step in the Scottish, seemed to have mastered the footwork perfectly. Indeed her feet flew through the formations in her black character shoes, never seeming to falter or stumble like the other members of class and the teacher did. D. told me that she had done belly dancing in Egypt, "It's wonderful for the stomach muscles" she said. "Egyptian dancing is amazing. There was a wonderful Egyptian dancer who could twitch every muscle of

her body.” D. quivered as she demonstrated how she would move her arm and stomach muscles. “Are you coming to the production of the opera ‘The Gondoliers?’ I’m singing in it and rehearsing all this week so I’ve no time to go to the second Scottish group. In fact, I haven’t been for a while due to rehearsals. I can’t go to the Circle dance session on Sunday afternoon that the teacher mentioned because of an opera rehearsal. K. in the second Scottish group has been advertising ‘The Gondoliers’ for me. There are so many different styles of dancing. I’d love to do Salsa but I haven’t got time.”

We did “Nigun Atik,” the Israeli wedding dance. This created a warm community feel and smiles were exchanged as everyone put a right hand on their neighbour’s left shoulder so as to link up in a tight knit circle. The teacher told us how the bride and groom were meant to stand in the middle. The action of raising or hands in the air she described as ‘ showering blessings on the bride and groom.’ This was a joyful dance and wrinkled smiles were exchanged as hands were clapped from side to side.

The last dance was an Italian one “Thanks for Life.” By this stage in the session a real sense of community had grown among the dancers. The teacher invited the two older Italian ladies in the class to translate the song associated with the dance for everyone else. It was a really moving song about saying thank you for your eyes and ears and all that you perceive through them. It was a lively dance consisting of eight cha-cha steps done anti-clockwise round the circle without holding hands, and then steps into the centre and out again, opening your hands out to the people on either side of you, as you took each step. This was an opportunity to exchange warm smiles with your neighbours, consolidating the sense of community for the final blowing out of the candle. I bought a tape and booklet of beginners’ dances from the teacher for £4. L., the older lady in her 70s with grey hair in a bun told me, “You should get a video camera to film this lot! They’re having such fun.” A wide smile spread across her wrinkled face. When the teacher asked for a volunteer to bring in a centre piece the following week, L. offered.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 26.11.07 at 1.45-3.15pm**

As usual, we danced in a circle round a candle and a few leaves. There was the teacher, who was retired herself, 15 older ladies, one older man and myself. We started with a Rumanian dance that involved holding hands in a circle in a low W. We took seven slip steps to the right and then raised the left leg across the right with toes pointing to the ground. We then did the same sequence to the left, this time raising the right leg across the left with toes pointing towards the ground. The teacher walked us through the steps from her position in the circle, rather than demonstrating in the centre as P. does. She clutched a note-card with the steps written on and sometimes asked a class member to help her interpret them. Despite the haphazard way in which the steps were taught, there was a real feeling of warmth and community in the group as hands were joined, smiles exchanged and the group danced together to the lilting music. After repeating the seven slip-steps and the lift to each side again, we lifted each foot and then did slip-steps in and out of the centre.

The teacher was confused over the timing of the steps when walking us through the steps of a Turkish dance that was performed in two lines, facing each other. D., the slim lady in her 60s with grey hair who also does Ladies’ Step in the Scottish, complained

“The timing of the steps is all wrong. Follow me. There should be four steps to each side, not three.” D. counted steps out loud and both of us kept in time to the music whilst the rest of the line echoed with laughter and confused steps. D. has a good sense of rhythm, probably from all her opera-singing.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 7.1.08 at 1.45-3.15pm**

There were 15 of us, including the teacher at the session. We did mainly Greek dances, with the teacher reading the steps from little cards at the start of each dance. She showed us each dance, step by step, rather than demonstrating the whole dance first as P. did. The atmosphere was light and humorous and the older ladies in the group laughed as they made mistakes trying to learn the dance. The first Greek dance “Gallicos” was done in a large circle with the candle and leaves in the centre. Smiles were exchanged as people linked hands. The dance consisted of a mixture of yeminite and grapevine steps. There was a modern dance “Sing the song” and then another Greek dance that was done in two concentric circles sometimes face-to-face or “bum to bum” as the teacher put it. There was much laughter as the teacher had some difficulty interpreting the instruction “180 degrees” on her card. The dancers took several steps to each side before changing places so that the inner circle became the outer circle and the outer circle became the inner circle. All dancers were now “bum to bum” rather than face-to-face. There was much laughter as dancers changed positions. After dancing several steps to each side, the instruction came to “turn 180 degrees to the left.” Was this an instruction for the two circles to change places again or was it simply an instruction for the two circles to become “face-to- face” rather than ‘ bum to bum?’ There was a lot of laughter and discussion about the interpretation of these instructions. The teacher got us to try the dance several different ways but there was just no clear conclusion. Laughing and tired, the teacher announced a break!

The teacher has arranged to be interviewed to-morrow. She told me how her mother, who is in her 90s, is really ill in hospital but she finds it really important to keep doing things such as circle dancing. She sees the interview as a good distraction for her. Several other older ladies have also offered to be interviewed. The circle dance group really seems to

facilitate older people to support one another, as one older lady told me and another older lady who is a retired nurse, the long story of her sister's husband undergoing treatment for leukaemia.

We did a couple more Greek dances before crowding round the candle to send the light to whoever needed it. The teacher mentioned her mother being ill in hospital. I reflected how in many ways, this second Circle dance group serves the same function as the other dance groups, providing physical and emotional and psychological support for older dancers. Dance provides time-out from hard lives and an opportunity to share life stories with each other.

### **In-process Memo 8.1.08 at 9.00am**

The teacher from the second circle dance group phoned to cancel her interview as her mother had died in the night. I sent her a bereavement card.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 14.1.08 at 1.45-3.15pm**

The teacher arrived looking bright and cheerful despite the loss of her mother. She had told me that her mother was in her 90s and had been very frail and ill and in hospital. The teacher seemed to focus well on teaching the dances, although she used prompt cards to remind her of the patterns of the steps. We did about seven or eight different dances, a mixture of Greek, Israeli and Celtic styles. It is hard to remember all the dances in detail so I will just write about three.

The first dance we did was "Misolou," a Greek dance we have done before which consists of various grapevine steps, crossing the feet over each other in different directions. The teacher seemed to have tremendous energy as she crossed her feet over one another, only occasionally falling out of time. Everyone was holding hands and there was a nice supportive atmosphere among the group of 18 dancers who were all retired women. The teacher commented, "Watch D. doing the dance. She's got the steps." Indeed D.'s feet glide in her soft black character shoes with tremendous grace and ease. She seems to absorb the steps of the dance straight into her feet without having to think about it. It must be all that Scottish dancing she does, dance just seems so intuitive in her life. In contrast, L., the lady with white hair who is holding my hand on the left laughs as she stumbles over the steps, "At least I know the rhythm, even if I can't get the steps." she tells me with a big grin on her wrinkly pink cheeks. She used to be a musician but does not play the violin any more. The dancers seem to be pulling and tugging against each other but somehow the circle manages to remain holding hands and rotate around the lighted candle and pink flower centre piece. Smiles were exchanged and the togetherness of this group of dancers seemed more important than any individual dancer's technique or lack of technique. When the lilting music stopped, some dancers stood quietly, as if collecting their thoughts whilst others exchanged smiles and brief comments in pairs.

We did another Greek dance "Agape Noo." (a Circle dancer from the first group had mentioned this dance "I love you" in her interview). The teacher said this was one of her favourites and again seemed to move with great energy. Smiles were exchanged as dancers rehearsed the steps the teacher was reading out from the card. Feet were criss-crossed to the left and the right, backwards and forwards whilst arms were held in a W formation. D. criticised my dancing as she was dancing on my right

"Your arms should be just shoulder height." The timing of the lilting Greek music was difficult and several of us got completely out of time. As D. said "You just have to get into a rhythm and keep going."

All the dances involved holding hands, which promoted togetherness. At the final huddle round the candle, one of the dancers sent the light to the teacher's mother: "Remember all the Circle dances we used to have in her garden?" she said. Many of the group hugged the teacher. She said her mind was clear and she felt full of energy. She thanked me for the card with a smile, as I hugged her.

I walked home with D., the 'expert' Scottish dancer in her 60s, who discussed the competitive nature of Scottish dancing

"It's just not fair on everyone else when people don't know the dances. D., the 85 year old man, doesn't know them that well but he likes to come for the social support. Just like some of the other elderly people. The intermediate class is going to start again on Tuesdays, but it's just not suitable for beginners. The university club on Mondays is good. The students are not so good at footwork but they're very quick at picking up the patterns just after one walk through. I shall start going again this term. You have to watch for J., the young man in yellow shorts. He's a bit rough but he knows his stuff. He's worked very hard over the last three years to learn Scottish dancing."

### **Second Circle Dance Group 21.1.08 at 1.45-3.15pm**

It was a wet, windy day and the 20 retired women who gathered in the hall for the Circle dance session appreciated the red warmth of the centre piece designed by M., one of the members. She had positioned a cream and red candle on a plate, surrounded it with pebbles and red flowers and placed the plate on a red headscarf.

We started the session with a fairly simple Turkish dance. This was done with hands held and shoulders brushing your neighbours' shoulders, in three small lines. The physical contact stimulated smiles and a friendly feeling in the group. The teacher got us to walk through the steps, reading the instructions from a small card: "Left foot crossed over right foot, right to the side and then left foot crossed over right foot and right foot to the side. Then put weight on the left foot and bend the right foot behind the left knee whilst leaning the body backwards." This pattern of steps was repeated again and again,



and the haunting music, played on stringed instruments, seemed to get fast and faster. The dancers struggled to keep in time to the music and grins and smiles were exchanged.

One of the older women had hurt her leg so she asked the teacher to do the slower dances first. We did a lilting Greek dance called "Thalos" that means the sea, and the backwards and forwards steps represent the waves washing backwards and forwards on the sea shore. The steps were a complex mixture of grapevine steps in various different directions. Some people were struggling to get their feet to cross in the correct way. The teacher explained

"There are no right steps in Circle dance, only variations of steps. As long as we maintain the Circle and all move in the same direction, it does not really matter what your feet are doing. I don't like to call out the steps when we're doing the dance because it's better to let your body just capture the spirit of the dance. One teacher I know actually did a course "How to teach Circle dance" and she calls out the steps when the group dances. Perhaps I should go on a teaching course."

We did a slow Greek dance with concentric circles that we have danced before. The two circles change places so that the outer circle becomes the inner circle and the inner circle becomes the outer circle. There was a real community feel as we all managed to perform this dance well and in unison. Smiles were exchanged. We took two steps to the right, two steps to the left, two steps to the right, two steps to the left, one step to the right, one step to the left. Then each person exchanged places with a person from the outer circle and repeated the dance from the new position. All 20 dancers seemed to move together like cogs in a wheel.

We did a Turkish dance with a lot of work with the heels. This was a very fast dance and several of the older ladies sat out, including the one who had hurt her leg. So the teacher, clutching a card with the steps written down, walked through the dance with us. We dug our right heel into the floor in front of the left foot and brought it back to close with the left. Then we dug our left heel into the floor in front of the right foot and brought it back to close with the right. The catchy rhythm stimulated the dancers to move faster and faster. Then the dancers did steps in and out of the centre, more heel digs and closing the left foot to the right with an emphasised stamping noise. The whole pattern was repeated again. Some dancers seemed to fall over their feet, while others, such as D., performed with grace and ease.

## **Second Circle Dance Group 28.1.08 at 1.45-3.15pm**

There were 20 older ladies at the session, myself as a 48 year old and the teacher who was in her 60s. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly as the ladies chatted in twos and threes. R., with white hair, who was in her late 70s, told me she could not manage the interview next week as planned because she is going out rambling with a few friends: "We get together as a small group and go off walking together because it is not safe to go on your own. We go at a comfortable pace and people will wait for you if you want to look at flowers in someone's garden as you are walking past. Sometimes we go to a nature reserve in the car. We usually have dinner together in a pub in the evening." K., with long curly hair, who is one of the best dancers, has offered to be interviewed next week instead. K. learns the steps accurately.

I noticed how everyone in this Circle dance group was very casually dressed in trouser and coloured tops. These clothes were not as flamboyant as the ones worn by some of the members of P.'s group. The teacher was dressed very plainly in black trousers and blue t-shirt and had her feet bare. Most members of the group were wearing black ballet or character shoes. The teacher reprimanded us for being noisy and chattering in between dances

"This is a noisy group. When you get to the end of a dance it is important to savour the atmosphere. Just pause for a little while, holding hands in a low W" said the teacher. Members of the group exchanged smiles and grins, as if they were naughty school children.

The dances were a mixture of different traditions such as Greek, Celtic, Russian and Gypsy. It is difficult to remember the sequences of steps to write about these dances in detail as I interviewed L., an older lady with short red hair and glasses, immediately after the session. Some of the dances were complex and included steps such as "squashing the cockroach" or the grapevine and yeminite. The "squashing the cockroach" step involved digging the toes of the leading foot into the ground in a squashing action. The Celtic dance was a very simple pattern of steps to the side and steps into the centre of the circle. K. as well as D, always seemed to dance with a perfect technique.

The sense of community generated by holding hands was particularly reinforced by a dance that included doing a grand chain around the whole circle. The teacher designated each person as either sun or moon in an alternating pattern. She organised all the suns to face clockwise and go round the circle in a clockwise direction whilst all the moons went round in an anticlockwise direction. The hand of the oncoming person would be momentarily clasped as each person danced round the grand chain. It was very supportive to hold all the different hands, some warm, some cold, some soft, some rough but all clutching mine in turn. The exchange of smiles reinforced this sense of community.

One of the catchy folk songs to which we did a dance in two concentric circles, keeps ringing through my head "Hey ho, away we go, riding on a donkey." This was an amusing dance that particularly facilitated a sense of community, as the dancers in the outer circle moved round after each sequence of steps, so there was the opportunity to dance with many different members of the group. The feeling of belonging was consolidated by the fact that each sequence of steps was performed whilst holding hands with your current partner. The lively steps mirrored the lively song "Step-stamp-stamp, step-

stamp-stamp. Forwards, backwards, forwards, backwards. A right slip step, a left slip step. Walk forward four steps, with the outer circle taking bigger steps so that they moved onto the next person in the inner circle." People laughed and smiled at each other, enjoying moving their bodies and the opportunity to dance with different members of the group. It was as if the donkey song had become so embodied that people actually seemed to be galloping along like donkeys.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 4.2.08 at 1.30-3.00pm**

There were 15 retired women in their 60s-70s and myself. The teacher was using cards to teach the steps of the dances and was having some difficulty interpreting her notes. The atmosphere was light and humorous, people exchanged laughs and smiles as they tried to follow the teacher's instructions with their feet twisting in various directions. Some of the dances were simple, such as the Greek "Misolou," that I feel I can dance with minimal effort.

Two other dances were ones I have done with the other teacher, "The Bells of Norwich" and a Russian one that involved a slow glide. The teacher passed around a postcard of the cell of Julian of Norwich adjacent to one of the churches. She told us the story of Julian of Norwich, how she was a mystic or anchorite who would give advice to people and pray. She had a servant who brought her meals and looked after her when she was sick. The music to the dance included a song about the Bells of Norwich, each verse concluding with Julian's famous saying "All will be well." The movements of the arms in this dance corresponded to the words of the song, for example the arms were held in a W formation as people held hands in a circle and swung backwards and forwards to mimic the ringing of bells. Similarly the hands were held in front of the body in a prayerful posture at the end of each section of the dance for the words "All will be well."

The music for the Russian dance sounded like icicles and the movements were beautifully graceful as individuals danced in a circle without holding hands, sliding along the floor from foot to foot and gesturing towards the candle with the innermost hand. This was a really meditative dance and the atmosphere whilst performing it was really spiritual, as it had been for "The Bells of Norwich."

In contrast, after the break, we did a lively Russian gypsy dance "Djalem-Djalem" that we had done that previous week and involved the "squashing the cockroach step." This is a metaphor for the step, when the balls of the feet are squashed into the floor. Various slip steps and grapevine steps preceded this kukurachi step, and the dance ended with four steps diagonally into the centre and back, like cutting a slice of cake. The bouncy music helped the dancers keep in rhythm and there was a loud marked beat at the end of the four steps into the centre, when the dancers raised themselves up on the tips of their toes on one foot. Everyone balanced well as we were all holding hands in a circle. K. said with a smile, "Balance is something you find difficult as you get older."

At the end of the session, everyone huddled round the candle to send out the light. I interviewed K. at the end of the session in a nearby café.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 18.2.08 at 1.30-3.00pm**

There were about 18 older women. The teacher was in Scotland so a dancer from one of P.'s groups in a nearby village led the dancing. She said, "I'm not a teacher but I'll do some Greek dances to-day. The teacher from the first Circle dance group arranges Circle dance for a day in the grounds of a stately home in the summer with a theme, and this year she did a Greek theme. These are some of the dances from that day." The substitute teacher, an older lady in her 60s, did not use any cards to teach the dances but she experienced some difficulty in remembering the sequences of steps. However the Greek dances and the Greek music created a beautiful sensation and the group seemed to glide through the dances as we held hands in a circle, even if there were some "wrong" steps or variations on the normal ones. The teacher explained about several variations in the "Misolou" dance, such as dancers adding extra grapevine steps or changing directions so that two dancers would be facing each other as they moved round in the circle holding hands. I noticed K. and D. performing the steps perfectly for each dance, whilst the rest of us seemed to struggle with the timing.

V., a lady in her 60s who had been coming to the group for only three weeks told me, "I felt so relaxed and calm and uplifted when I got home after the last session. It was just wonderful." The last dance of the session was the "Elm Tree," one of the Bach Flower Remedy dances. The teacher explained how it was about standing firmly rooted to the ground in each position as you moved your feet backwards and forwards, holding hands in a circle. We crowded round the candle to blow out the light and send it to whoever needed it. People are taking it in turns to bring an arrangement of flowers, candle and leaves. I offered to do next week. I interviewed M. after the session.

### **Second Circle Dance Group 25.2.08 at 1.45-3.15pm**

There were 16 of us, including the teacher, at the session. It was lovely to be surrounded by smiling wrinkled faces. The teacher said, "I warned my friend last week, I., who took the class when I was in Scotland, that you were a noisy group." Everyone laughed. The arrangement I had made provoked even more laughter as the small blue candle sputtered and went out although the purple, white and yellow crocuses from my garden had opened out beautifully in their small glass of water. Luckily, R., the older lady with white hair who I am going to interview in two weeks' time, came to my rescue. She happened to have a large chocolate coloured candle in her bag that she put in the centre and I duly lighted! She had won it at some bazaar! Her laughter was echoed by members of the group. There was a real feeling of community amongst these older ladies

that was enhanced by the holding of hands in a circle round the candle for the first dance “La Louette” that was performed to a French song. The simplicity of the sequences of steps meant that the dancers moved very much in time to the music and this really promoted a feeling of togetherness. The teacher called out the steps as she walked us through the dance from her position in the circle, “Two steps to the right, two steps to the left, two steps to the right, two steps to the left. Two steps right. One step left. Two steps right. One step left. Then repeat the whole sequence.” The teacher beat out the rhythm with her bare-feet on the wooden floor. The members of the group copied her. The circle moved in unison to the lilting French song, creating a feeling of fun and relaxation. At the end of the dance, group members grinned at each other and chatted away. Again there was much laughter. J., the lady who had offered to be interviewed after this class, was dancing next to me. Her whole face lit up with smiles and her pink cheeks creased with laughter. She squeezed my gloved-hand and asked

“What’s wrong with your hand?” I replied “RSI.” I have decided to keep things simple and just say “RSI” as I do not want to be dumping my own extensive health problems onto my research participants. Luckily I have full flexibility in my arm and can raise my arm right up in the air, in all the complex movements. No-body knows I am wearing a support on my arm underneath my long sleeved shirt.

The next dance was Rumanian and incredibly fast and furious. The teacher taught us the two sequences of steps, and then put on the haunting and frantic music for the actual dance. She used the metaphor of “cutting the cake” and “a box” to describe the two sequences of steps. C., the small Italian lady with grey curly hair, laughingly said, “It’s like a wedding cake and the box that you put it in.” She was greeted by much laughter. The teacher demonstrated the steps for cutting a slice of cake in a triangular shape and then got us all to practise this sequence several times whilst holding hands in the circle. Then she taught us the steps for a box, a square shape. We practised this square shape several times. The teacher warned us, “The timing is very difficult in the music. When you hear the wailing, you should be doing the box shape.” And she mimicked a wail. We danced fast and furiously when she put the music on, and many people were out of breath at the end. Again there was much laughter and chatter at the end of the dance.

We did a number of other dances but my ageing memory can only hold a few details of them. One of them was a Greek dance that seemed to involve physically tying each other in knots. The teacher (who is teaching voluntarily) seemed to have problems dividing the class into two lines of eight. First she divided the class into two lines of six and one line of four, next she divided the class into one line of ten and one line of six. Finally she got the class into two lines of eight and then changed over the people at the ends of the line

“I need people who know what they are doing at each end” she said. “D., will you go to the end of one line and K., will you go to the end of the other?” Everyone in the group laughed, as we all know D. and K. are the best dancers in the group, and everyone copies their feet when they get lost in the sequences of steps. They seem more reliable in their performance of the dances than the teacher who seems to frequently get the pattern of the steps wrong when she is teaching them and then performing the dance. D. smiled and then put on a serious expression as she dutifully went to the end of the line. The footwork for this Greek dance was simple – step to the right, stamp left foot next to the right, stamp right foot. This pattern was continuously repeated. The problem came with the arms. Each line held hands and the leader wove through each pair of arches, as if the line of people was a length of wool in knitting. As the people were woven or knitted together, each line was divided into two, with each person facing their neighbour, now directly opposite them, with hands crossed. There was much laughter as arms were twisted and bodies rubbed against each other. Somehow our line did not get the timing completely right. The teacher said the two halves of the line should be moving in opposite directions when facing each other but somehow this never happened. She repeatedly unwound and wound the line in snake-like patterns.

The teacher told the story of how she did another Greek dance, involving pointing the toes in a triangular shape whilst standing on the spot with the supporting leg, when waiting with her mother in bed at the hospital, outside an investigation room. Her mother had been asleep but another lady in a hospital bed had been fascinated. The teacher seems to use circle dance as a de-stressor.

We repeated the “Donkey riding dance” that I have written about in another session. There was much laughter and smiles were exchanged as the outer circle moved round after each sequence of steps to a new partner. Then we did “Circle Tango.” The teacher had difficulty interpreting the instructions from the card and K. took over the demonstration that involved holding hands in a circle and doing tango steps to the right and then to the left. The teacher could not interpret the word “swivel.” K. demonstrated how it meant swivelling the hand to the right when dragging the left foot back to join the right. K., as a class member, who gave me the third interview, seemed to be a more expert dancer than the teacher.

At the end of the session, we all huddled round the candle to blow it out and send the energy to whoever needed it.

## **Second Circle Dance Group 3.3.08 at 1.30-3.00pm**

There were 20 older ladies in the class. The atmosphere was convivial and the air full of gentle laughter. The teacher called us round the central arrangement, a white lighted candle and yellow daffodils, brought by M., the older lady in her 60s with white hair who had offered to be interviewed after this session. We did “The Bells of Norwich” first and the teacher repeated the story about Julian of Norwich living in a small room, with a servant, that was adjacent to a church, and spending

her days in prayer. The teacher brought out a little booklet about the church to show the class and said, "Anyone who wants to know more about Julian of Norwich can have a look at this." The dance involved holding hands in a circle in a low V formation and swinging the arms backwards and forwards to mimic the ringing of bells. Various slip-steps were done round the circle then several steps into the centre, a transfer of weight from foot to foot and finally turning round on the spot, ending with your hands crossed in front of the chest and your head bowed low in a prayerful position. This pattern was repeated again and again until the end of the music. I felt the pattern had become absorbed in my body so that my feet glided along the floor smoothly, like D., the lady with grey hair in her 60s dancing next to me. I was aware that M., who was on the other side of me, was struggling with the steps. M. said she was struggling when I interviewed her later.

Other dances in the session took on a seasonal flare, such as the "March Hare." This was a new dance that we had not done before. The teacher explained how one of the steps was meant to represent a hare kicking as you stepped to the side and kicked into the air with the other foot. The rest of the dance was a series of fast grapevine steps to the right and the left, coupled with some 'pas de bourre's' on the spot like in Scottish dancing. I was dancing next to D., whose feet in their soft black shoes, flew through the 'pas de bourre's' with great feeling and expression. Her experience of Scottish dancing gave her a certain fluidity and sense of rhythm in her feet and body which seemed to be lacking from other members of the group, such as M., who was dancing on my left side. M. was struggling to keep her feet in the correct pattern in time to the music. The physical act of holding hands helped the dancers to keep roughly in time with each other, even if some people had difficulty with the steps.

We repeated the fast and furious 'wedding cake slices' and 'boxes' dance that we have done on previous occasions. I noticed that a number of the group, such as M., seemed quite out of breath at the end of this rather energetic dance. D. asked me about other circle dance groups and I told her about P.'s groups that seem to work at a higher level although they are more emotionally intense, using visualisation to think about sick members.

"I don't mind that" said D. I told D. I would bring her details of how to contact P. next week. My research seems to have elements of action research, as I am now putting an older dancer in touch with other groups. I noticed this older dancer, D., doing the same for other members of the second circle dance group, telling them about the international folk dance on Monday evenings.

K., the lady who also goes to P.'s circle dance group, taught the last dance of the session. She demonstrated the dance with M., the small lady with shoulder length grey hair who had given me an interview several weeks earlier. K. remained in the centre for the whole of the dance, like P., the teacher of the other Circle group, sometimes does, so that she could demonstrate the steps to the group during the actual performance of the dance. There were eight liting waltz steps round to the right, at the start of the dance, with everyone holding hands. Two steps were done with the body moving forwards, then two steps with the body moving backwards. The pattern was repeated until all eight steps were completed. Then two waltz steps into the middle, holding hands with a partner, swinging a partner under your arm and raising the other hand behind your partner's back like 'angel wings', to dance to join the larger circle. The 'ladies' would then dance onto their next partner to repeat the sequence.

K. danced with a wonderful poise as she gracefully demonstrated the steps, pointing her toes in her black ballet shoes. K. danced with her friend M. and they were both smiling broadly as they danced together. As a large lady, K.'s size just does not seem to matter when she is dancing. Her voice has a soft Scottish lilt as she carefully explains and demonstrates the steps, dividing the sequence into three stages.

"You can't go wrong if you are all holding hands in a circle for the first eight steps" she says "You have to move in the same direction as the people on either side of you, either forwards or backwards." There was a lovely feeling of community as the whole group danced in unison and this feeling of community was reinforced by the smiling faces of the ladies who moved round. To everyone's satisfaction, the music finished as the original partners were re-united. There was much laughter and the teacher had to call the class to huddle round the candle to blow it out and send the energies to whoever needed it. I noticed that H., a short round lady, sat out a number of dances but was my partner for the Celtic dance

"I've got fibromyalgia, and arthritis in my hips and legs. I haven't injured myself circle dancing" she said. She did the waltz steps of "The Journey" dance very gracefully in her ballet shoes and did not seem to be in any pain. She had sat out for the fast and furious 'wedding cake dance' however.

## **Second Circle Dance Group 10.3.08 at 1.30-3.00pm**

There was much informal discussion about problematic body parts before the class started. J., one of the ladies I had interviewed, had hurt her foot and was concerned she might not be able to put weight on it during the dancing. Other ladies asked about my gloved hand and I said "RSI" as I do not want to draw attention to the fact that I have had surgery for cancer. Several of the older women, such as M., the small lady with grey hair, whom I had interviewed, complained about arthritis in their fingers, aggravated by the cold damp weather on this particular day. As usual, there was a large lighted candle in the centre, surrounded by blue flowers and leaves. We all joined hands in a circle. D. held my right hand and J. held my left hand. It was pleasant and welcoming to feel the warmth of these wrinkled hands. The teacher taught us the first simple dance "The

Four Seasons” step by step. The steps were very simple and the dance took on a trance like quality as the circle rotated slowly in an anti-clockwise direction. Two slow steps to the right, one step to the left, dig in the right heel, then the left heel. It was the repetition of this pattern that created the trance-like feeling, lifting the dancers onto a higher level.

The next dance was French “Le Printemps” and this dance stimulated memories of being primary school children as the teacher instructed half the group to be birds and the other half to be bees. Each bird was then paired with a bee. There was much laughter as individuals paired up, birds on the left and bees on the right of each pair. The teacher, clutching a card with the steps written on in short hand, walked us through the dance. She had some difficulty interpreting the instructions and sometimes the steps did not seem to quite fit with her counting. The atmosphere was great fun however and dancers laughed and exchanged smiles as they wove in and out of the circle. Initially all the birds skipped into the centre and then out again and then the bees skipped into the centre and out again. Everyone joined hands in the large circle and took slow steps to the right (in order to recover from the skipping, as the teacher said), and then eight fast steps to the right and eight fast steps to the left. Then all the birds skipped into the centre and joined hands to dance round in an inner circle, four steps to the right and four steps to the left. Then the birds paired up with the bees, each couple dancing round on the spot holding hands for six steps, ending with two claps. This sequence was repeated four times and then it was the grand chain that took everyone a few attempts to learn. I remember D. and K. in their interviews saying how difficult grand chains can be for inexperienced dancers. There was much giggling and laughter as the group of 14 dancers kept ending up with the wrong partner. Everyone just seemed to get the counting incorrect, except for D. and K. whom I could hear I could hear counting out aloud in order to help the other dancers with the correct pattern.

“Right hand, left hand, right hand, moving round three people, then clap in front of the fourth person before taking their right hand to start the pattern again.” I could hear them saying these words under their breath. There was much giggling as dancers seemed to get in a bottleneck but eventually everyone moved fast and freely. And when the catchy French music was played, everyone performed incredibly well. Such dances are really important for facilitating a sense of community through fun and laughter, with older dancers getting the chance to hold each other’s hands in turn and smile directly into each other’s faces. Eye contact was so important in facilitating this sense of togetherness.

At the break, people drank bottled water and chatted in pairs. The teacher announced that she would be doing a session of circle dancing in her mother’s garden in May. If it rained, we could dance round the table in the dining room. The teacher said the experience of doing circle dancing under the trees in a garden is really lovely.

I sat out for the Macedonian dance that was done in a front basket hold as this was potentially damaging to my hand and arm. Hands and arms had to be criss-crossed with your neighbours’ in a tight hold. This was a very sombre dance with sombre music and the teacher said the song was telling a sad story although she could not translate it. You could feel the sadness in the slow stepping movements and sense a sombre mood among the dancers as they straightened their usually smiling faces. At the end of this dance, instead of the usual smiles, laughter and chatter, everyone was silent. These moments of reflection seemed even more powerful in uniting the dancers than the laughter.

The timing of some of the dances was very difficult, and the teacher had a lot of trouble getting the steps of the Israeli dance “The Land of Eden” to fit the haunting and wailing music. The steps themselves seemed alien and the movements did not flow. There were a couple of steps to the right and weight would be transferred from foot to foot in a clumsy manner, and then there would be steps, in and out of the centre, combined with various brushes of the feet. At the end of the dance, D. said to me,

“The timing of the dance is not right... But it doesn’t matter.”

We did a number of other dances but I cannot remember them in any kind of detail. I can remember the Greek triangular dance that is done on the spot. However, as we have done this dance on several occasions, I’m not going to write about it in any kind of detail. At the end of the session, we crowded round the candle to send the light out to whoever needed it! The teacher got us to stand sideways so that we were shoulder to shoulder and could bend down more easily. The teacher bent down so far that she nearly fell right into the candle so she had to catch herself. Everyone smiled and laughed.

## **Second Circle Dance Group 17.3.08 at 1.30-3.00pm**

There were 18 older ladies and the teacher. One of the ladies had made a particularly beautiful arrangement, a green headscarf with a glass vase of colourful flowers, branches of evergreen and a large candle. The 18 older ladies smiled and laughed and chatted with each other as they waited for the session to begin. I noticed that M., the lady who had given me an interview and had said she had not done much exercise before, was wearing a new pair of sparkly blue character shoes. This seemed to be a real sign that she was enjoying the dance and intended to continue. A small lady with short grey hair and wire-rimmed glasses, who was slightly overweight and wore trainers for the dance, said to me, “How is your research going?” “Fine” I replied. “I’m not keen to be interviewed myself, but I can tell you a little bit about dance for your research. I used to do ballroom and line dancing with my husband. Line dancing is like circle dancing only much faster. Now my husband’s dead, it’s nice that I can do circle dancing on my own.” She smiled as we linked elbows to form a snake-like line for the first dance, involving two steps forward, then rocking forward and back, repeating the pattern again and again. The teacher led the line in

a snake-like manner, weaving in and out and round the candle, bending in all different directions. This was a lovely opportunity for people to greet each other, exchanging smiles as dancers faced each other. I noticed M. the small lady with grey hair was smiling very broadly. It was a warm welcoming dance and the physical contact between the dancers consolidated that feeling of welcome. Elbows were linked, hands were joined and we were dancing shoulder to shoulder, fostering a feeling of community through physical contact. I reflected on the healing power of touch for those suffering loss and bereavement. Physical contact seems to be an important part of circle dance.

We did a number of old favourite dances which members of the group had requested, such as “Misolou,” “Riding on a Donkey,” “Mad March Hare” and the Greek triangular dance that was done standing on the spot. All these dances consolidated the sense of fun and community in different ways. “Misolou” because all dancers held hands in a circle, facing each other as they did grapevine steps to the left and the right. “Riding on a Donkey” because the dance was performed in pairs, and the fact that people in the outer circle were moving round after each sequence of steps, whilst people in the inner circle remained where they were, allowed members of the group to greet each other one by one. “Mad March Hare” offered an opportunity for expressing joy at the onset of spring as a community of dancers. Hands were linked together in a circle and after various grapevine steps and several pas de basque steps, we all danced into the centre to do more pas de basque steps. I notice K. particularly putting a lot of emotional expression into her pas de basque steps, pointing her feet beautifully from side to side. The whole group enjoyed the final part of the sequence which involved kicking the air with each foot in turn, “like a hare” as the teacher said. The repetition of the triangular Greek dance created a real sense of unison in the group, as everyone pointed the right foot behind, to the side and in front, kicked left foot in front, right foot in front and then left foot, and finally swished left foot on the ground forwards and backwards twice.

At the break, the teacher announced dancing in her mother’s garden on May 12th at 1.30-3.00pm and the monthly Circle dance session organised by M. in the local village hall at 2.00-5.00pm.

“There’s always a nice cake at these events” added the teacher. I took the opportunity to thank the group for helping me in the research. “Come back and let us know the results when you have written up” said the teacher “We’ll have a little degree ceremony for you, complete with mortar board and gown.” We sent the light to whoever needed it as we huddled round the candle. I went for tea with C., to do an interview.

## Scottish Field Notes

### First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 26.4.07 at 6.00-7.30pm

A. was teaching this class with her usual air of authority. It was a small group, with only ten members rather than the usual twenty. Maybe four group members were in their 50s, and the rest were in their 20s, 30s or 40s. Half the group agreed to be involved in my participation observation. What was striking was the real sense of community in the group, facilitated by A. as she role-modelled the steps, using a printed music sheet for "The Happy Meeting" and a very old pamphlet priced two shillings and six pence for "The Flowers of Edinburgh." Doing the initial warm-up in a circle really promoted a feeling of togetherness as we all walked round pointing our toes with each step forward, then walked round on tip-toes and finally did a series of Strathspey steps.

A Strathspey step has a series of stages and is slower and a more sustained movement than the basic step :- step on one foot, close the back foot behind into third position, hop onto the front foot and bring the back foot forward to start the whole movement again on the opposite foot. Those wearing ballet shoes were able to point their toes, and I was able to feel the pleasure of the movement rippling through my feet during this last more complex step. It seemed as if those people wearing ballet shoes rather than trainers were able to achieve a higher level of performance, precisely because their feet could embody the grace of the steps.

The teacher, A., joined in the warm-up with an amazing vigour which peculiarly at the same time was graceful, showing her expert status in comparison with the rest of the class who seemed like novices as they galloped around the room. A. is only small, maybe 5ft tall, with tiny feet in blue ballet shoes, and maybe this partly explains her extraordinary grace. At every step her feet curled into a beautiful point, and she seemed as light as thistle-down. This was a contrast with members of the class, such as F., a lady in her 50s wearing black trousers and white trainers, who performed the movements mechanically and in time, but lacked the grace of A. She radiated warmth and happiness as she smiled while dancing the warm-up. In contrast, F. alternated between looking very serious with concentration and smiling widely so as to highlight the crowsfeet around her eyes and gold-rimmed spectacles.

It was as though she was experiencing a tension between trying very hard and laughing at her own efforts in the context of the group. I myself experienced a similar tension between concentrating very hard and laughing at my own efforts. A. seemed set apart as an expert because of the ease of her performance. As the whole class tried to copy A. in a disciplined manner, a real feeling of belonging to a community of dancers was promoted. A. challenged the group to perform the balletic steps to perfection. And I struggled to capture in my memory the language she used to describe the various steps she performed. The sheer physicality of the dance movement makes it difficult to capture in words.

The feeling of togetherness, belonging to a community, was promoted by the style of the four country dances which A. taught during the session. This seems to highlight the symbolic nature of dance (Ness, 2004). The dances taught were "The Happy Meeting," "The Flowers of Edinburgh," "Seann Triubhas Willichan," and "The De'il Among the Tailors." All these were couple dances which were performed in sets of four or six, and the leading couple would often progress down the line of dance, forming a new set with different couples. A. encouraged the class to change partners after every dance, and this was an excellent way of promoting the feeling of togetherness. As there were only two men in the class, most of the women ended up dancing the men's roles but this simply added to the humour and the feeling of togetherness, such as in "The Flowers of Edinburgh" where the leading lady, in A.'s words, is meant to "give flirtatious glances over her shoulder" as she casts off down the line of dance, closely followed by her 'male' partner.

As novices at Scottish Country dancing, keeping time to the music was difficult for the class. The basic step, step in front and close the back foot behind and then hop onto the front foot as you bring the back foot in front to start the basic step all over again on the opposite side, seemed fairly straightforward but it was difficult to keep in time to the music and get to the correct place in the line of dance at the right moment. A. explained the importance of just getting to the correct place in the line of dance at the right moment as the steps could be perfected as we became more confident. I frequently felt myself struggling to get to the correct place at the right time, and consequently, did not perform the steps properly. There was a co-operative feeling and members of the class helped each other out. When struggling with the sequence of steps known as the "Pousette," the lady in her 30s who was dancing with me, gently pushed me in the right direction as we were holding both hands and facing each other, doing the basic steps in a square-like pattern, going forwards, to the side and backwards. Her hands were lovely and warm and soft, and she grinned at me as she gently steered me in the right direction. A. demonstrated the correct way of doing the basic step backwards, pointing one foot behind, stepping on this back foot, bringing the front foot into third position and transferring weight onto it, then transferring weight back onto the back foot. She performed with such a balletic style but told us to 'cheat' if necessary, just as long as we got to the correct place in time. The discipline of keeping in the correct formation during the dance was more important than technique.

One step which I do seem to have mastered is the "Allemande." This is a close-knit step with your partner, where you link arms over your head and behind your back, and dance in unison, first pointing right to perform the basic step, then to

the left. Feet are thus alternated until the 5<sup>th</sup> step, when arms are brought over the head so that you are facing your partner to move backwards with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> steps. Wearing ballet shoes enabled me to feel the movement in my feet and a sense of gracefulness. Those wearing trainers seemed to lack flexibility in the feet. The "Setting Step" seemed particularly difficult to perform if you were wearing trainers and would just degenerate into hopping from one foot to the other, rather than gracefully sliding the foot and then hopping onto it as A. did. Half-way through the class, A. gave everyone a breather and time for a drink of water. She announced various events such as a tea-dance and a dance in the gardens of a stately home for which we could buy tickets and a series of Scottish Country dancing events to be held in the garden of one of the committee members.

Several of the female class members discussed their body shapes during this break. F. especially expressed concern about her stomach which was echoed by other ladies. At the end of the class, A. told us that we would all be stiff so there was a need to do some simple stretching exercises, putting one foot in front of the other to stretch out the thigh muscles. "I myself was very stiff after teaching the Ladies' step class on Sunday afternoon," she explained.

### **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 3.5.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

Officially this was the first class of the Summer term (the previous class had been an extra one because one of last term's classes was cancelled due to snow). There were a number of new people in the class, besides a number of familiar faces. There were 16 women and two men. When I gave out the information and consent sheets for my research, a number of people specifically approached me and offered to be interviewed as well as observed :- I. the Scottish lady in her 40s and her male partner A. with grey hair (it would be interesting to interview them together), J., a white haired lady in her 60s who had been learning Scottish dancing for her daughter's wedding which involved a Ceilidh, and a lady with dyed blond hair and black-rimmed glasses in her 60s who was very enthusiastic and said "Count me in!" At the end of the lesson, this lady with dyed blond hair and dark rimmed glasses explained

"Memory is the main problem if you are older. As you age, it is difficult to learn and remember patterns of dances.....It's hard to get the brain to co-ordinate the body.....It would be a good idea to chalk the patterns of the dances on the floor.....As you age, if you don't use it, you lose it." Various other members of the class who had attended the class last term volunteered to be observed. There was F., the lady with glasses in her 50s who wore trainers and trousers, there was C., a plump smiley girl in her 30s, there was J., a slim girl in her 20s with long blond hair. Several of the newcomers with whom I danced also volunteered to be observed. In fact, as we did most dances in sets of four to six people, I was able to check that members of the class were happy to be observed.

A., the teacher, revised some of the more simple steps for the newcomers and taught five dances which used these steps. As a warm-up, she organised the class to go round the room in a large circle doing the basic step in Scottish dance, step forward on one foot, close the back foot behind, step forward on the front foot and hop onto it, bringing the back foot in front to repeat the sequence of movement with the other foot leading. A., the teacher, explained as she demonstrated the movement, first gracefully and then more clumsily,

"It's like the Wizard of Oz step only more graceful." Her more clumsy performance was to highlight the difference between the Scottish basic step and the Wizard of Oz step. She demonstrated a little sequence of the basic step to encourage us to practice, holding her skirt delicately in front with two fingers and smiling, as if she was in a public performance on stage. She did the basic step eight times on her right foot, then eight times on her left foot, then four times on the right foot and four times on the left foot, twice on the right foot and twice on the left foot and finally once on the right foot and once on the left foot and then continue doing the basic step once, alternating between right and left foot. She glided from foot to foot in her blue ballet shoes and pointed her toes like a ballerina. She put some bouncy music on the CD player and all the class practised the sequence she had just demonstrated in a large circle going round the room. Many of the newcomers had inappropriate footwear, such as heavy trainers whereas most of those who had come last term wore ballet shoes or the proper Scottish dance shoes, which were similar to black ballet shoes only with black thongs crossed over the foot and round the ankle to secure each shoe in position.

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A., the dance teacher, organised the class into two sets, one of ten people and one of eight people. She got us to line up in our sets in two rows, facing our partners. She got my partner, S., a lady with glasses in her 30s who was a newcomer, to stand to one side, whilst she demonstrated "Rights and Lefts" in a group of four people. Using the basic step, we exchanged places as we took each other's right hand. A., the dance teacher, explained how it was important to smile at your partner as you exchanged places. She gave me a beautiful smile as she exchanged places with me. She then repeated the basic step and took the left hand of J., the white-haired lady in her 60s who had originally been positioned on my right, and exchanged places with her. I similarly repeated the basic step and took the left hand of F., the lady in her 50s with glasses and wearing trainers, and exchanged places. We managed to grin at each other but I noticed that J., the white haired lady who had changed places with A., the dance teacher, was looking very serious, as if she was concentrating hard on mastering the steps and the pattern of the dance. We similarly exchanged places using our right hand and then our left hand with the next two people until we were back in the original positions we had started from. A., the dance teacher, put on some bouncy music and we practised "Rights and Lefts." This particular sequence of movements seemed to symbolise the feeling of belonging to a smaller group of dancers in a more intimate manner. Some hands felt warm, some hands felt cold, some hands felt soft and some hands felt rough. When J., the white haired lady in her 60s took my hand, her expression was serious and she looked as if she was concentrating hard. She did not smile when I took her hand, which felt cold and rough. When the music stopped, J. explained to me that she was partially deaf, and finding it difficult to hear instructions.

The lady in her 60s with dyed blond hair and black glasses complained that her tights were falling down with the movement, her face creased with laughter and appearing slightly out of breath. She was wearing a black cotton dress with a V-neck and no sleeves, and dainty black shoes. Her laughter seemed infectious and spread through the two lines of dancers. A., the dance teacher, demonstrated how we should dance Watson's Reel, and the class listened and watched intensely. Her body was so balletic and disciplined as she confidently demonstrated the steps, springing lightly from foot to foot as if she was a professional ballet dancer. The two sets, one set with eight people and one set with ten people, walked through the steps of Watson's Reel and the magic of the ballet seemed to be lost. This was a progressive dance, starting with Rights and Lefts in groups of four, then with the leading couple taking three steps down the middle holding hands and three steps back up the middle, then casting off to the next place and dancing the side-step in a circle of four people, take eight steps left and then eight steps right. As I am writing this, I can feel my brain struggling to remember the correct patterns of the steps. I will have to try get hold of the music sheets which A., the dance teacher, uses to teach us each dance. Whilst doing the actual dance, we were all struggling to keep in time to the music and this had the effect of making our steps even less balletic than they already were. There was much laughter as we stretched out our hands to form a circle. The leading couple, now in second place, repeated the dance sequence with the next couple. In our set of eight people, the resulting patterns formed by this dance were geometrically distinct. When the circles of four people were formed, these alternated between two circles at each end of the set and one circle in the middle of the set with the couple at either end just watching.

The last dance was the Dunnedon Festival which was great fun. Three pairs formed a triangle as a starting position. The three pairs then formed a circle for side-steps, then separated to do dos a dos with your partner and then a star formation in your group with the right hand up, doing the basic step in a clockwise direction, then left hand up doing the basic step in an anti-clockwise direction. I can feel my brain struggling to recall the different steps of this dance as I am writing now. There was much laughter when at the end of the star formations, the 'male' dancers pulled a new partner out of the star formation and into promenade hold. There were only two male dancers in the whole class so most of the male roles were danced by women. In the ensuing chaos, the words "I'm not a lady!" could be frequently heard. The couples then did the basic steps round the room in promenade hold and formed a new group with different couples. We seemed to be dancing all over the place, like a class of rowdy children, and instead of maintaining three triangular groups of three couples throughout the dance, the group sizes varied, with two, three or even four couples in a group. There was much laughter, particularly when a group involved four couples, as dancing round in star formation became very clumsy, especially the action of grabbing a new partner out of the star formation! I was exhausted with laughter, although I enjoyed knowing that I was mastering the footwork more easily than the new people in the class. I enjoyed the feelings of well-being created by the dancing.

### **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 10.5.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

For the initial warm-up, A., the teacher, got the 12 of us to do the basic step round in a circle (two men and ten women). We then did the Military Two Step to some stirring music. A., the teacher demonstrated the steps first, hopping lightly from foot to foot and pointing her toes. She has an expert grace which I personally find it hard to emulate. The other members of the class went through the motions of the steps, but lacked the grace of A., the teacher. J., the lady in her 60s with white hair was my partner for this dance. I took the male role which meant I was in the inner circle whilst she was in the outer circle. Holding her left hand in my right hand, we did heel-toe twice with the right foot and then walked forward for three paces, turned and did heel-toe twice with the left foot and walked three paces back. We then turned and faced each other. Holding both hands, we hopped on the left foot and kicked the right foot diagonally across the left foot and then repeated the movement by hopping on the right foot and kicking the left foot diagonally across the right foot. "Don't kick your partner!"

called out A., the teacher. Then in ballroom hold, we danced round the room for four steps. I felt really awkward trying to maintain the ballroom hold as a nominal male and we were both out of time by this point in the dance. We had to hurry to keep up and start all over again with the heel-toe movement. J. had a serious expression when she was concentrating hard, such as stepping round in the ballroom hold, but broke into a smile when we did the heel-toe steps. The marching music seemed to race along and we just managed to keep up.

My memory has gone totally blank for the three dances we did in the middle of the session. I can just about remember their names but that is all. The dances were called:- Highland Fair, Mrs. Stewart-Sinton's Reel and Miss Falconer's Fantasy. We practised setting steps (pas de bas) and the allemande step with A., the teacher, demonstrating in a balletic and disciplined fashion. The setting step involves pointing to the side with the right foot, hopping onto it and bringing the left foot into third position in front of the right foot. The whole movement is then repeated on the left side, the right side, the left side and so on. A., the teacher demonstrated with her back towards us so that it was easier for the class, grouped in lines behind her, to copy. I reflected how in Scottish Country dancing, the dancer has a very disciplined and balletic body, disciplined to perform graceful movements in perfect time to the music. Indeed, as A., the teacher, got us to rehearse setting steps to music, she continually called out "Pas de bas. Pas de bas." to keep us in time to the music.

A., the teacher, next demonstrated the Allemande step with one member of the class and she then got us to walk through this step several times in pairs before practising it to music. The Allemande step is a sequence of eight basic steps performed hand in hand with a partner, making an arching pattern on the floor. As we practised this step to music, it seemed like we were a group of ice-skaters, gliding round the room hand in hand, with A., the teacher, counting from one to eight to keep us in time to the music. Step One was performed holding your partner by both hands and doing a basic step towards the right. On Step Two, each pair of dancers moved their joined hands over the lady's head in promenade hold and did a basic step to the left. Step Three was a basic step to the right and down the opposite side of the original line of dance. Step Four was a basic step to the left, continuing in this new direction. Step Five was a basic step with the right foot so as to both face the middle. For step Six, the lady twisted under the 'male' dancer's arms (usually a female) so that both dancers were facing each other holding hands. The illusion of being a pair of ice-skaters gliding across the ice certainly disappeared at this point as both dancers let go of each other's hands and danced clumsily backwards for step Seven with the right foot and step Eight with the left foot. A., the teacher explained "Many experienced dancers find it difficult to go backwards.....as long as you step back and keep time to the music, do whatever gets you there." The clumsiness of these last two steps provoked laughter. A feeling of being part of a close-knit community had been created as couples performed this allemande step, one couple behind the other. J., the lady with the white hair in her 60s commented on the feeling of community created by the dances, and suggested this would have been important in remote parts of Scotland such as the Western Isles.

A., the teacher, organised us to practise Rights and Lefts, a sequence of movement which again re-affirmed the feeling of belonging to a community. In groups of four, each person took the right hand of the dancer directly opposite them and did the basic step on the right foot. After doing the basic step on the left foot, each person took the left hand of the next dancer who was now directly opposite them. These movements were repeated along the sides of a square, until each person was back in their original starting position. The dancers would alternate between serious expressions of concentration and laughter. I reflected how difficult it is to remember the complex patterns of the dances which use both arms and feet. After doing Mrs. Stewart-Sinton's Reel, which A., the teacher, demonstrated using a music sheet to remind her of the steps and I have managed to completely forget, A., the teacher, organised us to take a short break for drinks of water and to tick off our names on the register. We seemed to be like school children, as we all giggled about the dances. A., the teacher, told us "There are thousands of Scottish dances.....I only know about six without looking up the steps.....For your teacher's exam in Scottish dancing, you have to be able to dance fifteen different dances from any position.....I am teaching you children's dances as these are easier.....The dancing is very aerobic and I seem to have lost my fitness since I've been teaching as I'm not dancing so much."

A., the teacher, has offered to get the music with the steps for me and I have joined the first Scottish Country dancing group for £7.50. A., the new lady in her late 40s in a long frilly flamenco skirt, explained "I have had to stop flamenco due to back problems which are exacerbated by the high-heeled shoes.....it's too expensive to see the osteopath all the time." I noticed that she was wearing the black Scottish ballet shoes with thongs round the ankles which she had recently bought, a sign of commitment to Scottish dancing. J., the young girl in her 20s, had also bought the black Scottish shoes for £30.

After the break, we did Miss Falconer's Fantasy for which I have completely forgotten the steps again. My mind is just a whirl of rectangular sets of six dancers, square groups of four dancers and circular groups of four to eight dancers. For the last dance of the session, I., the Scottish lady in her 40s, had a complete lapse of memory, despite having walked through the steps with the guidance of A., the teacher.

Once the music was put on, after doing the setting step to each side twice, holding her neighbour's hand, I. went crashing into the person diagonally opposite, instead of making a star formation in a group of four with her right hand up in the air for two basic steps. Her expression changed from one of horror to one of laughter as she exclaimed "I completely messed up.....I don't know where I was....." I. subsequently made a huge effort to concentrate, calling out the steps for the rest of the group. We were in two sets of six people each. The patterns of the dance seemed very complex, although A., the

teacher, said it was a children's dance. We seemed to be like a group of rowdy school children as we struggled to remember the steps and keep time to the music, laughing at our mistakes. A., the teacher, seemed as light as a feather as she sprung from foot to foot in the setting step, wearing her blue ballet shoes. In contrast, people wearing ordinary leather shoes, such as A., the man in his 50s who was I.'s partner, seemed to clump down heavily. I remembered how when practising the basic step in a circle at the start of class, A., the teacher had said that we sounded like a herd of elephants. She had got us to practise hopping lightly from foot to foot, so that we could feel and hear an improvement. It was not easy to maintain this lightness throughout the session if you were wearing ordinary shoes, and I felt very glad of my flexible black ballet shoes even though they were not the official Scottish dance shoes.

The Duke of Atholl's Reel consisted of :-

1. Setting step to each side twice, holding your neighbour's hand
2. Star formation in groups of four with the right hand in the air for two basic steps.
3. Setting step to each side twice, holding your neighbour's hand
4. Star formation in groups of four with left hand in the air for two basic steps
5. Leading couple cast off for one place, then join hands and go up the middle of the set for two basic steps, then back down for two basic steps, then loop round partner in figure of eight.
6. Then first man and second lady set twice to each other and turn all the way round holding hands.
7. Then second man and first lady set twice to each other and turn all the way round holding hands.
8. Then everyone does Rights and Lefts in groups of four.

This whole sequence of movement was repeated again and again, with partners bowing and curtsying to each other at the end of the music. As I am writing this, I can feel my brain struggling to remember the correct order of the steps. A., the man in his 50s, requested that we repeat the dance so we did, all changing partners and sets. The way in which people change partners all the time really promotes a sense of togetherness. A., the teacher, kept reminding us of the discipline of the dance, "Keep the sets tight.....I want to see you all standing in straight lines on the same floorboard at the end of each sequence of steps." At the end of the class, I walked part way home with J., the lady with white hair in her 60s and she talked about the importance of dance in terms of history. She suggested looking at the role of dances such as the Ceilidh in the Western Isles of Scotland which help to bind the local community together. She herself had been learning Scottish dance for her daughter's wedding. Her daughter lives in the Isle of Skye and had a Ceilidh at her wedding here at Easter. We discussed the up-lifting nature of the Scottish dance associated with feelings of well-being.

### **First Scottish Group Tea-Dance 12.5.07 at 2.00-5.00pm**

This dance was for members of the first Scottish Country dance group and people who attended Scottish dance classes in the local area. It was useful for meeting members of the committee and more experienced dancers as I have been attending a beginners' class. Several of the older men who are members of the committee and who have been dancing for a long while are keen to be interviewed and are very interested in my research question. I also met the lady who is one of the Ladies' Step dance teachers and she has invited me to observe her class on Wednesday evenings.

About 40 people attended this tea-dance. K., the Ladies' Step dance teacher was the caller for the dances. I found it very mentally challenging to try remember all the different patterns of steps. The way to survive each dance seemed to be to grab an experienced partner (such as an older man in a kilt!) I was familiar with the dance steps but found the patterns very confusing. Frequently the more experienced dancers pushed the beginners such as myself in the right direction. I found myself being pushed into figures of eight round the person who was diagonally opposite or being pushed into a Reel of Three, weaving in and out between each other. At times, I found my mind could not visualise all the patterns of the dances. Sometimes I could not send my body in the right direction. The shapes of the dances seemed to be constantly changing from circles to squares to rectangular sets or triangular groups of three. Although my head was not familiar with the complex patterns of the various dances, my feet felt familiar with the steps. Sometimes we would hold hands in lines of two, three or four and do setting steps. I managed to keep stepping in time to the music but the patterns of the dances left me feeling lost, even though I frequently had the opportunity to watch several other leading couples take the floor, before it was my turn to lead the dance with my partner. The friendly feeling of the community of dancers was up-lifting, with the more experienced dancers helping the beginners such as myself. Everyone changed partners after each dance which made the whole occasion very sociable and really promoted a community feeling. Half way through the session, there was afternoon tea for everyone with home-made scones, whipped cream and jam and various home-made cakes such as flapjack. Besides cups of tea, coffee or juice. A., our teacher, had bought her bowl and electric hand-held whisk for whipping the cream! Afternoon tea lasted half an hour. I sat with A., the lady in her 40s who was a newcomer to our beginners' class. A. was feeling very hot and mentally and physically challenged by all the dancing. She had only attended two beginners' classes.

A., the man in his 50s, was really hot too as there were damp pools of sweat on his blue cotton shirt. I myself felt hot but also pleasantly tired and relaxed. Scottish dancing certainly seems physically challenging. After the last hour of dancing, I was really exhausted. The pleasant feeling of being relaxed even though physically tired lasted all evening.

I am becoming fascinated by the differences between the experienced dancers and the beginners which seems to have nothing to do with physical age but more to do with skill. I am planning to contrast experienced dancers with beginners in my interviews. The longitudinal aspects of how dance can change experiences of health and growing older seem to be fascinating. I am also fascinated by the processes of learning to dance and how people develop their techniques over the years. It would be good to interview some of the beginners now and again in a year's time, to see how their stories have changed.

### **Informal Ethnographic Interview with Scottish Country dancer 16.5.07**

I bumped into M., a man in his 70s, whom I had met at the tea-dance, in the University Library. He told me the story of his involvement in Scottish dancing. "I began Scottish dancing 20 years ago in America.....that's how I met my wife who is much younger than me.....I haven't done Scottish dancing for 20 years but started going again with my wife to an intermediate group. Last week we did not dance at this intermediate class because when we arrived, we found we had forgotten our gear.....Scottish dancing is great for keeping you fit.....I'm fit anyway because I do Judo.....As a man, going dancing is a good way to meet girls. The nice thing about Scottish dancing is it's ok to touch and hold people.....there's no embarrassment.....touch is so important but we tend either to distance ourselves or hug too closely.....And memory can be a problem in Scottish dancing." I remembered how members of my beginners' class telling me that the Intermediate group was very serious.

### **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 17.5.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

For the warm-up, the 13 members of our class did the basic step in a circle and then A., the teacher, demonstrated the Strathspey setting step which we practised in a circle whilst holding hands, with our bodies orientated towards the centre whilst our feet were moving sideways. A., the teacher, told us not to bicycle but to develop like in ballet, bringing the back foot into a neat point in front after the step-close together in third position step and hop. I noticed S., a lady in her 50s who had done English country dancing, performing this step with excellent posture and a very straight back. The discussion with M. in the University Library really made me notice how much people touch each other in Scottish dancing and yet how naturally people hold each other. People were simply holding hands in a circle for practising the Strathspey setting step during the warm-up. A., our teacher, is always telling us to hold hands with our arms in a W formation at the correct height for the smallest person (usually her!). Various other steps also involve touch. The promenade hold involves holding both hands with our partner so that our bodies are side by side for dancing 8 steps travelling in an ellipse. The allemande is a variation of the promenade whereby one arm is lifted over the lady's head so her shoulder rubs her partner's shoulder. Even though there were 12 women and one man in the group, everyone appeared comfortable holding each other closely. The sequences of steps known as Rights and Lefts is another opportunity for holding hands as dancers move round doing the basic step in a group of four, first offering their right hand to the dancer immediately opposite and then offering their left hand to the next dancer immediately opposite. This movement is repeated until each dancer returns to their original starting position. We did four dances during this class :- Lady Catherine's Jig, The Rakes of Glasgow, Lady Glasgow and Strip the Willow, which involved various combinations of the steps alongside the basic step and the setting step. Everyone changed partners all the time which helped to build the feeling of belonging to a community of dancers. Several of the dances were done to Strathspey music, such as the Lady of Glasgow, which means the steps are slower, more deliberate and controlled. We seemed to be holding hands in many different ways for this dance:- in lines, with a partner for the promenade, in lines again, for Rights and Lefts, and then in a circle. The act of holding hands promoted eye contact and smiles between dancers. At one point in the dance, the leading couple did a setting step to the right and left, then cast off for two steps and into second place in the two lines for dos et dos for four steps. G.'s face crumpled with distress when she forgot the steps and she just stood there, as her partner,

An., a lady in her 40s, danced down the middle of the set alone when she should have been dancing with G. G. sat on a chair at the side, head in hands, and A., the teacher, went to join her. G. explained to A. that she had ME and drank some water. After resting for ten minutes, she went home.

F., the lady in her 50s with glasses, told me that her calves in her legs were not stiff after the tea-dance as she cycles. When dancing with I., the Scottish lady in her 40s, there was a loud click from a bone in her hand. She laughed. When doing Strip the Willow with J., the lady in her 70s with white hair, I noticed she danced more daintily and less vigorously than some of the younger people, as if she was a china doll. We all had memory lapses and J. and I frequently forgot which person in the line we were meant to be turning next. It was nice to feel the gentle warmth of her wrinkled hand as we turned each other round in the middle of the set. Sometimes J. looked very serious, as if concentrating hard, sometimes she smiled at me. I felt very hot by the end of this dance and the whole group was laughing. At the end of the class, F. and I took the narrative interview ethics sheets as they are interested in helping with my research.

### **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 24.5.07 at 6.10-7.30pm**

Due to the heat, several members of class arrived late. I arrived with F., the lady in her 50s with gold glasses. F. complained that she had got stuck in traffic when cycling from the other side of town. When we walked into class, we were ten minutes late but A., the teacher was fiddling with the CD player and members of class were standing in a group complaining about the heat and drinking water. There were ten women and two men in the class and I noticed that the lady

with ME was absent. I feel that I do not want to interview G., the lady with ME, as she was so distressed the previous week. A., the teacher organised us to do some warm-up exercises, such as walking around the hall in a circle, doing Rights and Lefts in a big circle (taking the right hand of the first person dancing towards you and then the left hand of the next person dancing towards you and so on), walking round the hall swivelling each arm and finally rehearsing the basic step.

A., the teacher got us into rows to practise the Strathspey setting step which is much slower and more controlled than the basic setting step. This Strathspey step is very balletic and disciplined. She taught us how to change directions using this Strathspey step – you point your right toe diagonally and do the Strathspey setting step and then point your left toe to the side and repeat the Strathspey setting step. We practised this to music a number of times and then did a Reel of Three using the Strathspey basic step and S., the lady in her 50s with dyed blond hair who did English country dancing, corrected me when I moved with the wrong shoulder leading at several points in the Reel of Three. It was a complex pattern of three dancers standing in a line and weaving in and out of each other in a figure of eight and back to their original starting position. I was hot and tired whereas S. seemed to be alert to every tiny movement of the other dancers. Smiling and holding herself erect, she corrected me on a number of occasions. S. is quite a large lady but her weight does not seem to hinder the grace of her feet, which glide across the floor in her low heeled black shoes. Every movement of her feet seems almost perfect and comparable with the movements of A., the teacher. S. stands in first position at the start of each exercise, sliding into the basic step or setting step with great ease. No other member of the class can match her skill. We did four dances during this class, with a short break half way through the session. The four dances were :- Highland Reel, Muny Musk, St. Andrew's Fair and Wild Geese. Once again, I was struck by the complex patterns of the dances and the humour of the dancers, who were always laughing at their own difficulties. Skill really did seem more important than body shape or weight, as the two most graceful members of the class were S., the lady in her 50s who did English country dancing, and C., a lady in her 20s with dark hair, both of whom were noticeably overweight. I noticed that G., the lady with ME, was missing from the class this week. She got so distressed the previous week that I have decided it is not appropriate to interview her. I gave out information and ethics sheets about the narrative interviews to everyone as I have decided to interview anyone who is willing to talk to me. I will use the data from anyone who is below the age of 50 as contrast data to those above the age of 50. After all, we are all involved in the process of ageing.

### **First Scottish Group Beginner's Class 7.6.07 at 6.00-730pm**

After the warm-up of walking round the room in a circle and then walking round on tip-toe and then swivelling both arms, A., the teacher, rehearsed the basic skipping step with us. She demonstrated how not to do it, ie "bobbing up and down" and how to do it well. You should hop onto the left foot and point the toes of the right foot and bring the left foot to meet the right as you hop onto it. Then you change feet to repeat the movement. The younger man in his 20s took a support splint off his left hand and told us that he had broken the bone so we had to be careful. I confessed about my arms and shoulders being sore and A., the teacher complained about the plaster on her shoulder for going trekking in S.America. Scottish dancing is energetic so you need to be fit! I noticed several women in their 50s, F. and S., were overweight but they managed all the steps in the dances, even though the leading couple might have to repeat the dance three or four times with different couples in the set of eight people before getting a rest.

A., the 50 year old man, and A., the German lady told me that they would like to be interviewed. Throughout the class, I noticed these two alternating serious faces of concentration and laughing faces when they made mistakes due to memory lapses such as doing the setting step instead of turning or getting lost in the complex patterns. There were only nine people in the class to-day, two men and seven women, so A., the teacher, had to join in most dances as well as call the steps. She used music books with the steps written down – she never works from memory. Before we started the dances, Miss Welch's Reel and the Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division, A., the teacher, got us to practise lots of different sequences of steps, copying her. She demonstrates steps with balletic grace and ease, smiling confidently all the while. She laughs with us as we have difficulty holding our partner tightly with one hand and arm bent at the elbow in order to turn each other round in a complete circle. It was always a rush to turn to the left and spin all the way round to face the corner – there was less movement when turning to face the corner on the right. A., the teacher, really stressed the importance of holding your partner correctly in order to be able to complete a full circle in two basic skipping steps. She demonstrated how to hold your partner with your elbow taut and the hand clasped in order to make the movement speedy. She laughed as she told us not to let our arms go floppy.

A., the 50 year old man who is really tall and wears trainers, seemed to clump around very heavily although he managed to keep time to the music and complete all the turns on time, even turning fully and spinning his partner round one and a half times to the left. When other group members laugh at their own difficulties, he joins in the laughter. His girlfriend, I., the Scottish lady in her 40s, does not usually dance with him as everyone in the group swaps partners for each different dance, so creating a real community feel. A., the teacher, provided us with a sense of history, by telling us the story behind the Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division. It was devised as a dance to be done by an all male set in a German Prisoner of War camp. It comprised strong setting steps and fast turning of corners and setting steps to be done in a line of four daigonally

across the set, because it was meant to be danced by men only. I reflected how people dance when they are in a life-threatening situation. I thought about the death dance which one of the Aborigines had performed in the film "Ten Canoes." I thought about the story of Ann Boleyn dancing with her ladies in waiting, the night before her execution. It seems to be a basic human instinct to dance when you are in life-threatening situations.

At the end of the class, A., the teacher, did stretching exercises with us for our calf muscles, one foot in front of the other leg and knees bent. She advertised about open air Scottish Country dancing at a stately home on Sunday afternoon which is open to members of the public for dancing in the gardens. If it rains, the dances will be cancelled. The dances will be called, which is useful for us beginners. A., the teacher, told us she was taking her mother to the event. Her mother used to be a dancer until she fell downstairs and broke both legs.

### **Stately Home 10.6.07 at 2.30-5.00pm**

It was a dry and cloudy day with sunny intervals so the Scottish dancing went ahead in the gardens of a stately home. About 50 people gathered for this event. A., the German lady, gave me a lift in her car. On the way she told me "I used to do a lot of ballroom dancing as a teenager in Germany and even won various medals. However my English husband does not like ballroom dancing. He tried dancing with me and because I was better than him, he didn't like it. I do a lot of singing and I just thought doing some Scottish dancing would be fun which is why I started this term. I don't know if I can continue next term as I may have a clash with singing."

There was a long programme of Scottish dances at the stately home. Several members of my beginners' class were there :- S., the lady in her 50s who is overweight but very graceful who also does historical dancing, C., the lady in her 30s with dark hair and glasses who is similarly overweight but very graceful, and J., the lady in her 20s who also goes to the University club. There were 17 different dances on the programme and as beginners, we made sure we participated in the dances we knew. It can be very embarrassing to mess up a set in a new dance. However many other dancers were very helpful and as the dances were called, we were able to participate in a few new ones too. I danced in bare-feet as I was afraid that my ballet shoes would slip on the grass, but A. the teacher danced in her ballet shoes and she explained that it was possible to get slightly thicker Scottish shoes for dancing on grass. The dances which we had been taught by A. included :- St. Andrew's Fair, Rakes of Glasgow, a Reel for Jeannie (a children's dance which included clapping), Miss Milligan's Strathspey and the Duke of Atholl's Reel. Some of these dances I did with A., the German lady, and we managed to keep moving in time to the music and keep to the correct positions within the set. A., the German lady danced in black Scottish shoes and the frilly silky skirt she had originally bought for Flamenco dancing. I was honoured to be invited to dance by a young man wearing a kilt and sporran for the last dance "The Montgomerie's Rant." He gently guided me in the right direction for the complex patterns of this couple dance performed in a set. He told me that he had been doing Scottish dancing since he was a child. During the tea-break, the chairman of the first Scottish group made a date with me for an interview.

I also spoke with Scottish dancers from neighbouring towns who took my contact card and invited me to come and observe their Scottish dance sessions. I really feel that I have been welcomed into this organisation as a researcher. People seem to dance for pleasure and several people told me stories of older dancers literally dropping dead on the dance floor. What a wonderful way to go!

### **First Scottish Group Thursday Beginners' Class 14.6.07 at 6.00-7.30pm.**

There were only nine of us in the class. Class members discussed the differences between beginners and more experienced dancers at the stately home. In terms of knowing what you are doing, C., the girl in her 30s with dark hair and glasses, who was rather overweight, saw it as a problem that there were only a few dances we knew at the stately home such as Reel for Jeannie (a children's dance with clapping) and the Duke of Atholl. She felt very embarrassed as she had completely messed up a set in one of the other dances she had tried. The steps had not been walked through first and she had had to learn by watching the other dancers in her set. The confusing issue had been when dancing in lines, the lines were not always operating in mirror image to each other.

After the usual warm-up of walking in a circle, pointing toes and circling arms, we practised Reels of Three from different positions then combined them with two setting steps and turning each person in turn. This sequence was used in the Dashing White Sergeant, the first dance of the session. The other dances we did were The Duke of Perth, Braes of Baellamude (a children's dance) and Braes of Toletmet which was a slow Strathspey.

The class members alternated smiles with serious expressions. For example, J., the white-haired lady in her 60s who had missed several sessions. She smiled a lot so that her face creased with wrinkles, in between serious expressions of concentrating hard. She danced well and lightly, performing the balletic steps with a lot of grace in her dainty black shoes which were neither ballet shoes or the traditional Scottish shoes. In contrast, the two men in the group were wearing heavy shoes and seemed to clump around heavily and pull on their partners' arms when spinning them round, especially in The Duke of Perth. One of the two men, who was in his 20s, seemed to really pull on my arms when it was my turn to dance with him. I noticed that both my arms were becoming painful when I extended them to join hands in a circle. I got really lost with

the fast turns in the Duke of Perth and ended up giggling so much that the others had to push me round the different positions in the set. The same thing happened to a young girl in her 20s.

A., the teacher, kept reprimanding us for uneven sets. She taught us the dances by demonstrating the steps in a balletic and disciplined manner. The smile on her face radiated confidence. She was so graceful in comparison with us beginners. For The Duke of Perth, A., the teacher demonstrated how to hold each other by clasping one hand and maintaining the elbow on that side in a bent posture. The dance was very fast as the Reel of Three was done in six steps (six beats of the music) rather than eight. The leading couple weaved in and out of the set, spinning each other, setting to the opposite corner, spinning each other again, setting to the last corner and then joining together to repeat the sequence. When the leading couple got to the bottom of the set, the couple at the top of the set became leading couple. The dance was repeated until everyone had been leading couple. The ninth person swapped into the set at regular intervals, and everyone took it in turns to be the ninth person and have a rest. There was a real co-operative feel among the dancers and everyone took it in turns to dance with everyone else or to be the ninth person who had a rest, watching the other eight people dance. The class was a community of dancers who smiled at each other when they felt in control of the steps, looked serious when concentrating hard and descended into giggles when the set got messed up by dancers turning in the wrong direction ie not setting to the correct corner. We pushed each other in the right direction when an individual had got it wrong. The two young men in the class seemed to pull my arms but A., the German girl, told me she felt the man who had been pulling my arm particularly hard did not hold her hand and arm with enough resistance. I reflected how matching the skill and ability of dancers seems to be a really difficult task.

A., the teacher, got us to stretch our calf muscles at the end of the session. F., the lady in her 50s with gold rimmed glasses and A., the German lady, have made times to be interviewed.

### **My Visit to the Physiotherapist 21.6. 07**

As my shoulders and arms were painful, especially the right one, and seemed to be aggravated by Scottish dancing, I had arranged an appointment with a physiotherapist. She gave me a number of exercises to practise every day in order to strengthen my muscles. I asked if I should continue Scottish dancing as my arms had got pulled doing Rights and Lefts or spinning round with a partner. She replied "You can injure yourself as much if you trip when walking on the pavement. You should carry on Scottish dancing as you seem to enjoy it and it's so good for your cardiovascular system." I reflected how this physiotherapist seemed to think the health benefits of Scottish dancing outweighed the risks. It would be interesting to interview some physiotherapists about the health benefits and risks of dancing.

### **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 21.6.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

We learnt three dances during this class:-

- Roxborough Castle
- The Rakish Highlander
- Waverley

After the usual warm-up, we practised the pousette step and learnt a new step the petronella. This involved doing setting steps in lines of three and a triangular formation, with the middle person facing in the opposite direction to the ends. We practised Reels of Three and chasing round in lines, first the men would chase round the ladies and then vice versa. There were gender difficulties as there were only three men but thirteen women in the class. Frequently, women ended up dancing male roles which provoked much hilarity as there was often confusion and laughter, when the women dancing men's roles forgot their assumed identity! The dancing sets were often messed up by these mistakes and members of the class alternated serious expressions of concentration with raucous laughter. As usual, people changed partners all the time and this helped create a really friendly atmosphere or feeling of community. I deliberately avoided dancing with the men because of my painful arms and shoulders. So I asked J., the lady in her 60s with white hair to dance with me. She held my hands very gently as we danced the pousette. She had a lot of difficulties memorising the correct direction for the pousette as this dance involves 90 degree turns, as if dancing along the sides of a square. She smiled widely when she finally mastered the pattern in the correct time to the music. As she said "Now I can concentrate on learning the steps."

A., the older man in his 50s, has a very cheeky expression as he clumps around leading the "men" in a line chasing round the ladies. He is about six feet tall, slim but with large feet and his steps are larger than anyone else's. A., the teacher, says "I am really challenging your memory to-day." The complex patterns of the dances certainly seem to be a challenge to your memory :- squares, rectangles, triangles, pairs. S., the lady in her 50s, who does historical dance, was performing with her usual grace despite being plump. A., the German lady, said how impressed she was with A., the teacher, because she taught the balletic steps in such a professional and disciplined manner.. She said to-night was the first time she had properly learnt the pousette and yet she had tried to dance it on another occasion with a different group. She told a story about nearly breaking her spine when dancing competitive ballroom in Germany – her male partner had dropped her when she leant back on him. How to fall out with your male partner!

A., the man in his 50s and his girl-friend I. have agreed to be interviewed. So has C., the lady in her 30s with black hair and glasses who is rather plump.

## **First Scottish Group Beginners' Class 6.7.07 at 6.00-6.45pm.**

Left class early, after 45 minutes, due to a formal dinner. At the start of class, A. the teacher, told me all about her injuries, pointing towards her calves. She had pulled a ligament in her right calf two years ago when she landed on her right foot heavily and it still gives her pain sometimes. She has also just pulled a muscle in her left calf. She told me "I still think the health benefits of Scottish dancing outweigh the risks of injury." I told her about the Sports' injury clinic at the local hospital where it is possible to get physiotherapy.

A. and I., the couple who had expressed an interest in being interviewed, had e-mailed me to say due to a family bereavement, they would rather not do an interview. However, they had expressed the intention to carry on dancing as it was helpful for their emotional health. They were both at the class this evening, looking a little subdued but smiling at other members and joining in all the dances. Dancing together has brought a kind of emotional togetherness amongst the class members, and I was able to openly express my sympathy with A. and I. which they received with smiles, saying how the dancing was helpful. There were only nine of us in the class this evening so it felt very cosy to be in such a small group. Everyone was laughing and got very red-faced, especially A., the man in his 50s, as we got lost when practising the Reels of Four after the initial warm-up.

A., the teacher, taught us a modern Scottish dance called "Dancing on the Streets." As she said

"This dance was written by a modern Japanese choreographer for the International Scottish Dance School which takes place at St. Andrew's in Scotland every year in the summer. People would literally be dancing on the streets of St. Andrew's if the weather was fine."

This dance involved complex patterns. There was a set of eight with the first and third couples spinning round and eventually forming a line of four at right angles to the other dancers for a Reel of Four. The whole set would be involved in chasing each other round the set in an anti-clockwise direction in a large circle and then everyone would hold hands to dance round in a circle. Finally you did a pousette with your partner in order to change places with the neighbouring pair and start the dance all over again. Such dances are mentally taxing because you always have to be thinking about where you are going next and ensuring that you are keeping up with the other dancers in the set. Spinning round in pairs can make you dizzy and cause a bit of disorientation. We laughed a lot as we struggled through the dance. I danced with A., the man in his 50s. Even though A. and I. are a couple, they both follow the conventions of Scottish dancing which require you to change dance partners for each dance. Not only is this a convention in the classes, but also at any public event, such as the dance in the grounds of a stately home earlier in the summer.

## **First Scottish group Beginners' Class 12.7.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

There were only six at the class :- I. and A., P. (man in late 20s), C., the girl in her 30s with dark hair and glasses and a young girl in her 20s with long hair. After the warm-up, we practised some of the steps :- Strathspey setting step with turns followed by Hello-goodbye setting (corner-partner, corner-partner, according to the first Scottish group which the teacher ignores). We incorporated Hello-goodbye setting in Lady Susan Stewart's Strathspey which was slow and then in Lady Susan Stewart's Reel which was fast. A. and C. got very out of breath in the fast version. C. is rather plump. We all kept falling over our feet as we were trying to keep up in the fast version and there was much laughter. A., the teacher, explained "Miss Milligan wrote down many dances which had been passed on by oral tradition. So present day dances may be very different from the original dances." She demonstrated the steps in the usual disciplined and balletic fashion, beautifully pointing her feet in her black ballet shoes, as if she was a professional ballet dancer.

A. demonstrated the Strathspey step which is step to the side and close feet together in first position, step to the side and lift the other foot behind the ankle of the weight-bearing foot, pointing the toe down to the ground. A. demonstrated the Bootlace step for the College Hornpipe dance where the lead couple weave in and out the lines of the set, crossing in the middle, like tying a lace in a shoe. Many of the dances seem to be metaphors for activities of daily life. "My ballet shoes are still wet from dancing on the wet grass in R.'s garden last night. This event is open to any of you. If you are coming next week, remember to bring some food as it is R.'s birthday." said A., the teacher.

## **First Scottish Group Improvers' Class 20.9.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

This was the first class after the summer break. A., the teacher in her 30s, told us how ten people had come to her Beginners' class on Tuesday and how there would be eleven of us in the Improvers' class (there were only two men, A. the Scottish man in his 50s and P., the younger man in his late 20s, who had attended the beginners' class last term.) I knew everybody apart from one lady who had attended the Beginners' class before I joined. I gave the information sheet about participation observation to this lady and she was happy about the research. She explained how she was wearing a tight sleeve on her left arm as she had had surgery for breast cancer and lymph nodes removed. She seemed very happy and lively and smiled a lot as she danced, easily criss-crossing her arms in the allemande when we danced together later in the session.

A., the teacher, plunged us straight into the Gay Gordons. I danced with F., the lady in her 50s with gold-rimmed glasses whom I had interviewed on tape last term. She was wearing a flowery waist-coat and short brown trousers and soft shoes. She laughed and smiled as we twirled our arms around to walk forwards and backwards. At the end of the Gay



Gordons, we did the warm-up. A., the teacher, told us how she was going to be much stricter about technique with regard to footwork as we were now improvers and not beginners any longer. She was really in a school mistress mood as she emphasised the disciplined and balletic nature of the steps, with the importance of pointing toes and turning the feet out. She got us to practise all five ballet positions with each foot in turn :- first position, second position, third position, fourth position and fifth position. When we practised steps, such as the pas de bas and the Strathspey setting step, she reprimanded individuals by name, emphasising that she was going to be much stricter on the footwork now. She singled me out for a reprimand on the pas de bas because I had my feet in the incorrect positions. My technique may be poor, but I noticed that I did not get as out of breath and red-faced as A. and I. or C. when doing lots of pas de bas on alternate feet very quickly to the music, probably because I do an hour's cycling four times a week. We practised skip-changes and the poussette which involves dancing around in a square shape whilst holding a partner and at the same time exchanging places with the neighbouring couple. We did the Flowers of Edinburgh which incorporated the poussette, and there was much laughter at various stages of this dance because most of the men's roles were danced by women and at one point in the dance, the man had to chase the woman round the set whilst she was giving him flirtatious glances over her shoulder. The complexity of the patterns made it vital to keep up with the music, so sometimes we literally stumbled over the steps. Two older women in their 50s were dancing together and erupted into fits of giggling. They told me that they only come Scottish dancing for a laugh.

A., the teacher, could see that people were out of breath and laughing a lot so she gave us a quick break and time to have a drink of water. She told us about the annual dinner dance on October 20<sup>th</sup> for which she was selling tickets at £12.00 each. This event was to be held in a nearby Sixth Form College and there would be a live band and a plate of food for everyone. A. the teacher explained how she was deliberately teaching dances which were on the programme of this Annual Scottish dance such as the Flowers of Edinburgh and Seann Triubhas Willican. She also told us about a demonstration of Scottish dancing which would be taking place at one of the local universities. She herself would be dancing in a white dress! We were all welcome to attend this event which started at 2.00pm on Saturday September 29<sup>th</sup>. After this break, we did Seann Triubhas Willican and the Military Tatoo Step.

I danced the Military Tatoo step with the new lady and we laughed as we desperately tried to keep in time to the music with our heel-toe pointing, eventually galloping through the polka steps which involved the ballroom hold at the end of each sequence. Laughing, we all did a few stretches of our legs as a cool-down exercise.

### **First Scottish Group Improvers' Class 27.9.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

There were 10 of us in the class this evening :- I. and A., F., P., J. (in 20s), S. (lady in 50s who does historical dance), two ladies in their 50s who live in my street and new lady with arm in tight sleeve. Everyone was wearing black soft shoes, either ballet shoes or Scottish shoes, and even A., the man in his 50s who was I.'s partner, had recently bought some Scottish shoes. The atmosphere was relaxed but A., the teacher in her 30s, was definitely in school ma'amish mood (she works full time as a history teacher at the Sixth Form College where the lessons are held). After the usual warm-up of walking round in a circle, practising skipping steps and the five ballet positions, we spent a long time re-hearsing Reels of Three to either six or eight bars of music, starting with the right shoulder first, and then starting with the left shoulder. With a lot of laughter and a number of mistakes, we managed to incorporate these Reels of Three into Montgomery's Rant, one of the dances from the programme for the first Scottish group Dance on 20.10.07. A., the teacher, complained that we were being "peevish," just like her Sixth Form students, as we kept making mistakes with the patterns of the dance and often ended up in the wrong place, frequently crashing into each other and laughing.

After a short break, we re-hearsed the slow Strathspey step, both as a travelling step forwards and as a step to either side. A., the teacher, demonstrated how to point the toe towards the ground when behind the ankle of the supporting leg and slide the foot easily into a deep sinking setting step in front. As she said "I don't want to see any bicycling or horse-riding."

The movements are very balletic and disciplined, emphasising the importance of keeping the foot close to the ground during the Strathspey setting steps. As we re-hearsed these steps in a circle around the room, A., the teacher, singled out individuals by name either for praise or a reprimand on poor technique. These adults seemed to be reduced to school-children, either receiving praise or criticism for their efforts and members of the class exchanged quizzical expressions with each other. A., the 50 year old man, really pulled a face when he was told to improve his technique. We then did another dance for the Annual Dance Programme, Sugar Candie. This dance used the slow Strathspey setting step and A., the teacher, got us to walk through the dance in pairs from various positions before we tried dancing the whole thing. She had similarly walked us through Montgomery's Rant from various positions earlier in the class. Sugar Candie included a movement which A., the teacher, described with a one word metaphor "Fish-hook." This Fish-hook movement involved the leading pair separating and crossing each other in the middle of the set to loop round a person in the corner of the set and meet their partner in the middle of the set again. The lady would always loop round the man in the corner of the set which was diagonally opposite in an upwards direction and the man would always loop round the lady in the corner of the set which was diagonally opposite in a downwards direction. Again, there was much laughter as we made numerous mistakes with these complex patterns. The last dance of the evening was Deil among the Tailors, which was also from the Annual Dance

Programme and A., the teacher, walked us through the dance from various positions before we danced it. At the end of class, we stretched our legs in the final cool-down exercise.

### **First Scottish Group Improvers' Class 25.10.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

Missed the warm-up as I arrived a few minutes late. There were nine people in the class, eight women and one man, P., who was in his 20s. There was I. (the Scottish lady in her 30's), F., the lady in her 50s with gold rimmed glasses. S., the lady in her 50s who did historical dancing, A., the lady in her 40s who used to do ballroom dancing, C., the lady in her 30s with dark hair and glasses, S, the slim lady in her 20s, the lady in her 50s who was my neighbour and myself. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, A., the teacher, was demonstrating the Strathspey setting step from side to side and then turning round to face each corner of the room. She had organised the class in rows to practice this Strathspey setting step. The movement was very disciplined and balletic, pointing the right foot to the side, closing with the left foot into first position, then hopping onto the right foot bringing the left foot behind the ankle and pointing towards the ground with the toes. The movement was very balletic and A., the teacher seemed to perform the steps as gracefully as a ballerina, really pointing her toes and arching her feet in her blue ballet shoes. She transferred weight from foot to foot as if she was as light as thistledown. A. is a small lady, although a little round. No-one in the class could match her grace although everyone seemed able to co-ordinate their feet in the steps. Class members smiled and laughed at their efforts. I noticed that all members of the class were rather overweight apart from P., the man in his 20s, and F., the lady in her 20s and myself. S., the lady in her 50s who does historical dancing and is the most graceful member of the class, is very overweight but her weight does not seem to hinder her ability to perform well.

There was a real sense of community within the class. People laughed and joked in pairs at the short breaks in the music. A., the lady in her 40s who had just re-joined the class told me that the Annual Dance which I had missed due to a cold, had been

"Very, very taxing. Four and a half hours of very advanced stuff!" A. had only just re-joined the Improvers' class so she would not have had much opportunity to learn some of the dances from the programme which A. had been teaching over the last few weeks. A., the teacher, had a copy of the manual which outlined all of the steps. She taught us a full Strathspey in a Diamond. I., the Scottish girl, grimaced as she walked through the complex pattern which involved each pair facing each other and holding hands, doing Strathspey setting steps on the various diagonals of the room, so as to move round the adjacent pair in a diamond shape. This particular pattern was very hard to master and it took our brains a long time to learn to co-ordinate our bodies and our feet in the appropriate direction at the appropriate time. A., the teacher, said, "Sometimes you have to cheat a little when you are doing a complex movement in a dance. You need to make sure you are at the right place at the right time."

As there were nine people in the group, everyone took it in turns to sit out and watch everyone else. There was a real community feel as people took it in turns to dance with each other or to sit out and watch what was going on. A., the teacher, announced at the short break about the Scottish dance in a nearby local village on December 11<sup>th</sup> when there would be mince pies. A. taught us two dances which used the full poussette in a diamond. The first dated from 1794 and was called "The Village Reel." A. explained how because of the oral tradition of Scottish dancing, it was difficult to be sure of the exact interpretation of the steps. However when the RSCDS wrote this down in 1923, it seemed to involve a full Strathspey poussette in a diamond. We then did Mrs. Stewart's Jig which included a full Strathspey poussette in a diamond besides a Ladies' Chain and a Grand Chain. A Ladies' Chain involved the ladies, who were diagonally opposite each other, holding hands and turning each other round, then turning their male partner on the side, then the two ladies turned each other round in the middle and then turned the man round on the opposite side, meanwhile dancing Strathspey steps with the feet. It took a lot of brain power to co-ordinate hands and feet and anticipate which person you should be turning next. The Grand Chain seemed easier as this involved three couples moving round in a square, each person clutching the hand of the oncoming dancer and smiling as they moved around the square. It was lovely to feel the warmth of everyone's hands as we danced this Grand Chain and see all the smiling faces as our eyes met when we clasped each others' hands. The tactile aspects of Scottish dance are really important for creating a warm welcoming atmosphere and sense of community. The session ended with A., the teacher, just getting us to stretch our legs.

### **First Scottish Group- Improvers Class 1.11.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

I have decided to go to Improvers' class every week, but the second Scottish group every other week so that I do not exhaust the patience of the more experienced dancers in this group. Also I must not exhaust myself. It is very physically and mentally exhausting to go to two Scottish dance sessions one after the other.

There were only five of us in the class this evening :- F., the lady in her 50s with gold-rimmed glasses, A., the German girl who had been an expert ballroom dancer, S., the girl in her 20s, P., the man in his 20s and myself. A., the teacher, was in a lively mood and challenged us to learn some new movements. First of all, after the warm-up, she got us to revise and walk through the Strathspey poussette. I was dancing with F. and we both grimaced as we tried to remember the steps and which way to move round your adjacent pair along the diagonals of the room in order to move round in a diamond shape. F. was dancing the male part so she kept her hands in front of her body with palms raised upwards whilst I rested my hands with

palms downwards in hers. At first we seemed to be struggling against each other as we started each step on the wrong foot. The steps had to be done so that we mirrored each other's movements as we traced out the diamond pattern on the floor. So when F. stepped on her right foot, I stepped on my left foot so that we both moved round together on the floor. Eventually, F. and I managed to dance in synchrony. A., the teacher, was very encouraging and said we were doing well. I could sense that the pattern of this Strathspey poussette was becoming imprinted on our minds and bodies so that eventually we were gliding along the floor together with balletic steps. I could feel my toes pointing in my black ballet shoes and my body rising and falling as I did the step-hop-step-step.

A., the teacher, then walked us through a dance which incorporated this Strathspey poussette that she had just taught us. She explained how the music for Strathspeys was usually eight minutes long and she was using a CD from Green Ginger, the band which had played at the Annual dance. The dance was called "Mrs. Ogilvie's Fancy" and was written for an eight person set. A. adapted it to be danced by six people. The ones and twos did the poussette, the ones led down and back up and changed places with the twos, the ones circled with the threes and then the ones did rights and lefts with the twos. The leading couple then repeated the dance from second position.

A., the teacher, said she wanted to be able to surprise the rest of the class next week by getting us five proficient at doing the Rondelle. This movement involved four people. The first couple and second couple both held hands, facing each other in a square shape. The second couple danced under the joined and raised hands of the first couple. Then the two men and the two ladies held hands on the side and the two men made an arch for the ladies to go under. The original couples then joined hands and the second couple danced back under the hands of the first couple. A., the teacher, incorporated both the Strathspey poussette and the Rondelle into a dance, the "Saucie Haughie." She said there was a long story behind the dance but refused to tell it. Apparently the chairman of the second Scottish group know the story. There was lots of laughter in this dance as the patterns were complex. I was dancing with A., the German girl, and felt whisked around the room from poussette to whirling round in pairs to charging round in a Rondelle like a group of noisy school children.

Finally we did the dance "Red House" which involved an unusual variation of reels of three. In fact, it is the only dance within which this particular variation occurs, according to A., the teacher. There are two couples positioned in a square formation, but only three people are involved in the reel at any one time, either both men and one lady or both ladies and one man. A., the teacher, actually came up behind me and put her hands under my arms so she could steer me in the right direction! Dancing as a man, I had to start the Reel of Three round A., the German girl, with my right shoulder, while J., who was the lady in the opposite corner of the square, drifted inwards so as to go round A. with her right shoulder. When the reel was completed with these three dancers, two of the dancers moved over to do a Reel of Three with the last lady.

A., the teacher, recognised that she had pushed us hard. I felt mentally and physically exhausted and the other members of the class said they felt the same way. We did some stretches of our calf muscles. A., the teacher, told us about St. Andrew's Summer school for Scottish dancing, and that there was information on the website. A., the teacher, told us how this was truly an international event, with people from all over the world, especially Japan. There were Scottish dance classes every morning and optional ones in the afternoon (you could go for a walk or shopping in Edinburgh), besides Ceilidhs every evening. The whiskeys were apparently very large. So everyone would be well-oiled by the evening dance! A., the teacher, spoke of problems finding a teacher for the Intermediate class in a nearby village. She is amalgamating her Beginners' class with the Improvers next term and there are plans to join the Intermediate class with her Improvers class.

### **First Scottish Group Improvers' Class 8.11.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

Arrived during the warm-up. A., the teacher, had organised the class into a circle to practice the Strathspey travelling step. There were ten people in the class including myself. I slipped my black ballet shoes on and joined in. I felt the rippling movement go through my feet and legs in the hop-step-step-step, hop-step-step-step, and was conscious of pointing my toes in a balletic style. Class members' performance of this step seemed to vary. S., the young girl in her 20s, seemed to move gracefully from foot to foot, whereas A., the 50 year old man and P., the man in his late 20s, seemed to hop somewhat awkwardly and land heavily. A., the 50 year old man, was wearing proper black soft Scottish shoes so his awkwardness was not quite as pronounced as P.'s, who was wearing thick soled walking shoes. Everyone wore serious expressions as if concentrating hard.

A., the teacher, is challenging us to learn more and more complex sequences of movements which she then incorporated into dances. She was using the manual of steps. This week she taught us the Tournee, which is performed in groups of four. A., the teacher, demonstrated the pattern of movement with three members of the class. First you dance into the middle of the square to join hands with your partner who is opposite you. You take your partner's hands and swing round so you are standing next to them, facing in an anti-clockwise direction. Both pairs are now lined up and each pair is facing opposite sides of the room. The whole long line then dances round with each pair in promenade hold, like clock hands going round a clock face but in an anti-clockwise direction. On completion of the circle, one pair joined left arms and the other pair joined right arms and danced round in a smaller circle themselves, each pair going in opposite directions. Class members alternated serious expressions when concentrating hard, with laughter when people made mistakes. I practised this move first

with A., the 50 year old man, then P., the man in his late 20s. A. was nervous and I could feel his warm hand shaking as we both got confused with the directions of the tournee. We ended up laughing. P. was more confident and kept pushing me in the right direction. A., the teacher, put her face in her hands, seemingly in despair at the mistakes made by the class members who just ended up in giggles! I completely collapsed with laughter every time I ended up facing the wrong direction, as did a number of the other class members.

Next we did a Canadian dance with a Gaelic title which translated into "From the Shores of Scotia." A., the teacher, explained that it was a dance written to commemorate the soldiers of World War One. As she said "It's appropriate as it will be Remembrance Sunday this weekend." I reflected how many of the Scottish dances had militaristic overtones, and how A., the teacher, had a strong sense of Scottish history, as she was a history teacher who had done a degree at St. Andrew's and whose mother had been a Scottish dancer. A., the teacher, referred to the music as she taught the dance which concluded each phrase with a Tournee, the movement sequence she had just taught us. It was as if she was trying to re-inforce our learning, so that this particular pattern was imprinted both on our brains and on our bodies. A., the teacher, walked through the dance moves, beautifully pointing her toes and gliding with great grace as it was a Strathspey. Her poise contrasted with our laughter as we struggled with the patterns. Writing these notes the next day, I find it hard to recall the exact patterns although the Tournee is well-imprinted both in my brain and in my body.

A., the teacher introduced the next dance, "White Heather Jig", with the words, "This was written by a mathematician called Fosse. It is lively and many interesting dances are not by choreographers from the first Scottish group. Mathematics and dancing seem to go together and you find a lot of mathematicians like Scottish dancing."

All I can remember about this dance is bursting into fits of laughter as we moved through the complex patterns which included Reels of Four. As usual, A., the teacher, had got us to practice Reels of Four just before the dance, starting from different positions and using left shoulder or right shoulder. "White Heather Jig" felt rapid and the Reels of Four stimulated smiles and laughter as dancers wove in and out of each other. It was as if we were an excited group of school children dancing around in the playground. These dance movements, such as Reels of Four, really promote a sense of community among the dancers.

P., the man in his late 20s, left early and I watched the last dance as it only required eight dancers. A., the teacher, demonstrated and walked through the steps, referring to a sheet of paper as she had done for "White Heather Jig." This last dance "Marie's Wedding", included a new variation, Half a Diagonal Reel of Four. A., the teacher, used a metaphor to describe the pattern of the dance, "like a four leafed clover." This was the shape alternating lines of four dancers traced on the floor with their feet. The dancers laughed and smiled as they performed this particular pattern. Everyone joined hands to dance round in a circle at the end. A., the teacher, did some simple stretches of the legs and bending of the knees at the end of class.

### **First Scottish Group Improvers' Class 22.11.07 at 6.00-7.30pm**

There were the usual warm-up exercises :- walking round the room and then doing Rights and Lefts (taking the hands of the on-coming dancers) besides all five ballet positions. There were lots of smiles exchanged between dancers and a warm friendly atmosphere. There seemed to be lots of laughter among the ten dancers this evening, particularly when mistakes occurred in the patterns of the dances later in the evening. There were eight women and two men, P. in his 20s and A. in his 50s. A., the German lady in her 40s seemed to be in a very exuberant mood as she leapt from foot to foot in her soft black Scottish shoes. She is a former ballroom dancer and I noticed her technique was very good as she pointed her feet in first, second, third, fourth and fifth positions during the warm-up. She seemed like a professional ballet dancer, even though she is over-weight, as she pointed her toes with beautifully arched feet. S., the older lady in her 50s who does historical dancing, similarly had excellent technique. Although she was quite a large lady, she was very graceful and light on her feet. I could see her serene smile as she pointed her feet and glided across the floor in the setting steps. C., the lady in her 30s with black hair and glasses, is also very graceful and overweight. I reflected how you can be a good dancer, whatever your size or shape.

A., the teacher, gave out programmes for the end of term dance which was to be held in a village ten miles away, with mince pies as refreshments, on Tuesday December 11<sup>th</sup>. She taught us two of the dances from the programme this evening, using her music sheets. The first was "Haste to the Wedding" but the second, the "Saltire Society Reel", provided much hilarity because of the complexity of the patterns. A., the teacher, got each pair to walk through this dance as first couple. However there were times during the dance when some couples got totally lost and disintegrated into giggles like a crowd of noisy school children. A., the teacher, smiled and put her face in her hands in mock despair. The first and second couples in the set of ten, turned each other half a turn in the middle of the set for two steps, then danced down the set for two steps, back up for two steps, setting to each of two corners for two steps and then joining with the two corners to circle round in a right hand star. This sequence of setting was repeated to the other corners, concluding with a left hand star. The first and second couple then did a poussette. This dance was done progressively with couples exchanging places so that everyone got a

turn to be first, second and third couple. In fact, the bouncy Scottish music seemed to go on and on. We laughed and laughed as individuals got lost in the complex patterns.

At the break, A., the teacher, again announced about the end of term dance and renewing our places for next term. We then practised the tournee, which I did with the young man, P., in his late 20s. This is a complex movement done in groups of four. For the tournee, two couples dance into the centre and line up so that each couple is facing opposite directions. Both couples dance round in a circular fashion using a Strathspey setting step. Then each couple repositions themselves so that both dancers are moving round in opposite directions to each other, with joining hands raised. The whole sequence of movements seems to be like clock-hands sweeping round a clock face in anti-clockwise then clockwise directions. We then did the Argyle Strathspey which involved the tournee, all changing partners again before we started the dance. A., the older man, requested that we practice the Saltire Society Reel in the last five minutes as it was so difficult to remember the sequences of movements. Afterwards, we did a few knee stretches to cool down and relax muscles at the end of the session.

## **First Scottish Group Ladies' Step Dance 21.4.07 at 2.30-5.00pm**

A., a trained Scottish Country Dance teacher in her 30s and secretary of the first Scottish Country Dancing group, was teaching the session. I met her briefly outside the church hall and showed her the ethics' forms for participant observation and narrative interviews. I have attended A.'s Beginners' Scottish Country Dancing class on Thursday evenings for 9 weeks and she has agreed to facilitate my research project on experiences of learning to dance, health and growing older. A. is going to show the forms to the local Scottish Country Dance committee. She gave me permission to observe and write about her teaching this Ladies' Step dancing class. There were seven ladies over the age of 60, one man over the age of 60, one lady in her 30s and myself at this class. A. slipped on a loose skirt and blue ballet shoes. A. handed out printed sheets which detailed the stages of each different step in the dance "The Village Maid" which she was going to teach during the class. She taught by demonstration, providing her own interpretation of the steps which were on the printed sheet. As she explained,

"Much of step dancing is taught by 'oral tradition.' In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, travelling dance teachers taught ladies in their own homes and country girls in barns. Rather like the tradition of dancing in Jane Austen's England. Step dancing was a way of showing off your figure, dress and grace and originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century France.....Balance can be difficult if you are older but balance is something which can be achieved with practise. I find my own balance deteriorates if I do not practise."

A. demonstrated the steps in a very balletic and disciplined style, and yet at the same time, she performed with ease, grace and a smile. First she lead the class in a warm-up, walking around the hall in a large circle, pointing toes and stretching arms, then walking on tip-toe and finally stretching the ham-strings in each leg in turn. Wearing my old black ballet shoes and a skirt, I felt as if I had gone back to my childhood days of ballet classes. I am beginning to re-learn the basic ballet steps of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> position which A. rehearsed during the warm-up. I loved the feeling of pointing my toes, stretching from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> position. A. moved with such grace and fluidity, as if she was a professional ballerina, arching her feet and pointing her toes although there were no blocks in her shoes for actually standing on tip-toe. Her smile radiated confidence and she held her skirt out in front with the tips of her fingers, as if she was making a shallow basket. She told the class how it was very important to hold the skirt in the correct manner. She was standing so erect, as if there was a ruler down her back. She disciplined the class to follow her every move, demonstrating the steps with her back towards us, so that it was easier for us to copy, and calling out the instructions for each step. At times, she got confused with the steps, as if her memory had failed her. She explained

"Memory is a problem when learning to step dance.....Sometimes you need to 'cheat' with the steps. The sheet may state 2<sup>nd</sup> position but it can be easier to do 4<sup>th</sup> and then move into the next sequence of steps."

I found it was extremely difficult to remember the different sequences of steps. I needed to copy A. very closely as each sequence was very complex, with a lot of hopping from one foot to another, stepping to the side and behind, bending a foot in front to point the toe. I did not find the dance physically tiring but found the mental concentration really hard. It was difficult to get my brain to co-ordinate my feet to glide through the complex patterns of steps as A. did. The whole lesson was spent on learning one dance thoroughly. It seems as if the written text for "The Village Maid" merely gives the names of the steps but does not capture the emotional grace with which they are actually performed. A. stretched her feet to each side in a beautiful point. Her arms were still through-out the dance as she held her skirt. She transferred her weight easily from foot to foot, as if she was as light as a feather, as she moved from first position, stepped to the right and curtsied and into step one, with the ballonee composee. The class was disciplined to follow her every move. A. repeated the step sequences again and again to re-inforce learning. It was as if she was teaching to the level of perfection for a public performance. A. invited questions from the class after she had taught each sequence of steps, so that individuals could improve their technique. A. referred to the one man in the group to clarify technique on some of the steps as she referred to Scottish dancing as an oral tradition rather than a written one. I found this description of dance as an oral tradition fascinating.

Half-way through the class there was a tea-break with home-made cakes provided by the one man who was treasurer of the first Scottish Country Dance group. He said he would like to be interviewed for my research as he can tell me a lot of stories about the history of the dances.

### **First Scottish Group Ladies' Step Dance 27.5.07 at 2.30-5.00pm**

K., a Scottish dance teacher in her early 40s, taught this session but A., our teacher helped to demonstrate as this dance, "The Thistle and the Rose", involved two women dancing together, mainly in mirror-image to each other but sometimes with subtle differences. All the steps were on a printed sheet. There were eight sequences of steps. There were eleven women, including myself, and one older man R., the treasurer of the First Scottish Country dance group, in the class. R. was in full Highland dress with a blue and red plaid skirt and sporran and black Scottish dance shoes. All the women were wearing light tops and loose skirts, with either ballet or black Scottish dance shoes. Four of the women had very white hair and appeared to be in their 70s, several others appeared to be in their 60s. My partner appeared to be in her 60s. She was a large lady who struggled with the steps. Laughing, she told me "I've been doing this many years though it doesn't look like it. I find the social part of Scottish dancing makes me keep coming." Her whole face wrinkled into a big grin. I held her soft warm hands and together we danced the sequences of steps, often stumbling over the steps and not providing the polished and disciplined performance of our two teachers. It was hard to remember all the sequences of steps correctly. Everyone laughed and smiled at the end of trying each new sequence. Two of the older ladies in their 70s kept asking for clarification of some of the sequences.

However their actual performance of the steps in black ballet shoes appeared very disciplined and graceful, with pointing of the toes, hopping from foot to foot and swivelling round on tip-toe. Indeed the whole class was very disciplined, concentrating hard with serious expressions when learning and rehearsing the steps. At the breaks between each sequence of steps, members of the class would laugh and joke in small groups, sharing difficulties and sometimes rehearsing the steps again amongst themselves. Scottish dance seems very disciplined and everyone performs in unison as K., the teacher leading the class, shouts out the French names of the steps. Half-way through the class we had home-made cakes and tea, provided by R., the older gentleman in a kilt. His home-made flap-jack was gorgeous and sticky.

One of the older ladies in her 70s told me she does Highland dance and only gave up doing the Highland fling last year, due to problems with her knee. A., the German lady from my class who has just started this term, told me how her calf muscles ached after each Scottish dancing session. During the second half of the session, I noticed how remembering the complex sequences of steps seems to be a major difficulty. When K. had finished teaching each of the eight sequences separately, she and A. tried to demonstrate the whole dance. The only problem was that K. had a complete memory lapse after step four! She burst out laughing and her laughter was echoed by the whole class. A. and K. managed to perform the whole dance correctly and then the class went through the whole dance several times, with A. and K. demonstrating at the front.

### **First Scottish Group Ladies' Step 16.9.07 at 2.30-5.00pm**

There were three older ladies in their seventies, R., the older man who was the treasurer, one lady in her 50s, A., the teacher and myself. A. was teaching the session and the dance was called "Over the Water to Charlie." She gave out printed sheets with the steps, explaining that there could have been several different versions. R. the treasurer agreed with this and there was quite a lot of debate between A. and R. during the course of the class over the correct interpretation of the steps, for example the Glasgow Highlander step, which seemed similar to the grapevine step in Circle dance. A. the teacher said it had taken her from 8.30am till 1.00pm to try learn the six sequences of steps and she still felt unsure of them. She needed to refer to her notes at various points in the class when she said she had a mental block. She really stressed the importance of getting the patterns of steps into your mind so that you can co-ordinate your feet. The class members agreed it was hard to remember the steps.

The warm-up involved walking round the room and then doing various ballet positions:- first, second, third, fourth and fifth position with pointed toes. All the women were wearing skirts and ballet shoes whereas R., the one man, had a blue kilt and a sporran and the proper Scottish shoes. We all held hands in a circle for the final part of the warm-up and practised the five ballet positions, besides standing on each leg in turn and swinging the other knee across the supporting leg and then out to the side.

No-one had any difficulty doing these exercises, even the people in their 70s. One of the ladies in her 70s explained to me how she had trained as a Scottish dance teacher with the first Scottish group, having attended the summer school at St. Andrew's in the training which involved both theory and practical teaching sessions. She told me about her one frozen shoulder and her friend told me about her two frozen shoulders.

They found the dancing helpful and both had physiotherapy exercises to do with walking sticks, lifting them above their heads and swinging then from side to side, similar to the exercises I do for my shoulders with an umbrella. They also told me about the rubber straps they pull to strengthen their shoulder muscles. They complained about having to fasten their bras up around their waists and slide them on, because of these frozen shoulders. The lady in her 70s who was the teacher said "Middle-aged people who start Scottish dancing often have to give up because their bodies just can't cope. I've been doing it

for 50 years, like my friend here.” The other lady in her 70s had been doing Scottish dancing for 25 years. The lady in her 70s who was the teacher put a tubigrip on her left ankles/foot part way through the class. “An old injury.” she said. She seemed to get very hot and wiped her face and drank water during the short pauses between each sequence of steps.

A., the teacher, was careful to ensure that everyone had a little breather after each sequence of steps. Half-way through the session there was a tea-break with R.’s home- made flap-jack and buns. We paid R. £4.00 each for the class. Everyone chatted about their holidays. The older ladies told me how the Scottish dancing was really good for their health in terms of keeping them moving and also the social contacts. One of the ladies in her 70s told me about the 84 year old man who used to come to their Scottish dance group in the neighbouring town. As she said “He used to come to the dance group even when he lived in a nursing home and could only walk through the steps. It is so unusual to go to an outside group when living in a nursing home. Sadly, this man was knocked down crossing the road and died. It would have been horrible if he had died on the dance floor.”

A. the teacher explained “There are so many different interpretations of the steps, I kept ringing R. up this morning when I was practising the dance in my flat, to get his advice,” (R.’s deceased wife used to teach Ladies’ Step and he is writing a book about Ladies’ Step in her memory). The printed sheet of steps stated that this was R.’s wife’s version. I reflected to myself how involvement in Ladies Step and providing cakes for tea helped R. to keep his wife’s memory alive. He seemed so jovial and relaxed at the class to- day and joked with A., the teacher,

“Every Scottish dance teacher affirms they teach the correct version of Ladies’ Step. However there are many versions because of the oral tradition.” A. kept checking the steps with R. as she was teaching and made modifications to the more difficult steps such as the “shuffles” so that the older people in the group could cope with them. She suggested “Instead of pivoting round on the spot whilst doing four shuffle steps, you can do all the shuffles in one direction or you can even do spring points instead. So there are three options.”

The older women seemed to struggle to remember all the six sequences of steps and so did I, because each sequence was a complex variation of the “hop-brush- beat-beat” step or the “shuffles” which she had taught at the very beginning of the class. The dance was very balletic and aerobic, with toes pointed, feet turned out and graceful movements, hopping from foot to foot. The discipline was superb as everyone followed A., the teacher, with perfect timing. A., the teacher, laughed when she made a mistake in the Glasgow Highlander step and ended up on the wrong foot. Her mistake showed just how mentally challenging Scottish dancing can be, as she got confused on this particular step at several points in the dance. Eventually she got the group through all the six sequences of steps, with a lot of demonstration and repetition. She deliberately slowed the paino music down on the tape as it seemed impossibly fast. We all managed to perform the whole dance from start to finish. I felt relaxed and uplifted by the dance and a little tired.

At the end of the session, R. carried all the tea-things in a large box out to his car. He had no difficulty with this and declined any offers of help. I reflected how the dance must help to keep him fit. I have adopted the strategy of not ‘crowding’ the organisation of this first Scottish group and it seems to have worked well. I have attended the Beginners’ class regularly on Thursday evenings but I did not go to any of the five sessions in R.’s garden in June and July on Wednesday evenings.

I had attended the tea-dance in a local school and the dancing in the grounds of the stately home however. When I had phoned R., to check the date of the Ladies’ Step dance session in September, he had said that I would be “most welcome.” Indeed he and the teacher A., who was secretary of the first Scottish group, had both welcomed me warmly at the Ladies’ Step. They are important gate-keepers to the first Scottish group. It had been important to interview the chairman and his wife too, as gatekeepers to the first Scottish group.

### **First Scottish Group Fosse and Drewry Society 14.10.07 at 14.30-17.30**

Organised by R., the 71 year old man who was treasurer of the first Scottish group. With his permission, I gave out the ethics forms for the ethnography at the start of class. People offered to help. The Scottish dances by Fosse and Drewry produce highly complex patterns which are far more complicated than the dances I have been learning at the first Scottish group classes in preparation for the Annual dance. We paid £2 each for the session which was held in a local community hall. 16 people (including myself) attended the session. R., the organiser, explained to me

“It’s great fun teaching these dances. It takes me a whole week of going through them three or four times a day in order to learn them!” He showed me the Piling diagrams on his music sheets with instructions that looked very complex eg the Belhaven Reel, which had the emblem of four circles, one on top of each other, to represent the patterns of the dance. Besides R., there were three ladies in their 70s from a nearby local town and J., an older man who was 79 and told me he had been Scottish dancing for 53 years but found it was getting more difficult now he was getting older. He only did a couple of the dances and although mentally he seemed to have absorbed the complex patterns of the dances, the shuffled along awkwardly in his black Scottish shoes, leaning his whole body to the left. He was a tall thin man, maybe six feet tall if he could stand straight, with a twisted expression across his face and especially his mouth, as he seemed to be concentrating very hard. When he sat down, he told me, “Scottish dancing is like bell-ringing, my other hobby. You have to think.”

The dances were incredibly complex. I had never seen such complex dances before. There was no warm-up or practice with footwork but R., the 71 year old organiser, walked through the first dance with us which was called “Herring Colours” and was about fishermen’s wives selling fish. The energy required to actually dance through such a dance, and indeed all the dances, was enormous in comparison with my Improvers’ class. The dancers were noticeably out of breath by the end of the session, and despite the fact that I go long distance cycling, I felt out of breath too. The complex patterns are just swirling around my head, and it is impossible to remember the precise details of any one dance. The variety of formations are just whizzing around my head. Rather than just one leading couple going through the set of eight people, all couples seemed to be moving in different directions at once, such as Reels of Four across the side, and then Reels of Eight with the two lines of dancers intermingling with each other.

Dancers moved in pairs, in circles, in squares, in rectangles, triangles, figures of eight, star formations with four dancers or with four pairs of dancers holding hands with each other and one of each pair would put a hand in the centre to form the hub of the star. Sometimes dancers would split into two groups, with one group forming an inner star formation and the other group dancing round in an outer circle, either in a clockwise or an anti-clockwise direction. The dances from the “Rose Collection” by Hugh Fosse seemed particularly frenzied. One of these dances included the complex star formations described earlier and some dancers dancing in a square formation, with men and women alternating in dancing round in a circular fashion in the centre, sometimes back to back. The result was numerous collisions. One of the younger dancers, a girl in her 20s, slipped in her ballet shoes and crashed into a younger man in his twenties with a beard, yellow t-shirt and yellow shorts, who had already crashed into another man in his 30s when dancing in the centre. No-one was hurt and there was much laughter but I reflected that the risk of injury was high in these Fosse and Drewry dances. I asked R. about this at tea after the session and he said this group had never experienced an injury.

I did several of the dances and watched others. Their names were complex such as “Hachted Ha” and “Maclaune’s Reel.” I danced a Strathspey with R., which was lovely because he knew the patterns of the dance and I could just mirror his movements. The men and the women were dancing in two lines of four in mirror image to each other. R. is a very jovial person who smiled and laughed throughout the whole session. He gently steered me in the right direction when I got lost in the sequence but mostly I was able to respond to non-verbal cues from the other dancers, such as four dancers getting into line to dance a Reel of Four, or R. holding his hand out for me to dance up the set with him. R. is so jovial, he smiles and grins and laughs all the time and was obviously enjoying organising the session. As he said afterwards at tea, “It was such fun that I forgot all about the pain in my hip which has been bothering me earlier in the week.”

Indeed, everyone was smiling and laughing at the complexity of the dances, especially when dancers ended up in the wrong position and had to dart quickly to the opposite side of the room like a startled rabbit. Two of the 70 year old women were grinning from ear to ear as they had to run across the room to swop places. They were very nimble on their feet and did not slip or collide into anyone else during the session like the younger dancers had done. The whole afternoon was such fun with all those smiling laughing faces. R. was resplendent in his blue and red kilt with sporran and university club sweatshirt, and his proper black Scottish shoes. He smiled so broadly his yellow teeth showed and his blue eyes twinkled mischievously. He was in charge of the music too and had a large CD player with a selection of Scottish music. I noticed his wife’s name on the dance books with instructions – he was obviously carrying on his wife’s tradition of promoting Scottish dancing.

After the end of the session, R. served afternoon tea with home-made cakes at his house which was just round the corner. This was a lovely opportunity to socialise with people of all ages. The three older women and J., the 79 year old man, were there. There was chat about gardens, photos J. had taken of ducks when bird-watching and also injuries from Scottish dancing. R. told us about his right shoulder which had got pulled during a dance in the summer, and a girl in her 20s talked about her arthritis and how she got pain in her ankles. She has to take painkillers and wear supports for dancing. She has been advised to do this by the doctor. J., the 79 year old man, told me how at summer school at St. Andrews, the orthopaedic doctors had to be available and not on holiday due to the large number of injuries. The most common injury was a pulled ligament in the knee. He took off his shoe and demonstrated with his green socked foot how you should roll the foot gently down in Scottish dancing, starting from the toes and rolling onto the ball of the foot and finally the heel. This was how to avoid injury.

### **In Process Memo:**

This dancing session had provided a lovely opportunity for these older people to get together with younger people, dance together and socialise over tea. It was so lovely to be sat round in R.’s sitting room, drinking tea and chatting. The dancing had facilitated fun and a community feel which carried on throughout tea. R. has such a strong sense of belonging from the Scottish dance as he is so immersed in the pattern of these dances. He loves the challenge of the complexity. His involvement with Scottish dancing seems to maintain his relationship with his wife.

### **First Scottish Group Ladies’ Step Dance 28.10.07 at 2.30-4.45pm**

K, the teacher who was a friend of my teacher, taught us the “Dusty Miller.” There were seven older ladies in their 60s and 70s, myself and R., the older man in the group. After the warm-up of walking round the room pointing toes, and



bending both knees with feet parallel so as to stretch calf muscles, K., got us to practice the steps of the dance. These were complex and mentally challenging for example the "Shuffles," which involved pointing a foot in front and brushing it back to the other foot and out to a point again very quickly. I found this movement very difficult and K. said you could just point your toe instead, changing from foot to foot. She demonstrated how you can practice the shuffles sitting down and suggested that we all practice when sitting down at breakfast. "Shedding" was another difficult step which involved hopping on one leg whilst bringing the other foot quickly behind-in front-behind the supporting calf with knee bent and toes pointing towards the ground. It was a very balletic and disciplined movement and all the older ladies seemed able to perform this movement, although R., the older man, and myself were struggling. R. seemed very hot and sweaty though he was smiling as he told us about the Ladies' Step book he was writing in memory of his wife as she had been too ill to write down the dances before she died. The book is now with the first Scottish organisation but he said there were various disagreements on the sub-committee about the copyright of some of the dances. He had been compiling the book from his wife's notes. He felt he could not publish the book independently because of this copyright issue, although he had given a copy to K., the teacher, so that she could carry on teaching the dances.

K. taught the six sequences of steps in "The Dusty Miller" one by one. The timing was difficult as it was 6/4. She had to keep slowing down the music as the steps were so difficult. She said that she could not talk through the steps, think about what she was doing and demonstrate the steps all at the same time, because the brainwork required by Ladies' Step was just too taxing. Most of the older women agreed with her and one said "It keeps your brain young!" Another said "It's really impossible to get your brain to co-ordinate your feet!" And yet everyone seemed to perform well, apart from myself and R., the older man, who was a little clumsy with his feet. The steps are very balletic and disciplined. People were getting quite out of breath with all the hopping and pointing so K., the teacher, gave us frequent short breaks. By the end of the class, K., the teacher, said that her shuffles had deteriorated to points. He complained that the steps really pulled your calf muscles and several of the older ladies nodded in agreement. After we had learnt three of the sequences of steps, we all had tea with R.'s, the older man's, home-made cakes and flapjack. Everyone was laughing and joking. A couple of the older ladies held hands and rehearsed the steps.

After tea, we did the last three sequences of steps and then did the whole dance through several times. Everyone seemed very tired at the end. D., the lady in her mid 60s with short grey hair and glasses, who was very thin, complained that her legs were aching, especially her calves, after the Ladies' Step dance. She had told me she found it hard to get her brain to co-ordinate her feet. She had been once to the Monday Circle dance class. She said with a grimace.

"They're all very elderly.... they get out of breath very easily. But the dances are nice and it suits me because I'm in town on that day. I go to an American dance group on Fridays so I can't go to the more advanced Circle dancing group then."

### **First Scottish Group Ladies' Step Dance 2.12.07 at 14.30-17.00**

This session, held in a spacious church hall, was attended by nine older ladies, one older man, R., who was treasurer of the first Scottish group, two students and myself. K., the teacher, was in her 40s. D., the lady in her 60s who also attended the second Circle dance group, was there. She was chatting with two other older ladies with white hair. "We've just eaten too much lunch at my house. We had haddock mornay, which was shared four ways because my cat had some, followed by trifle." One of the ladies with white hair smiled and clutched her stomach, as if indicating that she was feeling too full to dance.

K., the teacher, got us to do warm-up exercises in a circle. R., as usual, was wearing his kilt and sporran. K. then taught us the waltz step, dancing round in a circle. This waltz step was used in the first sequence of the dance which involved tracing a diamond pattern on the floor with your feet moving forwards and backwards. There was much laughter as everyone found this shape difficult to master. The laughter was particularly pronounced when D. said, "I don't know whether I have two or three feet!" At the end of the diamond, there was a spot turn and then the diamond pattern was repeated with another spot turn. One of the older ladies with white hair felt dizzy and sat on the floor for a few minutes. However she recovered and carried on dancing.

Everyone performed the next step well which was a pas de basque with a hop, stretching out the back leg in a point. This movement was repeated several times to each side before K. taught a sequence she described as a "collapsing deckchair." R., the older man, stood out of the dance as he said his shoulders hurt too much to do the twisting arm movements over his head which this "collapsing deckchair" sequence required. Apparently a young man had pulled on his arms and injured his shoulders seven years ago. Three dancers formed a circle in the "collapsing deckchair" movement and joined hands to hop forwards and backwards several times before twisting their arms round to form a circle facing outwards rather than inwards. The four groups of three dancers were like cog-wheels in a clock circulating round in various directions, as the dancers twisted from facing centre to facing outwards and vice versa. K., the teacher, took R.'s place and demonstrated the movements with myself and another dancer. Although I was wearing a support on my arm and hand, I found the movement was conducted in a gentle manner. R. came back to our group and tried the movement, letting go of our hands when it became too painful. Next we danced in lines of three, doing pointing steps forwards and backwards, and spot turns, concluding the dance with a curtsy. The holding of hands facilitated a sense of community and laughter.

Half way through the session, we had the usual cup of tea and home-made flap-jack and buns, provided by R. We paid £5 each to attend the session, putting the money in the pot. K. and R. said they agreed on the interpretation of this particular step dance, but there are always variations of each dance as these dances were derived from an oral tradition. I lent D. the Circle dance tape and booklet I had bought from the second Circle dance teacher as she wanted to do the "Misolou" at the international folk dancing club she goes along to on Monday evenings. She invited me to attend this group too.

### **First Scottish Group- Ladies' Step Dance 2.1.08 at 2.00-5.00pm**

I attended a Ladies' Step dance workshop led by a Japanese teacher who is regarded as the best Ladies' Step dance teacher in the country. She is married to a Scottish dancer. The workshop was held in a local school hall which had a very hard floor. Fourteen people attended the session, mainly retired older women but there were two older men, including R., the local treasurer of the first Scottish group. Laughing, R. made tea and coffee for everyone and explained how his book on Ladies' Step dance, compiled from his wife's teaching notes, was stuck with a Scottish committee.

"I've had no reply from them" he said with a grin. "I don't think the powers that be approve. You don't know them but they are very fierce. I know I should go see them in person but .... Anyway the teacher K. has a copy and she will teach them. So the dances will get passed on that way."

Another lady showed me her injured foot and ankle. She was wearing a small tubigrip and explained, "I have an inflamed tendon so I have to watch it. It got really bad from dancing on hard floors and the tendon was inflamed all round the edge of my shoes which made it painful to wear them." She grinned and touched her foot. I noticed however that she danced for the whole session without any apparent difficulty, doing the warm-up and the two full dances gracefully and easily in her black ballet shoes. "Ladies' Step is a lot of memory work" she told me. "You've just got to make your brain remember the various movements through repeating them again and again."

The teacher repeated this point about memory. Her dancing steps were incredibly fluid and graceful like those of a professional ballerina. She got us to rehearse the various ballet steps at the start of class :- first, second, third, fourth and fifth positions. She demonstrated how to slide the foot and point the toes as you moved through the different positions. We practised these steps, including the fifth derriere which involved pointing the toe behind the body. This movement was challenging for balance and the teacher suggested holding onto the wall or holding hands with someone-else. Several of the older ladies held hands with each other. I noticed D., the lady in her mid 60s who seemed such a good dancer in Circle and the other Scottish group, struggling to maintain her balance and holding onto the wall. Indeed she had difficulty with a number of the steps such as the "Shuffles" and often asked the teacher to repeat the demonstration and instructions. The "Shuffles" involve quickly drawing one foot into third position with the ball of the foot resting against the arch of the supporting foot, and then letting it slide out again into a point. The movement is repeated on alternative feet. This is the first time that I have noticed D. struggling with a step.

As a younger person, I found I was struggling with some of the steps too. The practice of the Russian bourree or skip change of steps in a large circle round the room to the stirring piano music, put me in touch with my younger self when I did ballet lessons as a child. But trying to learn the complex sequences of steps involved in Ladies' Step dancing really challenged my brain and my body, especially my feet. Doing a spin turn, after sequences of Russian bourree steps or the "Shuffles," was especially difficult, and I found myself sitting out for one or two sequences of a particularly fast dance, as did D. and some of the older ladies. Again, it was the first time I had actually noticed D. sitting out of sections of a Ladies' Step dance.

The two dances we did were very different and both comprised various sequences of movement. The first dance "Pas de trois" was a modern adaptation of a Ladies' Step dance from the Hill manuscript. It was performed in triangular shapes of three dancers. I danced with two older ladies, one in her 50s and the other in her 60s. We moved round the points of the triangle doing the sinking and rising Russian bourree steps, two steps to each side. My fellow dancers smiled at me and there was a lovely co-operative feel as we did this dance together. We did forwards and backwards steps in the triangle, before chasing each other round the triangle doing Russian bouree steps in the opposite direction. After a spin turn, we did various pas de bas steps in front and behind, followed by a Reel of Three in a triangle, spot turns and dancing round in a small circle of three holding hands. The holding of hands really connected the dancers with each other and we exchanged smiles and grins.

My brain is swimming with all the complex patterns of this dance and I am struggling to remember them correctly. At the time, the rhythm of the piano music guided my feet, changing tempo with each section of the dance. I felt mentally uplifted by the sensation of the balletic movements within my own body and the sense of belonging to a community of dancers who were performing those same graceful movements at the same time. This is the sheer pleasure of moving your body to beautiful music once we had rehearsed each section of the dance, we did the whole dance all the way through, and the atmosphere was so uplifting. It was as if we were a group of professional dancers on stage, even though the school floor was hard on our feet as we wore ballet shoes or Scottish shoes.

After a tea-break with R.'s home-made flap-jack and muffins, we did the second dance which was performed individually and was much more difficult as it involved the "Shuffles." The effort of dancing fast made me feel mentally and physically refreshed, even though it was difficult to perform the complex steps gracefully. During tea-break, I gave out several

information sheets about the narrative interviews. This session was a good opportunity for recruiting as I could talk to people face to face.

### **Day out to a nearby town to interview two ladies from the Ladies' Step Class in the First Scottish Group 18.4.08**

These ladies were happy for me to write about the day in my diary as it was only possible to record an interview in the cafe. I went out on the bus and met H. at the bus station. She had also come by bus. D., her friend, picked us up in her car and took us for coffee at a nearby garden centre. On the journey, they chatted about their involvement with English folk dancing as well as Scottish dancing. They dance around the Maypole in a nearby village at 6.30am on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Both of them found the interview comfortable and after the interview, as we drank coffee, they told me lots more about dance "to put in my diary." D., with a laugh, told me about the importance of having a good Scottish dance teacher.

"When I first started, my dance teacher had me up at the front of the class doing the steps. She pointed out to the rest of the class how I was an example of "how not to do it." She was awful. It's really important to have a good teacher when you're learning."

H. told me about the performances and displays she has been involved with through Scottish dancing. "We both do about eight displays a year at fetes and other local events. Often we're dancing outside on hard tarmac, which is really bad for your feet. I've got a metatarsal injury, damage to the nerves between your toes, from dancing on hard surfaces in soft shoes. The first question the doctor asked was "Do you wear high heel shoes?" I said "No." Apparently you can get the same injury from wearing high heels but I had injured myself Scottish dancing.... By the way, we do have white dresses with sashes that we wear for performances and sometimes we cover the white dress with a tartan wrap-over, just to give a bit more of a Scottish flavour." H. then told me about going up to Scotland to visit her grandchildren.

"It's so nice because both my grand-daughters are learning Scottish dancing. It must be in the blood. Their teacher lets me come along to their class when I am visiting them. She always includes a dance I can join in. The older one who is ten, is rather good.... It's rather nice when I go up to Scotland because so often you drive through a little village or town and think "Ah, I know a Scottish dance with that name." It must happen about half a dozen times."

Both H. and D. interviewed me about learning Scottish dance and how I experienced it. I told them how I find the dance mentally challenging although not physically hard as I do a lot of swimming. Both D. and H. said they swim too. Dance is obviously part of an active lifestyle for them. Both of them stressed the need to attract more young people to Scottish dancing so the tradition would continue. I told them about my Improvers' Scottish class and how I also went to a more advanced Scottish club. D. and H. said it was nice to get the opportunity to talk to me as there was never any time to talk at the Ladies' Step classes.

### **In Process Memo**

Working ethnographically is so nice as it is naturalistic, breaking the power relationships of formal interviews and providing true ecological validity to the research process. Both ladies are keen to see me at Ladies' Step class again. I must be careful about not creating emotional dependence and I have told them both I should withdraw from the group on completion of the research for ethical reasons. It is nice to know that I have been welcomed into the group.

This interview and informal get together has nicely confirmed many of my findings. The importance of dance as a sense of belonging for older people, the sense of community provided by dance, the physical and mental health benefits of dance despite the problems of injury, and dance as a means of emotional expression. My interviews are deliberately reflective, asking people to reflect on and evaluate the meaning of dance in their lives. I seem to have a rich tapestry of themes which weave in and out of each other.

### **Second Scottish Group 31.5.07 at 8.00-10.00pm**

I met the organisers of the second Scottish group, K. and J., who are keen to help me with my research. As J. said "We dance because we love it. We dance for the sheer pleasure of dance. It keeps the brain active and it keeps you fit." He gesticulated at his head as he spoke. L. looks in her 50s, J. in his 60s. J. is a slim Man with gray hair, smartly dressed and he taught the steps for the dances. I noticed just as R. had said in his interview, the emphasis in this second Scottish group was on moving in complex patterns rather than perfecting footwork. The group were very welcoming and a number of people took information sheets about the narrative interviews. Most of the groups members are over 50 years of age so it would be useful to do some participant observation here if I can negotiate permission in the future. The group takes a break from the end of June until the beginning of September so I am planning to re-join this group in September.

### **Second Scottish Group 20.9.07 at 20.00-21.30pm**

I had made contact with this group last term and the previous week and their organisers had given me permission to ask their members if they would mind being observed or interviewed for the purposes of research. I had given out the information and consent sheets for participation observation the previous week and I had already interviewed two of the older women. One of them rang me up when I made initial contact with the group last term and another had given me a short interview on Wednesday 19.9.07. Just from first impressions, the emphasis of this second Scottish group seems to be very

different from the first Scottish group. The Second Scottish group members seemed to stress the sheer pleasure and fun of doing Scottish dancing and there was no attempt to teach the footwork or perfect techniques.

However a broad range of dances would be performed and dancers were expected to have a relatively good working knowledge of the various sequences of steps as dances were only briefly walked through at the beginning of each one. Indeed the last two dances of the programme were always repertory dances which meant that members were expected to know these dances as they would not be walked through. As I went into the church hall, I noticed the programme of dances was listed on a noticeboard :-

- Mrs. Stewart's Jig
- Festival Fling
- Bonnie Lass of Bon Accord
- Polharrow Burn
- Major Ian Stewart
- Break
- Reel of the Royal Scots
- Lucy Helen's Strathspey
- Immigrant Lass
- Margaret Parker's Strathspey
- Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division

There were sixteen people at the session, mostly in their 60s and 70s. Many of them were overweight and there were several older men. One older man just walked or shuffled through the steps. A lady in her 60s with curly grey hair and glasses was calling the steps this week. The patterns were incredibly complex :- circles of varying sizes, stars of four, turning your partner, petronella steps, setting steps in triangular shapes of three, sets of four to eight people. The second Scottish group members showed varying ability on the steps. People took it in turns to watch or to dance. When I was dancing, members kindly pushed me in the right direction as I frequently got lost in the complex patterns. A lady with curly grey hair who seemed rather overweight took me under her wing as she was my partner for the Festival Fling.

She smiled as she gently took my hand and we danced up and down the set before peeling off round the back of the set, re-joining hands at the bottom and dancing back up before setting to our first corner and going into a Diagonal Reel of Four.

Even though the lady with grey hair and glasses had walked us through the routine several times before we started, I still got lost! The smiling wrinkled faces pushed me in the right direction again and again. These dances are a real challenge to the memory compared to those in my Beginners' and Improvers' class. There was absolutely no concern for correct footwork however. Some people hopped lightly in a balletic fashion in their Scottish shoes, others clumped around awkwardly, sometimes just in ordinary shoes. Like D., the man with white hair who shuffled from foot to foot in a rocking manner as if he had a hip injury as he walked through some of the dances.

The dancers were all shapes and sizes. There was a very tall man in his 60s, with a large beer belly and white hair and a short white beard. Yet he jumped around energetically with his setting steps and reels of four. There was the rather round lady with grey hair and glasses who had rung me up and had been the first person to offer herself for interview in the group. She hopped lightly and confidently through the dances, weaving in and out the intricate patterns without hesitation, smiling all along. Both these dancers were extremely jovial, laughing and smiling with me often. M., a slim lady in her 50s who had brought her daughter in her 20s who was suffering from Down's syndrome, smiled broadly at me and gently pushed me in the right direction when I danced with her. There was such a welcoming and supportive atmosphere among these dancers. Anyone who came along late seemed to be immediately incorporated into the dance, whatever their shape, size, age or dancing ability, such as the round lady in her 80s or the slim young girl in her 20s or indeed the girl with Down's syndrome. I noticed people wore tartan bands around one shoulder and across the stomach to indicate that they were dancing a male role. Many of the women had to dance as men because there were only four men in the group, including one university student in his 20s, who belonged to the University club. There was a tea-break at 8.45pm for 25 minutes. Several of the group members had omitted the last dance before the break so that they could prepare the tea-trolley. Tea and coffee were served in green pottery cups and cold drinks and biscuits were provided too. It gave a real welcoming feel to the session and people chatted in small groups and shared information about Scottish dance events. K., the lady with black hair in her 50s who was one of the organisers (but she was not calling the dances to-night) collected the money. Each person paid £2.50 for the session. I paid £3.00 to join the second Scottish group and gave her my card. K. was selling tickets for a Scottish dance in a nearby village on Saturday evening. Tickets were priced £3.00 for spectators and £5.00 for dancers. I am deliberately taking it slowly with each organisation and not 'crowding' them so I decided not to go to this event. I also only stayed until the end of tea-break so that I do not 'crowd' this particular group of dancers.

I had given out the information and consent sheets for participation observation the previous week and everyone had agreed to the project. I gave an information sheet to M., as she had not been there the previous week. She was fine about the project.

enjoying herself. The footwork was not as disciplined as at the first group but everyone wore either ballet shoes or Scottish shoes. E. came and sat next to me as I was watching the Duchesse Tree, and started wetting the bottom of her red ballet shoes with a damp tissue, saying "The floor has been re-surfaced. We're not allowed to use chalk any more. You have to be careful about slipping." She continued "See K. with the dark hair? She's too busy as she works full-time and looks after two elderly parents." I joined in the next dance as M. offered to help me through. It was a slow Strathspey dance, The Gentleman, which involved setting steps, pousettes and Half Reels of Four in lots of different directions. I felt refreshed and relaxed by the dance, though I kept making numerous mistakes and relied on the other dancers pushing me in the right direction, as if I was a ball being bounced back and forth. I missed the last dance before the break as I went into the kitchen to help make tea. I helped E. wash up the tea-cups. She gave me a copy of her book of poems which she had made by hand especially for me, alongside copies of the two invitation cards for her 70<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> birthday Ceilidhs. E. had to physically collect the tea-cup from G., the white-haired 85year old lady, as she could not physically get up from the stage to put it on the trolley. Eventually, G. got herself up and started walking through the next dance. I noticed that E. liked to get the kitchen in perfect order after making the tea. Her love of order was reflected in her interest in the patterns of Scottish dancing besides making books of poems and cards on her computer with a graphics programme. She seems to have a very logical mind, like one of the older men I interviewed from the first Scottish group. After finishing the washing up, I went home, leaving the group to dance their complex patterns up until 22.00.

### **Second Scottish Group 27.9.07 at 20.00-21.30**

As the standard of the second Scottish group is higher as the dancers are expected to know the patterns of the complex dances really well, I have decided just to participate in a couple of the dances and watch one or two of the others. There were eighteen people at the session, including three older men. J., the white-haired 85 year old lady told me that she had been doing Scottish dancing since 1970. She is a small, rather round lady in soft black shoes and she just walks through the steps now rather than dancing them. However mentally she seems to know all the patterns of the dances off by heart. D., the man with white hair who shuffles through the steps of the dances, whistling continually to the dance tunes, is also 85 years old. E., the lady whom I interviewed on Wednesday and who does the publicity for the second Scottish group, told me "D. is difficult to dance with as he does not know the dances so well. He used to always dance with his wife who died after a coronary bypass. He has carried on coming however." I reflected how the dancing provides a sense of continuity and social support for older people who have been bereaved, as well as physical exercise.

The young male student from the University with dark hair and a dark beard was calling the dances. The dances were only walked through once or twice at the beginning as there was the expectation that people were familiar with them. There were very complex patterns in all the dances and as M., the lady in her 50s who brought her Down's syndrome daughter to the session, told me "We do very different dances here from the first Scottish group."

E. told me that M. usually went folk dancing on Thursday evenings and that I should give that a try for my research. Apparently the young male student from the University also goes there and stops coming to the second Scottish group when those sessions run during University term.

I noticed all the smiling wrinkled faces as people danced, weaving in and out of each other in Reels of Four or doing star formations with the right or left hand only up in the air. The dancing seemed much more mentally challenging than the Improvers' class but the quality of the footwork was very varied. Some feet were balletic, some feet were just shuffling or walking, other feet were clumsily hopping through the steps. Keeping up with the music and the rest of the dance formation seemed to be more important than technique. This was Scottish dancing as social dancing without the disciplined footwork of the first Scottish group, even though the actual patterns of the Scottish dances were far more complex. The laughter and the smiles on the wrinkled faces suggested this was "time-out" from hard lives. Older people were dancing for the sheer pleasure of dancing, without worrying about their technique. Scottish dancing was something many of them had done for years, and it seemed as if the patterns of the Scottish dances were in-grained within their bodies. They just seemed to know how, when and where to move. For example, the first dance of the evening, Spiffin, involved setting steps in pairs, Half Reels of Four, a tea-pot or three people putting one hand up in the centre of a triangle and dancing round, using verbal and non-verbal cues from the other dancers. I attempted this particular dance but kept getting lost in the Reels of Four, even though the other dancers gently pushed me in the right direction. One of the tall slim older ladies told me with a laugh "We look as though we know the patterns but I'm not always sure!" The very act of dancing together seemed to be physically and mentally supportive for these older dancers as they help each other if they get lost in the sequences. For example, I watched M., the lady in her 50s with the Down's syndrome daughter, gently pushing an older German lady during the repertoire dance, The Duchesse Tree, because it was the first time she had ever tried Scottish dancing. I meanwhile noticed M.'s Down syndrome daughter who is in her 20s, dancing gracefully with another older lady. K., the lady in her 50s with black hair, was singing away in a piercing voice to the music as she danced, obviously throughly [??]

## **Second Scottish Group 4.10.07 at 8.00-9.30pm**

When I arrived, the group was already performing Frugal Fergus, an adaptation of a dance from Waverley, Walter Scott's novel. It involved complex patterns with lines of three dancers weaving in and out of each other. There were lots of smiling faces among these older dancers. E., the 77 year old I had interviewed the previous week, was calling the dances. She was very organised and had word-processed little crib sheets for all the dances. She told me she did not like calling. I managed to collect the cribs for "Hobson's Conduit," "Floating on Air," and "Black Swans of Narrabeen." J., the older man in his 70s, told me how he had written the next dance "Hobson's Conduit" for publication in the second Scottish group's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday book but it had been rejected as many people had written dances for this particular book. Quite a few people liked the dance "Hobson's Conduit" however. He was laughing as he told the story. "Hobson's Conduit" was a corruption of the "Flowers of Edinburgh." J. explained how the "Flowers of Edinburgh" were sewers which is why his version is called "Hobson's Conduit." It was a very chaotic dance with couples chasing round from each end of the set. It was great fun and there was lots of laughter during the chases. Several of the older ladies laughed at me as I got lost in the patterns. As a relatively inexperienced dancer, I am a great source of amusement for these older dancers! J. was my partner and he was the perfect gentleman to dance with as he held my hands gently. Everyone touches each other in a gentle and friendly way as they change partners in the dances. There were different types of hands, some soft, some warm, some wrinkled. I noticed eyes gleaming and smiles and laughter amongst the dancers. The two 85 years olds, D. and G., seemed to know the patterns really well, even though they only walk through the dances. G. was feeling a little tired so she sat out for several of the dances although she told me how she went dancing several evenings a week. The lady in her 50s with shoulder length blond dyed hair just creased up with laughter at my efforts. She dragged me into one of the repertory dances which you are expected to know off by heart. It was a complex pattern of three couples criss-crossing over and dancing in lines. G., the 85 year old, was sitting out reading the crib for the next dance, "Black Swans." She then danced it perfectly. After tea and biscuits, when members of the groups were chatting in pairs, I went home, leaving these more experienced dancers to get on with the second half of the session.

## **Second Scottish Group 25.10.07 at 20.00-21.30pm**

When I arrived, the group had already done a "Trip to Bavaria" and were getting in a set to do "Pelorus Jack." I was warmly welcomed as they needed another dancer to make up a set of twelve, so I hurriedly put on my ballet shoes. The lady whom I had first interviewed, a slightly overweight lady with grey hair, gold rimmed glasses and red cheeks, kindly took me under her wing and guided me through the steps. It was N.'s turn to call the steps to-day (she was the lady who used to teach the village group E. attended and who had designed the second Scottish group website). She got us to walk through the dance several times first. This group was primarily a social dance group which launched straight into the particular programme of dances each week. I followed my partner's movements closely and found that I was able to keep up in the pattern of the dance by following her movements closely as we danced as a pair, then chased each other in and out of the set, joined hands to dance from side to side across the width of the set, and then did various Reels of Three across the set with the leading couple in promenade hold. As I am writing, I can feel my brain confusing the steps in "Pelorus Jack" with the next two dances which were "Miss Milligan's Strathspey" and "Broadford Bay." I have danced "Miss Milligan's Strathspey" before and it is one of the repertory dances which means it is not walked through but the steps are on the printed sheet given out at the beginning of term. I must admit, I have not found these printed sheets with the steps of the dances.

S., a tall lady with curly grey hair down to her collar and glasses was my partner for "Miss Milligan's Strathspey." Scottish dancing can be done by older people without a particular partner as it is usual practice to change partners at the end of each dance. Indeed I noticed the group was mainly comprised of retired women, with J., a man in his 70s, being the only man in the group until D., with the long grey beard and glasses, arrived. S. told me

"I started Scottish dancing when I was a child, continued when I did my nursing training, stopped when I had children but I've picked it up again now I have retired.... It is very important to stand still with your feet in first position when you have finished being leading couple. That way you won't confuse the other dancers in the set. The discipline of being able to stand still is very important, you mustn't slouch."

I felt I was being reprimanded for poor posture. S. continued "You really need to know what you are doing at an Annual Ball, like the one I went to on Saturday.... I go to the Advanced Scottish class on Wednesdays." She had been to the Annual Ball on Saturday which unfortunately I had had to miss due to a cold. All the different patterns of "Miss Milligan's Strathspey" and "Broadford Bay" are just a whirl of confusion in my mind :- circles, squares, lines, rectangles, reels, with three people weaving in and out, "teapots" when three people raised one hand in the air and danced round. I watched the last dance, "Lochaksh Reel" and one of the ladies in her 40s explained to me, "It's all brainwork... Scottish dancing is very popular abroad. That's how I got involved."

I noticed how much people seemed to be enjoying themselves. K., the lady in her 50s who was secretary, was singing to herself as she danced. J., the older man in his 70s was all smiles and grins and G., the lady who had given me a short interview on the fun of Scottish dancing, was laughing and smiling when I danced with her. The jovial atmosphere carried on when the tea trolley was brought through. One of the ladies in her 50s had brought a bag of parsley from her garden which

she was sharing with everyone. After tea, I went home, leaving the group to do the other five dances on the programme without being encumbered by a novice such as myself!

## **In-Process Memo**

I certainly feel very mentally challenged myself. It is interesting that S. had told me about the importance of discipline and balletic posture, something which A., my teacher emphasised. The members of this group really seem to know the patterns of the dances, even if not all of them worry about the footwork. S. is an example of a dancer who does strive to perfect her footwork. And there certainly is a lot of laughter in this group.

## **Second Scottish Group 8.11.07 at 20.00-21.15pm**

There is such a warm welcoming feeling among this group of mainly retired people who get together just to dance. There were sixteen people in the small, shabby church hall (seventeen including myself). Most of the people were retired. People do not all arrive on time, but dribble into the hall, one by one. So as I arrived early, there were only eight members of the group performing "The Hazel Tree." When I arrived, I put my bag and coat in the adjacent room with chairs and changed into my ballet shoes. Everyone leaves their bags and coats in this room. I went and sat on one of the small plastic chairs lining the sides of the hall. The eight dancers were smiling and laughing and singing as they did "The Hazel Tree." I noticed G., the small round 85 year old lady, walking through the dance with a big smile on her face. She did not falter once in the pattern of the dance. K., the lady in her late 50s, with black hair, was singing away in a high pitched voice to the bouncy Scottish music. J., the older man in his 70s, who was slim, with wavy grey hair, was grinning as he danced. The pleasure and community spirit amongst these older people seemed immense.

D., the older man in his 70s with gold rimmed glasses and a long grey beard, who was chairman of the society, invited me to dance "The Same Gang State" with him. When I confessed that I did not know the dance, he graciously offered to help. He gently told me the steps and sequences of moves. The leading couple dance round together, cast off for two, dance round together again and then cast off above the twos and threes. Reels of Three in various different directions ensued, followed by setting steps performed in lines of three on various different sides of a square, with various combinations of three dancers. All the while, D. gently prodded me in the right direction, for example, he indicated with his hand how I was to move round from one line of three dancers to form another line of three dancers. I feel that I learn more complex dances from this group than the Improvers' class. These older dancers provide me with a physical and mental challenge, to remember the pattern of the dance and the physical movements. The feelings of togetherness are confirmed by the holding of hands in the various lines of three.

There were now seventeen people in the hall. There were four retired men and all the rest were women, mainly retired or in their late 50s. The dance of the month, "Inimitable Derek", was performed next with twelve dancers. G., the 85 year old lady, sat down next to me saying "I don't know this dance." She grinned at me and told me a long story about how she had made the red skirt she was wearing from a pair of old curtains. She said

"I got a lot of use out of these old red curtains, such as magicians' cloaks for school plays. I gave another pair of curtains to the homeless people in the night shelter. Ever so nice they were, they came round and collected them."

E., the older lady who did publicity, came out of the formation and reprimanded G. for talking to me. "You should be watching this dance, G. It is dance of the month. You should learn it." G. pulled a face at me. She said, "I like the dance as it makes me happy." She got up and went out into the adjacent room to get a little book with the Piling notation for the dances. She sat down with me again and watched the first performance of the next dance "Scotch Mist." She opened the book at "Scotch Mist" and began studying the strange collection of shapes which comprised diagonal lines, squares, circles and triangles. It was a dance by Drewry. After a few minutes, she closed the book and said "I know it." She stood up and walked through the second performance of "Scotch Mist." J., the older man in his 70s who was on the committee, invited me to do this dance. It was amazing to see how the symbols in G.'s book of Piling translated into actual formations :- circles, squares, teapots, reels of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  diagonal reels of four and lines of four. J. gently steered me through the dance. As he said casually

"You've either got the steps or not... but you might as well enjoy dancing, which is what we're doing here." In contrast, E., the lady in her 70s, who did publicity, commented on my poor technique in the Strathspey travelling step. She said, "You're bicycling rather than sinking into the ground, as N. our teacher says." She was referring to the class she attends in a local village.

When the tea trolley was brought in, K., the secretary announced about the second Scottish group's Ceilidh on Novemebr 24<sup>th</sup>. E., the publicity lady, asked J.

"Would you like tosing a song as part of the entertainment at the Ceilidh? You wanted to sing a song a couple of years ago but never got the chance." J. laughed. The Indian lady who wore a pink saree, was meanwhile rehearsing a dance with some of the retired ladies in the adjacent room in preparation for the entertainment at the Ceilidh. She had brought coloured batons for each dancer to hold and they were all grouped in a circle with heads lowered.

“As the music begins, you gradually raise your heads and stretch backwards” explained the Indian lady. Meanwhile, K., the secretary was holding up a poster about a production of the Gondoliers at the local theatre and inviting people to attend. After a cup of tea, I went home, leaving the group to do the other five dances written on the board.

## **Second Scottish Group 22.11.07 at 20.00-21.15pm**

Received a warm welcome from the group of sixteen older people. I watched as they finished dancing “The Inimitable Derek”, the dance of the month, with all the complex patterns and formations such as diagonal reels of three and teapots. I noticed that D., the 85 year old man with white hair, simply shuffled through the steps. He knew exactly where he was going, although as he limped from one foot to the other, it seemed as if he could no longer actually dance the steps. J., the older man in his 70s, invited me to dance “The Wisp of Thistle” with him. One of the older ladies was reading out the steps for this dance from a small book. She got the two sets to walk through the steps several times. First and third couple to dance round with each other half way, then do petronella steps to the side and end the sequence with a reel of four on the side. There was also a promenade in pairs down the centre of the dance floor. J. was a real gentleman, carefully steering me in the right direction when I seemed confused, or quietly saying the name of the next step, for example, “petronella.” His wrinkled face creased in a smile at the end of the dance and he bowed his head of grey hair graciously in my direction.

Even though one of the older ladies walked everyone through the steps of the last dance before teabreak, Father Connelly’s Jig, my set D., the 85 year old man with white hair, simply shuffled through the steps. He knew exactly where he was going, although as he limped from one foot to the other, it seemed as if he could no longer actually dance the steps. J., the older man in his 70s, invited me to dance “The Wisp of Thistle” with him. One of the older ladies was reading out the steps for this dance from a small book. She got the two sets to walk through the steps several times. First and third couple to dance round with each other half way, then do petronella steps to the side and end the sequence with a reel of four on the side. There was also a promenade in pairs down the centre of the dance floor. J. was a real gentleman, carefully steering me in the right direction when I seemed confused, or quietly saying the name of the next step, for example, “petronella.” His wrinkled face creased in a smile at the end of the dance and he bowed his head of grey hair graciously in my direction.

Even though one of the older ladies walked everyone through the steps of the last dance before teabreak, Father Connelly’s Jig, my set got completely lost. The other set of eight dancers seemed to perform the dance perfectly. In my set I was dancing with G., the older lady who had given me a short interview about the fun of Scottish dancing. We both giggled as our whole set of eight dancers got lost. As G. explained

“It’s ok when one or two people in the set don’t know the dance because you can cope. But when six people or more in the set don’t know the dance, then you’re in real trouble.” It was agreed that the dance would be repeated after teabreak, mixing up the sets. At teabreak, K., the secretary, announced about the Ceilidh on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, The Gondoliers and the death of one of their former members. His wife had received 70 cards and letters of condolence. K. gave details about the funeral in case anyone wished to attend. I went home so as not to disrupt the dancing in the second half as I am still a novice.

## **Second Scottish Group New Year Party 3.1.08 at 19.30-22.00pm**

Received a very warm welcome. My policy of not attending this group every week seems to be working well. K., the secretary, was busy collecting the money from each person for the party, £3.00 a ticket (50p more than usual). D., the lady in her mid 60s with grey hair, was particularly pleased to see me. She had been bringing the Circle dance tape and book she had borrowed from me to several sessions of scottish and Circle dancing but had not seen me. And of course she had not brought them this week!

“Will you be at the second Circle dance group on Monday?” she asked. “Yes.” I replied. I seem to have been dancing a lot with D. I have been attending Ladies’ Step dance, Fosse and Drewry, and the second Circle dance group with her. Now she is back with the second Scottish group (she had been heavily involved in the production of the opera “The Gondoliers” but that has finished). D. herself is looking resplendent in a red tartan kilt, and she is wearing a little make-up. She is such a slim and graceful dancer as she glides round the room, doing the Gay Gordons with another older woman.

As it was a party evening, people had brought plates of finger foods such as Scotch pancakes with butter, small quiches, sliced hard-boiled eggs, buttered sultana tea-bread and chocolate mint crisps. All this food was laid out on the table in the adjacent room ready for the supper break. There was a mixture of party games and dancing to-night as it was a special event. There were about 22 people, mainly over 50, but there was one young girl in her 20s who had come with her mother to Scottish dancing sessions since the age of seven. Just before the supper-break, she demonstrated a little bit of the Highland Fling, which involves standing very high on one leg with fast and frantic movements of the other leg, bending at the knee so as to bring the foot in front and behind the knee of the supporting leg. She received a hearty round of applause from the members of the group who were sat on the chairs round the edge of the room. Her demonstration facilitated a sense of fun and community.

The sense of fun and community among these Scottish dancers was really promoted by the mixture of games and laughter. K., the secretary of the society, who was in her 50s, was busy organising everything. The evening started with a quizz, which involved identifying streets in the local town through looking at drawings pinned to the wall. As K. said, “These drawings are 30 years old. So if you were a Scottish dancer 30 years ago, you’ll know them all!” Everyone laughed. The drawings were difficult to identify so there was a lot of cheating going on, as people helped each other with the list of eighteen names. This activity really facilitated the feeling of fun and laughter. A small box of chocolates was awarded by K. to the person who got sixteen right and this lady instantly shared them with everyone else.

After the “Gay Gordons,” a lively couple dance which I watched, we did “Muriel and Willi.” This was an incredibly complex dance, which involved the leading couple setting and turning and then doing rights and lefts so as to move round the square to find a new partner, turning the new partner, forming a circle of four to dance round and then just the women



joining up to form a wheel –shape, with one hand raised into the centre. Most people seemed to know this dance so I was lucky enough to be pushed into the appropriate position at the right time. My original partner was the 85 year old man, D., who always shuffled through the dances with an awkward jerking movement from his hips. He did not seem to know the dance at all, even though J., the older man in his 70s, who was doing the music, had walked everyone through the dance at the start and D. had been dancing a long time. I find it difficult to learn the dances as a young person, so it must be challenging for an older person, who maybe has memory problems, to learn them. Other dancers were very sensitive to both my and D.'s, this 85 year old man's needs, gently pushing each of us in the right direction or giving one word instructions such as "Turn," "Set" and "Middle." There was a lovely sense of co-operation and it seemed possible to do the dance adequately in a set of ten people where two members were unsure of the moves. The dance was followed by a team-game of Donkey Derby, shaking a long string to get a cardboard donkey to move. There was much laughter!

At the supper break, the mood was lively as everyone crowded round the table laden with food in the adjacent room. M., the lady with grey hair in her 60s, was serving the tea from the trolley in cups and saucers. She told me how she was very busy working full-time and looking after a sick elderly mother. Coming dancing provided time-out from her stressful life, as did her music. She had played the violin in an orchestra for a New Year's Eve concert. She feels too busy to be interviewed. J., the man in his 70s who was on the committee and doing the music and calling the steps for the dances, has offered to give me an interview next week. D., the lady in her mid 60s, who also goes to the second Circle dance group, introduced me to a retired couple who go to the international folk group on Monday evenings. She explained that I had lent them the tape and book of Circle dances which I had bought second-hand from the teacher, U. This couple told me how they had done Scottish dancing when living abroad.

I helped the older lady who did the publicity for this Scottish group, do the washing up. I find it useful to be helpful as it helps people accept your presence as a researcher. This lady had designed the music quiz and compiled a tape of Scottish dances which people had to identify after the break. Again, there was a lot of laughter and cheating going on as people copied from each other! The winner was given a small box of chocolates which they instantly shared! The evening concluded with more dances and I just cannot remember the names or sequences of steps, apart from "Posties' Jig," an old favourite of mine from my Scottish dance class. The way in which dancers charge around the set in pairs, making arches or ducking underneath arches, creates much laughter! And then there is the spinning of the posts, or turning the dancers on either side of you. This is a fun, sociable dance, facilitated by the physical contact of dancers with each other as they move round the set.

### **Second Scottish Group 10.1.08 at 20.00-21.15**

I received a warm welcome by name from K., the secretary. She gave me a brown canvass bag with three old pairs of Scottish shoes (gillies) as I had forgotten my ballet shoes. The largest pair fitted but it was a complicated process to tie the laces round the ankles. This was the correct way of wearing Scottish shoes, as I noticed K. and J. were wearing them in this manner. J. explained to me why he had changed his interview date with a laugh, "It was a good job I went to the dentist. I had an extremely painful filling."

The first dance was Pelorus Jack, a dance written in Australia about a dolphin. The patterns of the dance were a metaphor of the dolphin surfing over the waves. Reels of three were danced back and forth across the set in different directions, only one of the positions was danced by two dancers close together, who represented the dolphin surfing the waves. I had to be the dolphin with D., the 85 year old man who seemed to have a hip injury, and shuffled through the dances limping from side to side, rather than dancing them. He certainly seemed to know the steps of this particular dance and I had a job to keep up with his shuffling pace as he weaved in and out of the various dancers in various different directions across the set.

"Follow D." called out M., the lady in her 60s with grey hair who also does folk dancing and had brought her Down syndrome daughter, H., with her, who always seemed to know the dance moves perfectly. When I had arrived at the hall earlier that evening, M. and H. had been scraping the bottom of their Scottish shoes on the pavement outside to stop themselves slipping on the hard wooden floor. M. explained that the group had been banned from using slip-stop on the floor, a powder which I had noticed K. sprinkle on the floor on several previous occasions. "Pelorus Jack" concluded with two facing lines of three dancers holding hands and setting, with the leading person turning each of the other people in the line round three quarters with one hand. I was next to D., the lady in her mid 60s with grey hair, who also did Circle dancing and Ladies' Step. She said with a smile "You're improving" as she took my hand to turn me. D. is such a slim and elegant dancer and she moves gracefully and easily through the dance, as if she is a professional dancer. She is beautifully dressed for the occasion with pink cardigan, red and black tartan kilt, black Scottish shoes and her face is delicately made-up with a little blue eyeshadow and pink lipstick. I am delighted as she has fixed a date with me for an interview. An older married couple, who also go folk dancing, have agreed to be interviewed and fixed a date. An older single lady has also offered.

We had great difficulty with the dance of the month. There were two sets and no-one in my set seemed to get it right. I was dancing with E., the lady who does publicity. She reprimanded me for not following her with my eyes. "You need to watch every move closely and copy me. You're looking all over the place."

Non-verbal cues from other dancers seem to be very important. Often, in this dance, all the dancers in my set stood still, looked vacant and laughed. K. got her Piling book out and walked us through the sequences but there was still there was confusion about the instructions.

I discussed with G., the lady who gave me the second rather short interview, how to conduct the research. She asked if I had received the magazine she had sent about the first Scottish group. She thought I would be interested in the article on the archives. She has offered to proof read anything I write. She also asked about my gloved hand. I said "RSI" and she gave me advice on how to type properly, showing me with arched hands.

## **Second Scottish Group 14.2.08 at 20.00-21.15pm**

My interviewees are absolutely right when they talk about Scottish dancing as being fun. I woke up this morning, after dancing yesterday evening, feeling happy, refreshed and relaxed. I can still hear K., the lady in her late 50s with dark hair who was secretary of the society, singing away as she danced the Duchesse Tree with me. The Duchesse Tree is one of the repertory dances which means members of the group are meant to have learnt beforehand, by memorising the crib which had been given out on a printed sheet earlier in the year. I must admit, I never seem to find time to learn the cribs, but as I am still attending Scottish dancing Improvers' classes, I am much more familiar with the various dance formations. This meant I was just able to mirror K.'s movements as she was my partner and respond appropriately to her one word commands such as "Set" for the setting step, "Circle" for everyone joining hands in a circle and going round to the left using the Strathspey Setting Step, and "Right-hand Star" for when four people joined their right hands up in the centre and danced round to the left. It was a beautiful slow Strathspey dance with a lovely melody and K. sang along to the melody in a loud shrill voice. People exchanged smiles and grins as K. and I. joined hands to dance down the centre of the set and other dances moved up and down the side-lines. I noticed especially that J., the older man in his 70s I had interviewed last month, was grinning at me. I had been very careful about giving him a bit of space after his interview as he is one of the key organisers. I had not been to the second Scottish group for several weeks. G., the 85 year old lady with white curly hair, creased her face in a big welcoming grin as she said "Hello" to me. Indeed she was smiling all the time as she danced the Duchesse Tree, walking all the steps rather than dancing them. She teased me "Are you here to do research or just for pleasure?" I noticed K. also walked the steps rather than dance them. I wondered if this was because of ageing joints or risk of injury on the hard floor.

D., the retired man with grey hair and a grey beard, was caller so had chosen the dances on the programme. The first dance was a special one for Valentine's day, Kiss under the Stair, and everyone laughed when he announced it. Indeed I sat and watched the dancers as they did this one, laughing and smiling as they wove in and out of each other. Some people were doing balletic footwork, pointing their toes carefully in their black Scottish shoes, whilst others, such as G. and D., the 85 year old woman and 85 year old man, were simply walking or shuffling through the steps. There were about 20 people at the dance session this evening, mainly older women in their 50s and 60s but about six older men.

I danced the Drumlochy Glen with an older lady with grey hair in her late 50s. She kindly prompted me with single words as we changed formations. It was a slow Strathspey and as a progressive dance, with the leading couple working down the set, the timing was difficult as it often seemed too slow. But with smiles and laughter we got through the complex patterns of the dance. It was lovely to hold the wrinkled hands of all these older people as we danced the setting step in lines of three and then the central person took a petronella turn to form a line of three at right angles to the first line. These petronella turns and setting steps were repeated until the two central people had worked their way round all sides of a square. This constant changing of positions facilitated the dancers to hold hands with every member of the set of six people, and created a real sense of community. There is a heightened awareness of dancing in relation to others in Scottish dance.

During the last dance before tea-break, I went in the kitchen to help M., an older lady in her 60s, prepare the tea trolley. She explained she was off work due to dizzy spells and offered to give me an interview as she said, "We know you so well because you've been involved with this group and various other dance groups."

Due to her health problems, she invited me to interview her in her own home as she lives very near to me. I helped her wheel the trolley through to the main hall, laden with cups of tea, juice and biscuits. D., the caller, and K., the secretary, were giving notices out about various Scottish dancing events such as balls and courses in the local area. The older lady who does publicity, invited me to a dance in a neighbouring village. I politely refused, saying I was buying a ticket for the Beginners' Dance in a local school hall. I told E. about the Ladies' Step dance workshop I had attended. She replied, "I'm past Ladies' Step. Anno Domini."

I bought a ticket for the Beginners' Dance for £5.00 from K., the secretary and she gave me the programme of dances, complete with cribs and instructions to bring a plate of food. I also paid K. £2.50, the usual payment for the dance sessions. After tea-break, I went home.

## **Second Scottish Group 27.3.08 at 20.00-21.15pm**

There were eighteen older people at the session this evening, six of them were older men. I noticed M., the lady with grey hair in her 50s, who had told me she was working full time and looking after an elderly mother, was the caller, walking

through the dances which were the ones she had chosen for the programme. People were just walking through the second dance of the evening, the Blacksmith of Elgin, when I arrived. I put my coat and outdoor shoes on a chair in the adjacent room, as the other members had done, and put on my black ballet shoes. I sat on one of the seats at the edge of the main hall to watch the dancers. G., the 85 year old lady, who was rather small and overweight and with short white hair, came and hugged me, grinning from ear to ear on her wrinkled face. It was lovely to feel so welcomed. "You keep coming and going!" she said with a laugh. "Are you still doing your research." I nodded and told her I just had a few more interviews to do. I told her how much I enjoy Scottish dancing.

There were twelve people dancing the Blacksmith of Elgin in two sets of six. The dance was lively and these older dancers were grinning and laughing and indeed humming the tune, as they wove in and out of each other in the complex patterns. Some of the patterns seemed to be metaphors for the work of blacksmiths, such as when two lines of three curved round each other in horse-shoe shapes. There were also complex patterns of rights and lefts and three people balancing in line. K., the lady with black hair who was secretary, was singing loudly to the music and several of the others followed her lead. There was much laughter as dancers greeted each other and moved round the set with the rights and lefts. D., the old man with a long grey beard and white hair, was wearing his red and white tartan kilt. He was the only man in a kilt this evening.

An older man in his 70s with white hair and a white beard, danced the Braes of McIlinish with me. This was a Strathspey which was a nice and slow rhythmic movement. Couples turned each other, cast off, did reels of three on opposite sides, a ladies' chain and moved down the set in a line of four holding hands and back up again, concluding the dance with a right hand star of four people dancing round and then turning your partner with your left hand. It was welcoming to hold hands with different members of the set during the ladies' chain, and smiles and grins were exchanged frequently at this point in the dance. I felt really welcomed by these older dancers. D., the 85 year old man who shuffled through the dances in a taciturn manner, actually smiled at me this evening as he gently pushed me in the right direction with the words "This way." L., the lady who taught children Scottish dancing and whom I had interviewed several weeks earlier, was my partner when we repeated the dance a second time. She performed the various steps with immaculate precision, especially the pas de basque steps. I felt my shoes slipping on the floor. L. picked this up and said

"The floor is slippery to-night.... You've not been dancing that long. Don't try to push yourself too hard. Now that your Improvers' class had ended, you should go to the Intermediate class on a Tuesday. The Advanced class on Wednesdays is difficult. Does K., the teacher of the Advanced class, know that your teacher has invited your class to move up? There has not been a committee meeting recently." L. asked me about my gloved hand and I said, "I have RSI. That's why I'm late with your interview transcript."

"Don't worry" she replied "I might have another story to add."

M., the lady with grey hair who was in her 50s, who was doing the calling, got everyone to walk through the steps again.

"First couple cast down" she said.

"That means move down behind the threes" said L.

"No, I said "Cast down" which means move down behind the twos" said M. adamantly. L. shrugged her shoulders and said to me, "Some people don't use the terminology properly." L. is a qualified teacher so she knows the importance of being very precise when giving dance instructions.

Father Connelly's Jig was a fast dance done in sets of eight, divided initially into two groups of four. I watched this dance as it was way beyond my capabilities. People did a series of turns in their groups of four, swapping partners all the time, and then everyone chased round in a square shape.

"Then you do two Father Connelly's" announced M., the older lady with grey hair who was the caller. There was much laughter as these Father Connelly sequences turned out to be very complex, involving diagonal rights and lefts between the pairs of dancers in the centre of the set of eight, whilst the dancers on the ends of the sets did pas de basque steps and then wove in among the dancers to do reels on the side. The sequence concluded with the whole set of eight dancing round in a circle. One of the sets of eight older people seemed to perform this dance perfectly, but the other set got completely lost and gave up after a few bars of the music. I noticed E., who did publicity, was in this group. She was standing at the side of the room with the other dancers who had got lost, looking rather disappointed. Suddenly, at the end of the dance, she called out, "Who wants tea?" Eleven hands went up. "So it's cold drinks for the rest" she continued. I went into the kitchen to help her.

"How many for cold drinks?" said E.

"Six or seven" I replied.

"No, I need to know exactly" she said "So that I know how many glasses to put out." She went back into the main hall to count how many people wanted cold drinks.. At tea, I chatted with an older lady who offered to be interviewed. She told me about her teaching career in further education. D., the chairman, announced about several Scottish dances out of area on Saturdays. The lady who was the retired teacher told me that she never went to an out of area dance. She came to the second Scottish group with her husband and together they went to the local dances. At the end of tea-break, I went home after

helping one of the older ladies' to wash up in the kitchen. She told me all about her daughter who had just completed an MSc in Speech Therapy at City University with a merit.

## In Process Memo

I reflected how this pre-occupation with mathematical precision seems to be an important aspect of Scottish dancing. Scottish dancing seems to appeal to people who have a strong sense of order, such as E. I also noticed that I always feel tired and find it hard to make the effort to go to this Scottish group but I always feel really happy and uplifted afterwards.

### Second Scottish Group 3.4.08 at 20.10- 21.30

I arrived a little late at 20.10. I could hear Scottish music blaring all the way from the end of the street as I approached the church hall. When I entered the hall, I saw a large folk band of about 14 musicians playing a variety of instruments such as the accordion, fiddle and keyboard. Unfortunately, I had missed the first two dances which I actually knew how to do. These were the Machine without Horses and Wild Geese. I watched Nedpath Castle which was a very complex dance composed of a multitude of formations such as reels of four, balancing in line or turning the dancers who were diagonally opposite to you. The music was fast and furious. J., the older gentleman in his 70s on the organising committee was wearing a blue tartan kilt and socks with little red bits of material at the top and his black Scottish shoes. Most of the older ladies were wearing smart dresses and the other older men were wearing smart trousers. There was a party atmosphere among the twenty dancers. G., the 85 year old lady with white curly hair, looked resplendent in a purple dress with a double string of pearls round her neck. The Asian lady R. was wearing a full length brown and yellow saree and similarly looked resplendent. R. has offered to be interviewed which should be interesting as she is from a different cultural background. All I can remember of Nedpath Castle is a frantic swirl of colours as these older dancers wove in and out of each other.

Then oh help! I got dragged up from my chair on the side to join Muirlands Willie in order to make up the numbers of a set. M., the older lady in her 50s whose daughter had Down's syndrome, was my partner. M. was a good dancer. There were various setting steps on the side, dancing round in a circle of four, half reels of four, promenades with your partner and doing setting steps whilst holding hands in lines of three. Several of the older dancers were having difficulty remembering all of the sequences, even though K., the lady who was secretary, had walked through the dance with everyone beforehand. K. was laughing as she was telling me during the actual dance, which direction to move in next. My faltering steps seem to be a great source of amusement for these older people! D., the chairman, who has grey hair and a long grey beard, was smiling as he pushed me in various different directions. P., one of the ladies in her 70s with grey hair, told me she had been ill and although she had been dancing many years, she was feeling hesitant about the steps. J., one of the older men with white hair, looked vacant as though he had completely lost concentration. K., the secretary, gently pushed him in the right direction at every change of sequence. There was a lot of laughter and smiles amongst this group of eight dancers. There was a real feeling of community as the more expert older dancers supported other older dancers who were experiencing memory problems, even though they had been doing Scottish dancing all their lives. When the dance was repeated and I had P., the lady in her 70s as my partner, she said to me, "It will be difficult for you as we are both lacking confidence."

"Don't worry" said K. the secretary who was the caller for the evening. "This group is just going to walk it." she continued. And so we did. There was G., the 85 year old lady who always walks the dances, in the set besides P., who had been ill, and J., the older man with white hair who had a vacant expression on his wrinkled face and did not know which way to turn. G., the 85 year old lady, knows all the dances inside out, even though she always walks them. At tea-break, when I was puzzling over the Piling diagrams in K.'s book, G. the 85 year old lady told me

"You need a mathematical brain to learn these dances. I always learn the dances by using my book of Piling. I practice the various moves in each bar of the dance by pushing black and white counters around on the table. You see the little black and white circles in each larger black box? The box is a bar of music. Scottish music usually comprises bars of eight but sometimes bars of ten." I reflected how her rehearsal with counters mirrored the retired professional ballet dancer I had interviewed who was able to learn a ballet on her fingers.

At tea-break, E., who does publicity, announced "My local Scottish group has a crisis. Our teacher dropped a bombshell on us on Friday. She is emigrating to Australia with her family in the summer. So we need a teacher. Can anyone help? We don't want or need step practice for an hour. We are not the other Scottish group!" She laughed and her laughter was echoed by the group. She continued "It's like here. We just do the dances." One of the retired ladies in the group raised her hand and offered to help. This was the first lady I had interviewed from this second Scottish group.

One of the ladies in her 50s asked how my research was going.

"Fine." I replied. "Would you like to give me an interview?"

"I'm too busy with work." she replied.

"And looking after elderly parents?" I asked. She smiled and nodded.

"Yes. I've got an 87 year old mother and a 92 year old father-in-law who is in a nursing home." I reflected how K., the secretary, and M., with the Down's syndrome daughter, are also too busy to be interviewed as they are caring for elderly mothers. Some dancers seem to use Scottish dancing as a de-stressor, time out from stressful lives. A lady J. who smiles a lot

and is in her 60s has offered to be interviewed. She gave me her e-mail address. One of the Scottish ladies who played the fiddle in the band, told me how she does not dance any more now she has retired because of sore feet. I reflected how music is an important aspect for those who can no longer physically dance. M. (interview seven) was there playing the accordion with this band.

I went home after tea-break feeling tired and mentally uplifted although I was having tremendous difficulty with the dances this evening. M. had told me she just learnt the dances from the walk through, although I noticed that as she is more experienced, she can get away with it.

### **Second Scottish Group 10.4.08 at 20.00-21.30pm**

There was a small group of only eight older people dancing when I arrived. I joined in three of the five dances before tea-break. I stayed up late when I got home and wrote notes immediately after the session rather than the next morning so I found I was able to capture more detail on the complex sequence of dances. An older lady in her 60s with white hair was calling the steps from the platform, getting us to walk through each dance from different positions. So I danced Miss Allie Anderson with J. This was a Strathspey. J. is a very kindly older gentleman and there were smiles on his wrinkled face as he used one word prompts or gently pushed me in the right direction. He used a gentle hand hold and his hands were soft and warm to touch. I watched the other dancers closely for non-verbal cues as to the next move. First it was set to your partner and cross over, then turn your partner and dance down the set in pairs. Then turn under your partner's arm and dance back up the set. Next there were setting steps in lines, then each individual turned their partner and took their partner in promenade hold to dance round. J. gently reprimanded me: "No, we don't cut in there" when we were dancing the promenade and I tried to move in front of some other dancers. The mathematical complexity of this dance required a lot of concentration.

G., the older lady who had given me the short interview about the fun of Scottish dance, helped me to do Hamilton House. She requested an extra walk through so we got the chance to practice the dance from first position. She laughed and smiled, reminding me of the next move with odd words such as "set in line" or "circle." There was a real co-operative feel among the dancers, as people held out hands to bring a straggling dancer, such as myself, back in line. Hamilton House was danced in sets of six people, three men and three ladies. The first lady did a setting step to the second man and turned with the third man. At the same time, the first man did a setting step to the second lady and turned the third lady. Two lines of dancers were then formed, with the first lady between the second man and the second lady and the first man between the third man and third lady. Both these lines did four setting steps together. Next, the first lady and the first man turned each other three quarters of the way round. Two lines of dancers were then formed, this time with the first lady between the second and third man and the first man between the second and third lady. Both lines did four setting steps at the same time whilst holding hands. First lady and first man then turned each other half way round. Next, two lines were formed with the first lady between the second and third lady and the first man between second and third man. All the dancers in the two lines took four setting steps whilst holding hands. Finally, all six dancers joined hands and circled in each direction. The whole pattern was then repeated from different positions.

An older man who could no longer dance as he was losing his sight, came and sat on the outside of the hall, just to be with the group, as we were dancing Hamilton House. He was given a warm welcome by M.'s down syndrome daughter who eagerly clutched his hand saying "My friend." The older man smiled. At tea-break, I explained to him about my research and he clutched my hand eagerly, telling me about the pleasure of Scottish dancing and the history of some of his favourite dances.

The next dance I joined in after Hamilton House and before tea-break was Iona Cross. There was lots of laughter during this dance as we all got in a muddle. This dance was done both as a Strathspey and in Jig time. There were 12 dancers who were positioned in lines to form the shape of the Iona Cross. My partner, M., the lady in her 60s, did not know the dance. We got very muddled in the reels of four as it was hard to remember which direction to go in. J. kept calling "Faster, faster" at the point in the dance where dancers on the outer points of the cross chased round in a circle, around the four inner dancers. The patterns of the dance seemed to involve two lines of dancers doing reels of four whilst the remaining two pairs of dancers danced into the centre and back again. Then there were rights and lefts in groups of four with the two remaining couple doing a dos et dos. Small groups of three dancers then rotated in a star formation, using all 12 dancers. The four dancers in the centre then danced in a star formation whilst the dancers on the outer edges of the cross chased round. The whole pattern of these sequences was then repeated from the opposite positions.

At tea-break, I helped set up the tea-trolley and cleared away afterwards. I discussed the progress of my research with J., the older man in his 70s, and a possibility of doing a poster for the research student competition on the joys of Scottish dancing. I asked J. whether I could use the photos on the group's web page. J. told me the person who did the web page was not there this evening but that I should ask them about photos. I explained to J. how it was better to use photos in research that were already in the public domain. Thus the photos would be how the people in the group wanted to be represented and would include people who did not mind having their photos published. Such a method also prevents the photos being a construction of the researcher if they let the camera get in between them and their research participants.

## **Second Scottish Group 8.5.08 at 20.00-21.15**

I attended the AGM of the second Scottish group in order to thank them for helping me with the research. It was the format of a typical AGM, with committee members sitting on the stage and a secretary's and treasurer's report. This was followed by a long discussion of planned social events for the next year such as Burn's night, a walk in the country followed by tea, balls and whether table-cloths should be provided for serving the food, a possible visit to the zoo and a dance event in a garden. There were also suggestions for charities the group could support and a long discussion about finding a better hall for dancing if nothing could be done to improve the quality of the present hall floor. The committee agreed to look into getting permission from the caretaker to put slip-stop on the floor and sweep it up afterwards. As the chairman, D., said

"We have liability insurance but if someone fell and injured themselves, we could still be sued for dancing on a slippery floor." The discussion focused on the lack of good halls for dancing, as all the ones suggested seemed too expensive, with no nearby parking or simply too hard floors. School halls were not always available all year round and the one sixth form college with a sprung wooden floor is due to be demolished within five years.

I put my hand up at the end of the discussion and was invited to speak by the chairman. I thanked the group for helping me with my research, said good-bye and invited anyone to contact me with ideas for a poster on the joys of Scottish dancing. I was greeted with a loud cheer from the 20 older people at the AGM. We then had tea and I arranged my last interview with the older Asian lady and had a brief discussion with the chairman about using photos from the website. He told me to contact the organiser of the website and said he did not see any problem as the photos were already in the public domain and the individuals involved in the photos had probably already signed some consent form. I thanked him and said good-bye. It was 21.15 and they were putting on music to do some dancing. K. was not collecting money as it was the AGM. The chairman expressed a wish not to be interviewed when I told him I had plenty of data. I had asked him if he wanted to be interviewed because he was a gatekeeper of the group. I reflected that he might not have wanted to be interviewed as he was a widower and did not want to bring up sad thoughts.

# Circle Interviews

## First Circle Interview One (1.C.1)

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

R: Yes of course.

I: How did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

R: Goodness me.....it was a long time ago....it's hard to remember. When I retired.....or when I was working part-time I was looking for something like that because.....I've danced on and off in my life and I think it's a friend who told me about it so I went along and really enjoyed it and I've been going ever since. I travel a lot and I can't aim to go every week because I'm away sometimes for a few months but I always come back to it.....and there's such a good teacher..... that's how I got started really.

I: So how many years have you been doing Circle dancing?

R: It must be.....I'm retired five years and I think I started a year or two before that.....so I suppose six or seven....yes...

I: And you say you've always been interested in dance?

R: Oh yes, yes.....I mean I did ballet when I was, you know, sort of school girl age up to grade five.... and enjoyed.....always, I've always been a fairly sporty person too and as I get older I can't play tennis any more, I can swim, but I want to keep active really mm so mm...yes so I've danced on and off all through my life that's why I was asking about the Five Rhythms because I've done something called the Five Rhythms dance....

I: Right.....

R: And at school, later on at school I did.....I don't know what we used to call it..... sort of free movement dance, you play music and then move to the music and I enjoyed that very much too so.....my sister was a ballet dancer, she actually trained at a ballet school, so dancing has been very much in our family and....over the years I've always done something and.....Circle dancing seemed to me to be a good thing to do and I love it, I really love it.....I think that's the main reason.....

I: Can you tell me a little bit about this Five Rhythms?

R: Yes..... it's a while since I've done it.....my daughter is a teacher of the Five Rhythms and it's a woman in America who started ... this dance....and in some ways you could say it's sort of a dance therapy, you work through different rhythms and there are five basic rhythms and I'm trying to remember what they're called ... and I'd have to talk to her, I could let you know.....one's chaos, when you just swing yourself around.....one of them is.....oh I just can't remember I'm afraid but you work through the Five Rhythms. She's in fact going to a workshop in a couple of weeks down in Devon ... but there's a big movement in this country to do this music and sometimes you have taped music, sometimes you have a drummer. And usually they do it over a weekend and they've done it at college here several times.....and I enjoy that very much because I like to free dance as well.... Just move with the music, what the music speaks to me, so I like to move....so a bit about it but I'll have to find out more and let you know.....

I: So you say you did ballet as a child? Was it ballet you did as an adult?

R: No.....once I reached grade five, which was when you go onto points, I didn't really want to carry on. I mean by that time I was beginning to do O-levels and so on so ... time was scarce so I didn't want to go on with the ballet. But I've always felt it's helped me in the way I walk, the way I know my body,.....so I think it's been an invaluable basis in my life. And then again, this free movement in the school as well which we did, we used to put on shows and things like that, and of course, when I started working.....those sort of things had to go by the board.....I've always had an interest in dance.

I: So when you started work, how often were you able to dance?

R: Well..... when I mean one would go to parties and do Rock and Roll and the Twist and all that sort of thing you know.....(laughs) but not on a regular basis like I do now..... once the children have grown up then life's a bit easier.....I was able to take it up again....

I: So do you find you're actually doing more dancing now that you're older?

R: Well I suppose once a week is what I did when I was young, you know, when I was still at school.....so yeah, I guess that's true, I didn't think about that....

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in the Circle dancing?

R: ...When I've been away for a while I find it takes me a little while to .....you know remember and of course there are new dances that have been taught while I've been away but.....there are basic steps, like the grapevine .... and various other steps which....come back to you very easily .... and she is an extremely good teacher because you know, when she first dances it, you think "I could never possibly do that" and yet she breaks it down .... and makes it very.....readily available to all of us .... and goes over it and also there's no feeling of judgement if you don't do it right, it doesn't matter, you know, so that's OK too. So you're striving yourself to take it on and do it right and you feel better if you do it right.....some of the dances are very slow and that gives you more time to reflect about what's coming next, some of them are faster but then sometimes the music helps you because....it tells you what's going to come next somehow.... the rhythm of it, at least that's what I find, and ... of course it's very good for one to be memorising this sort of thing I guess and good for the old grey cells (laughs). So, you know, some I

find more difficult than others. On the whole I think usually by the end of the dance I've got it.... and the more consecutive weeks I go when I'm here, then of course I get better but then if I'm away for two or three months then come back, then obviously it's harder for me to pick it up.....

I: So how would you say the Circle dances influence your experience of your health?

R: Of my health?...Well .... I think .... it's good to have some exercise .... and I do walk and I do swim as well but I think as you get older, your metabolism slows down so it's good to raise the cardiovascular but.....I also have a problem in that my thyroid doesn't work so my metabolism is ever slower so I'm sure...that's good.....I think it, I mean I think using your feet and ankles and knees and hips probably helps to keep them flexible still. I'm pretty flexible anyway and I do yoga when I'm in....away but .... healthwise I mean I feel good afterwards, I feel you know I've had a bit of a work out and so on. I think it also raises your spirits as well if you're looking at the whole picture of things..... because I think it helps to keep your brain alert as well..... I think it addresses the sort of physical and the mental and the emotional, all three really which can't be a bad, but a good thing. So..... I'm sure it has a positive effect as with other things that I try to do to keep healthy..... like eating sensibly and exercising and so on and keeping an interest in everything....

I: So how would you say the Circle dance makes you see yourself?

R: Oh dear... well.....The teacher always says when I come back "Oh I'm so glad she's here because I love her clothes." And I do like to wear sort of flamboyant sort of things when I'm dancing, especially sort of skirts that twirl about when you're turning and twisting and so on. So I suppose it satisfies that side of myself in the sense that I've always enjoyed dressing up (laughs)..... so .... I suppose that's one way I see it....and how else would I see myself with the dancing?..... I suppose I feel pleased when I've mastered maybe a difficult dance or difficult steps.....I also like .... the companionship with the other people.....and meeting them each week. Some I know better than others and I enjoy watching other people dance as well..... but generally I'm concentrating on my own involvement.....yeah I think that's how I see myself with the dancing. I mean I'm not the best by any means and I'm not the worst either I don't think....but I get a lot out of it and enjoy it.....

I: Can you describe a particular dance in detail that you like?

R: Like I said before, I don't, it all runs in together, I enjoy....a lot depends on the music, if I like the music, then I usually like the dance..... and there are very few that I don't like.....there are one or two that are a bit repetitious or a bit boring.....and go on for too long but generally I like all of the dances in their different ways. Again I can't pick out one and that I would say that's my favourite, I know some people do have favourites and so on, but I like the variety really and the teacher's quite good at that and also like the fact that they come from all over the world....and the music comes from all over the world.....so that's what I find satisfying....rather than any specific dance....

I: It's very varied....

R: It is very varied and the teacher's very good, she starts off with a very simple dance usually, and then she leads us into.....more difficult dances and then dances that we haven't done before maybe.....and then after the break we may have a medium slow one and then build up again and then at the end she effectively calms us down and we do sort of slow, almost meditation kind of a dance.....which is good and then of course end by gathering and sending out the light to whoever is needing it.....

I: You get a real sense of community from Circle dancing?

R: Yes, I think that's true.....

I: Just thinking about what you said earlier about meeting people.....

R: Yes you do indeed yes.....

I: So would you say the dance influences your experience of growing older?

R:..... I can't really say it does, I don't know how you mean.....

I: Does it change the meaning of growing older for you?

R: Not really.....I don't think about growing older much to be honest .... I think people of to-day in our, 60s are really like people in their 50s of my parents' generation. I think we are a lot more fit. We travel a lot more, we are more active mm so I mean maybe.....in another 10 years' time you know if you ask me that question I might say it makes a difference but, to be honest, it's just one of the many things that I do in my very active life.....my children say to me "Mum, you're always out, you're always doing things." And I can say, I'm almost more busy that when I was working. So, Circle dancing .... is just one thing I do.....so I can't see how it affects my ageing really.... perhaps keeps me more active, and fluid and flexible and so on but then other things I do, do the same....

I: What sort of other things do you do?

R: Well I do swimming and I walk.....and I do yoga.....so those are the main physical things I suppose.

I: So it's like Circle dancing is just part of a very active lifestyle.....

R: Yes, I think so.....And I do find now that when I'm with my grand-children I don't have the same energy as when I had my own children and I don't have the same strength in the sense of picking them up or the stamina to keep going all day ..... but then that fact I suppose is natural, you know.... I don't have, I'm not with them that often and don't have them that often either so I can manage it when I've got them.....the Five Rhythms dance that I was talking about earlier is much more vigorous



than the Circle dancing..... in various aspects of it, so that's something I did more in my 40s..... and you can still do it, I mean they say you can do it sitting in a chair even .... participate. But I felt frustrated about not being able to do what I really wanted to do so Circle dancing is good in as much as you can more or less do everything that is asked of you..... I don't know if you're looking at line dancing, that's something else which I've heard about, that seems more rigid to me, set pieces and set steps along the lines, it doesn't appeal to me as much as Circle dancing though I've never tried it..... but .... I did do, oh there's something else I did, I used to do Scottish dancing a lot and I would do that at least once a week mm but then I slipped a disc and it was so bad, I was ill, and I couldn't go to work. I.....the pain was excruciating. Eventually after about six weeks it subsided, but I knew I couldn't go back Circle dancing, I mean to Scottish dancing because it's again much more vigorous, jumping and you know it puts a strain on your back. So Circle dancing was the next progression in a sense.....

I: It's a question of sort of adjusting your style of dancing?

R: I guess it is.....

I: Would you say that the dance classes have changed how you experience your body?

R: I wouldn't say it's changed it because I have always done dance throughout my life. It's actually continued it so that when I'm walking I'm conscious that I shouldn't slouch along and keep my head up and so on. Because my eyesight isn't as good as it was, .... my daughters say I tend to walk with my head down..... looking at the floor to make sure I don't trip .... so I try to stand erect and sit well and all that sort of thing. So I wouldn't say Circle dancing has changed that. I would just say that it enforces me to continue to be conscious of how I hold myself and so on..... I think that's the answer to that question.....

I: Is there really anything else you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

R: Well I think it's, it's quite spiritual .... with music. I think the combination of moving to the music .... is always about for me .... to touch my inner core so to speak, my soul, whatever .... and.....it's a way of expressing yourself too..... I sometimes dance spontaneously at home .... for example this weekend my husband and I are clearing the house or trying to because my son's getting married, we're going to have lots of people staying in the house and so on. And we're both sort of fed up with it. So he put on this really loud music sort of from our youth, like Beatles, and .... all those and the Who and so on and it instantly made me want to dance .... and it uplifted (laughs) my soul (laughs) doing a job that I didn't like doing. So I think it has a spiritual meaning for me too as well as the physical .... and .... sometimes when we're dancing at the end, when we're doing the more reflective kind of dancing and you can close your eyes and dance really going into yourself and I find that it enables me to touch, or to feel my inner self .... which generally in the hurly burly of (laughs) working and living and so on you don't very often have the opportunity to do, so it's sort of yeah very spiritual for me.

I: Anything else?

R:....I don't think so.... I ..... obviously when I find something I love I always want other people to do it so I tell other people about it and hope they'll join but I have known friends who have had to give up because of knee problems and hip problems and so on which is sort of sad..... I shall go on doing it as long as the teacher goes on doing the classes ..... I mean she is the key, I have to say that, because I knew of somebody else who did the classes and I didn't go to them but other people went to them and got very frustrated and I knew I wouldn't want to go to those classes .... and .... the teacher is very, very good ..... and ..... she makes it fun .... she thinks very carefully about what dances to do, you know, how they fit together and so on and how much we can take on board learning new ones .... and so on.....I think we've got a pretty large repertoire now.....But you're going to interview the teacher too aren't you?

I: Yes.....she didn't want me to interview her first....she would like me to interview her last.

R: That's fair enough.....you might reflect back to her what people have said because generally one doesn't, we all say thank you to her when we leave but .... you don't expose your innermost thoughts about it. She may have an inkling, because she may feel those things herself .... but.....yes the other thing I was going to ask you.....will it be possible to have another coffee and see what you've written?

I: That's in my debrief....I ask "Would you like a copy of the interview?" Obviously the interviews are confidential because I will be writing it up anonymously but the teacher said to me that very much she would like me to hear from the group members what Circle dancing means to them.

R: Yes that's good.

I: Because she said "Actually I'm biased, I'm a convert, I'm preaching Circle dancing."

R: I think everybody there would be a convert, they wouldn't be there if they didn't love it.

I: I think she wants the group members to speak for themselves. Then I've explained to her it's part of the research design, I've got to interview the teachers as well because I'm looking at several different styles of dancing so it would be useful to have her expert knowledge of it.

R: I will get you.....or find out more for you about the Five Rhythms because that's a very popular movement in this country .... and .... my daughter is a qualified teacher in it although she's got three small children now, she can't really do it but I'll talk to her. You'll be at the class on Friday? So I'll bring information on that if you would like it.

I: That would be lovely.....No I think the teacher very much wanted me to find out for myself how people found the dance beneficial rather than from her, rather than from what she said.

R: Yes.... I mean you might want to get a range of ages too.....I'm 65 by the way.... So you know it might be interesting to hear what a 70 year old, a 75 year old or an 80 year old thinks. There are some quite elderly people there you know mm. I don't know what, how old the youngest.....I mean myself and several friends when we started probably were at the younger end of it.....and I don't know how many people younger than us started since, mostly not.....

I: Oh well thank you ever so much.

## **First Circle Interview Two (1.C.2)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

A: Of course.

I: So how did you get involved in Circle dancing?

A:.....well I play tennis on a Monday morning and a lady there called B. just mentioned that she was going dancing. And I love dancing, always have done, and she said that it was Circle dancing and I thought "Oh no I don't think so." That was my first reaction. Because I'd seen some Circle dancing once, at an exhibition that had all sorts of alternative ... medical ... things happening and that and there was, and I just thought it was a little bit too serious, it was a little bit....it seemed pseudo-religious the way it was presented, so I thought "No I'm not going but B. said "Well give it a go" so that's how I went along, just because a friend asked me.

I: Right....you say you've been involved in dancing before?

A: Well I started dancing when I was five years old. My parents were both Irish and they came to England because of the lack of work. Well my mum came to be educated and became a nurse in Manchester and my father, who didn't really go to school very much, and lived on a farm with lots of brothers and sisters, they had to go because there was not enough for them, not enough work, not enough money. And so I mention that simply because when you become an alien in another land, certain things seem to matter more to you and my mum had a great love of music and dancing. She had never learnt properly how to dance so she was determined that we would. And she found a lovely lady, in Manchester, who could play the fiddle, and she brought her to our house and she started to teach us. And I had seven sisters, two brothers so it was quite a class, and then eventually she branched out and took a hall and we all followed her and I just danced, Irish step dancing, Ceilidh dancing, for years and years. We went to Durham, we went to Dublin, we went to Birmingham. It was....was wonderful at a time when my family would not have been able to afford anything like holidays so to us it was like.... we had adventures that the other poor children where we lived didn't go anywhere. But because we were in this group and they hired a coach to take us to do this wonderful dancing, it...it meant a lot to our lives, it really did, it did.

I: So...did you carry on with the Irish dancing as an adult?

A: So....when I became an adult...I was a primary school teacher at first, and like lots of people go through their teenage years and decide that ....they don't want to have anything to do with what their mum and dad told them to do, so I left it for a while.

And when I was at teacher training college, the new thing was jiving,.....so somebody from Newcastle who was at college, we were in Hull, showed me this dancing which I just thought it was absolutely wonderful and because I'd done Irish step dancing, my feet very easily fall into any kind or sort of dancing and I just loved that. And so I did that.

And.... But then later on I got married and went to live abroad and when we lived abroad, ... they were very, very long...we lived in the Middle East, and they were very long summer holidays and....a friend who had been a musician, and I got together. Now she wrote the lyrics and the story-line and I did the choreography and we got all the children together in the summer holidays and we did pantomime, what we called pantomime, that involved dances and things like that. So then I became quite interested in any kind of dancing. Then I said.... I tried to teach my children to do the Irish step dancing but ... and it's quite disciplined and with my own, I didn't seem able to get them.....You need a class, you need a big group, you need somebody who's not your mum teaching you, I think. But then a lot later, when I came back from the Middle East, and I went to visit my family in Manchester, my sister who also danced, we all danced, said "We've discovered a new kind of Irish dancing that's not new at all it's actually very old, that we didn't know about." And it's what they used to dance at the cross-roads in Ireland or any place, in the kitchen and it's called "The sets." And basically you get eight people together, you get any musician, a fiddler or whatever and they would do these dances, very like Scottish type dancing, with lots of twirling around, with very set figures to them and quite clever stuff really and each county in Ireland has their own sets and somebody has been compiling all of these over the years. And so I became very, very interested in that. And we have been doing that, but not... we did here for a little while but there weren't enough people. If I need to do that sort of dancing, I go up to Manchester because there's a big Irish community up there, we do that, yeah.....

I: So...how often were you dancing in a week say during your life?

A: .....oh that's quite difficult to say because there were times....I've got four children so ... in that space of time I wouldn't be dancing really that much but ... it was something that was always there for me but as I say with the children in the holidays, we definitely always made a point of doing some sort of dancing, but I can't remember really exactly. I mean when we were learning when we were very young, the discipline of the dancing was, we went to school, and then Friday night we went to a

dancing class, from I don't know, half six to half eight, we went Saturday afternoon and we went Sunday afternoon. And everyday at home we had to practise. Now that's a lot of dancing. We did that, I did that from when I was five years old until I was about fifteen. We went in for competitions, exhibitions, it was, it was intensive. And also it was ... quite restrictive but because that was what we were brought up in, I didn't mind cos you know the step dancing, your hands are by your side, you're very... So I wasn't...although I did get books from the library with ballet dancing in, my mum wouldn't send us to ballet classes, ballet classes always seemed very expensive, whereas the Irish dancing was something like a penny each so that was manageable. So but I wasn't very good about my arms or moving anything else... it was quite strict. So once I grew out of that, now with the Circle dancing it's such ... a change and a relief for me to actually be able to move everything ... it's so different but I love it, I love it all.

I: How would you describe the Circle dancing?

A: To me, the Circle....well I told you my first impression. When I went to that thing, it was actually in the townhall here and would it have been called... like alternative....with lots of candles, lots of stalls for meditation all the spiritual side of life I think was being...exhibited and talked about. And it was in that setting that I saw the Circle dance, and as I say, just felt it was a sort of pseudo-religious thing that I didn't want to have anything to do with. As people were very seriously going round this candle going very gentle....and I just thought "No, I don't think..." Now when I go to P.'s class, what it means to me is because of the music that's chosen and because of the variety, I think it's a lively opening up of all the world and that's what I love about it ... because ... there's dances, there's things, there's gypsy dancing, there's Spanish, there's modern, there's jazz type things, there's even classical, some from operas and ballets and then you've got Greek and you've got Israeli dances and, and so that give me a feeling of just being in another place each time and that's rather lovely. It's journeying without going anywhere which is very enjoyable. Yeah, yeah....Now about the Circle dancing, another aspect of it is you can dance on your own and we've just been mentioning ballroom dancing for retired people in London, but you can come across that trouble of not always having a partner and that can be quite awkward and it can put you off. And then again, people's level or ability to dance is not always matched so you might be quite a skilled dancer and you might be partnered with someone who isn't and that's....difficult. Whereas with the Circle dancing on the whole, I mean I know we are holding hands ... we have much more scope to do our own thing and I think that's very liberating for people and I think people need to feel that level and the success they can get when they set their own standards. Because when you are with someone else, you've got a different standard. When you are on your own, a lot of things are on your own, you've got your own standard and then you don't feel put down really or necessarily.

I: How easy do you find it to learn the Circle dancing?

A: I find it very easy....I think it's a discipline that I learnt from learning Irish step dancing and you don't realise and these must be parts of the brain that are developed and you learn to... relate to music and remember a sequence of movement and I know I can do it. And I watched a programme on television about how intelligent you are and I wasn't very intelligent in most of the things, the maths things and, they were doing everything too quickly. The only thing I was intelligent at was....it was Winston, what's his name and he did a certain number of physical movements, and that's the only thing that I was perfect at because how my brain thinks that repetition of movement whereas numbers and words that are similar or different, I need more time to work on. So I think it's a practised skill and by now I'm really quite good at it so yeah...(laughs).

I: How does the Circle dance influence experiences of yourself?

A: Oh....I think like I said before, it's made my...it's made me feel part of a bigger world let's put it like that. Because we go to a little hall in a little English village which ... is mostly white middle-class, and it's just a little ordinary place and while we are there, I remember and think about people in so many different places that the music makes me think of, that ... it makes me feel part of a bigger world. I can't just stay at home, I would be lacking, missing out on I think, I suppose it's a richness, a sharing and that. And of course a lot depends on the teacher. I find the teacher, and you see I've never done any other Circle dancing and I find that P., she's so loving and so open-minded, that ... I think it ... it comes, it...just spreads the loveliness about and that and it makes you go home feeling really great. So...yeah...that's sort of me (laughs) yes.

I: So how would you describe the richness, you were talking about a lot of richness from the dance?

A: Yes...well it's through the music and it's just through the names and the places that she mentions, so this one is from Greece and perhaps this one is from Latin America or this one was from... La Fille Mal Gardee, I remember that particular kind, there's a lovely dance from that one. And... and I feel very lucky....And also, not everybody has got.... I mean I've got some music at home obviously I've got some Irish dance music, I've even got a little bit of belly dance music cos I've done a bit of belly dancing I've tried that as well, and I've got Salsa music, but nothing, nothing like, I wouldn't be able to afford....to have bought myself that variety of music. And, music for dancing is very important to me and P. provides it, whereas I wouldn't be able to. I don't know where else I would go to get that sort of mixture. I believe there's this thing called...

WOMAD is it? Oh yes, World...anyway, it's "World, Music and Dance" and it's been going now since the '80s, my neighbour goes to it. And that's the kind of place where you would get people gathered together to listen to music. But that's all happened a bit late for me. I would have loved that, if I could have done that when I was in my 20s. I don't particularly

want to go off into a dance field now and attempt....you know what I mean (laughs). So I'm quite happy that P's provided us with all this lovely rich music. That's what I mean....

I: Right...how does the Circle dancing influence your experiences of your health, would you say?

A: What...to be well...if I'm well and I've got the time then I will dance. And...if I'm feeling a little bit low, if I've had a bit of a hard time, I've got a worry or anything like that, when I do the Circle dancing, I don't think about it. I can make that go away for that length of time. And I think that's a very useful thing to be able to do. Because we all have..... problems in our lives and we all have things that we have to deal with and it's lovely to have somewhere where you can forget about them and I can say that does help.

I: How does the dance make you feel well?

A: I've answered the question obviously.

I: I'm just probing a bit.

A: I don't know how it works....I suppose it's...adrenaline and stuff like that...because if I just sit down, I'm a great reader as well, so I have these two very very opposite passions, one is to read...there are times when I could read and not always anything fascinating, just rubbish, I read...packets, anything that's written on anything and obviously books and I read novels and I read detective stories, I read autobiographies, very wide. And I have read books on human behaviour, whatever...whatever. Now that's very, very static and I could do it for hours. But then I've got this other part of me that's got to move...and the moving makes me feel refreshed. So reading and all that is very relaxing but the dancing is very refreshing, that's how it makes me, it's stimulating and when I've done that, I can then go out and fancy doing other things, I can tackle my garden. If I was sat down reading, I'd have to put off my garden because I'd put my feet up. So...and all that means that then I feel healthier. Because then, as I say, I can perhaps go in the garden or I'd be more inclined to go for a longer walk because the dance thing has started my muscles. Because if you sit for a long time everything begins to seize up, joints get a bit more painful and that sort of thing whereas with the dancing, no, everything flows and then it creates the need...the want, the desire to do more activity which I'm sure...and that makes me feel healthy.

I: So how would you say the Circle dancing influences your experience of growing older? Sort of in a longitudinal sense.

A: ...well I'm just glad that it's there and particularly as there are people who are doing it who are even older than I am. And that makes me think "Great. Here's something I'm going to be able to continue to do. And ... for quite a long time." I hate the idea...like when I was working ... I worked for a while for the ministry of agriculture, just doing clerical work, and the day I was 65, that was it, out the door. Well I mean I was still capable on the day after, and the week after, and the month after of doing exactly the same thing but sadly I was.... and that has quite a bad effect on you psychologically. It made me feel really...So I needed then to fill up my days and to make myself feel good and this was one of the things, was Circle dancing, it does and it's an activity that I'm hoping to continue with cos it's got a social aspect, it's lovely meeting up with the people week after week, and hopefully with time, one becomes friends. I mean I don't rush into things, it doesn't matter but it's lovely to say "hello" to people and be recognised and all the rest of it. Yes, so I see it as, a long term way... of keeping fit. I've tried other keep-fit things though. I've tried aerobics with "thump, thump, thump" music which...it gets you going, yes it's not a bad...but repetitively having to perform this movement and that movement and twenty times and more till it....and so boring, oh so boring. Now Circle dancing, yes I get to use my brain even as well, now that is very good. So it's not even just a matter of playing with the music, it's a matter of, you have to think, you have to send it down to your body, your feet, your arms or whatever, and ... that has a very good effect, well I think so anyway. Yeah....keeps me quite alert.

I: Lovely...so how would you say the Circle dance has changed your experience of your body?

A: Yes... cos I was only thinking when we were there yesterday, there was one dance, I mean I love, I love formal dancing because I'm trained to do, so when the teacher says "This is quite difficult." I love it when she says that and I think "Oh good, a challenge." And I love it better the more of a challenge it is. And it's like you know "Swing to the left and turn." And it's unexpected and it doesn't and because...in Irish dancing we do on the right foot, we do on the left foot, it's repeated, it's about mirror imaging, you know where you're going, with this the music from different countries it's not always, it's not the same balance so you can do certain movements, what you expect to happen doesn't happen and that is so, so exciting...now I've forgotten the thread of what I was saying...

I: I was asking...

A: Yes oh I know about my body and.....

I: And the Circle dancing.

A: Yes, yes, so...there was a lovely dance yesterday where we don't hold hands at all, and it was ever so flowy and we could do, you know, whatever you like with this bit and that bit, I've never.....it's what I wasn't trained to do, to be creative and I'm....delighted to be able to do that, to have the freedom to, and there's nobody watching you, cos we're all doing it, so it's not like being as you say, you went to a party and you got up and you feel people were looking at you, that's different. This is....it's only you. Nobody else cares, they're all doing their own thing and then that makes me feel that yes....I've got ability that I didn't even know I had. All this flowy finger movement, imagine an Irish dancer doing that. Mind you...(inaudible) exactly has started to change all that hasn't he? Because they never used to do that but he mixed, which is great, he took

elements of other dancing which was lovely. And when I was in the Middle East, I told you we did this in the holidays, but there was a school near us. And ... my husband worked in the oil industry. And there was a school on the camp which was quite near where we lived and somebody must have told the teachers that this friend and I, we'd done all these... pantomime things and so the head teacher asked us, M. and I., to...do a little dance show, so that when the mayor came to the school or something ... we could do it. And I said to M. "What we'll do," and in a way I suppose it was like, a little bit like what I'm doing now,"Let's try and do a dance from different countries." So we did a Dutch dance, my idea of what a Dutch dance was. M. found the music for it. We did a girls' Morris dance not a boys' one because I'd seen that up in Manchester ... when we went to field events and we did Irish dancing, where there were girls doing Morris dancing, not the boys this time. And... so we did dances from all over the world and that that was really nice and that was a little bit of forethought of what I'm doing now really. Very often people, cos we lived in Iraq, you see, mostly they would have had, well...Arabic dances. I didn't really learn very much about Arabic dancing because...I don't really know why. There's Kurdish...all the Kurdish dancing, we do a bit of that at the class, that's when everyone holds hands in a line. The thing about Arabic dancing, as far as I could see, if you mention dancing, everyone would just think about belly dancing, and you see, in a way in Iraq that was considered....well it's a little bit like night-clubbing, you know it's not, not what good girls do really. Or...so it didn't have the same sort of ....feel. I never did learn about the kind of ordinary dancing that they might have done. Not a dancing nation really, especially not for women, meant not to be seen very much there (laughs). Any way, I don't think that's very relevant.....

I: Is there any other way the dance has changed your experience?

A: Well it's just added an extra dimension to my social calendar, let's put it like that. Ok I believe that in the summer, P. goes to lovely places to have ... a big picnic where we all dance on the grass. I'm looking forward to that....

I: How long have you been with P.'s class?

A: It's not a year...about a year. I was there last year but I couldn't go to the thing, I had somewhere else to go. But she does do that and I was thinking that would be a nice summer event. And I've been to a whole day workshop which I found most exciting, that was lovely, I love dance workshops. And that was all through the Circle dancing, where we met this person called S. that P. occasionally...who choreographed a lot of these lovely dances, well that was wonderful, we had a whole day of doing that with lunch and everything inbetween so a very nice social occasion for me. Yeah...(laughs).

I: So just onto my last question.....is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

A: I just think dancing.....it's a great...leveller and it's a source of happiness and joy I think. That's how I think about dancing. I also think that..... sadly nowadays people tend to watch things more than they actually do them themselves. We have become a nation of watchers I think. So you'll get people saying... "My dad likes rugby and likes football" and they don't, they like sitting down watching other people play football and that's not foot ball. And people watch all sorts of competitive things when you've got all these dancers doing... I'm not mad keen on that, I think I'd just rather be dancing. And I think also it may set too high a standard and then people feel that they wouldn't ever be able to succeed to that level. So they give up and don't try things. Whereas by going to Circle dancing, you don't feel challenged in that way, you can do it to your own ability and that's it, so....I can't think of anything else to say about it really. It's just a great joy I think.....

I: Thank you.

### **First Circle Interview Three (1.C.3)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

B: Yes... Can I just consent? To be recorded on tape.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

B: Well it's such a long time ago I can hardly remember... I think I went into a local school. I love dancing and went to the local school for something and saw that there was a Circle dancing group and thought that's what I'd like to try and do. Just after I'd retired. Oh no, no, I've just remembered. I retired and I joined a retirement organisation, and I've always loved dancing, any sort of dancing, and I saw that there was a Circle dancing group on a Monday afternoon, so I went along to join that and that was run by U... And it was pleasant, and I learnt a few Circle dances and U. went away on holiday... it was sad for her really because P. came to take U.'s class. Well P. is such a bubbly personality and ... such great fun. She came with... the music was a lot better, she has a really very good music system, lovely music, whereas U. has quite nice music but it's just taped music and it doesn't have the same quality. And after P. had done her session, she said "I also have Circle dancing." So I immediately converted and went rushing off to follow P. And... I've been Circle dancing in P.'s class ever since. So it's five years, six, since I retired.

I: You say you've always loved dancing..

B: Yeah... I... when I was a little child, I was sent to tap dancing classes and ballet. I was a little, little, plump thing. And ballet wasn't really appropriate for me (laughs) but I loved tap-dancing. And I did that for a while and then I don't know what happened, but I enjoyed it. And then when I got to about eighteen, and started, and went to UCH to train to be a nurse, we used to have ... dances every Saturday with the medical students at UCL and ... I did lots of jiving and... just .... dancing I used

to go to every week. So I liked dancing then and ... I've always loved, liked dancing about. I haven't done any Scottish dancing actually.

I: How often were you dancing a week when you were an adult?

B: Oh once a week when I was about nineteen and twenty, and then there was a huge gap... a huge gap really because I got married, had a child, moved up here... and the husband, my first husband, we danced. And in those days you only danced with partners basically..... Big gap. Then I met B., the guy I'm with now, and he loved dancing and we met... we met at a time when the Beatles records were all going, and there were about three night clubs here that did lots of dancing, we could spend all evening just dancing.... Just free dancing, not any particular one, but we dance together, and ... we had a great time dancing together and ... then we settled down and I was in full-time work and we didn't do any more dancing. I don't know quite when we stopped. I just think we got very, very busy. And then it stopped. Then I've started again with the Circle dancing. B. hasn't started.

I: Do you do any other form of dancing?

B: I do tap-dancing with the retirement organisation. And I've gone back to tap dancing. I like that.

I: About the Circle dancing, how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

B: I find it very easy. I think it's because when I was little... I went to tap dance classes and I think well what that teaches you, when you're little, is to look at somebody's feet and copy... to take the message from looking at somebody else's feet, into your brain and putting it down into your own feet (laughs). And copying... left foot to right foot and things like that. So I find it very easy if I watch P. doing the demonstration of a dance, then I can usually do it straight away... If not, it takes me about two times to learn it. I can do that. I can't always remember the dances... if we haven't done a dance for about five weeks, I can't necessarily remember all the steps immediately but it comes back very quickly and the music makes a difference, as soon as I hear the music I start to remember it, the steps. So I do find it very easy. I mean I was, I was really enthusiastic to take a friend of mine who came to live here, I took her with me to Circle dancing and she just ... couldn't do it, she just couldn't. I couldn't understand why, but for some reason, she didn't like it, she didn't enjoy it and she couldn't she just couldn't get the steps, she just couldn't do it. And I think it must be something to do with doing it when you're a child. I think it's like ABC... if you learn it when you're young, you never really forget it. And it's not, it's not the ... I mean I didn't learn those dances, but what I did learn, when I was little, was how to copy with my feet, you know, how to move to music. And that comes back.

I: Any more on that?

B: Not really. I just find it easy. I enjoy it. And I like all the different styles. And I like to try to ... you know, to, to glide along in the Russian one and to bob up and down in the bobbing up and down ones. To try do the ones, the tango in a different way. All different styles of dancing. And even the Scottish ones that we do. When we do Scottish circle dancing you feel you sort of want to point your toes and hop a lot more, do it in that style. So it's not just a question of moving your feet in the right places.

I: It's not just your feet?

B: No, I think it involves the whole person. It involves your arms and your body, you have to move around. But you also get swept up with the emotion coming out in the music. So it can be very happy and bouncy ... like there's a song about Spring, a French one, a French dance about Spring and it's all bouncy. Or you can do a Russian Glide... Or you can do a South American Salsa where you're wiggling your bottom. So it's all different emotions. And I think that's really enjoyable, it's like going, it's like being another person isn't it? For the, the length of the dance.

I: How would you say the Circle dancing influences your experiences of yourself?

B: Well, I think it's, it's ... it's a form of expression. You can express different sides of yourself while you're dancing... I mean it's really a game that you're playing all the time ...

It's fun, it's just fun, it's like being back in childhood, and pretending to be a big bogeyman or, or a fairy or whatever. You know, just pretending to be something else.

And it ... just makes me feel happy. It's difficult to describe isn't it? It's just a game I'm playing. But I really enjoy it.

I: What about clothes?

B: Mm?

I: What about clothes?

B: Yeah, yeah. That's fun too, isn't it? I mean I find the whole thing fun. I mean I dig out all my party clothes and wear them. And dance about in (laughs). After a certain age, you tend not, especially here, you tend not to go many places where you can wear silly clothes, you can wear silly clothes for Circle dancing (laughs). You can wear what you like, lots of beads. I mean I got a box of beads that you know there was an era in the... 60s and things when people wore beads all the time, lots of beads, and I used to have lots of, all cheap beads, lots of them. And I put them, I remember when I was ... little I used to play with my grandmother's button box and get all the buttons out, see in my, upstairs in my bedroom I've got an old make-up case thing, it's full of beads that I keep for my grand daughter to play with, you know, basically are kept for her to play with. So she can tip all these beads out and dangle them round her neck and they're all

cheap. Long beads. But once I've started Circle dancing, I got them all out, I actually wear them again (laughs). Dangle them round my neck. And, go here, great piles of beads again. And it's good fun. I don't wear them anywhere else, only Circle dance. Long earrings. All sorts.... It's a morning for dressing up. I think quite a few people do that. Dig out their silly clothes. And then of course P. has special days, which I don't think you've come across yet but every year she's had ... since I've been doing Circle dancing, she's had two special days, maybe more, but two in the Summer when she arranges that we all go to a stately home, and there's a lake with a big tree, which we can all sit under for a picnic. So we go there and she has a theme. So at one time she had an Arab theme so we all wore baggy trousers and all dressed up like Arabs and another time she had ... South American and we all tried to look South American in frilly skirts and things. And ... and then we dance outdoors by the lake and have a picnic and spend the whole day there. And when we were there last time, we were all dressed, I remember ... one of my friends had been to Egypt and bought ... a very fancy Egyptian thing with a great big Sphinx's head on it, all glittering gold, so I wore that, borrowed that and wore that. And ... we were all dressed in Egyptian clothes and one of the passers-by came and asked what country we were all from (laughs) which was really very funny (laughs). And the girl she asked had just come from down the road so she said "I just live in the village next door." But ... we all looked completely crazy, I mean all of us dressed in Arab clothes. And she has two days, two... it's usually August, she books two Sundays in August for that, and Audley End let her come in the back way. And ... dance in the gardens. Then we have one session in the winter ... on the shortest day of the year when we all dress in black and have a really sombre set of dances and slowly work up ... go right down into the darkness and back into the light, it's all very spiritual. And lots of, we have ... a kind of ceremony with candles, light the candles, and we do a candle dance which is very unusual. That one takes place, well last time we did it in the village hall, and we have done it in other places. And we black out all the windows so it's completely dark and we dance in the dark so just with the light of a candle and nothing else. Very, very unusual. Just specific dances we do. And slowly the dances get slower and slower and get to the mid-point and then you suddenly, you start coming back into the light again. And everybody lights a candle at last which is rather nice.

I: What is the meaning of this?

B: The meaning is just really, I suppose it's the, it's the winter ... there's a name for it which I can't remember, it's the thing of going together, down into really the darkest part of the year, and then turning and coming back out into the light. I suppose you can take, get as spiritual as you like about it. Still enjoy it.

I: Anymore on how it makes you see yourself?

B: I think dancing to different types of music certainly makes you, when you, I look around the circle of people, and none of them are young in our group, they're all over 60 at least, most of them ... I think it makes you feel, I think it makes you feel in touch with a younger self, you don't feel old, you feel young. Or at least ageless. Not sure that you feel young, but you don't feel any particular age at all which is ... it's rather nice when you look at your age written on a piece of paper you think "I don't feel like that." I don't feel like my aunts and uncles did when they were the same age as me. It's a kind of side issue, you don't do it for that reason but I think that's got a lot of youth in it. Some of the dances, there's one dance ... which is Greek ... that really puts me right back when I was ... after my divorce, when I was separated from my husband ... I went to Greece for a whole summer with a friend of mine who also had small children, and there I fell in love with a very beautiful man and there's this one Greek dance which has got ... a Greek voice on it saying "Agaype Boo" which means "I love you." And I can really, whenever I dance that dance, I'm immediately transported back into that period of my life, when I was in love with this Greek man. Beautiful. And that's just the complete transportation by the, it's the language and the words and the music because I was completely... I was completely absorbed in Greece for that whole summer... staying in Athens and I was just completely absorbed in the Greek world, in the Greek music and Greek everything. Till I came back. Back to reality. So that, that song takes me back to that.... Well there's a lovely one called "The Wanderer" which I really like which is a free one, where you can float about and do what you like which is rather nice, that's rather nice, makes me feel really free. And ... and there's other ones which make you feel very supported. And I can't remember one. There's one that we did... on Tuesday afternoon, I go on Tuesday afternoon, I dance at another hall. And there's a lovely one where you go into a hug and then come slowly out of it, and then go into a hug again. You feel very supported by the people around you. You know, it's a really supportive dance. And there are several like that that I like as well. So you feel you're part of the group, being supported.

I: There's a lot of benefit to being a group?

B: Yes, yeah. Yet we don't talk very much because we're dancing. We only have two or three minutes to talk. I've made a few other, some friends outside of the... we've met outside of the Circle dancing since I've been doing, five years, six years now and basically... the group is very solid there, but we don't really mix a great deal outside of the dancing time. And yet we feel very supportive of each other. It's interesting. I think we're holding hands and dancing. I don't know if that, if that comes so, I don't think that works in the tap dance class. I think the tap dancing, we're all very friendly with each other and it's a very jolly class but we don't have that supportive feeling that we get with Circle dancing. I think Circle dancing is very supportive because you're actually holding hands with people, you're touching people, you're hugging people and there are lots of dances that are very close contact. With other people, every individual. Just trying to think if there are any other. There are dances that take me back to different times of my life. When you're listening to the music and dancing, if you know the dance, you go

off into a dream-world and very often transported back into other places and other times. Mostly with dancing, always happy times. I don't ever feel that I'm being tran..., put anywhere unhappy. Maybe serious and thoughtful, we do a dance where you actually look back over your past and then look forward. That's really, that's just really pensive, not unhappy necessarily but pensive... Ah! There's ... we do several dances, I think there's one Jewish dance .... with people, it's mostly walking, and you look back over your life that was and then you look forward. There's another dance that is a ... Celtic dance about leaving and it's got lots of hovering, and in the circle you hover. You start to move and then you hover backwards because you don't want to go, and you don't want to leave. That's rather nice. So there's, some of them are quite serious dances. The ones that we do at mid-winter, there's a name for it and I can't remember...

I: Winter solstice.

B: Yeah, the winter solstice that we do...

I: Would you say the Circle dancing influences your experiences of your own health?

B: Healthwise, yeah.... well I think it's extremely good exercise... You can adapt. I had a bad knee for a little while... and you could just not put so much pressure on it... you could do smaller steps, you could adapt a little bit if you can't do it very well. And P.'s very good because she, she, like when C. came back last week, I mean she, she carefully said "Now if you don't want to spin around at this point, you just do four steps." And C. was doing that so he didn't spin all over. And everybody was catching him if he tried but I mean ... you can, so you can adapt the dance. Just because you're not so healthy one week or somebody isn't so healthy one week, they don't have to stay at home, they can still go. And they can do most of the dances, even if they have to sit some out, they can adapt. So, in a way it's an ideal dance for people who are getting a dancing system. I mean you couldn't do that with tap-dancing, you couldn't do that, I don't think you could do it with Scottish dancing either. I think if you're.... if you're growing older and you're likely to have, I mean I haven't had any serious health problems, but I've seen people who have, and it makes me feel quite cheerful because I see (laughs) I see them coming back and I see them slowly getting back into the dancing and adapting, and then gradually not having to adapt any more because their health is improving and improving and improving. And I think if they had not had Circle dancing as something to go back to, they may not have had that improvement in their health because ... there are some sports that it is difficult to go back to and the Circle dancing has, well particularly this particular class, and I think most Circle dancing because of the hand-holding and the support and the fact that you dance in couples or with the whole circle, anyone who is not able either to do the steps or to ... go as fast as everybody else, is supported by the group. We don't think "Oh God, that person's no good. Poke them out." ... have them sit out there because they're no good. We actually try to work-out how they can be joined in, if anybody has a bad hand and they can't grip, I mean P.'s got a system where they tie a, if they've got arthritis, or once somebody had, you can tie a scarf round and the person next can hold a scarf. So they haven't got to use the hand if it's not working. And then of course they come back and they try and ... form the nursing background, you can see that people start to be involved. They try and gradually the bit of them that's not working so well gets stronger and stronger and they don't need to have the scarf or you know, lay off it so much, and they find they can spin round again, which is interesting. And I think there are a lot of, a lot of sports which you would give up. People, I have seen... people who say "Oh well yes, I used to play lots of golf and then I hurt my back and I haven't been playing. Or I used to play tennis and I had a bad knee and now I don't play tennis anymore. Because there are certain, things like playing proper tennis, I mean if you haven't got the power, and you can't, your back-hand doesn't work, I mean I used to play tennis. Once you can't use that power, you're not wanted because you're going to let your partner down every time, every time the ball comes your way, you're going to lose the point. So you don't go when you're injured. And then it's extremely difficult to get back because you're always going to be worse than the other people and letting them down. Whereas with Circle dancing, you don't let anybody down.... from any sort of problem, and slowly work your way in. We had a lady called E., who had very, very, she was in her 80s, she loved dancing and she came. She'd got very bad asthma and pneumonia, and she came back and she died just a couple of, about a month ago, but she'd come back from all her illnesses, and she still came back and she was still dancing about a month before she died. She came and watched and she joined in two or three of them. She was so happy when she was dancing.

I: So it seems to have a special effect?

B: A combination of ... it's a combination of touch, the music and touching each other. Makes people feel, makes people feel as though they belong to each other, as though they're part of, well part of a circle. It speaks for itself doesn't it?

I: Ok. So how would you say Circle dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

B: ... I don't know, it's a very difficult question, because I don't actually feel as if I'm growing older. I know that sounds really silly but... it's like somebody saying to you when you're a child, you know, "Well you're six to-day. How do you feel now you are six?" And... you think "Well I don't feel any, I was five yesterday, and ... I'm six to-day. What's the difference?" And ... basically, the last year, two years I was at work ... I was sitting still a lot of the time, counselling, I mean I hardly moved a muscle, you can imagine, just sitting, sitting, sitting. And so I put on quite a bit of weight and I was working out at another town. so I drove down the A road every night to come home in the rain and the fog and the nastiness, and by the time I got home, I was just knackered. So I just used to sit and watch television in a sort of blank fashion. So ... basically, my last five years since I retired, I mean I did work for NHS Direct part-time after I retired, I've just retired from that in fact, but that



was just part-time ... Since I've retired, I've actually felt better because (laughs) I'm doing twice as much activity and I've got thinner, I mean I was kind of like twelve stone, which is not, which for my height, is far too big... when I retired. And ... so basically I actually feel younger since I retired, which sounds a bit funny because people say "How does dancing influenced my feeling of getting older?" But ... I suppose on the other hand, mentally I know I'm getting older, I mean mentally the thing, you know, I mean I know that the figure, I've got a free bus pass, and ... the figure, the figure on my... on where it says "age" keeps on increasing and it looks old. So, so Circle dancing, that, and also I look round and see, I suppose really it... the effect of Circle dancing is for people, it's quite nice to be getting old because you can go and do Circle dancing in the day-time when younger people are at work (laughs), being unhealthy and sitting around ... So there's that to it. And also ... I think it lessens your fear of getting old because I, I... I remember E., as I was telling you... she absolutely twinkles, when she was dancing and I mean she was in her 80s and she had as well... so the thought that, there is the feeling that if you're still dancing, then you're not really needing to be frightened of getting older particularly because I suppose one is only frightened of having some, well not exactly frightened but I suppose the down side of getting older is you feel you might have more of a chance of... of getting ill. I don't see why you should though... I mean, well yeah, I don't really know. I mean I'm not actually, I don't sit in fear of getting arthritis or in fear of pulling a muscle... and I don't actually see because I am a year older than I was last year, that that would necessarily happen. I must say that I'm not so frightened of getting old when you see older people enjoying themselves (laughs). Good to know. I'm very lucky actually, very lucky, a lot of ... a lot of my friends ... have had, I mean I've had a sort of knee that went "Ouch! Ouch!" for about, a couple of months and then got better... and it didn't stop me doing anything much, apart from running downstairs, and that's about my whole sum total of, of anything wrong. But I have friends who've got arthritis in their hands and friends who get... it's getting old, "I've got bad digestion, it's getting old." But I haven't got many friends like that actually, most of my friends seem younger than me and quite healthy. I'm lucky because I don't seem to get anything. So who knows whether one... I don't think necessarily getting old means you've got to get ill. But presumably you run down eventually (laughs). I don't know. I suppose, I suppose it's quite a long while. I just went to a 100th birthday party of a relative of B. and she was full of beans at a 100 so I thought "Well." And she actually had just had a stroke three years ago and... but until that, that was when she was 97, she was marching in, she lives in a town, but she was... marching into town and back everyday. So she didn't... she didn't seem to lose any faculties until she was really almost 100. And how she was as bright as a button sitting there chattering and full of beans, having a party.

I: So how would you say has the Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

B: Well it probably has, it probably has over a period of time... I think I probably move more than I used to. Well more than I did when I was at work. I probably move my hips and move all over, move much more all over my body.... I go swimming a lot as well so I don't know, that probably helps... as well. Certainly I do feel, yeah, that, I did Circle dancing from like six years ago, joined a tap dance class when it started a year ago and I mean I think because of Circle dancing, because I got used to looking at feet, I just looked at the tap dance teacher's feet and just copied it and did tap dancing and everyone said "My God, you're good at that!" ... all the other people in the class (laughs). "So how did you do that? How did you pick that up?" .... they thought I'd got some clever system and they said "Well you've obviously been tap dancing all your life." I said "No, no. I stopped when I was seven." (laughs). I'm now 70. It's quite a long time, quite a long time back from when I, when I did tap dancing. But I did say "Well I do do Circle dancing and ... it's the same sort of skill. You look at somebody's feet and they demonstrate. And you copy. So it's a similar thing." So I suppose that that really... means that you your body, and also, a lot of P.'s dances, she wants us to wiggle our hips and ... be like belly dancers and things like that, bits that you haven't been wiggling for a long time... Any other reason, you wouldn't be doing that, you wouldn't be sort of, needless movements. And I suppose too you do find, because you are moving with the music, you can do, you come across really fast dances and you find that after doing them... several weeks running, you're not out of breath anymore when you were maybe out of breath the first time you did them. But you find that your breathing improved.

I: Any more?

B: I don't think so. I think I've worn the subject out. I mean I just love it anyway. I don't do, I don't really do it because it does me good. Because I really like to do it. I do it because I like it.

I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

B: I just think, I just think dancing is, is a, I mean I like to watch it as well. I like to go, I like watching ballet and ... modern dance. I like... I think that the combination of music, any type of music, and movement of bodies, is a real, is a real fascinating thing to be involved, either to be involved yourself or to watch, to just watch how the, the... I mean it's just a perfect combination really of... watching a ballet or something. A perfect combination of hearing the music and then seeing this beautiful tableau in front of you. And I quite.... really, really like to go to shows too. So ... shows with dancing in and singing. And... singing and dancing. I think music and singing and dancing is really... I belong to a singing group as well, I like singing too (laughs). So I think it's just great, it just... makes life happy.

I: So what sort of things do you sing?

B: I'm a ... I sing silly things, things like "Don't..." we just did a competition "Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me." And "Little old lady passing by." A little old fashioned song in four part harmony. Yeah. I prefer dancing actually. What I would like to do is sing and dance together (laughs).

I: Do a musical?

B: Yes I like a musical. Yeah I love musicals. We did... in our tap dance class we did a bit from Chicago which I like and....

I: Any shows with the tap dancing?

B: No it's just a... we did actually, the first teacher we had did, got us a set piece to do to a certain piece of music. The teachers changed, and we're just doing it for exercise.

I: Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

B: No, I think I've run out. (laughs).

### **First Circle Interview Four (1.C.4)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

M: Yes, I give my consent.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

M:... as far as I can remember the first time that I was exposed to Circle dancing was at a family gathering .....and ... my niece or is interested and active in Circle dancing and she ... arranged quite informally for people to gather in a Circle and ...she introduced a simple step and we did one or two dances as a circle in the garden at a family gathering...

I: Any more?

M: That was the first time. Then we were at a.....a 60th birthday of a dear friend over in a village and again it was in a garden and there there had been arranged a Circle dance teacher to come, and arrange a whole sequence of dances to all comers and I think ...practically no-one there had ever done it before and ... we did various dances, none of which I can remember now. This must have been seven or eight years ago and we joined in and thought it was fun. And then following that we heard about a..... visit here of S. and B., for their annual dance day here. And so we signed up and came to that having never had any real experience before and never mind, we joined in as best we could and we thoroughly enjoyed it. And ... at that occasion, December, maybe six years ago, we heard about ... P. who was giving weekly ... sessions in the same place so we thought "That's fun....we'll join in." And that's how we started.

I: So can I record your consent on tape?

N: Yes of course you can, no problem.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

N:...I saw a Circle dance day advertised and I don't even remember now where, and thought "Let's just go." Because we'd been to a family.... party, where there was Circle dancing and it was fun and we thought "Well why not go for it? We've never done it properly." So we went to this day, and it was here in a beautiful big hall, and there must have been about 40 to 50 people, and it was run by a couple called S. and B. and then I realised many of those people, had been there or they'd come, ten years they'd been dancing, or fifteen years or were teachers themselves. And I thought "Oh my gosh.....how do we, you know, we're just total beginners." Nearly freaked out. But it was absolutely wonderful because although we had never done it sort of properly, we felt totally included in the group and the dances, the music was so lovely, we had Israeli, Greek, Russian and the steps were really not that complicated and because it was a very large group, the experienced dancers and teachers were making an inner circle and people who were if you like, beginners, who came for the first time, or were not that expert, they were dancing in the bigger circle.

So you had people in front of you who were dancing properly and you just picked it up. And we danced I think from 10.30am till 5.00pm with a break for lunch and of course, coffee, and you could sit out some dances if you want. But we just kept at it and were totally, totally .....we were so excited about it that at the end of the day, we bought some tapes because we wanted to know, we wanted to actually continue. Now this couple live in a town far away but there was one local woman there and she said "Hey listen there's a local lady who does it called P. and why don't you come on a Friday morning?" So we went on a Friday morning, and it must be now, six or seven years ago, I don't remember exactly I'd have to check the diaries, and we've never looked back. And we.....are just like so taken in by it, it's really part of our lives now. And..... I couldn't do without it. There'd be no Circle dance holidays with B. and S. and it is.....until you do it, you don't really know what it is like. Because I had prejudices about "New Age" and Findhorn and all these people in knitted jumpers and they all dance... and that is I have some relatives who used to live in Findhorn and they were sort of alternative types, they would do it at home. And I.....personally I reacted a bit against it then. But now that I've done it myself, I'm totally like converted. So that's the way I got..... introduced to it.

I: Anymore.....about getting involved at first?

N: Yes....there was no way..... I.....I felt also, I had retired from work and I wanted to do something physical, and personally I tend to live maybe from the head up a bit. I cycle a lot but I just thought "Hey dance is something that is totally different. It's a sensual experience and it will do me some good just to be more relaxed." And the way our first teacher was teaching the

dance was, on a physical level, she had totally planned her two hour dance with a break in the middle, with a physical component and then sort of... and it was spiritual. So physical... very energetic dances and then it would become more emotional with feelings, and then it would become quite spiritual. So after a morning you would feel totally in a different place from when you arrived to start the dancing. You might think "Oh my goodness, I can't be bothered to be there at say ten o'clock... There's lots of things to be done in the house and you may feel a bit low and negative, or whatever." But without failing, whenever you go or went, afterwards you felt the benefit from it. And so, it was also the connection with others, particularly I think, dancing in a Circle, and you do not need partners. And that I think is very holistic and all inclusive, because especially many women... widowed or on their own, dancing is usually a couple experience and this is one where, okay women pre-dominate but it is an experience where you can connect with others on a level that is very, it flows, it's very natural, it's almost as if you have a connection, because you are doing this dancing together. And you don't need to talk about it. And it doesn't matter where you come from, what your background is like, whether you are young or old, you do it because you love the dance and the music and the movement. So it's a very lovely way to create energy. And to give each other support in that way. And it doesn't need to be verbally, I think at the end of every session, call it if you like, a group hug. You all stand in the circle together and you reflect for a moment because there is a focal point in the middle, the candle, flowers and the energy that you have... brought, you send it to wherever it is needed and you take some of it to yourself. Ok. You don't need to sort of buy into that but for me, that was also a spiritual, a very, it's not tangible, but a very important part of it. And I believe in it. I just... But it's very difficult to say that from the cold because people might think "Where does that come from? That's scary." Or whatever. And it may not do something for everybody. But for me, I find a focal point to, specially with meditative dances, and some are very... thoughtful and very deep. It's really, it takes you on a different plane. It's very... and I think it's very sustaining too, if you do it on a regular basis. In the beginning I used to go twice a week but with other things, I couldn't keep that up, so at the moment I really try at least once a week. Whole days from time to time. They are just wonderful because you don't see people for a year but immediately you click, you have fun. It's just a whole circle of friends really. It's like making friends, even if you do not see each other in the intervening months. There is a connection that you don't have to work at, it just happens. And I think that is something very special because normally that sort of relationship builds up over years. And here you can actually much more easily get to a point because of your shared interest, I think. Well that's what for me it's like....

I: Any more?

M: I mentioned the problems we had at H.

N: Oh yes.

M: And it doesn't matter. That's all really.

I: Right. How did you end up changing Circle dance classes?

N: What do you mean by that?

I: Changing from the Friday group to the Tuesday group. Why did you move?

N: Well I think, when we first started, we went to a hall with a very hard floor. And, and our teacher changed it to the local school which was a lovely, lovely wooden floor, sprung floor. And we loved that hall. Now when we moved, she's been looking for places, when we moved to this particular hall... that you're referring to, I had a gut reaction to the hall itself. I found it, it's a village hall, and I've nothing against the organisation or whatever people the hall belongs to. But I had a very, it didn't do anything for me, I found it seedy, dark and the shape I found oblong rather than ... big enough for a big round, for circle and the platform, the decoration, there's a picture of the Queen with a corgi, I mean there was, I don't know, I reacted against the physical place.

N: There again, as a matter of interest, before we, before P. settled on that hall, she had very cleverly arranged a whole series, every week, in a different hall. So week by week, in one year, we danced in more or less every village hall around here, in the villages. And then finally, she settled on this particular one. And because she decided she had to leave the local school, which was we thought a great pity, but that's what happened, and ... we both felt "What a shame." Then she started a new session on Mondays, originally she only did Fridays. Then she started, I think, Mondays, and then of course it went on from then. She does, did Wednesdays then she wanted to start in another village and then in another and she does two or three sessions every week plus the Monday one. She got organised with another village hall. So we thought "Let's go to this one, to see what it's like." So this other hall, is just fabulous. Light, airy, nice size, dimensions and a nice group of people. Well the other group are nice people but the people in this hall, I have to say, there's a different spirit. That's all I can say. It's a different energy. And we just love it there and we find it less easy in... where is it now?

N: H.

M: In H.

N: But.

M: But for me of course there is another dimension which is the fact that I'm a male and I love the dance, it does everything N. says. Well for me, I find dancing in that particular group of women, of a similar age to myself, in H., I get tired of that particular setting, of those particular people. Now in the beginning also, there was a much more fluid attendance, numbers,

new people would join, and some would leave and others would join. So for several years, it was a very changing group. So you'd always see new faces. Well that's changed too and the H. group has settled very much into a set group, which has also added to my particular reaction. And it's my fault, no not fault, it's how it impacts on me that's all.

N: ... I would still be dancing in H. if there were no alternatives because I think the teacher is absolutely amazing and I would go for the dance. But I prefer the other place because there was a time, way back, when she wanted to have a special session for people who wanted to take it further and would do the really difficult, exciting, complicated dances. And so the last one and a half hours of the T. session is the really fast, exciting, dances that she just quickly goes through and we pick it up. And so the first half of the session is just... normal session and then we may start with 25 people and maybe twelve stay for the second half. And I find to be stretched and do something complicated or wild or whatever it is, very, very exciting. And that fires me on. And I think, speaking for M., in this group there are, at least there is always one other male, another guy.

M: Yeah.

N: And he's very keen on that. And then there is always, very often a second one, N., and sometimes even another one. And that actually makes a difference.

M: Yes.

N: And I can understand that. When you go on an all day dancing day... well men are always in the minority but there is a sprinkling, maybe eight to ten in a group of 30, so it needs both I think. And I also feel, personally... there are no... every, in other words, sometimes you are pre-occupied when you first start dancing "Oh I don't do it right and the steps are wrong!" And get all worked up and "I'm upsetting my neighbours." And there are no wrong steps, that's what we were told by S., there's just variations. So don't get totally hung up on the right steps. But I must say sometimes, if I go to this group, and I have somebody next to me who really doesn't get it, and has been there ... week in and week out, and I'm next to that person, and I can just, it's, it doesn't spoil it totally, but it's, it is just a shame. So maybe I'm also too choosy now, I want to be with people who really are all... doing it well, or who are not...who are tactile because I think what it is also, it's very good for people, why H., it's because it's accessible to most of the elderly people, I think, it's easier to get to, for me it doesn't matter where it is in a way, but that is also, I think, a factor, where it is, and it's also close to the teacher's home, which is useful on that day. But I think it's something to do with ... when I look back when I first started eight or seven years, there were people like your age and there were people in their 30s and there were, it was, it was a big mix. And so you never knew who was going to be there. There were people of different nationalities. What has happened to them, I don't know, they're probably working because if you're working full-time, you cannot go in the day-time. And so that of course is automatically becomes like, almost the University of the Third Age with people who have retired. And there's nothing against it because I fall into that group but I would always like to do things in a mixed bunch of people rather than in a group of my own age. I find the ... I find I want to be in real life rather than be just with my group.

M: I suppose it's because we all want to be with younger people because we want to feel younger. That's the health, one of the aspects of the health issue is that it helps you feel younger, particularly if there are some younger people.

I: Yeah

N: Yeah (laughs)... Yeah, it's... yeah, there maybe reasons

M: I... we're getting into other aspects, but for me the music is very important and I have fairly... firm or not so flexible tastes in music, so I am not really happy dancing with the pop music and the jazz music. I, at the other end of the scale, am totally transported by original music from Greece or Russia or the Balkans and the feel that I'm dancing steps that also come from those countries, Rumania wherever. So whenever we have... they're good dances but for me, they don't get to me like the other ones.

N: ...I also find it extremely nice when I go to a day of dancing for instance, and then with S. and B. and there are tapes and CD's for sale... the first day, I was so inspired that I had to get a tape and I asked for advice. "Which one, if I'm just a beginner, which one should I take?" So I took one that was advised. And then, since then, I have bought lots of CD's and tapes. When I drive in the car, I put in the one which has ... or Balkan music or Israeli music or a mixture and I find that absolutely very, very nice. It's very relaxing and when you're driving, which I find is something I do not like to do, I find that in itself quite stressful... I find listening to music then puts you in touch, you've danced it, and it transports you to that very lovely antidote. I wouldn't take the meditation one because that would really be quite dangerous driving. But I find ... even at home, doing the cooking or doing, I put on a CD and immediately, I get into it because of the associations, where I've danced it... what the situation was. And it really, it lifts me up even when I'm not dancing. And when we do specific days, like we once did a day on ... it was dancing from the dark into the light, for the first half of the day, was getting in touch with very dark and sad and deep music, Armenian and Russian and really quite doleful and really deep. And then after the interval, the second half of the day, you would come out of that... as it were, and come out of the other side with gentle music lifting you right up. And those dark moments, like one particular called S.... was a dance with candles, and you started in the dark. It puts you in touch with such deep feelings and memories, that you would never conjure up normally. And it comes to you, and, I find it healing because you're all doing it together, no words are spoken, you dance six dances, one after the other, have a break and do the others and it's like... yeah it's difficult to describe it into words, it's, you go almost, it's a catharsis. And for everybody

whose there and danced, it will be a different experience, wherever you're at that point in your life. And to share that and see the person again and you were there, you don't even need to say "Hey you were there, wasn't it brilliant?" There is an unspoken link with people when you've been there. And I think that is what is very special, I I feel...? So.....

I: So I was going to ask you "How easy you find it to learn the different dances? How easy do you find it to learn the dances?"  
N:.... When I first started, but that's speaking for myself, I wanted to get it all right (laughs). And I was concentrating so much on the steps, and sometimes when it was a fast dance, I thought "Oh God, I don't get it." And be competitive with myself almost "I must get it right. I mustn't foul it up for people on either side." And when I let that go, because it is really about moving to the music, and ok the steps but there are steps, but if you don't get it all, if you have any sense of rythmn at all you let yourself be carried away with it. Once you've come out of your head, which may be difficult if you are the person whose always done things like... with the head a lot... Once you allow yourself to do that, it's almost as if you relax and let go and say "Yeah, what the heck!" And you get much more enjoyment out of the dance. You then, speaking for myself and I'm not a natural dancer, I suddenly feel "Hey that music! I don't even think about the feet." And I do it and I experience with my whole body, which in the first couple of months, I was thinking "Oh, do I get it alright? Or I hope I'm..." .... that goes, and I think that is the wonderful thing of it actually.

M: Yeah.

N: Wouldn't you say?

M: I would say exactly the first year, up to a year, I spent feeling at ease with the steps... but once I had the steps, and a basic selection of dances, covering all the different steps, I could then not worry about my feet. Not even think about my feet but feel the music and it's effect on me, in my movement. And... that was a wonderful. place to be...

N: What I also find very important, the teacher of course selects the dances and she does it very thoughtfully. She has a very catholic tase. Now some of the dances I would not choose. I think "Oh gosh, we're doing that one." Or we're doing some really sort of Russian Cossack, really strong and militaristic, and really... go for it. Now I react, but that says something about me. Because it's very important to be in touch with all those feelings and do it, which I wouldn't chose to, but I've learnt that you really have to be, bring it all together, and you don't choose just this or that... th at you take, the other ones you need just as much. But we don't choose that because... for whatever reason, psychological or whatever, or you think "I'm not aggressive. I don't want an aggressive dance." And sometimes, in some dances, there is aggression and stamping and all that. And there may be part of you that says "Well that's not very nice.... I'm not like that. I'm not taking part." But of course we all have it in us, and it's a very good vehicle to actually get rid of it and do something, and go for it. And that is something that you learn over the years, not to react. And some are, feel like child-like in fours, which I think "No I only want circle dance, I only want to be in a circle." And there is part of you that reacts a bit against it and wants to be like the naughty girl in shcool, and be bolshy and just laugh or muck it up a bit. But the teacher is so... aware of all of that because she's a musician at the same time, that she brings it in for a reason. And I think that's very good too. Because we avoid, not only in dance, but we tend to avoid what we don't like and if we do yoga, we also avoid the ones we don't want but which we need, and are good for us. So in that sense we are guided by a teacher who is really very, very broad-minded, brings in all sorts of dances and... it must be the same for other people. What one person loves, like what M. loves... maybe I don't like or the other wayaround. But it doesn't matter .... you have to be, all-embracing if you like. And who am I to decide what? It's all, it's very personal. So that's what is nice about the whole movement, it's even better than S., sometimes I would think "Why would he do that dance?" That is just because it's extremely personal. And you have to learn, you learn to actually embrace almost all of them in their own right. So in that sense you enlarge your horizons and like the things, like if you've never heard Leonard Cohen and you think "Oh my gosh, what a voice!" But the dance is so lovely, you get to like it and you just say "Hey great."

M: Yes I would say that, in that particular case also.

N: Yeah. And I think "brilliant."

M: Also I say for me it was not too difficult to get into it from the beginning because as a child and through my teens, I did a lot of dancing, just because, at that time... after the war, in the particular situation where we lived, there was, dancing was popular and there were dances. And we learnt Ballroom and Reels, Scottish Reels and even Square dancing and all sorts of different dances we learnt as teenagers. And I loved it. And... so I had dance in me as well as a verythorough grounding in classical music through my family. And I was, I loved it, I was absolutely 100% immersed in music. And so now, after a break of 40 years, it was very easy for me to enter this dance and musical setting. And I wanted to do something with N., as a couple, so that we could both enjoy it and N. had not done so much dance in her earlier life as when we ever went to the odd dance when we were overseas, I was always tripping over N., and... I had the more experience and N. felt slightly uncomfortable, so I thought once we first tasted Circle dancing, that was the answer for N. And it worked. It was absolutely what N., what fitted N.'s needs.

N: Yeah, it's really what I needed. I always felt self-conscious because you were a very natural dancer "Oh gosh, I can't do this." And I think I didn't listen to the music at the same time. It's like wanting to get the Tango or whatever dance it was together right, and not listen to the music and let the music go through my body. And then you, you don't really enjoy it much or you think "Oh gosh." It's being self-conscious about it. And it was, even though I went to classes, as a teenager... and

I went to balls... in those days there was not a lot of dances you didn't need a partner for, although you went with a partner, it wasn't so... I think we did it as part of life and go to balls and things like that. But I never, I think, was a natural. Now, if I had to do that type of dance now, it would feel like joining in without being self-conscious. It's like for instance when I, after three years of Circle dancing with P., I went to Hungary and there was another woman who was also Circle dancing. And we went to an event somewhere where there was a gypsy band and we decided "Hey, why not just dance? Do a Circle dance." Well ten years ago, or 20 years ago, I would rather not be seen dead getting up and making a show of myself, like. And that felt natural and lovely and we just did it and we just enjoyed it so much. So it was almost like a freeing, freeing of your body. And that's I think what it was. To be comfortable in your body. And although I don't have problems being tactile, or like that, but actually doing things with your body. And I think there also, with posture and everything, the dancing, the yoga too, helps you to be in the body. And it's also got a spiritual dimension and a mental... it's a whole, holistic approach. So I couldn't do without either.

M: On the question of health one thing that I benefit from is my back, because I get a stiff back. And if I have a stiff back and I go Circle dancing, it might be a little bit more sensitive that day, but the following day, it's ten times better. So the twisting and turning, and moving backwards and forwards is extremely good for for exercising for me for my back.

I: Yeah.

M: And of course, it's good exercise, if you don't do much exercise. I should do more, but it is just good exercise, yeah.

N: And I think what's also so lovely, you go and you haven't seen people for a month maybe because you've been away or whatever and you go, and they say "How are you?" And you immediately feel incorporated in the circle again. And it gives you, and people are pleased to see you and so are you when you see people again. And so it's... it cheers you up, it's a very cheering experience. And... and even to dress up for it ... put on a long skirt or put on something that isn't your everyday going to work outfit. It's, it's making something of it. It adds to the experience for those couple of hours. And it sets you up... it sets you up for the rest of the day, really, because you act differently in what you're doing after that if you've had that input. And I find also for myself, if I go to work or what I do outside, I find having been, benefited on a Monday morning, dancing say for nine thirty till one, and then go to the hospice, I'm in a different place emotionally, physically and everything than I would have been just Monday morning getting the house in order, doing the washing, run around like a... like a headless chicken. So you really, it's something that now I feel, really need. It's part of my life. And I hope I don't ... I can carry on. From the health point of view, I can't immediately sort of pick a physical thing, other than the exercise is great, and... moving in different directions and it must... But I find it's doing more for me as a person, than an age related thing. That's all I can say at this point, because I don't have ailments yet, so from that point of view, I find it is a personal enrichment for the whole person, the whole body. But... I don't see it exactly as a health issue, thinking of physical health, it's more a holistic approach I think... yeah.

M: I think it helps very much in bringing you, or I feel it brings me... in a measured way, in touch with my emotions and ... I feel very much more comfortable feeling emotions now, than I did when I was younger. Although classical music has always sent me aware of my emotions and... I think I've always expressed my emotions fairly easily. But the dance... brings you more closely and deeply in touch with your emotions, to the point of feeling tears in certain dances... and ... well with growing older, I think that happens anyway, you more easily become tearful. I do as an older man, anyway, which I would never do as a young man. So find that also... very valuable. It's a rich experience. Yes.

N: Yes, and I do it too. When I sometimes have to spend time alone, when my husband goes away for maybe one month or two months, I'm used to that. But for instance I put on a CD with Greek... music, and some of the Greek dances we've actually danced, it actually, it helps me an awful, it puts me into a very, I'm not a negative person, but it puts me in a really lovely place and I don't feel alone so the associations I have are in the music. Not even dancing it then... it's like a... I don't know how to, I can't find the word for it, but it's a very supportive, wonderful...happy... I mean a good spot, I'm very... And I savour it. And I can be on my own all day or I say all weekend, but if I have music, I mean I love other music too, but if I put, I'm just fine, it does a lot for me, which ten years ago, I didn't know. Ten years ago, I loved music too and I might listen to French and all that, but this is... because you felt it in your body when you were dancing, the associations are so much closer and the same with emotions. I don't think I have problems showing emotions, don't wear masks or anything, I think I'm in touch with them, but through the dances too, I have felt that some of them also, I don't want to talk afterwards when I've had it because I'm too full, I might not just cry or so, but I just want to be quiet and I want to be... still. So it's... it's a spiritual experience, which I would never ever have thought, well when you don't know it... if you don't do it, you don't know.

M: It's the dance adds to the enjoyment of the music like you could sit and enjoy the music of a dance but when you add together the effect of the music with your own movement, it, it magnifies the effect on one's mind and body. That's my experience.

I: That's lovely. You've actually spontaneously answered all the questions I had. I just have... just to say, is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

N: The meaning of dance... it's sort of a very, you almost feel like you like to sit with it. "What is the meaning?" .... It's become an integral part of, of my life, and for instance, if anything happened to the teacher we have at the moment, she won't

go on forever because she's not... she's not old but she's not, I would think "Oh what are we to do then?" There is, there's almost a fear built in "Gosh, if it stops to-morrow, because the teacher is no longer able to do it, what do we do then?" OK we will find maybe only once a month, but that vacuum, there is a part OK, I'm not thinking about it daily, but the thought that she would stop for health reasons or whatever, I would feel bereft. So I don't know if that answers your question... I need it, I need it... I need it because you're also doing something, it's not a passive thing, I go to concerts which is wonderful, I go to the theatre which I enjoy very much but when I go dancing, it's because I am doing something and I think I don't have that anywhere else in my life. That I'm doing something with others in a, in an enjoyable way, in a ... let's say it's a nourishing way, it's a fun way, it's a supportive way, it's all of those things. And that only happens when I'm Circle dancing. It's a very unique experience and I couldn't replicate it or make, I can't make analogies anywhere else, in the same way as happens in the dance. So... in that sense it's a unique experience, a unique part of my life which I would like to value for as long as I physically can... short of getting in a zimmer frame (laughs) and dancing. I would like to carry on dancing for as long as I can.... and the meaning... it's very like "What's the meaning of life?" "What's the meaning of dancing?" "What's the meaning for you?"

M: I must say, there's another, for me, I go with N. but I would, and I have, and N. would have noticed it, I don't often go on my own, because while I just simply love the dancing, I am not comfortable with so many women. So I, and when I go with N. we don't stay holding hands all the time.

N: (Laughs).

M: We mix, we move around the circle, that's no problem, but... for some reason, I can't explain why, I'm not at ease on my own. And in part, that's a personal issue, I know, to do with, not being very gregarious I suppose. And I don't just go up and talk to all the women. I remain very... aloof and out of communication, and very withdrawn. And I don't communicate verbally. But the dance gets to me very deeply.

N: And also... sorry.

M: For me P. is absolutely tip-top in this.

N: Yeah. I think it has a lot to do with relationship to the teacher as well. And to some teachers, you take immediately and some, they may be a little bit ambivalent but it's also that it's the personal relationship between, even if you're one in 30 dancers, with the teacher that's also very, very important, how you relate.

M: And the value of the dance sessions is to us or to me, is totally related or tied up with my relation with the teacher. And if the teacher is not... doing it in a way which gets through to me, I will feel critical of the teacher and not enjoy the dancing. So that's an aspect which is difficult to explain, it's interesting really to think of it like that. And S. and B. even, while they're infinitely professional, they are not such good teachers as P. No, I'm not sure I have come across a teacher as good as P., with the combination of a deep and thorough musical... grounding and with her stage presence and with her, her projection, her ability to break the dances down into sections related to the musical structure, verses, lines of music and repetitions. It's a brilliant technique of teaching she has, linked with musical learning and her, her experience of music teaching, I feel.

N: But when you say on your own you would find it difficult, for instance, if you were away for a long time, you were not here...

M: No...if you were not here, if you'd died, for me to go on dancing, it would be quite a... I feel, that would be a major challenge however much I... I don't know what to say. It's difficult to say.

N: I think I would. We've danced always together. But when you're not there, I go by myself.

M: You do.

N: And I think I would always, irres[pective of my, whatever would happen in the future, I would go.

M: But you're very comfortable with all the women or many of the women.

N: Yes I can understand that.

M: You see. And you're very sociable and you're immediately chatting around with numbers of women there. And you see, that isn't, for me, it's not the same for me.

N: No I can understand.

M: That's different for me.

N: Yes. Yeah. But there are some men who come by themselves, there's one in our group who comes by himself.

M: L. comes.

N: L. And he's very easy.

M: Oh yes, yes.

N: But then and... and we like him very much. .... Know him locally. But he is much more gregarious.

M: But also he's more gregarious, he is.

N: You have to be. And another one is a teacher himself who comes.

M: Yes.

N: N... I can see that. And we've danced with other teachers too, out in a local village with a lovely woman, B., and she moved away to Gloucestershire and she had her own, she was like a professional dancer in her early life. And there again as a teacher, she was not as good as P., but she had a sort of elf-like... dance, she was lovely, and her sessions were always really very

enjoyable. But she moved away from the area. We've been back since with another teacher there who took over, lovely woman, there's nothing against, and we've been, but it doesn't do it for us. And that is not, and that is a smaller group and not as many dances are done in those few hours as P. So if you labour over say four dances instead of doing nine, you also

M: Yes

N: Become so bored by it, because you have to get it right first. And we've been with another teacher who was with the village here and she would then ask people in the group... and she dances with P. sometimes and in order to support her I would go, but she was very uncertain about some dancers and then looking for clues off her husband or somebody else. And that actually spoils the dance rather because we would labour over it, then do it again, stop and start. And we didn't flow. And you do it for a couple of sessions and you think "Well, who am I doing it for?" I want to get enjoyment, I go because I want to dance. So I suppose you become also quite choosy, I would say that maybe I'm choosy who I dance with, who the teacher is. Who am I to say that? Because I am not a natural myself. But I feel now very... happy with her and I... know what I don't like. And that I think is quite an issue too.

M: You notice too when you go to another dance day with another teacher, deficiencies and just not well presented. The demonstrations and the commentary and the calling are just ... not easy to follow. And not so confident.

N: No

M: And you want that. Once you're used to it, as you are with P.

N: Yeah, yeah.

M: You look for that.

N: Yes.

M: Wherever else you go. And when it's not there, you think "God..." You know? "Can't you get it? Can't you teach properly?" (laughs).

N: I think we feel very spoiled. I think we are extremely spoiled with the teacher we've danced with for the past six or seven or whatever years. Extremely spoiled. And that is our problem and then you become very choosy. And if a teacher says "Now what shall we do now?" As if they're doing it on the hoof. "Now let's do this one then, or let's do that."

M: (groans)

N: You may have a very beautiful dance and suddenly there is something very jazzy. It feels like... there's no structure.

M: Yeah, some teachers have a totally random selection of the sequence of dances, without any thought to their impact, one dance after another. And whereas again, coming with P., she uses the sequence of dances on our sessions, so that they fit together...

N: Yeah.

M: Beforehand. And she comes with the programme, written out as you see...

N: Yes. And also...

M: And all the people there...

N: And she also dances the programme, before she does it...

M: Yes.

N: To us. And when we...

M: And she puts in a lot of preparation.

N: And when we go for instance, this couple, S. and B., come here, once in December and they have a big dance day in the local school, 40 people even more come for all day, and after, and P. comes too. After that, she already is dancing new dances that have been introduced by S. at home, to make them her own, for bringing them to the group. So her life is like music and dance. That's her life... she is, that is her love, her life, everything. And that I think is her strength and encouragement in imparting that love for dance and music. It's infectious. And so you get swept up by it. And also because of her personality. The way she projects, the way she dances, the way she carries herself, the way she makes it irresistible and enthusiasm and joy and it's not like going through the motions now, have another two hours, no it's never like that. Wherever she teaches, whichever hall it is in. So it's only us who are coming who are sometimes fussy about which, because it shouldn't make any difference which hall. But, so I think it's her big personality... It's her and the dance, it's her tune that has changed us, me, and I don't speak for other people but it must have impacted on many people and I'm not in the category of like "Age and health and old" ... but I think she must have done so much for people who are ten years down the road from me. And I know that when we first started, there were women who were 80 and dancing and you would... So she, that is probably when you feel it, when you're ten years on. How, how on age it impacts. Because I like to think I'm not old yet but of course I'm older than people of 30 or 40. But I think that's her, it's her personality, her presence, her love of music and dance that I find irresistible.

M: Yes.

N: And that's how we have been, if you like, sucked in and been ... yeah been given a different dimension and are transformed by it. But it's very difficult to bring that across to people who... haven't been.

M: Who are not musical, who don't know about dancing or have not ever danced. They... yes well I mean we know, we're all different.



N: And nothing is wrong or right.

M: (Laughs)

N: I brought for instance my sister once years ago, because she wanted to see what it was all about. She'd never heard of Circle dancing, she came from Holland. And she came and she picked it up very quickly because she's very... she liked it. She said "Yes, I like some of the dances. Nice woman. But that circle in the middle with the candle, flowers around and sending energies, I find, gosh yes, that's a lot of hocus-pocus." And I said "It doesn't matter. You don't have to accept that. You just take from the morning what, what is right for you. And if you just enjoy a few dances and others you don't, fine. Doesn't matter." So it's not, prescriptive, it's just... you can take what you like from it. And I think I may have initially also have had some feelings towards the centre-point. And think "Oh gosh, this is a bit New Age. And is this a ritual? To make a ritual?" I think that's part in all of us or not. No I can't say all of us, but in me. I also thought "Well I have absolutely no problem. I think it's absolutely lovely to have a focal point in the middle." So you evolve as you're doing it. If you would have asked me, eight years ago, I may have answered things differently from doing it now. And I think that's what's so wonderful, because it's where you're at really.

I: How do you think the dancing influences peoples' mental health?

N: I think, speaking... I don't want to say from my own experience, I don't have sort of like mental health problems but that is just... well that is the truth, I think I don't, not that I'm aware of. But I have seen, having been on Circle dance holidays, three now, and on two occasions for a week dancing with big groups like 38, 40 people, that within such groups, there are people who come on their own or with another woman friend and they've either recently been bereaved or... a relationship has gone wrong, or a divorce or a child with... mental handicap, there was a couple. People come sometimes from a very dark place. And it's not written on their face but you all bring your own thing. Now in a large group, the dance... you can sort of diffuse that and people don't become cliquee. You talk to each other, you dance, it breaks down barriers, you get connected with each other, you have meals together. And people confide in you and talk about their problems. And in that sense, the dance, and being in a lovely spot, for a week with a swimming pool and walks, good food and wine, people unburden and I think the dance teachers too are very aware, without calling them therapists, they pick up, because they build community, and so they enable people through workshops like non-violent communication or whatever label you put on the workshops, we've had several, people can come and express if they so wish, their anger at a husband whose walked out or anything else. And I think through a very supportive group, and teachers who enable that, and individuals, we had GP's, we had nurses, we had people from all different professions in such a group, people are able to off-load and the dancing in such, helps, is extremely therapeutic. Well you don't call it a therapeutic holiday but I think really, in reality, it has a very important therapeutic influence on people. And speaking from our own experience, last year we were in a very small group in Greece on an island. It was too small a group I think for people who came with problems, maybe there were eleven people. And there were people who had just had a broken relationship, another also, husband just died, but thank God he died, there was a divorce before, and there was a lot of anger at men from several women. And then there was a couple who found it extremely difficult to go on holidays together, and they found that very troublesome. And we had little, we had to gel as a group. We felt very, not uncomfortable but disappointed because we seemed to be whatever normal is, the only ones without major problems or recent major problems. And I had somebody attach themselves to me which we didn't mind, because we could speak our own language, I'm not originally from this country. And I found it was important for this woman to unburden to me and I heard her whole history and I, that's what I do sometimes in my normal life here, listen to peoples' problems. But after a week of that, inspite of... the sea was there and the swimming pool and the dancing, I found it really after a week I needed a break. I thought "God! What shall we do now?" It, there was too small a group of people, there weren't enough, the group wasn't big enough to let people just filter in and you all mutually be supportive of each other. And this group was too small. But then I thought "My goodness, this couple who leads these dances, they don't know beforehand how big the group is going to be. Everybody comes with their own baggage and some of it is quite difficult. They are there to really be for people outside the dance circle too. Because they did take a real interest in where people were at and tried, you can't make things better for people, but to be listening, compassionate and I think there was a lot of therapy going on there, without calling it 'therapeutic dance holiday.' " And I think, speaking for myself, and being maybe unaware of past losses, of parents and things like that, you are put in touch with that. But it was very exhausting. And we felt personally as if "Gosh. I wish we'd been in a different group." But having said that, it shows that people do come for a variety of reasons and it must meet their needs, because otherwise they wouldn't come again and again. And we are a couple that dance together, and there are not many couples I think that dance, so when we go on those holidays, and although we are not sort of glued at the waist, we don't sort of dance next to each other all the time, you realise that for many people who come on their own, to see a couple that is loving together and feeling and enjoying it both, is painful, because they are not in the same place. And it may take them back to a time when they were together and it worked and now it isn't. And they would ask me questions "How do you still have got it together? Or seeing you, what is it?" So there are people coming with, life is up and down, with sadness and disappointment, loss and all that, but I can't quantitatively tell you how many, but in a group of 38, there are bound to be, I don't know, a third or whatever, in those big groups. I have talked to people, like walking back from the dinner to... the place where you sleep, or at

the pool, or when there's a moment that it feels right, that people do unburden and then I think "Gosh, I don't need to unburden because I do not have issues like that." So it's good, it is also I think very important from the mental health point of view. And I've been on other holidays with women where you also do not, it's not called like that, but also in moments where you don't expect, people suddenly tell you things that are maybe not, never have told. So there is a place for people dancing, not on a day, not two hours a day, but on holidays you build a sense of community, friendliness, you smile, there is laughter, and things develop. Even if they think "I may also never see them again. But I can off-load." So would you not say?

M: Yes, that's how I felt also on that holiday and the other holidays, very much. But then of course as a man, I'm not, men, I don't know how much you can generalise, but it's not the same with men (laughs).

N: But what is interesting, which is not to do with mental health, I do remember, the first time we ever went, there was another Dutch guy, who dances. And I immediately, coming from Holland, we immediately clicked. On all levels. And we would speak in Dutch and I wasn't aware that M. found that sometimes a little bit difficult. There was nothing going on, but there was an immediate closeness... of interest, dance, culture, like *deja vu*. There was nothing we didn't... And I, you did not tell me that at the time, but it was not so easy for you. That I wasn't aware of, which is interesting. So there are let's just... we talked about it and we laughed about it, but there are all sorts of things going on in groups, that are sometimes not being expressed. But if you, as a couple, communicate on all levels... you don't bring it up as a problem, it's not a big issue, but you do then say "Yeah, this is how I..." So it's about communication too. And some of it is not verbal, so you don't know what impact you have on others, others have on you. There's a lot that's going on that is being facilitated by the dance, by a holiday, by good food, by ambience, by making community, that is actually therapeutic. There's no doubt about it.

M: No. I agree, yeah.

N: And even walking out after two hours' dancing on a regular basis, people might take you aside and say something "How do you manage with your husband away?" And you talk about it and they will come out with... "We split so many years ago." And a lot comes out... without planning anything. So there is, it enables, it's an enabler too for potential ... healing. I think healing is a better word than therapy. It's a healing place, going on a dance holiday, it also can be very healing.

I: How can... how does P. deal with mental health issues?

N: ... What was interesting, a couple of years ago now, she was very keen to go and dance as a group in a mental hospital with the elderly people and she asked members of the group who would agree, she felt strongly that dance was very good for people in the hospital. And she asked who would be willing to come and we had a group of about twelve maybe?

M: Ten.

N: Ten or twelve. And we committed to go and she had done all the research, the pre-things from you know, yes we would come on such and such a day and the patients would all come in a particular area, and they have different houses on the site. And when we actually turned up, it felt as if the staff had not been really that keen.

M: No.

N: So some of the patients had not been brought.

M: No.

N: And we had maybe four or five, some were very distressed. And she had made a programme.

M: We didn't feel that the staff actually... wanted it to happen. They, they were... they were not enthusiastic.

N: And you know why that was. There were two people, volunteers, who go to this ward in the mental hospital, and they would have liked to bring Circle dancing in. So they came to some taster sessions to see what Circle dancing was like, thought "That's a nice idea. We'll go to whoever the person at the hospital to arrange it." So it came from those two volunteers "We would like to bring the dancers in." The initiative didn't start from within the hospital. When we went, and she wanted to do it on a regular basis, it was the one time, and it was sad because she felt very committed to do that because she thought it was terribly important. Now that is, if you like, the mental health. I have never talked to, I have seen and looked at P. when she sometimes takes people aside and my gut feeling is sometimes that it's a person who maybe insecure... have a lack of self worth, or there is something that tells me something about the person. And I have seen P. take her aside or talk or... So that is where I think she picks up on who in the group needs some affirmation or encouragement or being listened to. And I don't know what happens outside the group but I sometimes pick up that she focuses on people who, whom I think she feels, that's my only hunch but I couldn't tell you more than that, could you?

M: No.

N: She's very perceptive... and I think she senses, I've seen her sense when people are tense because some people find it difficult to actually do a dance where you are linking in together and you sway and you go very slowly. That's a bit close, that's a bit... And they may sit it out. They do not want to do them. Why is that? And I can only say that she has set... she has encouraged people or she has seen people develop, she has seen people change, who might not be so comfortable before and are more comfortable. That maybe without mental health problems, I don't know, but sometimes the things... are a little bit inter-linked, aren't they? If you don't find it so easy to touch or embrace or hug or... be open or hugging. It's not, I don't call it a mental health problem, but there is something where people maybe lack of self worth or whatever it is. And that I think she

picks up because she does it all the time, four times a week, and she with her life experience, she susses people out pretty quickly, I would think...?

M:... Yeah.

N: And she's the first person to share of her own experience.

I: You mentioned something about people with mental health problems choosing to participate in the classes?

M: No, I maybe said something like that.... wondering how it is that they get drawn to join in Circle dancing. I don't know where they come from, but people with mental health problems appear, like on these holidays. Not so much in our group here that I'm aware of.

N: No.

M: No way. Not the same at all. As the people

N: Yeah

M: We encounter when we go on holidays.

N: Yeah

M: That's a different...

N: Yeah, and that I think is very often like if we have a friend who has maybe mental health problems and I want to go on a dance holiday and she's a friend, I might think "Hey, that will do her a world of good." So I think when people come in twos, like two women.

M: They can recommend...

N: I know that for instance, one person in our group, has a friend who was widowed and found it extremely difficult, and she thought it would do her a world of good. So she brought this friend on a French holiday. And actually it did do this friend a world of good and she had not danced before, and she was delighted. So what I'm saying is, two people on holidays, they bring somebody else, and you might think "Hey, that will help that person a lot." Without actually thinking "It will do a lot of good to me, because I don't need that part." But I mean it's not just that person, you yourself too. But you do it, maybe for somebody else. You don't do it for somebody else, you bring somebody else in. And I can also think of some people that I thought of here "Hey, that will do her a world of good." Suggested it. But no, no, no, so you don't push things. So people come when they want to come. And not only just with dancing. And, and I think it's with friends, I'm sure in the local group too, there must be women who, who... have problems maybe an ailing mother or whatever mental, or somebody... in a mental hospital or something else, and they would be drawn in by somebody else and say "Hey, that's good." And there was one lady whose husband was very ill was brought in by A., she brought in a friend. And that lady got a lot of support because... OK mental health problem, if you think of depression, that is a mental health, but even being very depressed, not being clinically depressed, it's, you know, you're not firing on all cylinders, bringing that person, giving that person for two hours of different, it, it does something. It helps, it lifts. And so, not talking or interviewing everybody, I'm sure there are, everybody has... There was one, a grandmother whose grand daughter was taken into hospital for anorexia and she was terribly, terribly upset about it. She came dancing. So the stress you carry for... Everybody has issues... Everybody has issues. We are none of us immune. And so I'm not saying that I'm immune either. There are issues that you may have worked through, and I've worked through them in my own way, and I don't bring them to the dance group, but that is also healing. I think it is a very healing... healing environment too.

### **First Circle Dance Interview (1.C.5)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

G: You may, yes, that's perfectly alright.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

G: Well, I think it goes back a long way, in that as a child, I did, I did Country dancing as a child, as well as ballet, tap, musical comedy and that sort of thing. So that was... group dancing. Then I had a wonderful experience in Greece, when I was with the ballet Rambert and we were in, dancing there. And we got caught up in a street Circle dancing, lots of lovely Greek men... and they dragged us in and we just got on with it. And it was difficult because there were lots of sort of hesitations and hovering on one foot, it's not straightforward.... But I thought "This is great." ... This is something I would like to do again, or more of... Also I did, movement and worship weekends, with various groups and in that I used some Israeli dancing or Israeli music and I sort of made up the steps in a sense. But... that was fun, people seemed to enjoy that. So then I met somebody from my church who was doing, belonged to a Circle dance group, and she said "Come along with me." So I said "Oh yes, alright." And because she could get me there. I'm not allowed to cycle too far because of my eyes, so I'm reliant on buses and other people to get me distances. So off we went and I persevered, I suppose I can't really remember whether I went once a week for six months or ... I really can't remember, it wasn't... let's say it was once a fortnight for six months, something like that. Now I was with a group... that already knew each other, I went in a middle of a term or something, so they all basically knew most of the dances... so I, I wasn't quite to scratch straight away... it was hard for me to catch up. But I think that's how I got involved. There may be other factors but I can't think of them at the moment.

I: Anymore?

G: Anymore on that line?

I: Mm.

G: No, I think that's it (laughs).

I: Ok. So how did you end up leaving the Circle dance group?

G: Yes, how did I end up leaving? I found I wasn't enjoying it. So I had to say "Why aren't I enjoying it?" And I reckon, one was the reason that I've just given, I was, a lot of the time I was trying to catch up. Now unless you know something really well, you can't relax, at least I can't relax and enjoy it, because I've been a professional dancer in ballet. And in ballet and professional dancing, you have to think about what you look like, which you shouldn't do if you're just dancing in a group to enjoy it. Unless you're performing to other people. You should just get on with it. But I have an instinctive assessment of how I'm looking and dancing. Well that's not much good for Circle dancing or any other kind of natural dancing... also, I thought they were being taught just a little too quickly. I wanted more time on the preparation, and we seemed to get through ten, twenty dances in a session, and I would have... rather done three and then know what I was doing. So I don't like not really knowing what I'm doing. I like to be on top of the work.... Then another reason was, one session particularly (laughs), I had somebody this side who was pulling on my arm... sort of clutching and grabbing and... pulling me over with her and this is I think very discourteous. I mean she had no intention, she didn't realise she was doing it, but it completely destroyed any possible enjoyment for me... Now I think there's, oh yes, and then I'd say the last reason was, this was probably the first time I'd been in a group of elderly people, apart from some re-unions. Now I think of it when I went back to my school re-union after about 100 years and met everybody again, I thought "Mm ... we're all silly old women!" ... This dance group was not full of silly old women but it was the first group I'd been in where everybody was over 50 really. So quite a lot of elderly people, and I thought "I don't want to be here particularly." I like being in a mixed group... with... of all ages and things. So that was a little bit of it, was not being, not wanting to be reminded that I was one of the elderly, because I didn't feel elderly you see. So I think there's other reasons I, I...gave up on it, I just wasn't really enjoying it. But that doesn't mean I wouldn't go again and have another go some time. I've not crossed it out of my life forever.... but it didn't give me what I'd hoped it was, which was fun and good feeling and... the physical enjoyment of using your body in dance. I think that's my reasons.

I: So how easy did you find it to learn the different Circle dances?

G: ... I don't know how to answer that. I obviously didn't learn it to my own satisfaction but I don't suppose I was... that would be noticeable to anybody else. I could pick steps up quite well if they're shown... if they're shown well... but remembering them in sequence or getting it into the dance or into the circle, using it as a finished circle dance, obviously didn't satisfy me that I'd picked it up sufficiently well in the time given. And I can't quote you the exact time given... to learn one dance. It did vary, we had a very good teacher and I think as I said before, she would do Circle dances that people had done before so she gave a quick brush up, you know, reminding people. And that was all I got, from scratch. And then she would say "Now we're going to learn a new one", and then it was all much slower and... more complete. So I think I'd say "Average. Average."

I: You mentioned something before about perfectionism?

G: Yes, that's part of being a professional dancer. You have to not just be subjective "Am I enjoying this?" which anyone doing a recreational dance should be saying "Am I enjoying this?" Or "Am I doing... Why am I doing this?" Somebody might join a dance group in order to help their memory or something (laughs), or to... yes to help their memory, to get their brain active, in a physical, using a physical body to remember things. Well I wasn't doing that. And what was the other part of your question? What was your question again?

I: I was asking you how important is perfectionism?

G: Perfection. Right... Do you mean in life generally or in that situation?

I: In dance.

G: In dance, very important. For instance I can't enjoy going to see a dance school performance with a whole lot of little kids half-trained, doing it very badly... ballet this is... I don't get any pleasure from it. Whereas if I was a mum, my kid was up there doing it very badly, I'd say "Isn't she wonderful?"... No, that's ruined for me. It's got to be a very,very high standard of performance. Which is not appropriate for Circle dancing (laughs) or any kind of country dancing. Mind you, you don't want anyone in a group whose going to completely ruin it for everyone else by not being able to learn it at all or fooling around or laughing and joking too much... But yes, it is important to me. To be on top of the thing. So until you're on top of the thing, and it's part of your nervous system as it were, and your muscles all know what they're doing, you're in a right mess... you can't relax and... enjoy it. At least I can't.

I: How important is memory?

G: I think memory in life or in dance?

I: In dance.

G: In dance it's vital. But there's a memory that goes on in the body system. It's a special kind of memory for movement, I think, than it is say for say poetry or anything else really. I don't know whether you'd use the word somatic or something, some kind of memory in muscles and things that... has to be laid down so the muscles know instinctively what they're doing without the brain having to interfere. So it has to become instinctive. I was going to say intuitive. It's not intuitive, it's instinctive and that comes through repetition and it's only then that you can allow yourself to just enjoy it.

I: Any more on that?

G: ... I'm trying to think when I did Circle dancing if I'd begun to have memory problems as an ageing person. I probably had, I mean I certainly do now... you tell me, give me a name and address to remember and I might or I might not remember it, a few minutes later.... I have wonderful gaps now (laughs) that come and I can't remember my own name or yours or anybody else. But I don't think that was an issue at the time... when I was doing the Circle dancing. Can't be sure about that.

I: Is there something about how the dance gets absorbed into your body? How has dancing in your life changed your experience of your body?

G: I don't suppose I can answer that, because that's the only experience I have. I don't experience not having danced... But do you say how do I experience my body through being a dancer?

I: Yes.

G: Well once again I go back to this inner and outer thing. I am self-conscious and you have to be self-conscious to a certain degree if you're a performer, and you work in a mirror a lot, in ballet for instance, which you wouldn't do in country dancing... so what was I going to say? (laughs).

I: How has the dance changed your relationship with your body? Or influenced?

G; Well I'm often very conscious of how I'm sitting. I'm sitting badly... slouched... yes I'm aware of deportment and in myself, in other people less probably, I don't go around thinking "That person probably should sit up straight." ... But in the ballet Rambert, we were, we had Madame Rambert teaching us, and she was particularly good on the top of the body. And any Rambert dancer will have a long neck, shoulders back... and a nice straight back. And you keep that forever really. If you don't, you're aware that you've slipped on something. Now it might be good to be without that experience (laughs). Get on with life and slop around like most people do. But also I went into a religious order and there again, we were expected not to slop around and sit in any position. You had to be aware and try and be alert to your body, not slouch around, actually if you think of it, if you saw religious people, (laughs) in strange positions and ways of standing and moving, that the world in general does, one might be a little... You do expect certain people to have a certain, stance, a certain physical not perfection, but balance or something. So there's two areas where I've been taught, and it's ingrained in me to be aware of, deportment. I mean one's aware of the line but that doesn't matter so much, line is something in ballet, and you wouldn't, it doesn't relate really to Circle dancing or country dancing. You don't bother about such things. So I wasn't able to go into that natural, normal, human being... group dancing. You know, to hell with everything that I'm talking about now, because those things are not important in that setting, and that will be one of the reasons why I didn't enjoy it, because I was too conscious... of my body not doing what it should.

I: So how would you describe this concept of line that you mentioned?

G: Right. Unfortunately I can only show you, I can't do it in words really. But there is... a line to a body and you've probably heard of an Arabesque, have you? And that's when you are standing on one leg and have the other right behind. If your other leg that is stuck out is bent or the foot's hanging down or your shoulder is too high or stiff, that's got no line... but that has line, you can go from here through the body to the toe and everything is in a beautiful arch, a bow shape. If it isn't, it's all stiff and gawky and has no poetry in it. So let's call it the poetry of the body's movement.

I: Any more on that?

G: (laughs) Any more on that? Relating somehow back to the normal country dancing which is just different and fun and familial and to do with, doing something with other people, being part of a group and everything. Yes, we could go into the fact, say corps de ballet work, when you are not the swan queen and you're one of the swans, you have to be very conscious of the dancers on either side of you, you have to be able to adjust and be just in the right line. You can't be just an individual forgetting everybody else. You're part of a whole and you must respect the people on either side, in front and behind... So you've got awareness, awareness of other people and when you have someone grabbing your hand like that, you couldn't do that in a ballet company (laughs). You'd be too unpopular. You... have to always be conscious of people either side of you, behind you, in front of you and how you are being relied on to be in exactly the right place at the right time... So in a natural dance group, people are there for their own enjoyment, they're there for the social side of things, they're enjoying each other as people and having coffee afterwards... But when they're learning the dancing, they're, they're involved in their own mental and physical processes... It's very important in a professional, for a professional dancer, that the person on either side of you knows what they're doing as well. It can be very upsetting if somebody's mucking up the whole thing. They haven't concentrated enough. That's another thing, concentration....

I: So how would you describe your career in ballet dancing?

G: A career is a very individual thing. I can only describe mine very subjectively. It went on for a long time. I started as the baby of the company and ended up as the grandma, unpaid ballet teacher left in charge when the directors weren't there, making decisions and things like that. And I was in the... ballet Rambert and Madame Rambert was still alive and she was an absolutely incredible personality, Polish with a fierce accent, wonderful intellect and a brutal manner (laughs). And to show the manner and the wit, I can tell you... the one I always tell people, a typical thing would be, she's taking a rehearsal, she asks somebody to do their variation from a ballet and she says "Filthy, disgusting, horrible, go back and do it again." So this person went back and did it again. "That was a little less awful." Now that shows the wit and the... harshness. I mean actually, underneath it all, she was quite a nice, lovely person but we (laughs) her method of getting you to do something to your very best, was to shout and scream and seldom encourage (laughs) and work you into the ground. And this was fairly normal in the old days, and interestingly enough... just to take it back to the country dancing, you wouldn't go to a country dancing person that shouted at you and insulted you and made you feel you weren't very good.... it's... it was to build up character, she wanted to build up character. You were suffering mentally, psychologically, physically and you had to break through all these things and emerge triumphant with a damn good performance and a good technique. So I had a very interesting teacher... who had not so much the ability to produce a great technique in her dancers... but who had the ability to help them understand a role, and create subtleties and nuances and emotions necessary... in the classical ballets especially. But she also... she also encouraged dancers to become choreographers, she produced some very, very wonderful choreographers as well. Now, what was the question again? (laughs).

I: How would you describe your career in ballet dancing?

G: ... I was very lucky. I didn't get into the Royal Ballet because I wasn't their type. They tend to choose people all the same height and of the same build and everything. Madame Rambert had all those rejects and we always used to say she made swans out of ugly ducklings (laughs). People, you got a chance, to dance leading roles in the classics and things. Now I was not a great technician, I had an adequate technique, I was not really, a swan queen or a Giselle, because I hadn't quite got the strength... needed for those roles. But my career depended upon my ability as a dance-actress. And I could perform any character from an innocent sixteen year old in love for the first time to a cranky old, really malevolent witch. And Queen of the Willis too, La Syphide, was a brilliant witch. Used to frighten myself (laughs). And in Giselle, I was Queen of the Willis which was a very, very... hard, strong character. So in the first act I was Matilda, she was the princess, just a mime role, very charming, very regal, very gentle, royal in that... a certain contrast there. I was very good at comedy. I say all this because that's what my dancing was about, my ability to perform all these different roles and characters. I was more a dance-actress than a ballet... Went on for thirteen years, started off just in England and Scotland then gradually we began to tour abroad. I mean we went all round the continent and we finally went to China, the Middle East, Egypt, Lebanon, places like that. We went off to America, came down through Canada. So it was a brilliant, a brilliant opportunity to... move and travel. And it was living in community, being paid very badly... never had any money but we had each other and because Madame Rambert was so fierce, it produced a very friendly, loving group. Now if you hear of dancers from the old days, you hear of ballerinas putting razor blades in each others' toe shoes and things like that (laughs). I don't know if that's true or false, but terrific rivalry whereas this was a family and everybody wanted you to do well. And they'd come in the wings and watch you do your first performance of something, and they'd all give you cards... and they'd look after each other. And each person in the company had a role to play in this. If you were sick, you went to S.R. (laughs). And she would mother you and tell you what to do... I was a motherly type too, I would take the poor new young dancers out to coffee and dry their tears and things and encourage them and so on. But it was the sheer range, I mean excellent ballets we did, wonderful repertoire... some ballets are absolute rubbish and we ended up doing too many... The public wanted the classical ballets, but it wasn't my forte, so I left in the end because I liked all the... modern ballets, the use of drama, where I could be all sorts of different roles. And Norman Morris was quite an important choreographer at one stage in the 50s and I danced the lead in all his first five ballets. I danced the lead in Anthony Tudor, his ballets and so on. I was just very, very lucky... because I had a limited technique and I used it to the full. And I look back with great pleasure, because it was very satisfying to have done one of those wonderful things and been to all those wonderful places and been with all those wonderful people. So I'm very, very blessed to have those memories. But it still doesn't help me with my Country dancing (laughs).

I: You mentioned last week about learning a ballet from a choreographer with finger technique.

G: Oh yes, you can dance on a train or anywhere or on a plane... you're actually memorising it in your brain, and your fingers become your feet and they can... do the rhythms and the hands... for Swan Lake (sings tune as she demonstrates with her hands).. this is what the Corps de ballet are doing... and I can't explain it, I can do it, but there is a way of dancing without moving your whole body, and it's very useful. I mean you know of course how the pianist does it on the piano, they use a dummy keyboard. That's more obvious. But yes you can dance, certainly the footwork, you can do with your hands... You can even try it with your Scottish dancing, I don't know whether you could but it might just not be so easy for you. But yes, you can... because when I was in the company, my very first performance was as a swan in swan lake and we were going down to Southend, and I was being taught the ballet in a compartment in the train. But they were using more their arms, we didn't get up and dance. They can use the names, the terms of ballet... "Ton levee, Pas de chat, Ton levee, Pas de chat.

Ton levee.” And so you can talk and use just the top body or your fingers to even learn or remember, certainly to remember... classical ballets and things like that. Just the names of the steps and things. Right. Does that answer your question?

I: Lovely. So how would you say dancing influences experiences of your self?

G: Heavens. I see I haven't experienced not being a dancer, so I don't know, do I? I think it's given me a certain confidence. I can never do anything again. I've always, I've got that behind me... I made my mark. I got to the top as far as I could go. I was respected and loved by the company, you know the other people in the company, and I've always got a nice solid “Well we did that.” And... I don't have to prove myself anymore. I mean I will do my best, at whatever I'm doing... but it's given me a confidence and everybody's always fascinated by ballet and ballet dancers, so you're a winner wherever you go. You know what I mean? You've always got something people will enjoy hearing about, asking about... I think that is the main thing. It's given me a certain confidence and satisfaction with my life, and anything else I do is a plus. And if I don't do anything else, I can rest on my laurels (laughs).

I: How has dancing influenced experiences of your health?

G: Right... how has dancing... it's a good question and I can't think of an answer to that one... I don't know whether it has... because I'm lucky at the moment, I can still move. I'm terribly aware that I've got very bad balance... I can't run far, things like that. But that's just getting older, it doesn't relate particularly to the dance... I can't really answer that one... it doesn't really quite tie up for me.

I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

G: Meaning of dance... and ageing?

I: Well looking back.

G: It just comes to mind, and I don't know if it's relevant, in many ways, that when I was a dancer... I'd go to see other people dance, and I'd either think “Ah, aren't they wonderful! Why do I bother to try? They're so exquisite. I'm nothing like that.” Or else I'd think “Uh how embarrassing! Aren't they awful? Oh dear, do we look like that?” ... (laughs). So that was one reaction to being a dancer. Something else was hovering in the back of my mind... There is a tendency to go on too long, sometimes, I think I got it just about right (laughs). There is a feeling that when you're a dancer, you wouldn't want to do anything else and you wouldn't be able to do anything else... And it does make people laugh because when I was in the company I thought “It's all too much. It's like being on a merry-go-round. You know you're going to get chucked off eventually by life, by circumstances, by age and you think “What on earth am I going to do?” If you haven't met Prince Charming and he takes you away on a white horse. You've got to find an alternative way of earning your living. It'll never match up to the ballet. And I've met people who, friends who have got married and have children, and they still have this yen for dancing again. They still look on their dancing days as the best, not fully valuing their present wonderful lives, nice husband and gorgeous children. So it becomes idealised when in actual fact it was 97% sheer hard work, exhaustion and misery... and probably five per cent, in my case, sheer heaven when you transcend something and enter into that sphere, perfection.... (laughs). The goddess of dance takes over, everything is just right. Your point shoes, the music, the stage and it all blends, and everything goes right, you feel as though something has taken over and... that is the supreme feeling for a performer. When you are taken over by the spirit of what you are doing, technique has... is not thought about. And it's all happening, almost automatically and you can actually enjoy it, and that's when you touch heaven and see the stars (laughs). I think I ought to end there.

### **First Circle Interview Six (1.C.6)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

A: Yes

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

A: ... well it was when I first retired... at 65 ... oh ... well when I retired at 65 I joined a retirement organisation and one of the things I did, was, Circle dancing because I fancied the dancing bit... I quite enjoyed it, the teacher was a little bit serious for me (laughs). And I did get to know other people then, a friend of mine came with me, she dropped out, she didn't really like it and mm then the other people I got to know said “Why don't you try P.'s class? She's really good.” And I went to P.'s and I've never looked back because it's so different, she's such a good teacher. I mean she's so inspired and she's fun, and you don't feel “Oh God, I've made a mistake.” I think. And when you go in first of all it's quite difficult, because if you don't know the steps, you're not actually taught the steps as you know and you just have to pick them up yourself which is quite difficult because as you get older, you don't pick things up so quickly. So... that was how I got into it and ... I've been going ever since. I enjoy it, I've gone from one class a week to two. I used to do Keep Fit but ... Keep Fit can be a bit boring when you are older so I've changed to the dancing. You've got the music and the movement and it's still good exercise so I stay with it. Yeah. That's how I got into it (laughs).

I: Anymore about how you got into it?

A: ... Well I suppose I've wanted to dance because I haven't danced for such a long time ... because I was widowed very young, and then you couldn't really go to dances without a partner. I used to dance when I was young, I used to do... Ballroom and

Square dancing, bit of Country dancing and... then after my husband died obviously I didn't get to dance at all. So and then I went, my friends lived in Devon, some friends of mine, I went down there, and I did a bit of Country dancing but I found it very ... difficult because if you go without a partner, you're relying on other people to ask you to dance. And A) it's a bit frustrating because you can't dance every dance and B) you feel a bit, bit out of it really. So I decided to never go again. So Circle dancing is just perfect for that because you don't need a partner and it doesn't really matter what sort of standard you are, up to a point. I know some of them are extremely good really though, aren't they? (laughs).... I think that's how I got into it, just because when I retired I was determined to ... I did other classes as well, but dancing has certainly stayed with me ...

I: So how many years have you been Circle dancing?

A: ... About seven years ... I think the other reason was I was told to take exercise, well I did anyway, but that worked in well because I got the music as well as the exercise ... yeah. That's the only reason for going into it.

I: Can you say a little bit more about the other forms of dancing that you've done?

A: Well Ballroom I did, I suppose I started when I was about seventeen I went to classes and then obviously ballroom dancing was the social thing then, met people that way... so I used to go dancing twice a week and I did Square dancing which was very popular at the time and a bit of Country dancing all of which I loved. I love the movement and the music so... then after I married, I suppose it would be just things like dinner dances but I was widowed at the age of 32 so for 30, over 30 years I really did practically no dancing. So it's been a Godsend to me (laughs). I really enjoy it. Yeah ...

I: You mentioned something about you were advised to get exercise?

A: ... Well ... I had a really big by-pass and when you go to the rehab they tell you to and I did do the rehab Keep Fit which I found boring to be honest... But they do say exercise, which I do in other ways as well but you know, but obviously dancing is a good one for me to do because I like it whereas Keep Fit I find a bit boring. I've done a bit of Yoga in the past and what else did I do? Oh aerobics ... when I was younger. But so I've always been used to exercising. But this is just ideal I think for our age group... when you're knocking on 70 (laughs). You can't do everything can you?(laughs).

I: So what other forms of exercise are you doing at the moment?

A: Well... walking which they count as exercise, gardening which they count as exercise, housework which I don't count as exercise because I hate it (laughs)... And I might, I might go back to Keep Fit with my friend who doesn't like the dancing but she likes the Keep Fit but I'm not very keen about that. Because I think when you're older they give you these awful things like sitting on chairs and pulling up bits of elastic, and that's not for me... I need the movement and the music really. Yeah ... yeah I do do quite a bit of exercise.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?

A: ... A good question. ... I find it a lot easier now, to begin with, I found it quite difficult because I was trying to pick up the steps... I think if you had a class where you could go and learn the steps and then go into a dance, you'd find it much easier. The way we ... you just have to pick up the steps. But now I know most of the steps, well I do know the steps I can usually pick it up. But it's not for me to say because I don't know how quick I am at picking it up really... It's more ... it's more if it's very complicated I suppose ... and you have to get in time with the music, and... I don't know a great deal about music so probably sometimes I get off the beat, I don't know... Yeah ...

I: Can you give a specific example of a dance that you've been learning?

A: Oh ... what do you mean? That's difficult?

I: Mm.

A: Oh God .... no I can't because I can't ever remember the names of the dances anyway. I can usually remember the music once it starts. So a lot of P.'s dances are quite difficult, as you probably know ... God .. What I find most difficult is probably if it's physically very taxing and you've got to remember the steps. But I love, I love the fast dances... sometimes I can't ... what I find I can't do, and I don't know if it's a result of my by-pass, I can't, I can't do a ... oh God what do you call it? (laughs). I can't go round and then go back, you know, when we do a ... oh God what do you call it? A twist. What do you call it when she says "Turn", when you turn fast? If you've got to come back again, I can't do that without losing my balance so I tend to, leave that out... as P. says "Just walk" or something. But I can do I can do just one in twelve but not two (laughs). So that's a bit difficult for me. But ... there's quite a lot of people who have to ... being in an older group makes it, it easier to do that, you know, to take it a bit easier, bluff your way through a bit (laughs) yeah. I can do that. And there's one other person ... who I know quite well who can't do the turns, the turns as well. You see that is short-term memory loss, isn't it? Turns. Yes. She can't do the turns so I don't feel so bad... if we dance next to each other (laughs).

I: Any more on learning the dances?

A: ... Well I think it's good for you, mentally actually. Cos you do, you do have to focus, and you do have to know what you're doing, don't you really? You have to really think about it, you can't just drift through because all the dances are different and P. has a really big variety of dances which I'm sure some people don't, I'm sure some people don't have that many. So it really does keep you on your toes, which ... I think is good and she's really inspirational and so it makes you do it... (laughs). Sometimes you think ... "Oh God, I couldn't get that one." But does it really matter? You don't really worry about it somehow with P. Yeah I find that's ... yeah that's it really.



I: You mentioned a bit about memory ... How important is memory?

A: Oh tremendously important ... What do you mean? To the dancing? Or to me personally?

I: To the dancing.

A: Well I think you've got .. you wouldn't be any good going if you've got really bad short-term memory would it? Because you you just wouldn't be able to remember. I mean P. doesn't actually go through it terribly ... in great detail before, does she? Not the advanced classes, so you have to be able to pick it up reasonably well otherwise I think you just wouldn't be able to do it... Some of them I expect you could do but I can't think of many. No I think you've got to be able to have a reasonably good memory to do it ... Most people are pretty good at picking it up, aren't they? (laughs). Even the older ones. Even older than me, are still very good at dancing. Not many of them.

I: Any more on memory?

A: ... What do you mean? Whether you can remember or...

I: Mm.

A: Not really. I don't I don't find it a problem with the dancing. Except that I probably am slower at picking up the dances than I would have been when I was 50 or even 60... It probably is a ... I don't know whether it's physical, or ... it's probably mental, that you're not quite as quick at picking things up. I don't know. Because you see I didn't do it when I was younger, so I really don't know. I can't tell. If I was doing it when I was 50, and doing it now I would be able to say "I used to be able to do that. Pick it up really quickly and I can't now." But I didn't do it when I was young, I can't make the comparison. Yeah.

I: So how does the Circle dancing influence your experiences of yourself?

A: ... Well I'm not a great one for analysing myself (laughs). I don't sit around thinking "What do I feel about this or that?" But ... I just know that I love it, I don't miss it unless I really have to. And I feel good when I'm doing it and when I come out, I've really enjoyed it. And ... I just love it but I can't sort of say ... I mean how do you relate it to yourself, I don't get it (laughs). What do you mean by that question?

I: Well it's open "How does it make you see yourself?"

A: Ah ... oh well I suppose I think I'm not doing too bad, too badly for my age really.... And I keep saying "Oh" because sometimes ... for a laugh "Oh do you want to see this new dance?" and they always say "No! No! No thank you!" But if I do a bit, they always say "I really like your feet, Mum." (laughs) which is quite nice to hear... your children think "Oh that's quite good really, considering how old she is." So I suppose that gives you a bit of a boost in self-esteem or something like that, I just don't think about it. It's just a laugh, as far as I'm concerned, with children. But they're very glad I do it, because they know I'm fully occupied all week. And obviously neither of them are at home, they're both away and married and got their own things so they think it's good, yeah.

I: What about clothes?

A: Clothes? ... Oh I just wear what I wear normally, I don't ... it's a pity because I used to have a lot of ethnic type clothing at one time because you chuck it all out, you think "Oh I'm never going to wear all that again." And it would have been perfect ... for dance... I have recently bought one skirt which I maybe won't wear out ... I probably will, so I don't actually just have dance clothes. No not really. But then my clothes are fairly casual anyway so (laughs) they do alright, I don't mind.

I: Any more about how the dance makes you see yourself?

A: ... I don't know really. I suppose it gives me something to talk about with friends, my married friends, of which I have a lot but they don't live here..... unfortunately... they always think it's a hoot and I make them laugh... and they think it's ... my brother-in-law is a bit worried about the candle and dancing round the candle and sending out the light. So I say ... "John... I sent out the light for you." (laughs) It's teasing, so it's quite a good talking point really, I mean they all think it's slightly mad that you should dance round some flowers and a candle (laughs). They all think it's quite funny so... it's quite a good talking point, and some like the woman, quite like to see what sort of things you dance. Actually one of my friends I have introduced her to dancing, to Circle dancing. She's a very good dancer and she used to do Scottish and... I used to say to her "Come with me... It's really, really good. You'd love it." She never did. Now she's moved away, I've persuaded her to find a group as a way of making social contacts and she's found a group and she goes where she is now but it's not every week you see, so it's not quite as good as here but, yes, she really loves it. So... it kind of spreads your net a bit. I wish there were more groups because when I was staying with my daughter for a while, when she was ill... I couldn't find a group that I could go to. It was only once a month and in a different village hall all the time, so it just wasn't practical. But... if I could have gone dancing, that's where it makes the difference, because it was a very traumatic time because my daughter had cancer and... if I could have gone dancing twice a week, that would have been great for me because I could have got away and danced and come back to it instead of always ... I wasn't always with it, I did use to have time-out, but then she was in hospital it would have been ... yeah actually, when you say "What does it mean to you?" I suppose that would have meant a lot, if I could have ... yeah so when I first knew, the group were very supportive. Very. I mean I couldn't go to the group, for a couple of months or more to the dance but everyone was really supportive when I went back... they asked "How is she?" But they don't now because they know it's fine, they're just good friends. You make a lot of friends, at the dancing. Because they're really nice people. Do you find that? Yeah, I think they are. And caring people on the whole.

I: So it's the fact it's so supportive?

A: Yeah, and it's a social, and it's a social thing as well, isn't it? Because twice a week you go and see the same people and you chat and you know about their families. It is ... we are good friends, although we don't necessarily go to each others' houses. It's... Yeah, we give each other lifts. Yeah, socially I think it's very good and very supportive... I think P.'s quite a lead in that, actually.

I: You go to another group as well then? Which one?

A: ... I go to the one in a village, which means, about half an hour to get out there but it's well worth it. Because it's a very nice group. And I meet different people there again... it's in a village hall, it gets you, out there. I think there's a lot of benefits to Circle dance. Probably more than some other ones. I don't know whether ... perhaps if you go to say Scottish dancing, I don't know whether you find that maybe you just go and dance and in a way, I don't know whether that happens or whether you make friends as well. So yeah I think it's ... but I have to say, I think it's mainly P. that brings in that side of it, doesn't she? Yeah, yeah ... because the other one I went to, it was a bit, you were a bit scared if you made a mistake and you knew you'd made a mistake (laughs). Specially when you were first starting... So you don't really want that, do you? You want to feel relaxed and... we can laugh and it's not a problem if you make a mistake so I think that's good about P.'s. Yeah. I think I've answered your question, have I?

I: Ok. So it leads onto my next question. How does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

A: ... Well I suppose it makes me feel I'm getting the necessary exercise. And it makes you feel good. So I guess that's good for my health as well... Because obviously I've got high blood pressure you know and that's one of the reasons why I had to have the by-pass and... I think... I just think it's good for me, yeah. There's not anything else to say about health I don't suppose. Except you feel good, it's good for your health isn't it? And the exercise is good. So yeah. Very good. I wouldn't like to be without it because then I'd go to Keep Fit and I wouldn't like that very much.

I: What is it you don't like about Keep Fit?

A: Well cos if it's my age-group they tend to do ... it's ok when there's music, but then ... the one I used to go to, I might try another one, but the one I used to go to, the second half was sitting on chairs, and... just exercising your body that way and that doesn't, doesn't do a thing for me, I want to be up and moving, and... with music. And yeah ... that's the main reason why I don't like Keep Fit (laughs). It's a bit boring basically.

I: I was going to ask you ... have you had any injuries from dancing?

A: No. No. No none at all. This back is nothing to do with dancing. It was putting out the green bin which was much too heavy and pulling it up a couple of steps when I knew I shouldn't be doing it. It's nothing to do with dancing at all ...

I: So that meant you can't dance at the moment?

A: I went to dancing on the Monday, thinking it would be good because... you have to keep moving if you do anything, but actually it made it worse, to be honest so I thought "I'll just give it a couple of weeks." It's getting, it's nearly better... so I think actually I probably pulled stomach muscles as well and with dance that probably would make it worse... So I think I shouldn't have gone really cos ... I think when you're dancing you don't like to slow down. When you're in a Circle it's difficult. Yeah .. so no I've never had any injuries from dancing at all.

I: But there's kind of like a risk of pushing yourself if you've got an injury?

A: Yeah I suppose I did do that a bit on Monday yeah, I suppose you could. But you can always drop out but I think probably you don't like to do that really....

I: How does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

A: ... It's not a thing I think about a great deal.... it's something I can do now I'm a bit older which is a great help ... So ... I think it's great from that point of view because you don't mind, you don't mind going because there's a lot of older people there... and you feel you can keep on doing it, unless you get really bad arthritis or something. You can probably keep on doing it a long time so that's ... whereas some things you couldn't do I think. Some exercise, some dances you wouldn't, I don't know, maybe you could do most dances .... I don't know, I don't know to be honest ... you couldn't do Scottish I don't think, not if you got into your 80s or something (laughs).

I: Anymore on that?

A: I can't see ... I don't honestly see what else you could say about how it influences you getting older. Except that it gives you something to do, an interest which is important when you're getting on, you've got to keep doing things... I suppose the only difficulty would be if you couldn't drive. It would become a bit of a problem. Getting to the classes... but ... no I think I would always want to do it, as long as I could. I'd probably be really miserable when I couldn't (laughs). It would influence me then. I'd probably think "Oh God, I just give in." I don't know (laughs).

I: So how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

A: ... There again that's something I can't really answer... Didn't think about it, haven't thought about it really. I suppose it makes me realise I can move quite easily, that I haven't got any major problems and... yeah I suppose I'm quite pleased, that after having had the bypass, that... I've made a good recovery and I can do all of the things that I want to do, well nearly

everything and ... yeah I suppose it does make me realise that I'm not bad for my age... I can still move all my parts (laughs). Yeah, I think, I think that's it. I haven't really thought about it to be honest. No, there's nothing else I can think.

I: Just give you a moment to think if there's any more ...

A: No ... I suppose because I used to dance, it's quite nice to know that after 30 years I can still do it, I can still enjoy it... And I think a lot of it is the music really as well.

I: Can you say how the music ....

A: Well sometimes it makes you feel really good and sometimes it makes you feel tearful. There's this one other person in the group I'm quite friendly with and we both have to really try hard not to cry when she does .... "Down by the Sunny Gardens". It seems to affect us both. Even talking about it makes me feel a bit ... a bit, yeah it's the music and you're dancing to it just makes you feel quite sad, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. It's something you need to do as well, isn't it? You need to feel your grief as well as your happy bits. Some of the music makes you feel really happy dancing, but I suppose the "Sunny dance" is quite a reflective dance, it's quiet yeah, it gives you time to think (laughs). You're not so busy concentrating on what you're doing. Yeah I suppose it does affect you emotionally and that's probably, well it is obviously the music which is good, a good thing. So don't ever come when she's doing "Down by the Sunny Gardens" or you'll be wept over (laughter in voice) .... it's really weird that it affects .... And I heard someone else say that as well ... it's obviously one of those things that can bring out the emotions I think.... Yeah ... I can't think of anything else on that one .. What was the question ? (laughs)

I: How has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

A: No, I think it mainly makes you realise you can still do things that you did maybe when you were twenty but not to the same degree obviously. Yeah I think that's ... everything. It gives you confidence I suppose, yeah gives you confidence to think "I can do that, well that's good." ... Yeah. Which I think you need as you're getting older. People do treat you as an old person very often... I suppose I had an incident when I was waiting for a bus ... I don't know whether you want to know this one?

I: Yeah.

A: And when I got on the bus, er the bus driver said, when I said where I wanted to go, he said "Huh!" He said ... "You could walk that!" He said "There's no need to get the bus for that." Which I thought was a bit cheeky, it was two stops and I was going to walk back anyway, so I thought "Damn cheek!" And then I suppose the dance bit came in because as I got off the bus I said "I hope when you're 70 you'll be able to dance the way I can twice a week." (laughs) And he was quite flawed! (laughs) Because he was kind of indicating that I was a lazy old wotsit for getting on the bus for two stops... (laughs). But really slightly annoys me. Yeah. So ... maybe it gives you a bit of confidence.

I: I'm onto my last question now ... and you can think about this one. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

A: Well I think I've probably said it all really. I can't ... I can't ... I mean it gives me a reason to get up early, I don't get up late anyway, but it gives me a jolly good reason to get out at nine o'clock on a Monday morning and at a quarter to ten on Friday, you know, it gives you an incentive to go out, which, I do other things anyway, cos I do other classes... as well because you need to keep your brain working, if you can, so I do art appreciation and other things but the dancing... is always there, it's always twice a week. Sometimes three times a week. Just very occasionally I'll go to the Tuesday class as well. Yeah ... so it's made a big difference I think, in the sense that I feel that's something I'll do as long as I possibly can... The only thing that slightly worries me is that if P. gave up, if we had a teacher who was not as good, I think you might, you might not be so keen. I think she's a big, I do think she's a big factor in it ... I'm sure there are very good teachers but .... I know the fact that she does so many classes and that she is so good, she does push you, she does push us a bit, she doesn't let us just rest on our laurels. That's good as well, that you're pushed a bit. Whereas you might go to some classes, where they do the same dances every time. Then I think you might get a bit bored, I think perhaps you would get a bit bored especially if you went twice a week, although you'd still enjoy the movement but there wouldn't be the mental stimulus which I think is important. Yeah. That's it! (laughs).

I: Thank you.

## **First Circle Interview Seven (1.C.7)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

G: Yes, you certainly can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

G: Well it was about five years ago, after my husband died, a friend of mine suggested I should go with her for the first dance class, and I did and I enjoyed it very much so I continued going to this day.

I: Anymore.... about...

G: ... Well it was good because it was a continuation of what I had done before in dancing, but it was something different....

I: Can you tell me about your dancing career?

G: Well to put it briefly... I started off when I was four with the school... used to do little concerts and that continued. During the war-time I didn't dance at all because we were evacuated to Yorkshire. After the war, we did a bit more at school and then

my parents sent me to dancing college to learn everything properly, so... which I enjoyed three years of doing what I had always wanted to do, it was absolutely wonderful. And then after that I got work and jobs, and then I got married and worked inbetween, inbetween having a son. And... then I did choreography, in fact, having joined the Circle dance group, I think it is wonderful because I am still dancing. At my age (laughs).

I: How many years have you been dancing then?

G: Well since I was four, I'm now 76. So apart from about five years during the war-time.

I: Can you tell me about the different styles of dance you know?

G: ... Well it was Ballroom and Latin American, they taught that in London for starters and then I did a lot of... choreography for the people here when I was home. And then I did lots of Cabaret, I did summer seasons and pantomines and more choreography and... so it went on... That's briefly (laughs).

I: Can you tell me more about the shows you were in?

G: Oh well, yes well let me think... the very first choreography I did was Oklahoma and I've done that twice... things like Guys and Dolls which was one of my favourites... oh yes the Boyfriend which I loved, I wished I'd been born a flapper... Carmen the opera, Footlights, Orpheus in the Underworld, Half-a-Sixpence, Bartered Bride, Noel Coward who I also liked, Sweet Charity, Salad Days... Guys and... Brigadoon, Pyjama John, Kiss me Kate, The Merry Widow which was probably my favourite because of the music, I love the music. Calamity Jane and lots of Gilbert and Sullivan that was put on by the village that I was in....

I: What forms of dance did you use during these shows?

G: Well it was mostly ... some ballet of course in the operas, Spanish in Carmen, and it was what we used to call when I was training, musical comedy, which is like if you go to the West End and see a musical, it's that sort of dance, lots of tap dancing in suitable clothes, kicking, chorus girl stuff. The times I've done the can-can is too numerous to mention! I've got to tell you a story about not, not having my knickers on (laughs) my frilly knickers on (laughs). No, we had frilly knickers as you do and I was on the stage kicking my legs up and it was a bit draughty, well I mean I had briefs and my fish-nets on, I was alright, I wasn't rude, I just hadn't got my frillies on, you see, which I realised, so I never forgot again.... And... yes it was just what we used to call musical comedy dancing.

I: You mentioned to me once you played a cat.

G: Yes, that was in the Noel Coward one. It was a song called "Chase me Charlie." ... It was about a cat being chased over the garden wall. I had to sing as well, cos I had to sing and act in all these things. And... it started off the director told me to lie down you see with a leg up, as cats do... "I can't sing lying down." He said "Yes you can." Those were the days before you had microphones you see, so I had to do it. And eventually I was allowed to get up... prance about as a pussy-cat... I didn't enjoy that much.

I: Would you like to show me the photographs and talk about them?

G: Well if there's any that are of interest to you. We could just flick through it. Perhaps the start of it, you see.

I: This was 1935?

G: Yes, Yes. So I must have been ... I was born in 1931 so I must have been about four then you see and I was a Robin ... with this little girl, I can't remember her name. Then we did the Minuet. Now that, we did this Minuet, this was at school of course, and I got an encore, we got an encore and when I came out in the wings, the teacher said "You must go and do it again, they loved that." So I burst into tears. That's the last time, that's the only time I've ever cried (laughs) because I've had to go on the stage... So anyway, so that's that story so I did go do it again, we did ... and that's where I trained.

I: So where's this?

G: Tring Park... they've got a school in London, there were two branches. And ... Tring Park was... originally belonged to Lord Rothschild, and it was a huge mansion with fantastic huge rooms with lovely floors, big mirrors on the walls and it was a lovely place to train.

I: So what styles did you do in your training?

G: Well Ballroom, Latin... Ballet, Tap, Greek, not Greek, Folk dancing, Greek in barefeet, do you know Isadore Duncan?

I: Yes.

G: Free styles of Greek, that sort of Greek... Of course we did acting and singing as well. And Tap ... anything really, anything they could think of.

I: And which was your favourite?

G: Well I enjoyed Tap the most, I think I enjoyed Tap because I liked the music. Music and the shows as it were... That's where we used to do the shows outside... This was mostly Ballet...

I: So these were people from your year?

G: Yes, that's right. Oh that was the actual mansion... that's Tring Park.

I: Is this you doing a solo?

G: Yes.

I: Which Ballet?

G: Well I can't remember to tell you the truth. It might have been something made up by the teacher, I can't remember that far back.

I: So how did you find pointe work?

G: Horrible. Very painful. We had to do it.

I: And these?

G: Oh that was the Goblin Market I was telling you about..... that was me wasn't it? Yes that was me..... and that was the other girl. We choreographed that between us. These were all the Goblins. No that's me.

I: So what role were you playing then?

G: Well I can't actually remember. There was a story wasn't there? I have to read the poem again, about two sisters wasn't it? And one was enticing the other or the Goblins were enticing her away and mm I can't remember which I was I mean whether I was the sister which was enticing or the other one who tried to rescue her (laughs). It's too, too long ago! ..... that's Prince Igor.... we did the dance of the .... what are they called? The dance of the duckling... something maidens.... This was the first choreography I did, I'm not there, I did not dance in this one.

I: What style of dance was this?

G: The Charleston and things, 1920.

I: The Boyfriend.

G: Yes..... Oklahoma.

I: What were you doing in Oklahoma?

G: I was just in the chorus and I also did the choreography for some of the dances as well.

I: How easy did you find it to choreograph the dances?

G: Well it was very difficult with the men if they were amateurs cos they hadn't danced before. The ladies were alright, they all managed in the end, with a bit of putting into order as it were.

I: What sort of notation did you use?

G: I used my own notation. I wrote it down in long hand, the steps, all the steps, and the patterns, and if you went right, left front, downstage left, upstage right etc and then I used to draw little match-stick men and ladies, the men had their faces filled in and the ladies were blank and placing them in patterns, where I .... working out where I wanted them to go. That worked for me (laughs)..... That was also Oklahoma ...oh I did that Spanish dance there. But actually my partner there, he was with the Royal Ballet at one time but he had to leave through illness, he had a wife and a couple of children I think and he was working in London in Hatton Gardens.

I: You've got a beautiful Spanish costume there. Did you make your own?

G: No, they hired those, they hired them from somewhere.

I: And this one ... Cabaret?

G: Now these two were in the Footlights but she was picked to be our Sally Bow. Her name was Sarah Dunnant. Did you used to know her? She's been on television doing book reviews and things and she now calls herself "Sarah Dunnant" ... as in the French I suppose.....And this is Cabaret again, I did the choreography for this.....

I: Did you find it hard work?

G: I expect I did but I loved it. If you're working at something you really love, it isn't hard work (laughs). It was what I wanted to do all the time.....Anyway more of those .... that was a Tap number, Tap dance..... that was my partner mostly for when we were doing things and... when I was doing Cabaret and things.

I: Is this you?

G: That's me, yes!

I: You look very happy.

G: Well that's the whole point, isn't it? If you're on stage, whether... even if you're feeling rotten, you have to look happy...

I: This is you twirling backwards

G: (Laughs) Twirling about, yeah.

I: You have to trust your partner?

G: Yes you do. That's the same number, the Tap number...

I: In your suspenders.....

G: That's right. Fish nets and black stockings. It was supposed to take place in the 1930s. That was the style (laughs). That surprisingly was the "Kiss Dance," that was what it was called in the Libretto (laughs).

I: And this one?

G: Yes... the same Tap dance. I've got a lot of them because it was my favourite....

I: And Carmen?

G: Carmen, yes. That's my friend Gwen and she refused to wear a black wig which was very naughty. I had to wear a black wig but then I..... that was the Footlights...something else then there's Orpheus in the Underworld ... Rock and Roll. I did the choreography and dancing, principal dancing. But it wasn't very easy to do the choreography and the dancing because you

couldn't stand back and look at what you'd done. Often when we were dancing in the show, I preferred to be in it or not to be in it... Half-a-Sixpence.

I: If you were choreographing a show, would you go to all the rehearsals then?

G: When I was wanted, yes, at the musical numbers... like Libretto, when there was just the script, I wouldn't be needed.

I: But would you have to demonstrate to the dancers how to do certain bits?

G: Oh yes, oh yes, definitely, I did a lot of that. Oh...that's the Folk dancing that I did in 1960s I suppose. What does it say there? It doesn't say a date....

I: International Folk dance.... You mentioned something that it was a bit like Circle dancing..

G: It was like Circle.... well you see we've got our arms crossed and it was from all different countries... We did that for a year I suppose.... one or two years then I went away to work.

I: Beautiful costumes.

G: We had to make our costumes. J., she was the teacher, she was genuine Hungarian, she had Hungarian friends .... with all the embroidery on.

I: Oh is that A... was A... then involved?

G: Well she joined with K. ... I don't know, I forget, I suppose that was where I met her, A... first. That was how I got to know A. because she was in the Circle dance, not Circle dance, Folk dance you see. And there's the "Bartered Bride.".... I'm there and there's two others, I did the choreography as well as the dancing in that...

I: That was a show in London?

G: No this was here, this was before I got my Equity card.... the same "Bartered Bride".... I had to wear green eyes as a clown and I was allergic, my eyes swelled up, so I couldn't wear green eye make-up for that particular number.... This is the "Boyfriend" again but this was here....that was another production. This was the Noel Coward thing, we did, that was A.'s daughter, L., she was opted in to do the main dancing..

I: Were you choreographing for Noel Coward or were you in that?

G: ...No I wasn't in that I don't think. I think I just choreographed. That's another kind of operetta thing which wasn't very exciting. Oh that's "Sweet Charity".... we're all hippies... that was fun (laughs). This is where I started doing professional work and got paid for it luckily. (inaudible) .... That girl had the opportunity of a life-time and she turned it down. Very pretty she was, she had a wonderful voice. And the people, this was in Torquay, in the Variety show, in Torquay, somebody heard her and saw her and invited her there for an audition with Val Doonican and she went for the audition and they wanted her there and she turned it down. I can't think why she did for the minute. There was a reason but it seems such a shame.

I: Is this you?

G: That's Tap, that's American.... "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

I: Stars and stripe shirt.

G: "Yankee Doodle Dandy" this is ... we had a little stage there, you see in the hotel....Oh that was the pantomime, I was Dick Whittington then, lots of thigh-slapping and same thing, finale, Dick Whittington and then this was another.... Oh this was tap, I've got my tap shoes on, that was tap and... that was like an American hoe-down thing, you can tell by the costumes can't you? Hoe-down. And then we did musical and I did Marie Lloyd numbers.... that was number....anyway I can't remember, it was a very long song and I had difficulty remembering it. So I had this gin bottle, I wrote the words on the back of the gin-bottle so that I could remember them (laughs). And this was the Lances which is a very old dance in twos.... We did that as a joke. The men dressed up as ladies or some of them did. He was a sports' man so he dressed up as a lady and I dressed as a little man (laughs). And we used to pass the thing round for, to collect money for the Variety Club of Great Britain, which buys buses for the disabled and all that sort of thing. And that was the Cabaret, that's where he nearly dropped me once.

I: Did you get injured?

G: Well I got up and carried on. It was sore for a bit, but that was what you did in those days.

I: So when you were collecting for the Variety Club, where were you performing?

G: Oh this was at Pontin's, at the hotel. It was called...in... that was in Weymouth I was ... that was the first... Then I went on to Bath and Horden and I was entertainment's manageress there, well second, because they always had a man, as the manager... I was second in charge which is on the next page probably. No this is still Weymouth... still Weymouth. And we had visiting people... like visiting artists, playing their songs or conjuring or working with fire and... magicians and... ventriloquists with dummies ... Oh Keith Harrison he came, he went off with the Krankies I think I got to know the Krankies very well (inaudible). I like that one, that was glamorous. I can't remember ... "Oh if my friends could see me now." I think that was the song. "Sweet Charity." And that was just in leisure time, parties and wot not. And then we had, we had a week of disabled people in wheelchairs, we had wheelchair dancing, which was wonderful for them, we used to wheel them around to music. And they loved that....Muscle men competition... Oh there's one of the ventriloquists with his fluffy duck... And then I came back here, this was when I was here, when I wasn't there but when I came back because I'd got my Equity card they had to pay me... I think I got about £50 a show which was quite a lot in those days.... That was Oklahoma for the

second time. Then I had my little girls' chorus. I formed that and we used to perform for old people's homes and all sorts of things like that for charity things... so we did that. That's them again.... And Salad Day I think.

I: So you taught this group of girls of a sort of small performing company?

G: That's right. They used to come to my house because I hadn't got a big room in those days, used to come once a week. We did modern, we did the tunes of the moment, things that were happening in the 70s you know.

I: Mainly Tap?

G: No, not really, whatever the music suggested.... Salad Days and Guys and Dolls. I wasn't in this ... I did the choreography. This is one of my favourite shows and the men's dance, which was one where they were rolling the dice, I wasn't terribly fond of, I mean I did it but it wasn't that great but then afterwards everyone told me it was the best dance in the show. So you never know, do you? Anyway that was that one. That's all Guys and Dolls. Calamity Jane I did... and Kiss me Kate.... Oh yes, I was in that, that was my last show I think, because at the age of 50, I thought I'd better give up dancing (laughs). Well, dancing as such. So that was '85. I don't know what that is, then we did the Merry Widow and the Can-can which I choreographed. Because I did a lot of music hall which isn't in the book, we never had any photos, but that was nice. Merry Widows. And then all these lovely things people write to me....

I: Lovely cards....

G: Aren't they lovely? They're gorgeous....

I: Are these from admirers or from....

G: Well these were from the production people or the producer. And... all the cast have written something. And they used to give me presents. I've got... I've got a glass engraved bell from Guys and Dolls because there's a tune in that called "If I was a bell I'd be ringing." And things like that appropriate to the show. So kind....

I: Look at this one. It says "To G. for teaching the most complicated routines in the shortest time."

G: (Laughs) Oh that was B., he was president of the Footlights, he was also the producer for some of them and he went on to the Playhouse at Oxford to produce things, then he went to Nottingham. I don't know where he is now.

I: So you taught the groups all by demonstration?

G: Yes. And words. By the time they'd finished they knew the names of the steps so I'd just say "Pas de Basque here" or "Shuffle-hop-step" there and they knew (laughs). These are just publicity photos for my agent or agents. Oh that was Victor Sylvester Junior who I taught ballroom to. And .... that's right....that's that!

I: You've had a very colourful career....

G: I've had a wonderful.... I've been so lucky I can't believe how lucky I've been. It's been so interesting which is why I sort of keep on being interested in, which is why I find Circle dance so interesting because I move my body about which I think .... to keep fit you have to keep moving. No good sitting down and letting your muscles go. And when I sort of gave up dancing as such, I put on weight. Dancers always do this, as your muscles relax and because you're not working out all the time, you're... you go to fat. So ... anyway I've tried to lose some but in middle-age you normally put on weight, most people do, unless you're very... thin, you know light-boned. But anyway, I'm very pleased to keep on dancing.

I: How many times a week were you going to classes when you were working as a dancer or a choreographer? How often would you practise?

G: Well I would, if I was choreographing, like at Pontin's, everyday you'd be doing something. And otherwise it would be two or three times a week. Yeah probably. Two or three times a week.

I: But quite demanding.

G: Yes, yes. When I was doing my children's teaching, when I had.... when he was about three or four, I started teaching children again and he used to come with me to the classes.... And I used to make him a gnome or something in the shows, we did little shows... He had to take part whether he liked it or not. He never said one way or the other (laughs).

I: So can I bring you back to Circle dancing and ask you a bit more about that now?

G: Yes.

I: So I was going to ask you, how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?

G: Well when I first started Circle dancing I found it quite difficult because it was slightly different from what I'd been used to. And also to remember somebody-else's dance. When you're a choreographer, you can remember your own dances. If you're learning somebody-else's dance, that's a different story. But after a few weeks I soon picked it up and now I find it quite easy....

I: .... Can you give examples of some of the dances you feel you've learnt really well?

G: Oh the Circle dances? I like the flowing ones "Wings on the Tour" is one. There's one called "Mistletoe." Some of the names of dances are very difficult to say. Consequently they're very difficult to remember. Like the one we did to-day "Havanobila." I can remember that one, that's quite easy to say. Some of the faster ones I like but I find now that my legs won't go as fast as they used to, or my feet. And I think "Oh dear, twenty years ago I could have done this with great ease ... going very fast." Now I find I'm slowing down as you would and ... I find it quite difficult to go that fast. But... Greek ones I like. Again the names I can't always remember....

I: Would you be able to describe a dance in words? One of your favourite dances?

G: Well I find the dances are permutations of the different steps. So you've got the Slip-Step and you've got the Grapevine and the ... what was that one called? Oh ... Pas de Basque, Pas de Basque which comes in any dance, comes in Ballet, Tap, anything, comes in Scottish even, anything that comes in... forward and back walking of course, that's quite natural. It's also quite ... the linking up steps, sometimes the teacher teaches you step B before step A. She'll teach you step B, then she'll teach you step A. And you think "What was B?" Because it is the other way round. I find it easier if she teaches A first and then B, and sometimes C and D. Because sometimes there are more than two or three steps. Grape-vine comes in Line-dancing. Again you get a lot of steps that are in other types and styles of dancing.

I: Any more on that? About learning the dances?

G: If she says the name of a dance, you can't always put the dance to the name. But if she does the dance first, and you think "Oh I've done that before!" and then she says the name, then you sort of remember it. But I find it difficult to put a name to a dance or a dance to a name because there's so many of them, over two hundred. That's a lot of dances to remember.

I: ... How important do you think memory is when you are learning the dances?

G: Well very important because as you get older your memory gets worse. That's what I've found and that's what most people say, older people say. So this is very important to remember because it helps you in other ways, in everyday life it helps you to remember things. If you can remember a dance up there, you should be able to remember other things.... But I do find my memory is ... my short-term memory is very bad these days. You remember things from a long-time ago but even next week, or last week, I've forgotten what happened... So I think the Circle dancing is very helpful because it is keeping the brain ticking over, you see.

I: Any more on that?

G: I don't think so.

I: So how would you say Circle dancing influences your experience of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

G: Well because ... I think it's very helpful also because it has a spiritual side and there are dances for certain aspects, like she does the dances that relate to the Bach or the Flower Remedies. I don't think we've done any since you came but there's different remedies in little containers made of flowers and herbs and you can get them for all sorts of thing, like I have a ... my sister-in-law gave me "Bach's Rescue Remedy" and I keep it in the fridge, I haven't used it much, fortunately. You put a little drop in some water and drink it and it's meant to make you feel much better altogether. The whole body. But that's about ... that's the only one I've ever tried. And there are dances relating to these remedies and some of it's to do with water when you're sort of rippling your hands and arms about, and earth, when you're bending down to the earth, and the sky when you put your hands up and all that sort of thing. Relating to the elements as well, some of the dances ....

I: So how do these remedy dances make you see yourself?

G: Well it makes you feel a lot better... I think it's very good if you're depressed, luckily I'm not. I did have a breakdown at one time but I read, nothing to do with dancing, I did yoga, that brings your mind back to reality... I think if you were depressed and you did some of these Circle dances, that would make you feel a lot, a lot less depressed, a lot lighter altogether and brings you into the right frame of mind to be positive about everything. I must say I think it did me a lot of good coming when I first started because it gave me something to think about, something completely different out of ordinary day routines of life... It does that for you.

I: Anymore about how it makes you see yourself?

G: No.

I: OK. How would you say Circle dancing influences experiences of your health?

G: I think it's keeping me healthy because it's keeping me moving about and ... moving my muscles and my bones whereas as you get older, a lot of people do not do any exercise. Consequently, they're not, I don't think they're very well. I have friends who do not do any exercise at all and they're always ill. I keep saying to them "Why don't you come to Circle? Or Keep-Fit?" and they always say "Oh I must do that." But they never do. And they ring me up and tell me that they've been coughing for five weeks or they've got aching hips or shoulders and I can't tell them any more to do something useful. I think I've got a sympathetic ear because ... they ring me up and tell me what's wrong with them. Occasionally they say "And how are you?" I feel awful because I normally say "Very well thank you." And they're not. Isn't that a shame? That's terrible really. But that's why I think dancing is keeping me fit, you see.

I: Any injuries from dancing?

G: I haven't had any injuries from Circle dancing... I had a knee, I had something wrong with my knee once and my back but I've been very lucky now I come to think about it, that's all really. My back was through Tap-dancing too much but that's all.

I: Are you Tap-dancing now as well?

G: No, no. I gave that up because I strained, strained my back. So I gave that up. Two years ago. Now I do more gentle things although Circle dancing isn't always gentle, is it? It's quite energetic (laughs) but I feel, coming back to that, that it's probably good for your heart because it keeps your heart pumping, doesn't it? When you're doing energetic things.

I: So how would you say Circle dancing influences your experiences of growing older?



G: Well ... I suppose it gives me an aim in life because you think "Now what's the day to-day? Ooh Friday! Or to-morrow it's Circle dancing." So you're looking forward to it. That's good, isn't it? To always have something to look forward to, that's my answer.

I: And any more on that one?

G: I can't think of anything at the moment.

I: So how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

G: ... Well having danced so much. I mean I don't think I'm stretching any more or moving about any more than I used to, it's just that I keep on moving and keep on stretching and not giving up. That's what's good for you, moving your hips and your arms and your legs and your feet. That's really... good for you. I'm doing it now, because my neighbour who's got arthritis, "You must go out G. and do it while you can." she says. I think "Yes, she's quite right. I must do it while I can." Because anything can strike at any time, can't it?

I: Any more on that?

G: No.

I: So my last question. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

G; Well I think it's ... I think it's almost been an obsession. I mean I've been very lucky, because a lot of dancers give up, getting married, having children, like ballet dancers it's a very dedicated thing so if you haven't experienced it, so many things... but I mean I think I don't regret getting married but I think if I hadn't done that, I'd be off to America or somewhere. On the other hand, I had the experience of getting married and having a child and doing this as well, so it's almost as if I've lived more than one life...several lives, so I think that's wonderful. And it's kept me fit.

I: Any other thoughts on dance?

G: I think everybody should dance, even schools, like I did it at school. Schools nowadays they don't concentrate on anything like that and even music takes a back seat in some schools. I think music is important too. Dance gives you an appreciation of music, of all kinds of music which I couldn't be without, because I have music on all the time at home. So that's another aspect of dance, it's the music isn't it? So it's a very wide ranging... occupation. Sometimes the Circle dances make you laugh or giggle. I was standing next to V. this morning doing a dance and she was giggling the entire time (laughs) which made me giggle. "Why does this make you giggle?" "I don't know." she said, "Everytime I do this it makes me giggle." And some dances are very happy. But you feel you want to laugh. I can't specify... oh there's one about tomatoes. For some reason, there's a saying, something about tomatoes and that makes me laugh. Why do you do a dance about tomatoes?

I; Thank you.

### **First Circle Interview Eight (1.C.8)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

A: Yes surely.

S: Yes.

P: Yes.

I: How did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

S: (Laughs) When I joined the retirement organisation when I retired, there was a Circle dance class and that appealed to me and I did that for three years, and P. was actually a member of that class and she said she was going to start off one of her own so I followed her.... to do that.

A: And S. introduced it to me because knowing I had a hearing loss, P. expresses herself so well that I would be able to follow and I love dance anyway so I'm very grateful for that introduction, yeah, yes, yes.... always wanted activity, did Folk dance right from... when I was married. So I've always been interested in dance and this is the best of the lot...

P: I actually cannot remember when I first Circle danced. I can't remember whether it was in London or when I came here. But ... in 1995, my mother died in May, and I went to S.... for a holiday, which I did a lot then, and a group came over from Guernsey, and ... they were offering to the islanders and the visitors etc. So I went along and I went in and they'd begun. And the music they were playing was... it touched me, it really got me actually and I just started crying actually. But I just thought "Well hang in there" and they stopped, and this lovely lady came over to me, who was directing the dancing, and I explained the whole thing. I said I would like to stay but it just... I might have to drop out at some point. But I didn't. I kept going with that whole group, and it was really therapeutic at that time. To be with people who obviously understood, what I was going through.

A: Did mother like music?

P: ... Well my mother was musical, I came from a musical family, yes, but this was just about.... three months after she died, but I had been Circle dancing before, this is why I went because I knew about it. But I can't remember when I started. I certainly went to the group in the retirement organisation but after S. I would think.

S: Yes I should imagine so.

P: Because P. wasn't a member then... and it was after that I heard about P. I can't remember. It was through somebody-else in that group and I preferred to go to P. A) It was nearer and B) It wasn't such a rush to go across town.

S: Also she's a better teacher (laughs).

P: (Laughs) That shouldn't be recorded should it? (everyone laughs). But we have mentioned no names... only one name but we haven't mentioned it.

I: Is there any more about joining Circle dancing?

P: No.

S: No.

A: What prompted us? The need for activity for me.... I suppose not long after I'd retired, but as I said I had danced while I was at work, this was just a joy to find and someone... as my hearing was going, someone I would be able to follow. I had done "Foot and Fiddle" and they had no idea how to communicate, no projection of voices or anything. So you feel so demoralised when you don't know what they're talking about. S.knows...

S: I think with the "Foot and Fiddle," there didn't happen to be anyone else who was deaf. So therefore I don't think they had to adapt. It is only when someone is aware of a ... of a disability of any sort really, but P. is a big personality and projects...

A: She is a born teacher, no-one should have difficulty with her..... "Foot and Fiddle." they were a different temperament entirely.

P: Oh yes yes.

A: No I mean she carries us along. I think she is one of the most successful in the country because of all her classes. It's her personality.

P: ...Yes it is... It's the mixture of music and exercise and it's not just exercise. It is the dance and being with other people. I mean if you're exercising and you're being with a lot of other people, but you're on your own. But with a group, you're in a Circle and that's the whole beautiful thing about that.

A: And the culture from the other countries. That's as wide as, she brings all that interest in anyway, doesn't she?

P: Yes.

I: Have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

A: Well, as I say "The Foot and Fiddle," yes, watched my daughter do ballet ... but ... I've never been to a dance, no S. loves dance.

S: I've always loved dancing, I did it at school, I love Ballroom dancing, I love Scottish dancing but Scottish dancing is just a little bit too energetic now. You're tired before you've really started. It's... well it's so demanding. I did some about four or five years ago. It was a teacher who was... insisting on you doing the exact footwork. Yes, I mean if you're going to go in for competitions and that, but... I didn't. I suppose I did that for a couple of years but I found that a bit too demanding, in the sense that... you had to keep doing it until you got it right. And that's a bit too much like school, in a sense. But I love the music, and I will get up and do a Scottish dance... But I do get out of breath very easily with that.

I: How many years were you Scottish dancing?

S: Ooh I started when I was about eighteen. And I actually married a Scot, so I did it, off and on, all my married life .... I probably did it for about twenty years.

P: I remember doing a bit of Barn-dancing at school. I have done Scottish dancing but I should really have carried it on. I'm of Scottish descent and I still think... I mean I love watching dancing, I love Irish dancing and the whole rhythm of it, you know, so .... I can't think that I've done anything else particularly...

I: Did any of you do much dancing as a child?

A: Oh yes, oh well anything dancing wise at school, I would be involved in. Oh yes, yes, jumped at the opportunity. So I suppose. What are you looking for?... Yeah it's the love of music I suppose, attracts you to the dancing, doesn't it? Yes, oh yes (inaudible).

P: I did do some Ballet dancing, I learnt Ballet at some point. But that didn't go on for long... I'm more a player than a dancer so. Yes because I studied music so ... but I think I'm always tapping away and everything ... feeling a rhythm if there's a rhythm going, I'm sort of maybe making up my own little dance (laughs).

A: And you sing, don't you? You sing, Music is in your heart.

P: Yeah, yeah. So it's more playing and singing than actually dancing but....

I: (to S.) Were you involved in dance as a young child?

S: Yes, more choreographed than ... free expression. It probably was the thing when I was a child, rather than free, that has come later, I think, free expression... If there was any... musical event at school, I was always in the, in the dance team.... I remember the Guildhall stage and the skimpy tunic, we did "Haiwatha" and I was a bowl and spoon (everyone laughs). But yes, I've always done something to do with movement.

I: How would you describe choreographed dance?

S: Well you're all doing the same step at the same time, or er you're all moving the same way. It's not "Now you do what steps you like." It's not that. It's, it's... there's a pattern to it... that's what I'd call choreographed I think.

I: Right. So it's dance for shows and things?

S: Yeah. At Speech Day usually... we didn't do shows as such. It was always connected to Speech Day and performed on the Guildhall stage.

I: Thank you. Any more about other forms of dance? Any more to say about other kinds of dance?

A: What do you mean? Whether we've done it? No.... I was a war baby. I longed to do Ballet, I longed to sing, I used to live 200 or 300 yards away, I used to go down the drive everyday and sing my heart out. And I think this is all through the love of music, but I didn't dare ask for ballet lessons or... we weren't well off enough... yeah it's funny I can remember not daring, I suppose the inner courage was not there then, to go into a group, to go into a room and do it. No I lived and danced through my daughters, I enrolled them when they were very young for Ballet and I enjoyed it through them. And my younger daughter got to a fairly good level..... No, no, I just had the interest in and danced wherever. Watching it on TV.... and being exhausted, having watched a Ballet, because.... Do you find this? I find that I am using the same muscles that they are because it is so interesting? Absolutely exhausted after a Ballet. Yeah.

S: It's strange. I don't, I don't like Ballet. I love the music but I don't like Ballet.

A: That's interesting.

S: It's structured somehow... it's not that I wouldn't go and see a ballet. I would go for the music, but not the actual Ballet.

A: ... interesting.... no it's not natural, the foot movements and everything.

S: No.

A: It's not even healthy at some stage, is it?

P: No, it might not be.

A: The modern type of Ballet now with all the awkward moves may seem more acceptable and more expressive I think to the modern way of life.

P: Well you have got to be an athlete.

I: How were you involved in music S....P.?

(everyone laughs)

A: P. say something and then she will recognise your voice! This is P. speaking... (laughs).

P: I studied music at the Royal College of Music. So I did piano and singing at the Royal College of Music and sang... in a choir. The Imperial College choir I used to sing in and did some opera. Then when I went to the BBC I was in their amateur operatic society so... and then I've worked musically with handicapped children, that's how I came here. But I always called myself a musical specialist, because I am not a music therapist, because I haven't done the psychiatric part of being a music therapist so there's no way I could professionally do that but... Then I taught music....I taught a choir when I went in an ordinary primary school, not very far away from here. And I use music every day really because I go to Mass and sing, plainsong and things... so it's still going (laughs).

I: How easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

A: Very easy actually. I feel very lucky because of this love of music and this love of rhythm. I don't find great difficulty picking it up.

I: Can you give an example of a particular dance?

A: Well last year I was profoundly deaf and there was... no I can't, I don't know the names of the steps, but there was the most intricate... set of movements, that changed, the rhythm had some claps and some turns I thought.... but I just went in and did it. And I was so surprised. And P. actually came up afterwards and said "How on earth did you do that when you can't hear a thing?" So I think it's visual, I think we're using our visual all the time. But that did me an enormous amount of good, as you can imagine. The fact that I could seem to pick it up. So I don't know how that happens, but ... I don't feel too phased out by new difficult dances....

P: ... I mean I think all the dances have a musical pattern and you do things at a certain stage within that musical pattern... there are one or two that P. always warns us "There is no pattern here." (laughs). And she's such a good teacher.

A: Yes. She works at it....

P: It's very strange... when you see her doing it in the Circle, you think "Ah!" ... (laughs). And then you realise what she's doing because when she's doing it on her own, it's slightly different from you doing it in the Circle going the right way round...

A: She breaks it up.

P: This is the great thing. She breaks up each section and you get used to it. Sometimes if you let your mind wander, you put a foot wrong (laughs) but ... no, I think it's fitting certain movements to the pattern of the music so you need to listen I mean your brain has got to be right there, in remembering what you're doing .... If it's crossing the beat that's difficult, because you've got to ignore the music then.

S: Yes absolutely you've just got to concentrate on the... yes on what your feet are doing and you can't let your mind wander then, you've got to keep going because the music has.... I don't know why the music's there sometimes. It's crossing the beat because it's ... mind over matter, in a sense.

A: Yeah which is why it's so good for you.... yes it learns you, it teaches you too! (everyone laughs) It teaches you to concentrate on the movements you are doing, although there is a diversion. Yeah. I think it's brilliant for the mind.

I: You've sort of answered my next question (everyone laughs). It's ok. How important is memory?

P: Oh yes, extremely.

A: You can't express the importance enough, can you?

S: Because when you're looking round the Circle you can tell those people who are not concentrating, or at least I can.

A: Yeah yes.... for one reason or another you can see just.... vacant somehow, and try to pick up moves without the attempt to take it on oneself.

S: Yes.

A: Which is very sad.

S: We're all so different, yes we are.

A: No you can't do without your memory in learning new dances. Retaining the facts and the movements, yeah.

P: But it is a help, unless we've done a dance recently, that P. reminds us. You hear the music and you think "Oh I know that" but what's the dance? (everyone laughs) Yes... and then she goes through. Except that I find that ones one has learnt earlier, like "Maurye", the pilgrim's dance, somehow you know....

S: The Russian one, "Balinka".

P: Yes, because we've done them a lot. It's the newer ones which you.... mind you there are so many now it's not surprising really.

A: Even P. has to go over her dances before she actually takes a lesson. She says "I did these in the dining room before I came." But... once you've got the pattern, it seems to retain, you can retain it and then bring that pattern out in the different dances it is used in, such as the grapevine, oh yes, immediately, and I find, do you find? I find new dances that come ... you can almost anticipate what you're going to do because you've done so much in the past if they're simple.

P: Yes certain music tend to....

A: You go to the beat, the bar and you know you're going to change your step.

P: Yes.

A: And you anticipate it and you're there and it helps because of the pattern of the past.

P: You can come unstuck.

A: Oh yes of course you can but...

P: If you're going to do that...

A: Yeah yeah.

P: And you're expecting to do it that side as well and you don't.... that sort of thing.

A: That's right. Yes where she comes in and says "But..."

S: Yes.

A: But I find it amazing that you can retain so many of these patterns and rythmns and they stand you in good stead when the new dances come.... That's brilliant! (laughs)

Don't you think it gives you self-esteem as well? That's what we're all looking for. Hanging on to our.... yeah?

I: That leads to my next question..... (everyone laughs). How does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

A: Right OK. This is where once again I can bring in my being profoundly deaf last year. Being quite low at the beginning.. going... being brave enough to go... because I felt at ease with people and I knew they would understand. And then finding that I could actually do it..... "I'm not so bad after all." And actually it was part of my saviour last year. Going, enjoying, being able to complete... a dance, even though I had no hearing whatsoever. So.... yeah, it gave me a better opinion of myself than I'd had before I went (laughs).

S; But we did talk about that, didn't we? At the time, that if you hadn't had the experience of being a dancer before...

A: Yeah.

S: Someone profoundly deaf going into it wouldn't cope, I don't think.

A: No...no.

S: You've got to be able to have a background of being able to do it.

A: Yeah, I think so.

S: And because you were going regularly.

A: Yeah.

S: In any case, it helped in that way, didn't it?

A: Oh yes. And the love of...

S: Yes...yes.

P: And knowing other people.

A: So it helped me enormously last year plus obviously the friendship of the people who pushed and pulled me, if necessary (laughs). Yeah.

P: Yes. I'm trying to think about influence... it can certainly help you ... if you feel a bit down and you need something uplifting, you can go and throw everything else that might be concerning you out of the window. Although you may be thinking of it but somehow the dances take you away from... any worries or what have you. I think I probably come away... feeling better, more confident to face... I mean I was very worried about one of my cats last year ... and really thought that ... the time had probably come, and you just go and let it, let the dance take it away, the worry, take away somehow. But I also find, from another point of view... two or three years ago, P. was doing a Circle dance on Good Friday. Now for me, I really was not sure about that. I was going to the special service at Blackfriars in the morning, and I was going to be singing at the service in the afternoon, but I knew that she was going to gear the music to the fact that it was Good Friday. And we did the same dance at intervals, it was the Pacabel... very slow and meditative and shut the eyes. And I thought "Well right, this is obviously a good meditative dance." So I was obviously meditating on the happenings of Good Friday. And it really moved me very much. I mean ... I was in tears then, in the end, because just going round and concentrating. But it was good, because at Mass you are sort of very busy and I was going to be very busy with sort of, the music in the afternoon, there wasn't going to be much time for meditating then. So in fact it was a beautiful moment..... very, very worthwhile I think. That's the other thing about Circle dances, when you can just meditate, whether it's Good Friday or not. It's, it's a lovely moment. It's a good contrast to ... other ways I worship.

I: How does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

A; I definitely feel better, uplifted and ready to go on. I can go in feeling dull and lifeless and come out feeling totally stimulated....I think it's very important, movement, to be active, and that fulfills that need. .... I think sometimes talking about being.... depressed, this is a time when you've got so much concentration that your mind is off everything else. You've got a total absence of thinking about whatever worries you have. It's a healing process.....Yeah, and once again, the friendship of the group the other people, there is a terrific support network there. But influencing on my health, yes it's had an enormous.... I look forward to it as movement, self-expression when she's let us go free ... you can do what you like more or less ... to the music. I think... you watch some of the dancers and they absolutely let rip and I think that's good because we don't let ourselves go as a nation as much as we should... and I think if you can express it, because you know everyone else is trying to do the same, to whatever degree, I think that has a good influence on yourself. I cannot let myself go in jazz, the day that I can I'll call you (laughs). I cannot let myself go in her ragtime stuff and yet I find I can dance freely when... nearly everything, the waltz thing, and I'd love to know why. I'd love to know why.

S: It's a syncopated movement in a sense.

A: Probably. Yeah....yeah, it's not that I don't enjoy it.

S: Oh well you don't do ballroom dancing. I mean a 'Quick-step' is my all time favourite dance and therefore, you've got to like that sort of movement.

A: Right. Ok. Well... the 'Cha Cha Cha.'

S: Yes.

A: But I'm not interested in.

S: Well I wouldn't like to do it all the time but I love those...

A: Yeah well I think possibly the ... the influence on health is the anticipation of moving and feeling better.... it does actually do it, it loosens you up, it tires you out, it loosens you up, and the adrenaline, the oxygen, and everything, it is a great improvement and it is necessary (laughs).

P: Yes. I would agree with that... Yes, I mean although I was doing, I've been doing Circle dance for a good while... because last year I started on a fitness programme by the doctor, so it was going to the gym, which is not lovely (laughs).... And swimming, that's fine but Circle dancing is another element where you are using your body differently, and the lovely Grapevines where you're twisting and ... you're doing all these lovely movements, and ... although P., well she says we don't loosen up our shoulders, that is an exercise I do every morning while I'm waiting for the cats to go out (everyone laughs). I'm down in my little porch doing my exercises (everyone laughs).

A: Lovely.

S: Rolling one's shoulders, really loosening up ... because I used to get quite tight at the back of my neck ... I suppose that was encouraged by my osteopath actually (laughs). He suggested you know doing the shoulder bit... but there are one or two where you're twisting... really turning and moving, using lots of energy and it's a lovely way you know of helping to maintain one's weight or lose it even.

A: (laughs) And flexibility.

P: And flexibility, yes.

A; And self-expression I think. It's all to do with health, isn't it?

P: It's lovely, yes... some of the ones where we swirl round. I like the jazzy ones as well (everyone laughs).

I: ( to S.) Do you have anything?

S: I don't think there's anything else to say.

I: Ok. How does Circle dancing influence your experience of growing older?

(Everyone laughs).

A: How does it influence it? It makes me more determined to keep it up (laughs). ... it's not a question that can have a set answer but obviously it's beneficial and if I feel I can keep on doing it, I will feel I am growing older wisely (laughs).

P: Beautifully put. That was beautifully put (everyone laughs). I must use those words (everyone laughs).

A: Yeah. But you do want to do everything that you can, and that's a nice way of doing it. Keeping fit and healthy, isn't it?

S: I just don't think of it in connection with age. Because I love doing it, I would be doing it in any case.

A: Yeah that's right.

S: Age doesn't come into it as far as I'm concerned. I know I'm getting old, I'm older than you, yes (everyone laughs).

P: But you tend to forget about the age thing, don't you? Because you're moving, you've got to use your brain, it's.... it's keeping all the little grey cells... dancing as well.

I: Have you had any injuries from dancing?

P: No not from dancing but I have had to... stop.

S: No I've had to stop for whatever reason but not because of something that I did at dancing. Probably because of something that I did at home.

A: Yes your arms... no I don't think so.

P: No I think I've had some back trouble... I've had knee trouble and it's not worth bouncing around. Well one can't, it's painful (laughs). But it's not because of the dance... I think the movements are too flexible... if you did it stiffly, well you couldn't do it stiffly because you feel you're in a lovely relaxed situation therefore you relax when you're moving, and that's fine, because if you tense up when you're moving, that's when you are going to hurt yourself.

S: The day after you've done some, especially when you're doing... twisting your hips, that one, you can feel it the next day (everyone laughs). No, it's not an injury as such.

A: And anyway, P. is very aware of that again, isn't she?

P: Oh well, yes she is.

A: She warns people, people with hip replacements etc. She allows us to walk straight rather than turn if we get dizzy spells, yeah.... I've been lucky in that respect.

I: How has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

A: Not a lot except that... no I don't think so because I've always been active... Yes, ok, I see other people have stiff shoulders etc, made me appreciate if you like, made me appreciate my capabilities as regards movement, perhaps that...

P: It's a difficult one.

A: Ok ... all the different styles.... No I don't think a great deal but I think the appreciation of the fact that I can do... what I want to do. It's the appreciation, is the realisation that I'm lucky in that aspect yeah.

S: Yes I agree with you there. It comes naturally, it's lovely that you can do it.

A: Yeah.... yeah.

P: But I have found because I was on this weight losing... thing, and I am in a different sort of way, feeling easier doing the dancing ... that bit of weight I've lost ... a stone and a half, it does make a lot of difference to how easily you move. With all the dancing I'm skipping a bit more where we're supposed to, whereas before I didn't (laughs). Yes so in that sense it's... it has made me aware.... that I've lost this weight (laughs).

I: Any more on that?

S: Just lucky that I can keep going, yes really, yes.

P: Well quite.

I: So is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life? Anything at all?

A: I didn't anticipate I'd be dancing until it was introduced to me. So it has become very, very important to me. I look forward to the company, seeing the friends I've made there ... exchanging bits of news. I think it's a total group. .... I've seen people have strokes and come back. It has been very, very important to us as an example, you have a set back and bounce back.... and dancing is part of that.... No I just thoroughly enjoy it and hope I can continue .... it's very important to me, yeah...yes.

P: Yes I agree with this wonderful thing where people really have been very ill and have come back. Not just the stroke people, other people, like falling off ladders and all sorts of things... and that they are having support from us, being part of that support group as well. That's what's very lovely.... through the dance, and that it's there to be experienced... I think one feels very privileged in a way.... that it's there and it's such a lovely way to exercise and it's communication, it's communication, yes... it's tremendous, really it's the sort of thing that should be done in schools for children to learn to communicate with each other.

S: I don't think it comes very high on the curriculum, does it?

P: No well unfortunately the curriculum's gone berserk, I've got so many people who can't read and write when they leave school (laughs).

I: Do you have anything more to say?

S: No I don't think so, I think we've said it all really... I know I just love dancing.

A: It satisfies the need, doesn't it?

P: Yeah.

A: It is the total, total .... I don't know what the word is but you've got the friendship, ok you've got the movement, you've got the love of music.... you've got the little grey cells being kept active... I can't recommend it highly enough actually.

P: No.

A: To people who are now retired and wanting to keep active.

S: I could do without the candle.

I: Why?

S: Yes, no I don't like the candle.

A: Oh right. Some people need it.

S: Oh yes I quite agree. I don't.

A: Actually that gives me a focus. I like it for spacing otherwise we'd be all over the place.

S: Oh yes that but that's not it's meaning.

A: But part of it, when we dance the trance dances, I can't close my eyes because I'd be flat on the floor. So that is my focus... for the trance dances.

S: No I don't like trance dances.

P: I regard that candle.... No I translate that candle into what I want it to be. And it's not just a candle, it's the light of Christ really.... so a lot of things like that have been trans....

S: No, it's wrong to put a religious....

P: Well for me because a lot of pagan things have been translated into... moved into that way...

A: Well the flowers around are lovely... now that's something.

S: Yes to have.... to make you do a proper Circle, that's fine. Yes.

A: The distance.

S: But it's the movement I'm more interested in, not the...

P: Yes, yes.

S: Well yes whatever you take from whatever (laughs).

I: Ok thanks.

## **First Circle Interview Nine (1.C.9)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

D: Yes, you certainly can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

D: I first got involved in Circle dancing... I do believe it was about the year 2000 but I'm not quite sure...P., whose is our dance leader, used to go swimming in town, and I got to know her, and several other people there. And at the end of the swimming sessions, September, because it's open air, P. said "Now swimming's stopped you're coming Circle dancing." And so we said as one voice "What is Circle dancing?" So P. said "You'll find out. You can come for two sessions not paying, and then if you like it, you can pay the fee. Which wasn't a lot. And so we found out that it was going to be at a certain place and it's not too difficult to get there, and there's parking. So my friends from swimming and myself, we went as a group to this centre. P. gave us our first ever session of Circle dancing. And we loved it.

I: Any more about that first session?

D:.... Well we had no idea what we were going to do. She got us into a circle, we did some very simple dances that didn't involve a lot of memory or a lot of fancy steps. We did... I think it's called a "Dandelion dance", where you go in and out and we all enjoyed it very much and we were very taken with P.'s way of... teaching us. And... I think on block we all decided we would pay from then on and go for I think it was, I think it was a two hour session. Yes, a two hour session. And... of course, I knew most of the people there because they were all swimmers, and from the town. And I used to pick one or two people up because I drive. And... yes it was, first session, mainly I was hooked straight away, and I've been going ever since.

I: So how many years have you been?

D: Well I tried to look this morning in my diaries, because I don't take a careful diary. I thought seeing you to-day and... the earliest one I could find, was year 2000, so it would be September 2000. But I do think it was before that, but I'll have to ask P. sometime, when she started it, she remembers. But that was the first... I put on this particular day, because I was looking desperately this morning for anything and... so I went Circle dancing, great. So it was... it's gone on like that. Yeah, so... trying to think of anything else.... We just enjoyed it, we enjoyed even the centre. It was pleasant, you could make a cup of coffee at

break time and... it was just so comforting to be together and dancing with people. Well for me, it was nice too because I knew the people I was with. So... that made it... more fun, because we always used to have a laugh, swimming... very silly.... So yes, and it was at a time, if it was 2000, well it would have been a difficult time for me anyway because... I had so many tragedies that year. Because my ... my brother had bone cancer, his wife was my best friend and had ovarian cancer and my daughter, second daughter, her husband died of a heart attack. Just suddenly, as he was getting ready for work. So the opening session, if that was for me the opening session, at that particular time, 1999 to 2004, there was a lot to cope with. And... that helped me a great deal.

I: Can you say how the Circle dance helped you?

D: Well it's the... a lot of it is the acceptance of how, how we are. I have very poor rhythm, even when I was teaching. I've never been a singer, I like music but I'm not, I haven't got a good ear for music and... to tap out a rhythm when I was teaching, which I had to do with young children, I used to have to practice the night before, or several nights before... several nights before, before I did it in the classroom. Because if it was a complicated rhythm, I wouldn't be able to do it. So I still find rhythm hard and so that's still a problem and it always will be I think. Because I've always had poor hearing, right from a child, and so I don't think I've listened to things carefully, because I don't think I feel, a confidence thing. So I think it's... I just switch off because I hear it but I don't carefully, because I don't feel I hear it. So well I have to make excuses (laughs). That's one of my excuses. So... I have coped with Circle dancing and I found that everyone is so easy that if you make mistakes, nobody seems to mind and... if I was out on beats, which I do regularly... I am able to wait for the beat to come back. It has helped me with the rhythm because now I can... I know I've missed it and so I will just do it on the spot till the beat comes back and then I'm ok again. So it has helped me with rhythm (gasps) But... Yes so, and on those early days in Circle dancing... I mean... (requests tape to be switched off). Yes, one experience I had in Circle dancing in the early days, when I had a lot of problems at home and with the family, before I went Circle dancing, which I was looking forward to, I had a very hard telephone call from one of my daughters, who, without going into detail, she was being very, very hard against one of her sisters. And I went dancing, as I was dancing, this phone call stayed in my head and I started to cry, because I cry very easily. I think I've two packets now (getting tissues out).

I: Right.

D: And... I was actually splashing the floor with tears and I had to go out. And I came back after a while, when I... got myself together and at...and at the interval, I said to P.

"I'm sorry about having to go out and being upset. "No" she said "It was a very good thing because you will have helped a lot of other people... Through being able to cry and being able to cope with it, a lot of," she said "if we asked a lot of people round the circle, a lot of people would like to cry. And they have really bad experiences. But the fact that you were able to cry" she said "You will have helped other people. And that was a good thing to do. And that made me feel a lot better." Because I thought "Well, I felt very ashamed." When she said that, it was quite a good thing so.

I: Emotional expression seems a very important aspect.

D: Yes, it is important and ever since now, I often do feel when I'm dancing, or when we're just waiting for another dance, things come into my head, and although I haven't cried so much as I did that day... I'm able to, it's a good thing to let these emotions come out and not to push them down.

I: Mm.

D: You know, it's alright. (laughs).

I: That's lovely, thanks... So have you been involved in any other forms of dance besides, ever?

D: Not since I was a young girl when I loved dancing, I do love dancing and... my brother, who was two years older than me, he was an excellent dancer, he was so good... I adored my brother and when we danced, because we used to go, I would be about sixteen, he'd be eighteen it was the end of the war, the Second World War. And we used to go to these dance halls... But there were lots of airmen, there's lots of airbases around this city, it's a flat area. And we used to have a lot of Americans, Polish, Canadians, all kinds of people. And I used to go to these halls and my brother used to very often come with me, if he was on leave or before he went to the airforce himself. And he could dance with me and make me feel I was the best dancer in the whole world. See I'd just lose it with him because he could turn you, and keep you in time and it was always a delight. And I did think "It's nice to go a lot." I used to go three or four times a week to these halls to dance.

I: That was ballroom dancing?

D: Yes, yes ballroom. Yes it was. In those days it was jitter-bugging, going back in history, and jiving. And... yeah it was just dance to Perry Goodman and his orchestra, all those famous jazz orchestras. If it wasn't them, sometimes they used to come up, the airmen, and all the forces up there, so we'd have a really good band. But if it wasn't, we'd have just social RAF bands who could do pretty a good Glen Miller and all those... music. And yeah, I think it's good. And I was quite a religious person as well so it, it was... I was very religious, I used to go to all, every single in the Catholic church, I went to every single organisation there was. And I also went to all these dances (laughs) during all the week. So they used to criticise me... the nuns came out to my mother one day "Did they know I had this RAF black man who used to pick me up in town?"

I: (Laughs)



D: And they were quite worried... that I was going down the wrong path. But anyway, yes, so dancing has always been very important to me, and I, mainly with my brother, whenever my brother was around because he had his own house, or at my house... we'd always put on a record and always dance. And it was part of our life, and my mother as well. My father not so much but my mother and my brother used to dance her around and then I'd be danced around (laughs). And yes, it's been part of. I would say it's always been a thing in my life but I've mainly been led, I won't say mainly, I've always been led. I've done it with children in school because dance is very important so I always, I taught them to do all of it, that stuff, country dances. And I was keen. I always found it very hard to teach other people it because of my lack of rhythm. And... but I ... I persevered because I think senior dancing is so important to our lives, that it should... you get over your inadequacies and just do it. Yeah (laughs).

I: That's lovely. Anymore on that?

D: No, I don't think so.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

D: I find it very difficult indeed. I...I find it very, very difficult. And I have no memory for... I've always said my musical ear is very poor, perhaps because I'm deaf or perhaps because I've never, I've never actually worked on listening to music. I do love music. I have a friend... a man friend whose not a partner, this, and he introduced me to classical music and I did learn to listen more and he also introduced me to opera. Now he has a fantastic ear for music and he can tell by a few bars... who the composer is and what it is, and he will try make me remember, say "What's that? And who wrote that?" And I was completely lost. And I must say, I'm in the same way, lost with a new dance. And when I hear other people who have, who are very keen Circle dancers, and they know all the names of the dances and when we last did them. I... my reply always is "Every session is a new session." So every time we dance, for me, it's a new experience (laughs). So I start from scratch every time I come... just the fact that we've danced it before doesn't mean a great deal to me. Or sometimes they come back but...

I: So how do you find you learn the dances in the session?

D: I don't really learn them... I watch people who can do them well... There are certain dancers there who haven't been dancing, I mean I've been doing it a long time, but they, some people are excellent and pick a dance up very quickly. And so I just watch them and... gradually pick it up from their steps. I mean that's...actually that is the only way I learn, is by watching somebody just along the circle who is doing it perfectly. And... you probably yourself notice, there are just one or two people there who get it. So I just... I'm away, and if they do it wrong, I'll do it wrong (laugh). So I don't really learn them.

I: Yeah.

D: I have some, bit of memory for them but I do I try, I try to think, now if P. will give us a demonstration, and I'm counting to myself "She did four that way, three that way." And I try to remember that... it helps, but I do try to have my own little way of keeping it together, as well as watching. But I must admit, the watching is a lot more important than my trying to put the sequence together.

I: Any more on that?

D: Well I think it's, the importance of memory, it's very important, because if these people weren't there, I would be really floundering. So, as I don't remember them very well, I see how important it is. If I could memorise them, that would be brilliant. But I...I'm merely that sort of nature that if this works for me... watching other people and doing it, that works for me, I'm not going to get myself into a state (laughs). I'd be in a state every week. So... it's just the way I come to terms with things. That's the way it is for me.

I: So you told me a little about this already. Any more on how Circle dancing influences experiences of your self?

D:... There's...there's one way, I'm not quite sure if the answer fits that question, but when I've had a very hard week, and I do seem to picture myself to have hard weeks, I don't really know why, my daughter says "Your choice." I say it must be my choice. But if I think I'm going on Friday to dancing, I can forget everything, except the odd times where I've had sort of a little breakdown and had tears, on the whole, it's my, it's my time off, it's my time off from the family, the worries and so... really the experience for myself, is that's my little holiday. And I can just enjoy it. So that's the main inference. And I do feel great after I get home. And I really enjoy it. And ... I have this friend and he, he always makes sure "You must go Circle dancing." Because he knows it does me good. And we always have a laugh and he says "Have you made shapes to-day?" And... so it's quite a nice feeling because he knows me very well, he's known me since 1960. And he's almost like my brother, he's taken the place of my brother, he's a man-friend whose been part of my family. And he knows me ever so well you see. "You've got to go Circle dancing to-morrow." And then we'll have a laugh afterwards and he'll say "Did you make some good shapes?" So it's... it obviously does me a lot of good and even helps him when I see him. It feels that I, that he wants me to be happy. If he sees me happy, he's happy...So that's... it goes over the, it goes from me to somebody else.

I: Well that's lovely. Anything else?

D: I don't on that.

I: OK. So I mean the next question's connected. How does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

D: Well, it's very good exercise anyway and I do like movement, I can't sit still, I can't not do things and so that fits in with the fact that I'm doing something and I'm moving and doing things. And that is... that is me and that helps my health.... if I

wasn't doing Circle dancing, I do Keep-Fit but I also do walks, or I clean the house or I can't sit down for very long... I've had to do with the studies but that is really part of the reason I study I think because, I have to be engaged... all the time. So Circle dancing helps my health because it fits in with my, psychological benefits as well. It suits me. Just the activity. Meeting... And I like people a lot so that covers two things, we have all the friends there who are not intrusive but you know they're all friends. And... so you feel, I like the company and that's psychologically good for me because I need company, because I do like people, although I've got this family as I've told you about, I'm not ever really short of company. I do like it. And... and also the physical activity. So... both ways. I can't think of anything, I can't think of anything as attractive as Circle dancing. And it all happened just by chance going swimming, as I'd never have known there was such a thing as Circle dancing (laughs). Yeah, I might have taken something else.

I: Anything else on that?

D: Any injuries? No I've never had any injuries. I have had injuries not in Circle dancing and I've still continued doing Circle dancing with... a difficult ankle, problems and things. P.'s always been very, she knows I can only do this bit, have to sit out, because ... my ankle will hurt. And... so any injury is nothing to do with Circle dancing, it hasn't stopped me going Circle dancing. Take your injuries with you (laughs). You see, yes.....

I: You see I'm trying to keep the questions very open. So how does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

D: Well because of the exercise and the company.... that helps, makes me feel young, I don't feel old... It doesn't... I can't think of a good answer to that really. It does influence me in the fact that I have something that I can dress up for a bit to go. Because you need perhaps a long skirt, I like that, because I like wearing long skirts. And... it's somewhere where you can forget your age and just enjoy the dance with whatever age person... that you're with. So.. it influences me in the fact that it makes me forget I'm growing older (laughs). So that's about all I can think of there.

I: And this one... how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

D:... I...I don't know how much it has... I think with all the different movements which we use all the body Circle dancing, I think it does help me to focus on... the whole body and the, and the posture, and the movement. It does make you focus more on, on the body when we're having to put our arms in the air. And you think "I can still do that." I think to myself sometimes. "I'm glad I can still do that." The only one thing, I say about health, it goes back, I've just realised, I used to get very dizzy, doing a lot of the circle turns, the turns, and that worried me a lot and so I told P. "I can't turn easily, I always go dizzy." And she said "No, just do it on the spot." So I did that for ages and then someone else who is very deaf, A., I...she said "Why don't you turn?" And I said "I go dizzy." And she said "You know, you can overcome that" she said "If you just do it, whether you feel dizzy or not." And now I do turns from that suggestion from another Circle dancer that you can overcome it, you just have to go with the dizziness and you're not going to fall, you will turn, you'll gradually lose a lot of the dizziness because your body... sort of re-organises your brain and the tubes at the back of your ears. It re-organises itself and you can do it. So that's partly with another question, about ...health really. Kind of health. That I can now do turns... I can't do very fast turns, I usually, a lot of it's just courage now... to do the fast turns. Because I've now coped with most turns.

I: Sounds great.

D: (Laughs) Yes, I used to, I can't tell you how I got dizzy. And...Yeah, I can do it now. And that wasn't P., that was another Circle dancer, who's deaf herself, it's something to do with deafness. And...So yeah, that was very good.

I: Mm

D: So that is changing experiences of the body... that I can now cope with dizziness. Even at home now. I do tend to get dizzy... I always have, from being a little child... that's what, I'm very, very healthy, but the one thing that I've always had is a bit of dizziness. And I never fainted, I've never ever fainted but I can feel it coming on and I know what to do... but now, I'm following the advice I had at Circle dancing. So if I bend down quickly and get up quickly and I think "That's silly." I start being dizzy. I go along with it, that does help me in general life. I can cope with dizziness (laughs). Yes. Instead of being worried and holding onto the table, I think "No, I'm alright." And... it goes away. So... but the experience of my body, I think I've always been very aware, I'm not a very tall person and I think I've always been very well aware of all my body... I suppose it's having your children... I've always been very, not athletic, I used to cycle a very long way... not just a mile or two, but for miles, we used to go from Doncaster to York and Doncaster to Cleethorpes on the bikes and ... right down through Sheffield from Doncaster into the Dales on bikes and I was used to being very aware of the physicality of everything and so I think that's part of me. And Circle dancing helps, it kind of fits in with that. Because although I don't cycle anymore because of the roads, it's...it's something you can safely do. So anyway Circle dancing also helps that side of it and probably makes me a bit more aware... Not a lot. Because it's... And as a teacher, I used to love doing... PE with the kids... that was fun for me as well as the children... I always did everything with them and... we used to do keep-fit, PE every day when some teachers would never do it... No, no, we always have a session, half an hour of PE, every single day. And now they're still putting that they should do that (laughs). But it is very important that they had half an hour... mainly because I liked it (laughs). Yeah, so I suppose physically I've always been like that.

I: It's part of your active life-style...

D: It is, yes it is, it's very active they call it now (laughs). Yes, it's just, it's just the way I am.... Yes that's all been an influence with the Circle dancing too.

I: So we're onto the last question... Is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

D: Well only to emphasise dance has always been important in my life but up to my brother died, or even before he died when he was a busy father and he was away in Australia for a while, he was the only one really to dance with me and... But it was always there in my head that I'd love to dance and... and the Circle dancing came for me, just at the right time. Things were really bad. But there was something that I've always wanted to do. And... and although I'd say that... I do find it, I still find it very difficult but I'm able to let the difficulties go because I love the music, I love the movement of the dance and I love the sequence of the dance and I love the friendship and the togetherness of the dance. And so all that, to me, is very important and so the meaning of dance really for me is...is being with people. It's wonderful too when we all manage to do it very well together, when everybody is at one. Sometimes it doesn't very often happen but it does happen. And when we're all at one and we're all doing it correctly, with the music, it's a lovely feeling, and that's kind of really special. It's almost like a spiritual feeling when the whole group have got the dance and we really know it and we're together. And I, even I, feel I'm doing it correctly, and I've got the rhythm. And held by everybody. And that takes you onto another plane (laughs). And you couldn't do that, if you wasn't Circle dancing, I think I could do it, just with my brother, when we were dancing together. He was so in control of me, and I could kind of forget what I was doing because he would guide me so well and... that was a kind of almost spiritual experience because I just forget. And that happens in the Circle dancing when we're all doing it together, when we all seem to have got it. So they're very important moments.

I: That's great. Is there anything else?

D: No.

## **First Circle Interview Ten (1.C.10)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

P: Of course you can Sue

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

P: I suppose it would be about 35 years ago and I was living in Dorset, quite near to a Rudolf Steiner encampment. And... I went along as a volunteer to help. And what they were doing there was Circle dance. It was all those years ago fresh out of Findhorn. And the young people who were leading it were... very inspired. They'd been with the great leader Bernhard Wosein himself, and they felt very strongly about what they were passing on. It was a revelation to me because Steiner campus was for... mainly young people, let's say up to 27 or 28, but mainly late teens, early 20s, who were severely traumatised. They had... mental problems... we're talking autism here, mongol, all the standard stuff, and head and physical problems as well, and these young people in state care would have led a very different existence. But in the amazing campus where they were, they lived in special, specially constructed houses with house mothers and fathers and they... danced all the time. It was part of their life and it was extraordinary to see how the dance... how could it even be done by these young people who were so severely... incapacitated? How could they do it? And yet they could, and part I think was because, I decided, because they had mostly been there from very young, and they'd been doing it from a very early age.... They didn't have the resistance, the inhibitions that many able-bodied, able-minded... young people have. And so they played into the dance, not withstanding terrible incapacities. It was... a revelation to me.

I: Any more on getting involved?

P: I think not..... When I first came here about 10 years ago, it could be 13. one of the first places I visited was the Circle dance group then functioning weekly in the centre of town. And...again it was..... a revelation. I came not knowing anybody, I knew nobody, who lived here, and when I moved here to live, it was... an amazing thing to walk into a group and find I instantly had people who were friends. That was.....warming, really, really warming. It...it...the friendship that is extended from the Circle dance group I think is one of the most important aspects. It's partly, I think, because of the nature of the dance itself. Dancing linked by hand with the entire group. Even if you arrive as a stranger, you're bonded very quickly with that group, and that bonding if you continue to move with that group, becomes very strong. I know in the groups which I myself run, the... people come, sometimes when they might be quite lonely people, who have not had the possibility of making exclusive friendships, possibly recently widowed... and to come into this group and find suddenly they've got all these people with whom they can speak, and feel accepted and.... it's ... it's quite distinctive that people once they start Circle dancing, never stop.

I: So how did you train as a Circle dance teacher?

P: All those years ago, in this Rudolf Steiner, the young people out from Findhorn, were full of the... dances that they'd received in Findhorn and I learnt a lot then. Now for many years for myself, I go on workshops with other leaders. I probably do ... maybe six workshops in the year. It's horrendously expensive but a very... good thing to do. I do it for two reasons, no three. I do it for ... increasing my dance knowledge. The workshop that I went to two weeks ago has left me with... a whole treasury of new dances that I will be introducing to my groups. So they have the ... inspiration coming from internationally

known dancers... So I do it for, I go to these workshops for myself, my own... my own enjoyment. It's always difficult to say that I enjoy them. People say "Oh did you have a good time? Did you enjoy it?" Enjoy isn't precisely the right word because I'm working very hard when I'm there learning all these dances. But it is enjoying them... there will be... dances I've never experienced before that plumb new emotions or new combinations of emotions that I've never experienced. And so for me, one of these workshops is likely to be another step on my own personal path to freedom. And the third reason that I go of course is for ... contact with all of my colleagues around the country and in other countries because at these workshops I can meet people whose interest is the same as mine..... yeah, catch up on all the gossip, but more than that, compare notes, discuss what to do, in classes when such and such happens. What, how to treat such and such a thing, how to present such and such a dance, it's extremely valuable to have these periods with other dance teachers.

I: Any more about the workshops?

P:.... No, that's probably it.

I: You mentioned something about an Armenian workshop yesterday.

P: Yes, yes, it was a couple of years ago..... And..... difficult for me to ... assess.... what I got from it. The Armenian leader was... wonderful. Totally inspirational and a leading light in... the Armenian State Dance Troupe and.... But the dances that we did, I haven't managed to teach on to my group. I think because.....rhythmically, more than rhythmically, musically, emotionally, rhythmically, everything about them, is quite a long way away from a European set. And, and so I'm not able to think of a way to present them that will make them.... rewarding for any group. I have the... the music and the notes... and I.... practice them myself from time to time, and there may come a group where I think "Oh yes. This is just the dance to show them." But as yet, that is... not a dance workshop that I got work-benefit from. Because in a way, Sue, when you go to a workshop of one dance tradition, if you go to Balkan dance for example...in that day, weekend, you move the same set of muscles because the steps are from the same tradition, they move the body in a particular way. You hear the same rhythms, they're very different from our rhythms, very exciting, very complex but their basis is the same.

Underlying, there is the same range of emotions there will be happy dances and sad dances but the range that they are using will be... what is typically Balkan. Now.... I think I most definitely and I believe most people find it exhausting to do a whole programme of one set of muscles, one set of emotions, one sound of music. I don't usually run any workshop on one ... on one tradition. I find when working out a programme that a mixture across the board is the thing that brings most joy to everybody. If... if I have one Greek dance, one Israeli, one Rumanian, one Russian, one piece of jazz, something pop, a gypsy, if all of these are mixed together, I can guarantee that everyone will have heard something, danced something, that they themselves can relate to and... and, or that they themselves need. So the mixture is the easiest... way to present it and... the easiest to receive. So when I've been to workshops, like the Armenian, part of the hardship is because of the concentrated nature of what it's doing.... If your same beautiful Armenian dances were spread out over a weekend interspersed between dances from other nationalities, I don't doubt that they would be, for me and for... anybody else non-Armenian, much easier to receive....

I: Can you give examples of how specific Circle dances facilitate emotional expression?

P: (Pause) It comes of course from the music and being a musician, I always go in from the music, my point of entrance. I will listen to the music and I think any teacher has to go from their own personal experience. I listen to a piece of music and it arouses for me... emotion. It may be that that emotion was intended by the writer of the music or the choreographer of the dance. It may be that that was far from their minds, that it didn't have any emotion. But if it arouses in me, that specific emotion, then, and if it's a strong emotion, then I'm very happy to... lead that dance because if it's in me when I dance it, it will be in the room and then... (sighs) the dancers who are with me at that time, some of them are going to relate to that and when they relate to it, then they will... as they're beginning to dance, tap into that same... range themselves. It's one of the reasons, Sue, that I always demonstrate the dance before I teach it. It's not that common ... quite a small percentage of dance teachers work in that way. And many are quite uncomfortable if you ask them to work in that way. This magnificent teacher that we were working with two weeks ago... didn't work that way, and I asked him where, towards the end of the second day, if he would consider demonstrating before he taught. Because he was a magnificent dancer, I longed to look at him, to look at what he was doing... and he was surprised and he did it for a few dances but I think not very comfortably. But... I feel quite strongly about it. When I do that demonstration, I'm showing the steps and making the link between the steps and the music, very important to me, and... I'm demonstrating the emotion. When I do that little demonstration, I'm making the link between the steps and the music, so important to me, and.... I'm demonstrating the emotion. The... when I do that little demonstration, hopefully the people in the room see a package, that, of a complete dance, in that little segment that I've shown, just one verse of the dance, they've seen what the body looks like, so imprinting immediately on their major, through their major sense, is this vision of what the body is doing, to doing what the arms and spine are doing, but they've also heard it, linked it exactly with the music so the shape of the body and the sound of the music are immediately linked, and finally, with it, they've felt the emotion that goes with it. And to me this is hugely important because then I stop the music and we begin to teach it. And I teach, as you know, not step by step, which for me destroys the pattern of the dance. I teach in chunks and I teach the pattern, at the time it might be a complete musical phrase if the steps are simple, it might be two or three

musical phrases all in one go. We grasp the steps fairly quickly so that people are comfortable moving them and then I speak about other parts of the body, what the spine is doing, how we're breathing, at that moment, what the lungs and the heart can be expecting to do. And then, I'll talk about the emotion. And what it is that I'm feeling and we might all considerably feel at that moment. It's a... for me, the combination of body, music and emotion go together, totally, as one unit and it's what makes this dance for me so hugely special.

I: Anymore on that?..... How important is memory when you are teaching dance?

P: Do you mean mine or the other dancers?

I: Yours.

P: Very, very, very important. Very. I've been to... many groups, on many occasions, when somebody is leading a dance from a... weak stand-point, and the frustration is intense. Absolutely, unbelievably intense (laughs). It...when I'm preparing to lead a dance, with my weekly groups, first of all I have to prepare the programme. Given the time, I normally do that on the same day as I have just completed a session with that group, though if I've taught a series of dances Friday morning, Friday afternoon I have to sit down (laughs) indeed lie down, and while I'm resting, I block out the programme for next week, because at that moment, the sensation of the group and their joint need is clear to me because I've just been with them and I'm... I'm carrying the impression of the things that we've been doing that they need to explore more and also where the group feels as if it needs to go next. So I write the programme up. If there is a new dance, I'm deciding to put in, sometime during the week, possibly daily if I have enough time, I run that dance for myself. These days, with the arthritis, I don't usually dance it physically.... I have to husband... the joints, to strengthen the joints. But what I do is I put on the music and dance the dance in my head. For example, there is a dance that I'm intending introducing next Friday that is new, I've never taught it, I only learnt it myself two weeks ago, and so yesterday, I suppose I listened to it about sixteen times and danced it in my head and the, my understanding is that when you, when you move a muscle mentally, it's the same benefit for the body as if you'd moved it physically. That they train athletes that way?

I: That's right, yes.

P: When they've got injuries and they can't move they go through their training in their mind. And then the day before the dance group, or, if I'm pushed for time, on that morning, which means getting up at six, I run the entire dance programme, absolutely all of it, and visualise the whole thing. So if I haven't, however well I know the dance, I may have danced it 100 times, but if I haven't revised it in my memory in the previous 24 hours, I run the risk, I know from personal experience, of faltering when I'm in front of the group because when I'm in front of the group, I'm not in my head. I'm not wanting to be in my head. I'm wanting to be in my body and in my emotions, in my spirit, to bring something else. So I'm out of my head, the stuff that needs to be in the head, is to be brought up there and focused in the previous 24 hours otherwise I can be in difficulty. The question of memory, yes ... when I run the programme.... If it's a two hour programme... it will take me, it depends on the difficulty of the programme, two to four hours to run it, and I don't dance it physically, again it's in my mind, but I re-read the notes on every dance, and play the music and dance it through in my head. Check that I'm comfortable with the way that I've made the programme. Sometimes, I find that I've made an error, I've put two dances together which use the same muscle group and I'm aware that if I do that with a group, dancers are going to be uncomfortable, their muscle group will be tired by the end of the second dance. So... I revise the programme if it's necessary, but mainly I pass the whole thing through my memory. If you were to ask me now, to dance a dance I hadn't danced for a week, however well I know it, I wouldn't guarantee I could do it. I have a repertoire of 1000 dances, more, and I couldn't guarantee, without looking it up, that it's there, and I certainly couldn't guarantee that I am going to dance it with total abandon, which is what I want to do, in front of the group, unless I've worked the memory first.....

I: Anything more on that?

P: No, no, no (laughs).... Not a thing, Sue (laughs).

I: So how do the dances themselves tell stories? Can you give me some examples?

P: A lot of the very... traditional dances.... come from early, early folk dance roots, and they, the lyrics that go with them... may be hundreds of years old, and the lyrics will have a story to tell. Frequently.... that story is not necessarily taken up in the dance steps. It will be in the lyrics, it won't necessarily have got through to the dance steps... A typical, middle European folk song would be..... oh, young boy goes in the field to look after his goats and it starts to rain and he goes home and his mother's bucket has got a hole in it. That doesn't seem to you like a lot of story, nor indeed to me but this would be fairly typical folk song *fayre*. The steps that go with it, that would have been danced traditionally, in those villages, would not have been particularly to illustrate the meaning of that story, but to induce group bonding in the villages where it was used. The purpose of those early folk dances were, was and indeed, still is, where there are communities where they've survived, group bonding. It is something, the dance is part of the village life. Where there are heightenings, or low points, in the village, special religious ceremonies that then have a secular celebration to one side, grief moments like deaths or parting moments like marriages, these will all have a series of dances that will have been danced with... on those occasions.... Sometimes for us, it's not that easy to relate to a bride's dance because our experience of brides is not the same but..... we can, we can understand what it is that they were dancing about and have it in our minds and at the same time make a correlation to our own experiences.

With...with more modern dances, more modern choreographies... the choreographer sometimes takes a dance which..... which is intended to tell a story, but thinking, Sue, of an example to give you... I cannot. If I can think of one over the next week or so, I will pass it on to you. The.. almost always what the choreographer is passing on is an emotional or a spiritual... sense the music or the lyrics have generated in them.

I: So how would you say Circle dancing influences experiences of yourself and your own health?

P: You mean "How has Circle dancing influenced my own personal health?"

I: And your feelings about yourself.

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Miraculously, I would say, miraculously, totally..... I have not a very.....how can I say it? What I have is advanced osteo-arthritis, it's in the joints, and... when first diagnosed, it seemed a great deal likely that I would be more incapacitated than I am. I find that the dance...when I dance... the pains in the joints that stiffens... that prevents me moving... goes away. It's like somebody waves a wand. I start to dance and the music lifts the spirit, it moves the emotion and the body goes with it. And the body dances then as a young body not as the age that it is.... To move that the way I do, given that I'm sixteen... I weigh over fifteen stone, and I have advanced degeneration in so many joints, is a total miracle. A total miracle. I ... I can't doubt that and I can't doubt that if I hadn't been dancing, my current situation would be very different. It also affects the way I feel about myself. When I dance, I'm connected to... to core issues.... Dance puts me in touch with my own spirit and enables me to... to grow. If during the week I've experienced something... bad, that leaves me emotionally, mentally, spiritually, wobbly in some way, when I'm thinking about the dance, I will include a dance that I need personally to stabilise myself in this place and this means that I'm immensely blessed because every week I've five groups in which I can.... work through anything that is troubling me. So I don't need to go out and have a therapist because, because the dance for me is a therapy.....So, how do I feel about myself?

Because every week I stand in front of people and move my body, I feel young and beautiful. This is of enormous value to me. It would be wonderful if everyone could have the same opportunity. That moment when I demonstrate a dance in order to lay it in front of the group.... I ..... I place myself in a most vulnerable position because I expose everything about myself. I don't stand back and think "Oh God! What if I can't do it? Oh my God, do I remember it? Oh what should this be?" No. I go out there and do what the dance has meant, has revealed to me. And that for me I feel totally...totally at one, at one with the universe, at one with myself... it's a very privileged position to be in. I... people ask me "Why I push myself so hard? Why I do so much?" And it's because my personal rewards are immense, immense.... the feeling that I have, I come out of a dance session, is... something that I couldn't put into words but a deep, deep, satisfaction. Of course, it is a satisfaction as well because I know what I have done has enabled two dozen other people to feel something in the same because of what I did, because I was willing to be completely open and to show everything that I could, and not to conceal. Then, for the other dancers, they can take that as... a starting point and go there too. And so... that's why, if you listen at half time when people are talking, they... there's the usual buzz of conversation that is relaxed and joyful that you will get in... any exercise group because people have been moving their bodies and now they stop moving their bodies and they've got satisfaction from the exercise. But listen a little deeper and you will hear that those people have already got to another place, they experience more than the excitement of moving their bodies, the laugh of a .....a warm joining a joke together. They've experienced something of what I was hoping the music and the dance can show them. And that goes to the.. to the body but also to the heart and the spirit and that's all one. So the people, when they've been very sick, it's amazing sometimes, regular dancers, how quickly they can get back into the group and dance. You can see somebody who's had major surgery, hip replacements... heart problems, strokes, chemotherapy, and they get back, they get back, and when they come back and dance you can see that the energy of the dance is lifting their bodies and helping them to heal. It's... it helps us all..... yeah, what can I say? It's a privilege for us all.

I: Lovely...it's really lovely. Is there any more on that?.... Give you a moment to think.

P: No...

I: Any more on the psychological benefits?

P: Prompt me here. Psychological benefits like...

I: For your mental health.

P: Yeah.... we have a strong belief in Circle dance, although I must qualify that and say that not all Circle dance teachers are comfortable with this belief, in the generation of energy. The belief that, I personally adhere to this very strongly, that is one of the, one of the huge advantages, as far as I'm concerned. When we hold hands, the thought is that the energy is transmitted through the entire group, that it passes through your palm, through the body, across at the level of the heart, down through the other palm and out around the room so that when you're holding hands, the energy is greater than the sum of the parts. It's not..... 24 people with their very problematic energy but one huge energy there which begins to surge, and as the music lifts us and we dance, we move our bodies, the energy grows and grows and grows. At the end.... we have a room full of energy. And... it is the custom to think, for the leader to think, where that energy could go..... In Circle dance, it is usual to have some marker for the centre of the room..... in most cases this will be a candle and where the group is established and.... yeah, not only the candle but flowers and a beautiful centre piece will be made, for two reasons. It has a practical purpose of marking the centre so that when we're dancing in a circle, we don't all end up in the car park. We've got a centre point to dance

around. But I have been in groups where this has been achieved by marking a ... cross in the centre, with a piece of chalk, or putting a coat there... something physically just to mark the centre of the room. But in the groups with which we move with the idea of a candle, our thought is that the candle... takes as a focus, the energy that we are generating, much in the way those schools of meditation... where the person practising the meditation will have a completely dark room with... one candle flame in the centre and meditate on that flame...

The... the flame itself is symbolic of so much of life, spirit, but it is also... a repository for the energy that we are generating.... So when we come to the end, we move that energy. Now usually, the group's first thought will be for it's own members, members who have current health or mental or physical or spiritual or practical problems. You know that... Joe Smith isn't in class to-day because... they have to move house. And we all know what moving house does. So when we blow out the candle, and this is something that we do as a group, we all blow the candle together, if we visualise Joe Smith and send him the energy so that his move is... as little traumatic as a house move can ever be. This exercise is particularly useful for those members who are sick. If we... know that a member is sick, then... we send them energy at that moment. In one of my groups there is a very brave lady who is just going through a second lot of very severe chemotherapy.... and ... it was, has distressing, as these things always are, when the disease returned and it was obvious that she had to undergo more treatment. We knew that the dance was important to her, and I suggested to her that... mentally, she danced with us the last dance, every day that she normally would have been in class. And that... I gave her the time that we would normally be dancing that dance and said "What we will do during that dance, every week, once a week, during the whole time you are undergoing this treatment, we will visualise you dancing with us in that dance. And you at home, visualise being with us, be with us and then at the end we'll send you the energy. And we did this.... to her great joy. Her treatment has not been easy, her kidneys and liver were both, not in good condition but she bore this further treatment. But... she did this exercise every week to join us in the dance... and so did we. We visualised her dancing amongst us with her body whole. And she felt the energy move at that time. Last week, she came and danced with us. She has a whole load more chemo to do but she'd asked for a gap of one week before she did the next lot of chemo so that she could come and dance with us on that day to be with us, really with us. So because she felt the strength that the dancing and that energy gave us, that we were doing could give her at home.... And you know Sue, not just a benefit for her, but for us. When... when we do that, we ourselves feel the upsurge of energy because to pass the energy in that way, I believe, that we are channelling, or take the energy from another source. And we send it to where it's being needed. But the energy coming from another source has the spirit, so we are blessed by that energy just the same. I have to say these beliefs are held by many but not all Circle dance leaders. There are prominent leaders in the country who would dispute vehemently about these ideas. So I have to say, this is my belief, this is what I do when I run classes and I know the belief is shared by many but you certainly could not say that this was... a given account of all Circle dancing.

I: I feel you've sort of answered all my questions. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of Circle dance for you?

P: No, I think not.... Something general, as I say, I'm a musician, my.... the chord that brings me to this is the music.... The huge treasure of Circle dance is the variety of music, which is immense. I know of no other tradition of dance which has this variety.... Folk dance, traditional folk dance, that has been played, sung in this way in villages for hundreds of years but also we have music that has been written in the last year because folk dance is only part of the, the story. Circle dance embraces not only folk but the growing.... growing tradition of any people because dance and music is an integral part of any community and when the community changes, when it grows or disperses or suffers, this is presented in the dance and so yes, some of the dance is very early and very basic, but other dance is 200 years old, reflecting... joys or tragedies, or growth or dispersal amongst peoples... the Armenians are a case in point....The change in their dance style once they were dispersed became very marked and it's my understanding that, because of the loss of the homeland, the tradition of the music and the dance became a great deal more important so that for those....living in New York, the traditions were something that they clung around and developed and absorbed things from their host country and...married them to what was their own tradition so suddenly you've got a new mixture. This happens...also a great deal with...with the gypsy races and oh my goodness, with the Jews. The Israeli dances which are danced now are nothing similar to the dances danced by the Jews in Middle European countries.. and as the Kibbutz developed and grew, then a new style of dancing happened then, with a new style of... of music. To-day... to-day, and the last 50 years, 80 years, I don't know how long, we have choreographers who are inspired by the concept of Circle dancing, by, yes we have a basic vocabulary of steps and we all hold hands to unite the energy, and to-day there are many genius choreographers living who hear music and write new dances. So... Circle dance now covers such a variety of music, music forms and styles and emotion from every country....The music, the dance from Israel is different from that of Greece, is different from that of Russia, totally different from that of the gypsies or the Romanians. We have all of these to dance when we meet in Circle dance. When you dance in ... Line-dancing, wonderful, spirited stuff, I do it myself, but we're talking country, country and western. The style is limited and the... music....what you do with your body, your emotions, your spirit, are always in one place. In Circle dance we are blessed, we have this enormous treasure which is....one of the reasons that I get very, very passionate about it.

I: Is there any more?

P: The importance of brain in Circle dance. It's my intention when we're learning, we're not learning through the brain. I find that when you dance step by step.... I personally dislike very much learning Circle dance through the brain. I find it enormously exhausting. For me, this always happens when it's being taught step by step so...if I'm with a leader who is showing me right foot, left foot, quick-quick-slow, the whole of that has to be memorised step by step. And It goes through the brain and it's agonising. My personal method is to go through the... the spirit, the body and the emotions, simultaneously and hopefully, to bypass the brain, because what I have in mind, when I do the demonstration, is that people's eyes and ears and emotions receive the imprint and they're not, I'm hoping, having to take it into their brain, step by step. That is my intention and my hope that when we start to dance, because the music hasn't gone through the brain, because it's gone through the... directly into the body and into the emotions and the spirit, that it quickly lifts to another place, it's not tedious and heavy mental work to recapture the steps. It... I feel very strongly about this one (laughs) because I find it incredibly tedious even to learn the most wonderful dance step by step because then, how do you get to the other place, into the body and directly to the music? If you're in the brain, you're not connected to the music, the music is in the heart and the... when I do that demonstration, it's my wish, my hope, that I'm plugging the dancers directly into the music.

I: How important do you think are visual cues?

P: Visual cues? Ie from?

I: From other dancers.

P: I'm not sure that I understand the question.

I: Watching what other dancers are doing in order to be able to dance.

P: Totally useless and I dislike it...when..... To start with, there is a very strong practical problem, when you are in a circle, everybody is at a strange angle to you, if you're watching the leader and the leader is on the other side of the circle, all of your steps are going mirror fashion and that is virtually impossible. And if you want to watch the dancers just on either side, you have to look at a very steep angle and bend your body forwards. So it's not a comfortable way to... to learn. I prefer always to demonstrate from the centre of the circle, and while we're getting the dance going, to remain in the centre doing two or three verses myself while you're dancing, while the dancers are circling around the outside, to have the leader in the centre, revealing the entire dance I hope so that by the time I melt back into the circle, we're all able to do it without having to watch anybody's feet. Watching somebody's feet is to go straight back into the brain. And it is painful for the person having to do it, it's not a good thing. And Sue, it's not necessary. It's nothing to do with memory or familiarity with the dance, it's to do with relaxation. When the person is... relaxed and uninhibited, they will not have difficulty in following even the most complex dance, and joining in in a very short while. As witness those extremely... incapacitated young people that I worked with in Rudolf Steiner. It's perfectly possible, it's to do with the relaxation.

I: Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview One (2.C.1)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

M: Yes definitely.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dance?

M: I first got involved in Circle dance when we were on holiday in Greece and I enjoyed it, Greek dancing, when we were on holiday.... I've only just got involved in it as a class to attend since coming here through a retirement organisation, that's how I saw it. So I did... It rang a bell with holiday, good holiday dancing experiences so yes (laughs) I go along. So that was my introduction to it.

I: Can you tell me any more about your holiday in Greece?

M: ... Yes I was interested in going to Greece because I studied art at art school and I was interested, at school I learnt Latin and classics, and my father was very interested in the classics, and what was missed out when I was at art school was the Greek, history of Greek art, ancient Greek art (laughs), which seems to me a terrible lack. And I'd always wanted to see places like the Parthenon etc.... And the children had grown up a bit and I had a tutor at art school who was half Greek and he'd raised my interest, curiosity about Greece. So we finally decided we would go. And enjoyed it very much... and we've been going to Greece for about 20 years on and off, for holidays. It was also not expensive which was an attractive part of it and I was fascinated by the music, I loved the music. And the people were very friendly and wanted you to participate so... really enjoyed it, there was something about it that was so different and so exciting and I liked... I hadn't been to the Mediterranean before, anywhere like that. And I loved all the exotic scents and... just it's completely different from, from Britain and what I've known here... I particularly like the open air... being out in the open air. Go in and swim and come out. And everything seemed very relaxed... And the people were very, very, I found very, very civil, very kindly, very friendly. We did notice over the years though, things change, the influence of tourism and the behaviour of tourists, didn't respect the culture because, because it is different from the British culture, there are ideas about how women should behave and so on, that are different from Britain. When I go abroad, I'm always very keen to try and empathise with the local culture and respect custom... the, their view of things. And we got so interested in fact that we started learning modern Greek. I taught myself initially and then



we were living in Bristol and discovered there were extra-mural classes in modern Greek by a native speaker. So we went there and we got to the point where we could hold (laughs) simple conversations in Greek. And this was nice, but as things changed with the influx of tourism which wasn't so sympathetic but was demanding what they wanted rather than merging with the Greek culture, we found that they hadn't got the time the way that they used to have, to listen to you while you tried to answer things in Greek.... there was just a subtle.... just a progressive subtle change. I think they were possibly... dis-appointed in the behaviour of some visitors which made them change as well. So regrettably (laughs) we haven't been back for the last five years because we felt, we just didn't like the change... and it seemed as though money, money, money was behind everything. But if you went sort of to be like them, they were more or less "Hire a car. Why aren't you hiring a car?" ....They didn't actually say that much but the pressure then felt that, that they wanted you to spend, spend, spend, and they made remarks about... holiday people coming from Eastern Europe who hadn't got much money, they were bringing their own supplies, and all they were doing was sitting on the beach and not spending money and so the whole, the whole climate sort of changed a bit, and it put us off actually in the end. We felt lost we'd lost what was so attractive about it in the first place. But I mean I think people, say in the universities, go over to do archaeological digs and things like that. I think they get to see possibly more of the sort of traditional Greek life whereas if you are just a tourist sort of going on your package tour, to the seaside, you're getting a very... contained... experience that's been more developed to meet the tourists' needs rather than to represent the natural Greek hospitality.

I: Yeah

M: So I think that's still there, but I think you probably have to go in a different way than the way we were going, to find it... again.

I: So can you describe what the Circle dancing was like in Greece? How did you get involved?

M: Well they just literally came across, took you by the hand, and they took you into the circle to dance, to dance with them. And you just went round following what they were doing. And they were just completely accepting that you made mistakes and nobody was upset about it. It was just literally... literally joining in, listening to music and watching what they were doing. I didn't know the names of the steps, like Grapevine and all the rest of it, it just sort of how they moved. And I really loved the rhythm of the music, the sound of the music so I found I picked it up quite easily actually. The dances they did weren't quite as complicated as some of the dances we've had in our class... in the sense that they probably only use three or four... well I should think three different changes of steps, so that it wasn't... you hadn't got a very complex sequence of steps to remember, they were much simpler. Possibly they did that deliberately when they knew they were inviting strangers in but... but we just joined in like that. They would come and welcome you and just...

I: Where was this Circle dancing happening?

M: Oh it was happening... where we stayed... in the hotel dining room or in the cafe or something like that. So I didn't associate it with a sort of celebration of any particular kind. Just, it was just something that they did. Just... dancing... (laughs). It was very informal. But...they didn't make you feel that if you'd got it wrong there was anything, any problem with it.... We all laughed or smiled and they encouraged you. So it was very nice.

I: And were men and women doing it together?

M: I can't remember... I think it was mixed, we were mixed, whoever was there. I think it was mostly women actually. That were doing it. As I say, it was extremely informal, so whether it would have been how, exactly how they would have danced it if there hadn't been visitors, I don't know. But there were... yes, my husband got up and danced as well. Yeah. So it was, it was quite spontaneous really... it wasn't sort of special.

I: So have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

M: ... Yes. I've gone to... Tango classes for a while, which I like very, very much. That's completely different, that's a way of dancing, obviously that's with a partner and its... a totally different style of dancing. I enjoyed that very much. I did Scottish Country dancing at school which I enjoyed very much... Ballroom dancing a long time ago (laughs) I went to, when I was a student, I went to some Ballroom dancing... classes....just that I wasn't, competent (laughs) But I do like dancing and... I've forgotten how much I have enjoyed it until I joined this class again... I thought "Why wasn't I doing this... before?" So... I'm really pleased. Because I love moving to music. I love music. But I particularly like the kind of music we get in Circle dancing, these eastern, more eastern sounding rhythms. So they really do sort of trigger something off in me. I don't why that I can really sort of feel... feel... gathers me in, somehow the music. I... I really like it. I find it quite fascinating because there are rhythms... not rhythms we're used to at all. So like that. But mostly it's moving, moving to music... I think the Circle dancing actually, when the rhythm's going right, and everyone's really getting into it, it has a wonderful feel... very sort of calming, very sort of... it moves you into a different sort of emotional state or plane, I think... That's what I really liked about it, the moments when that happens in the dancing, that happens in the slow ones, I think, or the simple ones where it's almost hypnotic.... you're repeating a very simple range of steps that go with the music and it's a bit like a wave. And it's sort of... very sort of calming, I think, steady in one sense and taking you somewhere else in another, and a higher plane on another. And that's what I really like about it, when that happens, that's it at its very best I think. And I think that's what really refreshes you, at the end of it, if you've hit that sort of moment in the... in the dance period... in the time that you've got to do it then

that really does something and that's the point where you get really refreshed afterwards. Even though you're sort of, in one sense sort of physically tired, but, but you're completely refreshed in another way. That's the effect it has on me, that's how I feel about it. I also like the fact that you're actually physically holding hands with other people, it is a uniting gesture. I think it makes, I think it makes... making new acquaintances much easier. I think that's, that's an important part to it. And the other thing that I notice that people never think of yourself as old, I know I don't, you don't consciously think of yourself as growing old, only you recognise there are people there who appear to be much older than you are, and the fact that they're really doing it and really enjoying it is a wonderfully positive thing, because when you stop to think about growing older, there are so many negatives that people can bring up and often do talk about (laughs) rather than the positives. And to see that, there's no reason to feel negative about growing old at all, because people are so obviously enjoying doing things and taking up new activities. So if other peoples' example also sort of... lifts you as well, to see how... So those are the things... that most impress me about the experience of... I know I can't, I don't worry about not remembering the steps from time to time, because what I've found is there is a characteristic pattern of steps, and the more often you do the dancing... the more you recognise the pattern of steps that you're being asked to do so you do in an unconscious way actually find yourself becoming more familiar and remembering. But I must admit, I do find it difficult when we've got a new dance and there's... very complex sequences. I might get the first sequence and think "Yes I've got that." Then we move to the next sequence which is a different set of steps but are quite complex, I find I can't actually remember the first sequence (laughs) not initially, not the first time we do it but when the music starts that definitely helps and somehow the flow with the music, by the time the dance has finished you've got the pattern with the music on the whole. But... I don't let it worry me whether I'm remembering it or not because it's the, I notice if you don't take too big steps, if you take small steps, and as she says, if you move in the general direction of the dance, even if you're sort of getting it wrong, you're not upsetting the dance, you don't feel, you don't feel it's too embarrassing (laughs)... if you've got it the wrong way, whereas with other dances, where it's couple dancing... to get it wrong you're treading on someone's toes or you're banging into someone- else and then you do feel very self-conscious. But I think, I think doing it in a circle like that, it's...making mistakes, doesn't feel the same as though you've done something dreadful. You feel it's part of the process. Yes. The other thing is I think we perhaps ought to repeat some of the new dances maybe the next week so there's a re-inforcing going on. If we keep having new ones all the time, you don't get, the gain isn't quite as much, I don't think perhaps as it would be... if we re-inforced it.

I: How easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

M: I think I find it quite easy... the more complex ones though I find more difficult, but as I said before, I don't worry about it... as long as I go with the general flow, as long as I'm not making a mistake that disrupts the circular movement really. So that's, that's... that's really how I feel about it.

I: Are you able to give examples of how you learn a particular dance?

M: I usually try and watch someone whose going close enough to my side, who I've noticed is obviously an experienced dancer, and use their steps to help me remember my steps. It's difficult if the teacher's, the mirror reflection thing is very, very difficult, makes it worse, if the teacher is on the opposite side of the circle to you then you're seeing everything in a mirror, mirror-image and that's really difficult so I try and look to whoever is to the right and left of me who is a more experienced dancer... and follow them. That's my method of learning (laughs) anyway.

I: And how important would you say is memory?

M: ... Well I do want to get to know the dance, but I'm not going to make myself anxious, I'm not, I don't feel anxious about it and I know from experience, that repeating something does re-inforce it. And I will remember it. How quickly I will remember it will vary, I suppose, as to how complex the thing is that I'm trying to remember but I don't worry about the memory. Yes I would like to become familiar with it so I can enjoy it even more. Obviously if you, if you know the steps, then you can lose yourself much more in the music and... and ... feel sort of more spiritual, emotional feel of the dance. So, so it's important, yes, to feel that you're going to learn the steps eventually, so that you can get even more out of the dancing clearly but I don't worry, I don't worry about it.

I: So how... you've told me a little bit about how Circle dancing influences experiences of yourself... Do you have any more to say about that?

M: Yes... thinking about the emotional content of the music obviously reminds me of our holidays in Greece, doing Greek dances, and that... that's got, that's got a sort of, happiness to remember it, happiness to sort of re-visit that kind of feeling you got when I was dancing. Also slight sadness, because (laughs) we are not going to go, we might not go back again. I don't know.... So it's reminding you of something you really enjoyed and also reminding you of loss, at the same time a bit as well. But... my personal feelings about it are that. But I love to hear it again and be reminded of it... And I'm still studying Greek so it, it's part of that continuing experience of the culture, yes. I also when we do the Scottish dances, that's, that's got an emotional content because... my family are all Scots and I didn't move to England until I was five and a half, so the earliest family memories are of Scottish music.... Scottish. We go back just to Scotland, so the connections with Scotland. So that has, that has a sort of nostalgic, romantic, and sort of historical, emotional content for me.

I: Mm.

M: Which I like. And that's a mixture of happiness at remembering, sadness at remembering... relatives, grannies or someone that aren't there any more...so it's got that mixture of happiness and nostalgia, melancholic. But it's nice to re-visit and to remember. That's what nice about it because it's a remembering too, reminding you of your own sort of history in a way... your own experiences through time up to now and it surprises, it surprises me, the emotion that will be evoked... or come to the surface through the dancing. And that's part of the... that's part of the benefit too in that, that you have these emotions you carry with you, and they're not always at the surface, they're probably there. I think just being, touching them again is kind of... takes you away from the mundane concerns of your daily life and reminds you of, of your real person as a human being, what really makes you you. How it makes all people real, valuable to other people, which is, is not what you do, it's how you are as a person I think and the exchanges you make with other people. I think this is, this is helpful in that sort of sense, putting you in touch with your... whole self or your private self... and it's always with you, but you get, you lose it in practical concerns like shopping this, cleaning this (laughs) all the other things. So it's nice but I think it's a mixture of happiness and sadness and remembering and then happiness that you can do again what once you enjoyed doing that maybe you'd forgotten about, a long time ago... Yeah so those are the emotions. But it's quite surprising, I didn't think I'd feel so emotional when I was dancing as I, as I found. But that was a surprise because most other dancing I've done is much faster, and when you're doing something physically quickly, you get that lively feeling from the music, but it's a much more superficial feeling I think, there's some of the more deeper feelings that come out of the Circle dances, especially the slow, slow ones... when there's this sort of rhythm. So that's as far as I can go on that one I think.

I: Lovely... So how would you say Circle dancing influences experiences of your health?

M: The most positive thing is I might go there having been rushing round or having been fraught with something that... irritated me or distracted me or worried me or I've been rushing, I've been physically very active or something's put me in a certain kind of frame of mind. I find that when I get to the dancing, that completely takes me out of that, of that emotional state and puts me in a much (laughs) much, takes me away from whatever it was that was... sort of tiring me or rushing me or worrying me beforehand, and puts me in a much better, I find a better equilibrium afterwards, it refreshes me. It sort of, takes me out of that. And even though I felt tired, when we're going round, even when we've gone round quite fast, somehow I feel refreshed. So that I definitely... yes refreshing's the word I would apply to it. So even if I go back, cycling back and all the rest of it, I still feel much fresher than I did before I started. So that's (laughs) the positive side!

I: Any more on that?

M: ...I've never consciously thought of it as a health activity... I merely thought of it, quite selfishly, as something pleasurable that I would thoroughly and enjoy and would be a good way of mixing with people... because we've just moved, we've been here now six months so it was a start of meeting new people and new contacts and all the rest of it. That I was a bit apprehensive of... initially but... And I was worried if you got it wrong it would matter terribly... and you'd feel embarrassed but I found the complete opposite of what I thought. I found it a totally positive experience... So that's it really (laughs). I don't think there's anything...

I: Any more on psychological benefits?

M: Well it definitely puts me in a place... in a more spiritual place is probably the right word, almost like meditation or... or... or even when you go to a religious place, like a church or somewhere like that, it induces a kind of, that side... So you're taking time out of the hurly-burly, you're sort of... yes, and I think that, that's what's different about it to any other form of dancing I've done. I don't think I could say any more than that.

I: Have you ever had any injuries from Circle dancing?

M: No, no. None at all. No. I've felt maybe my calf muscles, when we've done a lot of bouncing or skipping round, a bit sort of tight... but nothing, no, injuries, definitely not, no.  
(laughs).

I: So how would you say Circle dancing influences your experiences of growing older?  
You mentioned a bit before about...

M: It's made me feel very positive and it's made me feel that it doesn't, it doesn't matter, growing older... but actually no, I feel sort of as much pleasure and ability to do it as I did when I was very much younger, even as a child in fact. It's, it's awoken some of the senses of pleasure, in the same way it did when I was a child. And also this factor that there are people a lot older than me... who are obviously enjoying it, and moving round quite happily and if they've got problems with joints and things, they just sort of opt out of certain bits and it's no, it's no handicap to actually participating. So it's been very, very positive on that aspect, yeah.

I: Anything else?

M: On the health?

I: Growing older.

M:... Probably makes me aware that other people find difficulty at this stage in remembering things... so the fact that you're not the only person who might not remember as well as you used to, is just part of the condition, of this stage in life and therefore not something exceptional that you've been selected for, it's not some misfortune that's descended on you so, so

again that's sort of positive in the sense that you see it in place, in it's proper place, this... So it reduces anxiety I think about these things... sort of, when it's just how it is... (laughs) And by doing things like this, you're sort of practising, exercising it a bit more so you're probably staying off a bit, a bit of deterioration. I don't think I can say any more than that.

I: Ok.... How has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body? Or... more your relationship with your body?

M:..... I suppose when you go about your daily activities, I tend to rush at things if there's things I want to get done I don't particularly like doing, like the housework and so I tend to be quite sort of tense when I'm doing things. And this has made me be aware of moving in a more measured, slower... balanced (laughs) sort of, controlled sort of way, it's difficult to express it, but it's made me aware of making movements in a, in a very different way from the way I would normally make them in the sort of activities of going about your daily sort of business. So I suppose it's made me more aware of... actually thinking about how I do move... how you do move. And how you feel better if you don't rush and maybe I'm learning a bit that I shouldn't go bang at things any more, it's better if I, if I sort of take them a bit more measured way. So yes, it has made me experience moving differently.

I: Anything else? You can take a moment to think.

M: Yes... I realise I really like moving in response to a beat or a rhythm that comes from the music that, that timing with the music is actually something I enjoy. I enjoy the measure of movement that's defined by the rhythm of the music, I enjoy that very much which I wasn't conscious of as being something I thought about... And doing it without actually having to count "One, two, three. One, two, three." As you do in ballroom dancing when they're teaching you to do that. It's sort of different. Somehow the steps or the movement sort of leads you into going in time with the music without sort of having it sort of shouted out at you.... I think that's all.

I: That's OK. So we're onto the last question. Is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

M:... Well the strange thing is I find that this is a class that I don't want to miss (laughs) which I think is one I would probably make a real effort to get to... and wouldn't want to miss it, which is... which surprised me. I didn't think I'd find... I'd enjoy doing it so much that I would sort of come out in the rain on my bicycle, when there was a high wind (laughs) to get to it (laughs) With anything else, I could find a good reason....that would be the reason I could put it off. So that's something I've discovered..... Yes and I think the other discovery is this one of discovering a big emotional content in dancing to the music which I didn't think about beforehand but realise that it does bring up... quite powerful emotions.... as you say, some of them are light and happy and others are quite melancholic... But I actually enjoy, enjoy that experience... responding to the emotional content in the music. But I've always found music was something that would release emotions.... when you're very stressed. But I've always tended to use it, on my own at home, listening to music, as a settling sort of thing or something to help you express something that you're feeling, not letting out... But that surprised me, that I would feel it as much when I was actually dancing... I don't know why I thought it was something that you only feel strongly if you were sitting passively, listening to music. I'm surprised that the movement also is part of the sort of the emotional... experience... I think that's all.

I: OK. Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview Two (2.C.2)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

L: Yes, you can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

L: Well I joined this retirement organisation last year when I semi-retired. This year I have completely retired and I wanted a class that was, gentle exercise, because I do other forms of exercise. I've always liked dancing but my husband hates it so... and it was near where I lived so I thought... I would try it out and see how it was because I had no idea what was involved. I think I thought it was a little bit like country dancing maybe, which I haven't done since I was at school, so it was a bit of a learning process... and I haven't really danced... since... I was in my twenties so..... I have done aerobics which I find a bit exhausting, my main sport is... tennis which is obviously quite a physical sport and this just seemed a nice gentle, at least I thought it would be gentle, exercise class, but not, not aerobics. Something with nice music, which it's turned out to be. So... I went along not knowing what to expect and I really ... love it now and I'm not finding it particularly easy but I do really like it.... And.... so I've only been doing it since October and... just getting into it, I think you could say... Yes, so... and the people are all very nice, the other ladies, and... it's a way of meeting other people.... and yeah I'm just really enjoying it. I don't think I can say anymore than that.

I: You said something about being in... doing other forms of dance...

L: Well I haven't done any other... when I was young I did country dancing at school and whatever you did as a teenager, Jive, Rock and Roll... but I've never done any other dancing. We'd been to the occasional Barn-dance... So I haven't done any dancing... for 30 odd years so it's quite new to me.

I: Right.

L: Yeah, so it's quite interesting as well to see. And the philosophy behind it is quite interesting, I'm not sure I completely agree with it all but... it's quite, I think it's quite interesting, yeah, yeah... So that's it, as I say, I've only been doing it three months... about three months and that's it. I can't say more than that.

I: Anything more about the philosophy?

L: Ah well... I think it's nice to be involved in something where you've not got, not got the pressures of the modern world. It's sort of going back to... sort of more basic thoughts, I think. I think one of the things that I really like about it is the folk element I think.... I can't really tell you a story but my mother was Hungarian and I have quite a lot of photographs of her when she was young so I remember her telling me about the polka and the mussurka, so... from that point of view, there was the link, and that was quite nice I think. And the fact that quite a lot of the dances are... from... that part of the world, the Balkans and... Czechoslovakia. I don't think we've actually done a Hungarian one. We might have done one. And that's quite interesting. I wish she was still alive so I could talk to her about it. But that's quite nice, isn't it? So I think the... the getting away for the... technological age is quite nice. Goin back to... basic.... sort of, I don't sort of... I think some of the, some of the philosophy is a bit sort too much out of the modern world... Basically, it's quite nice to have a change. Yeah. Yeah.

I: Mm. So you said... you mentioned something about liking the music?

L: Yes, I like the flute. I like the flute and that nice gentle music.... and I like some of the meditative dances... and sort of Celtic influences. I do find the music, of all of them, even the quick ones, is really, really nice. Yeah I like the music.

I: Mm... and what bits of the philosophy don't you like?

L: Oh dear... well I think you could be too, too escapist, you have to sort of... accept some modern things that are going on. I mean we couldn't exist all living in forests and... living off the earth. I don't... living off, I don't think it would work, there are just too many people in the world now for that to work. I mean I think it's nice for those that can get away and are happy doing it but not everybody would be able to do it, that's it basically. Yeah, yeah.

I: Mm... So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

L: Well I found it quite difficult at first, the, some of the steps, I mean I still haven't got the hang of the... can't think, Yashimite? I think that one. So... and then quite a lot, when there's a lot of different parts to a dance, you then bring the sequence of the different parts. But... I now live got, now I'm into it a bit more, I find it a lot easier but... First of all I found it quite difficult but now I, I will, finding it much easier, yeah, yeah. So as long as I concentrate... concentrate on the different combinations, you can't, you can't really loose concentration so I think that's quite good, that you've really got to. Some of the, some of the dances that are just... one or two sections, you sort of go into a bit of a daze but... most of them, you've really got to concentrate on where you are.

I: Yeah... yeah.

L: So... so difficult to start with but getting a lot easier....

I: Can you give an example of how you learn a particular dance?

L: .... I tend to do it by numbers I think, sort of saying... "And back two three, side two three" whereas some people do it by a different method so that's how I remember it, so forward-back and the number of steps there are... Not necessarily the name of the step..... it's I think... sometimes the name of the step fits in with what it's like "Yosh-e-mite" parts. And the... Grapevine I've just got the hang of but sometimes get in a bit of a muddle.... we've learnt a new one to-day, didn't we? Interesting the names of the steps I think, and where they originated from. In some ways it would be quite nice to know a bit more of the background to some of the dances... to the different countries, and how, how, because the movement's been going since 1973 or something, wasn't it? So how somebody sort of sat round and decided that they were going to choreograph these particular dances is quite interesting, how they were going to name the different steps, that would be quite interesting to... to know. But... something to do further research on (laughs).

I: So any more about learning the dances?

L: .... Well.... I like, everybody's very helpful, nobody sort of minds if you get in a muddle... I.. when I first came, I didn't think that it would be quite, I mean I think it's quite, I think I thought there might be more movement but I realise now that it's, it's really the, which I like, where you really, really have to use your mind as well as your feet.... I really like that, that you really have to concentrate on remembering the steps, it's no good... just thinking the music will carry you along, you've really got to concentrate. And I think that's good when you get older, to make your mind remember certain combinations of numbers or movements or whatever. Sometimes, when you're trying to sleep at night, you can go through the movements in your head and send you off to sleep.

I: That leads nicely into my next question which is "How important is memory?"

L: I do think as you get older, especially when you stop going to work, you really do need some other stimuluses to make you use your brain in different ways, I mean. And I think this way is quite different from, because you're having to combine your, your...the memory of the steps with your actually doing them, so it's a sort of combination of the mind and the body, whereas you can do other things, cross-words which I do or play bridge or... which is just the mind. So this is very good for mind and... co-ordination, that's the word, isn't it? Co-ordination (laughs) Yeah. So I do think it's important for memory because I mean

if you, if your memory was going, I don't think you'd find it possible to do the dances so I think... it's a good test if you can do the dances, your memory's still there.

I: Any more on that?

L: No. I just think that...I don't think I'd find it as easy to remember now as I would have done if I was doing it younger, when I was younger. But no, so I think it's the fact that I'm quite pleased when I do remember a dance... I'm quite pleased with myself. So that's good... I don't think I've anything more to say about memory. I think memory is extremely important as you get older.

I: So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

L: .... Well I consider I'm quite a healthy person... because I sort of made up my mind that I'm going to... I've played tennis all my life and I'm not going to give it up unless something happens that I have... break a leg. So it's a case of making yourself keep up with things, and not saying "Oh I feel too tired. I can't do that to-day." Or even like going to the class... "Oh... I don't feel like doing it." But I think you have to sort of physically make yourself... do exercise. I think... we are being bombarded now, aren't we? With ... messages on the television, in the paper or whatever, that, how important it is to keep yourself fit... By exercise, particularly for older people... you have to do load-bearing exercises where you are jumping up and down so and, this is... a gentle form and the fact that it's...you can have a gentle dance and then you can have quite a, vigorous, energetic dance... but I never find I'm getting so out of breath that I can't do it, so that's I think, quite a nice... task to do from that point of view. I wouldn't say it would be a class to really keep you fit... not me, anyway, because I never really get out of breath... But it's a contrast to doing a sport, I think, a contrast to doing a sport. And it's not competitive which is quite nice, I mean tennis is competitive... because you are always striving to win. Whereas this is not. You can relax to a certain extent. I mean you've got to remember the steps but it's... you can relax as well, you're not competing against other people, although you might think if you make a mess up. But nobody minds, do they? So that's, it's a nice form of exercise and... I don't know whether it's benefitted my health, I'm sure it has... and the psychological benefits, well I'm sure they're all favourable, I'm sure.... And if I get time, I wouldn't mind doing one of the... one of the workshop classes when you have a longer session and learn them a bit more. But at the moment I haven't got the time but... I think it can only be, can only be good.

I: I was going to ask you a bit more how the Circle dance compares with your experience of having played tennis?

L: .... Well it's quite different because... I mean I normally play, I don't play singles now but I play doubles but even so... you're playing with a partner and you want to win... and tennis is more energetic, I have to say, and it's a different, it's a completely different mind frame because you're wanting, especially if you're playing in a match, you... you're playing to win whereas with Circle dancing, you're just doing it for enjoyment really, yeah, enjoyment. You're doing tennis for enjoyment as well but... it's a different, it's a different activity... And... the only other... I mean that's a sport. The only other activity, I cycle obviously and walk, but I don't do the type of cycling where you are sort of pushing yourself, a few hills round here, not pushing yourself to sort of actually get fitter... because I do a lot of cycling... And... I enjoy walking. So I think that's quite a nice complement to the tennis, which I call the energetic thing, walking and the cycling. Dancing is just nice, another contrast, and sort of something different, isn't it? I think those things complement each other so I'm very happy with it.

I: How does it compare with your experience of aerobics?

L: ... Well I haven't done aerobics for a few years... aerobics... I didn't... I didn't particularly enjoy. I mean I found aerobics much more strenuous, so from that point of view, maybe it was benefitting me more, because I could... you were using your, pumping your heart out more. It's not like that, so I wouldn't say it was a vigorous form of exercise... I did swimming but swimming again, not, not at such a pace that you get tired out... sort of ... at my own pace so... But I'm sure I'm pleased I'm doing it now rather than perhaps leaving it until I was older because it's something that you can get into now, it's something that if ever I have to stop tennis, it's something that I can carry on with. Yeah. Hopefully.

I: Any more on how Circle dancing makes you see yourself?

L: ... Well... I don't know that I can say that I see myself any differently... from Circle dancing... And... I haven't had any injuries from it... I can't, I can't think unless something, unless you did some unusual movement you'd get any injury from Circle dancing. I mean it makes me feel good, I enjoy it.

I: So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

L: Well... I think when I first started I was surprised that I did actually feel, occasionally, quite tired in the lesson, whatever, but now I don't find... that I'm tired, I just take it as part of whatever I'm doing during the day... So... as I like to think I'm fairly fit... I'm sure it's all positive experiences. That's all I can say, I think.... And I think as far as the psychological benefits, listening to music and especially nice pleasant, soothing music or music, all the music from different dances is all, is all... good for you, beneficial. I think the music is...is... a big part of the actual dance. If you didn't have the music it wouldn't be the same. I think.... and I think I like the fact you're dancing with other people and you are sort of connecting in a way. Yeah. And it's.... actually I think U. is quite good... when you're looking at somebody across the Circle you're smiling at them, so I think that's... I think that's... if you come away feeling happy, that's good isn't it? Yeah. I don't think I can say more than that.

I: Ok. Any injuries?

L: No, I haven't had any injuries. I'm very lucky, so...

I: How does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

L: ... Well... I don't quite know, only I think it's nice now I've got time to do Circle dancing when I wouldn't have had time when I was at work. It wouldn't have been something I would have chosen to do because... well in fact it wouldn't even have occurred to me. So I mean because you look through the prospectus and you think "Now I'd like that...to do something with exercise, an exercise class .I'd like to do a class, something that's educational but I haven't done before, not even remotely think of doing, which is what I've done and...so...maybe as the years go on, I do, see how long some of the other people have been doing it... and... I'm just really looking forward to it being a class I can keep going to as I do get older. Well into my 80s, hopefully(laughs). So.. so that's something I shall definitely keep up when the class is going.

I: Anything else on that?

L: ... No... I'm just so grateful that I'm fit enough to carry on doing it and mentally active to remember the steps.

I: So how has Circle dancing changed your experiences of your body?

L: ... Well... I said earlier I did feel quite tired after the first couple but now... I don't find at the moment that it's had... I've found anything different. And I'm quite pleased that I can do it.... I've never really considered myself as a particularly good dancer... and actually it's quite nice to watch some of the other people that have been doing it for quite a long time, how much, how graceful that they are. So I've tried to sort of, rather than concentrating too much on getting the steps exactly right, to try and bring a bit more rhythm into the, into the dance. And to actually try sometimes... forget about the steps. You concentrate sometimes too much on the steps, without actually getting the rhythm of the dance. We are all just sort of stepping it out, whereas if you can forget about, forget about the steps a bit, and then just sort of the rhythm, then I just think your body moves a bit more freely. So I'm hoping to work on that (laughs). Getting the rhythm and... I think as you do more, you don't, the steps will become easier, and you'll be able to enjoy listening more to the music and getting involved with the rhythm of the dance then, which is what I'm looking forward to. I mean I feel probably if I do the same class next year, I won't be worrying too much about the steps and the dances. Even though U. says we've done this dance before, I can only remember one or two and the whole thing's a new experience each time... But I think if I carry on next year... I shall... be able to do it much more naturally like... yeah, like somebody who's been doing it for a few years. So I'm looking forward to that and... I don't think, well I always thought when I joined the class "I won't have any difficulty"... as I'm... fairly fit and healthy so... I can't really say it's changed my experience of my body.

I: Any difference between doing Circle dancing and doing tennis?

L: ...Well... with tennis you can actually injure yourself and sometimes, I have actually... had a few injuries, like... I had a stretched ligament in my leg because I kept playing when I knew I shouldn't have done... so I had to wait for that to heal up. So... I don't feel that, unless you were very unfortunate, that you could injure yourself Circle dancing... So because with a competitive sport, you carry on even though sometimes you know you shouldn't because you want to win a particular game or whatever. But with dancing... it's a leisure activity rather than a competitive sport.

I: Lovely. So is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

L: (Laughs) As I say, I haven't done much dancing... it's actually quite nice now... that I am doing some dancing... and if I have time, I might try some other forms of dancing... I can't say I met my husband dancing or anything like that so no romantic (laughs) connections with dancing. I mean I think everyone sort of dances when they're teenagers and I remember doing, learning to dance at school but I think now... I'm very pleased that I've got the time to learn about some different dance forms and this might, as I say, I shall keep up the Circle dancing because I mean I really like it but it might encourage me to try some other forms of dance. And... this is a case of how much time you've got.

I: Can you tell me anything more about dancing as a teenager?

L: ... Well I can remember going to, because I lived here, since I was about eighteen, so I can remember... my friend and I, we always used to go to what was known as the "Vic" and the "Dorothy" (laughs) the Dorothy ballroom. And I can remember dancing to the Rolling Stones and I can remember going to see Gerry and the Pacemakers and... so I was really into Rock and Roll... but then I got married and we did the occasional dancing but somehow just... dancing was just something... that I didn't do anymore, which was a bit of a shame but I think maybe dancing went out of fashion, it was all what you call, bopping around, wasn't it? Because when my, when my daughters were sort of teenagers it was just, there weren't any steps as far as I can remember (laughs). You just sort of bopped up and down to the music. And... my husband, I think... and my husband was never keen, he, he was in the navy at one time and he was forced to do Ballroom dancing so he could dance with the lady-passengers and he said "That was enough." So he wasn't prepared to do any more (laughs). And... so I didn't dance, only... the Waltz, I could always remember how to do the Waltz and the Gay Gordons... and... Strip the Willow and dances... dancing with the kids I suppose I've done that... but not a class or anything like that. But I've always sort of liked rhythm and... liked music and...so in a way, I wish I'd had time to do some dancing. Now I have and now... I'm going to carry on and do some more. I can, I think I can remember my mother talking of dancing when she was in Hungary, because I think in those days... before... I mean we're talking about the wars, it was...it was a form of... entertainment, wasn't it? People didn't have television or radio, so I think they did a lot of Folk-dancing. And I wish she was still here that I could ask her about it... In fact my brother's got photographs, I must look them up and see what I can find... I mean I know she did... had this

wonderful sort of dresses, I don't know, costumes. I can remember a photo of her in her... costume. So... I know that she did a lot of dancing. It's just in case, if the opportunity's there and you can do it or... other things take up your time so that I haven't danced since I was... twenty I suppose. So I'm quite brave, trying a completely different class. That's it really.

I: OK. Thank you.

### **Second Circle Interview Three (2.C.3)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

K: Yes, you can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

K: When I retired, I knew about the retirement organisation, because people in the Church I attend had actually started it, so I determined that I would do something and when I got the brochure, I saw Circle dance and I quite fancied it... although I'd never done it and I didn't really know what it was. So I went along to U.'s class and that was the 2001- 2002 academic year, and that was my first year at Circle dance. And that's how I started doing it. Subsequently I've joined P.'s class, which is... a class I pay for and therefore it's more of a teacher's class. You get quite professional teaching, as opposed to U. just being a volunteer. So I do that class as well. So I dance twice a week, Circle dance.

I: Anything else about getting involved?

K: ... Well... do you want to know what I did in the way of dance before Circle dancing?

I: Yes, yes.

K: Well as a Scottish child I did Highland dancing because all Scottish children do Highland dancing, and that is not the same as Scottish dancing. We're talking about Highland Flings and Swords and things. I didn't actually like it very much, although I went... and I went for, till I was about eleven, from the age of probably about five, like most Scottish children. Then I then, in the 70s, I was ill and I went to Scottish Country dancing, and that was in Sussex and I had a brilliant teacher who was an Italian lady and started every session with making us practice the steps. So you can see, that she was determined that we would dance properly. And I loved it, I really liked it. So I did that for a few years. Inbetween times I discovered... I also discovered, probably around the 30s, that I liked dancing, what I call free dancing. And I used to make up my own dances. I would dance a lot, to classical music mostly, but also to Rock music. So since then, and that went on right on probably until about the time I retired, I would dance at home, just making up my dances, and dancing all the time, to any kind of music that I fancied and I found, it was something actually I could do. There was a chap who saw me dance once who gave me a book on Isadore Duncan, which he had inscribed with "May you always dance." So it was something that I actually liked and felt I was quite good at in those days. So I've always danced. Well, for a long time I have danced. But the Scottish Country dancing, when I came here, I didn't do Scottish Country dancing, I could have done, but I just think I was too busy working and that sort of dancing is very mathematical, so it's quite rigid. It's very sociable, but when you dance, you have to do what the dance says. You have to do the right thing by your partner and by the rest of the people in the set. If you do Circle dance, or I dance freely on my own, I do more or less what I want, because in Circle dance, you probably realise, you can't really be very wrong, as long as you get to the end of the dance at the same time as everyone else, no-one much cares what you do with your feet... I would say that that's perhaps slightly different with P.'s class, because she likes you to do it properly and we want to do it properly for her, to be honest. But because it is, it has a different dimension, Circle dance is different from anything else I have done... it's more like the old tea dance if you like, but because it has its own constraints, it keeps you focused on, certain things within the dance, I think.... There's a dance called "Alhambra" which consists really of whirling about, so it has very little form in it, when you dance "Alhambra", you're just away on your own. If you were dancing something in like, "Misolou" that we danced this afternoon, there are variations of "Misolou" but on the whole you're within the circle, you're not moving away, you're staying within the circle, you're finishing the same time as everybody else. But you've still got an element of... it's calming, that somebody described Circle dance as movement to music. And it's got a kind of, calming influence, that I find very... very peaceful, and I like that. What else can I say about it? Dances like "Alhambra" where you just really flow yourself into the room and into the music, I love, it's very easy, and I can do quite hard dances, and I don't mind hard dances, I like them, a bit of a challenge. But when you do some of those easy dances, they really set you free. They're wonderful, just to, to lift you, and put you in touch with yourself really. So... so the people who I dance with on a Tuesday would probably tell you much the same thing, that's the sort of people we are (laughs)... So, I suppose what I'm saying really is that, I've done a variety, apart from also a bit of Ballroom dancing and the usual things that we all do. I've done quite a lot of dancing of various sorts. But this is the most spiritually rewarding dancing, that I do. And sometimes that is just all it is, other times it is quite complex, you've got to watch your feet and try and get the step right or whatever it is. But it's not as rigid as Scottish dancing. Scottish dancing doesn't have... the emotional dimension to it, although I enjoy it. I don't think I could do it now, I'm getting on a bit. So that's how I started and that's what I do. So I don't know whether that's what you want to hear? (laughs)

I: That's really interesting... I wonder if you could say a little bit more about the emotional content of Circle?



K: I think those, when we dance with P., indeed when we dance with U., they both do trance dances but with P. I think they are more obvious. She'll say that we'll do this. I mean towards the end of a session she always does very slow dances. Trance dances I find, which are so easy, are probably the most rewarding emotionally, because they do... they make you, they make you think about yourself, they make you feel that you're together with everybody else but you're also an individual... Somebody I danced with once said to me, she said "I dance to heal myself, to heal those I dance with and to heal the earth I dance upon." And I think that is very much what I feel when we dance on a Tuesday. I don't always feel it, every week, and I don't always feel it, I sometimes feel it with U., but not so often because the dances there are less involved at this stage than they might become if we continued dancing... I do remember when I started Circle dance once, it was a winter afternoon, we were dancing opposite the college in the Church hall there, and just had the candlelight. And I remember looking round the ladies and thinking "We're all incredibly ordinary and we're all making a difference" ... was how I felt at that particular moment. And that was quite early in my own Circle dance career. And I think that's very nice. So in no way do I feel that because I'm older that somehow I'm redundant and superfluous... I have a husband but I have no children so you could say really... I'm a typical sort of person with no-one to look after them when they're older... I just think I'm having a great life., I really am, and I think anyone here who is older, is very fortunate, because there is so much to do and there is no need for anyone to be lonely, is how I feel. Is that what you wanted to know?(laughs)

I: That's lovely.... just to probe a little. Do you have any more to say on how the dancing makes a difference?

K: Makes a difference?... It maybe, I think I've mentioned I'm here, I like movement, so rather than just that, dancing is special to me but when I was young I played tennis and I swim still, I am the least competitive person in the world as far as games and things like that are concerned, but I like the feeling of movement. And the reason I like tennis is because it's got a flowing, it's got a dancing movement and that is why I like it. Swimming's the same. It's got a fluidity. So all of the things that I enjoy have a kind of moving sense to them. So...and I also like music, I've always liked music since the time I was small so I think dance was really going to happen at some point, moving to music is just a step further on from swimming in a swimming pool or listening to music in a class or singing or whatever. So... and... I don't know... I was wondering...it would be hard for me to say how it made me feel better, because actually, I think I'm quite a happy person. I wouldn't say I was always happy, I've had some bad times but everybody has bad times. But I'm having a very good, a very nice life and my dancing, is very much part of that. And it makes me feel, I think it probably does help towards your well-being. I feel I have a place in the world, I don't feel that, I feel I have a voice. I don't feel I'm overlooked. I hope I'm not too pushy, I'm quite timid about all sorts of situations but I think I can dance and I like it and I think it is, it makes me feel good. It sets me free.

I: It's lovely.

K: That's how I feel. Is that what you needed to know?

I: Oh that's just lovely... How easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

K: I find Circle dance dead easy in that I think anyone who has done Scottish Country dancing would find it easy, because Scottish Country dancing is much harder and it's much faster, much more energetic. So you've got to think on your feet a lot more. And also because everyone in the set is depending on you to do it right whereas in Circle dance, if you do it wrong... it's not the end of the world. I don't find it difficult, I don't find Circle dance difficult at all. But I like, strangely enough, some of the easiest dances best, like I said earlier, the trance dances.

I: How do you actually learn a dance in Circle?

K; I watch the teacher... I usually find because there are so few basic steps, and I know how to do those... if U. does the dance and doesn't hesitate... goes through it, I can usually see what she is doing. Sometimes the dances with a pattern are more difficult. So I don't always follow what she is doing with her feet. But P. does, P. dances the dance through to music, then she stops the music, then she teaches us the dance. And then in bite size pieces, and it is really pretty easy. And I don't say that I get it right every time, I don't, but I don't find it difficult to pickup. I'll have got it quite quickly and I notice she says "Is that OK?" and I find myself nodding. But I do know essentially what she is wanting us to do. Sometimes my feet don't do it, but mostly I can do it and I don't find it hard. And I do put it down to the fact there are very few basic steps, and if you can walk, you can do Circle dance, really. And if you've got any kind of sense of rhythm at all, I don't think it's a hard... I think it would be a wonderful form of dance for children to do to help them with co-ordination. And I think for older people to do, to maybe help them with things like depression or whatever. I really do. I think it's good. All such things because people can do it and they can feel good that they can do it. Because it isn't hard.

I: Can you give any examples of how you learn a particular dance?

K: Mostly.... well with U. really, it's more about watching, I mean I know that we do learn it by doing... with P., it's because she actually teaches us, in short steps. I mean she will say, for example, "Three steps forward and change those feet." We all know what that means and we all can do it. She will say "Three Grapevines to the right. Change those feet. Three Grapevines to the left." And we all know how to do that. All she needs to do is say it and we can do that. Because we know how to do those particular steps. Now I think if U. was to say that to her class, at this stage, people wouldn't know what she meant, would not get it right.... Things like Grand Chains. I can't, I can never understand how people can't do chains. U., I thought she was very brave to try it last week, because that class never, our class on a Monday, never, never gets it right. We cannot do

chains. I don't know why. They're very common in Scottish Country dancing, they're not difficult and we do them in P.'s without any problem, but it does seem to be the case, that some folk have great difficulty with these. And... we saw that last week, when people don't get to the right place at the right moment, and of course, you have to. But no, there is really, someone really just has to tell me what to do and I can do it, I think. I mean I, with P., I mean she teaches, but if she was to just sit down, because she wasn't teaching and say "Right. Forward and touch and back and touch. And heel and stamp, stamp, stamp." I mean I would know exactly what she wanted me to do and I could do it. I'm making something up, the dance. So... But that's really because there are very few steps in Circle dance. I suppose you could do it even in Scottish Country dancing but that's much more difficult because there you might be saying "Pas de Bas to your partner, turn away. Right hand to the third person, left hand to whatever." And already you're getting confused because you can't visualise that. So a lot of it, I suppose, might be visualisation. I couldn't, I couldn't visualise a Scottish set for a new dance in the way that I could for a new dance from P. or U.

I: That's great... How important would you say is memory in Circle dancing?

K: I don't think it necessarily is. It would be very important in Scottish Country dancing, because if you go wrong, you put everyone else wrong whereas in Circle dance, that doesn't happen, really. I mean it might happen to the person on the other side, if they were daft enough to watch it, but... but what I find is, I don't remember the dances, I always, nearly always remember the music. So that if I've heard a dance once, I'll remember that I've heard it, so I think that maybe it's a lot easier then for a second time, because I suppose somewhere in my head I must be remembering the dance, although I'm not conscious of that. But I do remember the music and I don't know why, I couldn't sing it to you but the minute I hear it, I know I've done that, even though it's a long time ago. And I think, I don't think I'm unique, I think a lot of us are like that...

I: Anything more on memory?

K: Memory... I think sometimes, we've got some music, some of us who dance, have got some music that we've acquired at various things that we've attended. And if we do the dance in the dancing class, sometimes I've gone home and written it out. Now I may have the steps in a little book, like U. uses, but it's much more difficult to follow than if I write it down myself. So I find when I put the dance down in words, it's a lot easier than writing it in little symbols. So U. will have a little book, and P. too, with the direction that you're in and little noses sort of showing that's where you're facing and little arrows for where you're walking. I would write down "Facing the centre, take three steps to the right."... I can understand what I've written much easier than what is really a much shorter, a short path, really. But I don't, personally it doesn't mean as much to me as my own words, so I write it down myself. And we all... I've given my little cards where I've written dances down to my friends, and they seem to be able to follow my cards as well, when I write it down in words... But I've got one friend who seems to follow the hieroglyphics without too much trouble. Now I have a bit of difficulty with that, that's someone else's symbols, and I find that more difficult.

I: So... how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

K: Well I mentioned earlier, I felt that, I feel it sets me free but it wasn't just Circle dance, when I used to dance in tap dances to the music, classical music, I'm just away... my mind is going... I'm a ballet dancer or whatever, but I don't have necessarily set scenes. I just like the feeling of being totally free, dancing sets me free, so I do like that and that is something that does happen.... So a feeling of well-being really, generally. It does make me feel good about myself. It's something I'm very confident about, I'm not particularly a confident person. I think people are a bit surprised when I say that, but actually I'm not always very confident. But I'm confident about dancing, I'm sure I can do it.... And... I don't have any doubts I'm going to be able to do it.....

I: Any more about yourself?

K: I don't think so really. It's... I mean I wouldn't, I wouldn't deliberately dance to just feel better. I wouldn't do that. I dance because I feel like it, because I want to... I mean that would be assuming I'm not going to a class, when I probably do feel better, when I'm going to a class. But I find if I was just at home, sometimes I'll just dance because I feel like it. P. teases me because I go home and practice things in my kitchen. If I can't do it... See if I can get it right.... But..... I don't.... I can't think that I would ever think I feel bad before going to dance. I do remember P.'s doing, this was wonderful, P. did a session called "Pilgrimage to the Light" and she did it on, it was the 23rd of December, a couple of years ago. And one of my friends said "Come on. Are you coming?" And I said "Oh. Too much to do. Can't..." She said "Well that's when you should go." So I went. And we started dancing in the darkness. She lit one candle, otherwise it was completely dark. And then we danced right through, and at some point we lit candles, we all had candles to light. And in the end we were dancing amongst quite a lot of light. But it was, the idea was that it was darkness, and she'd chosen dances that were... really some of them were quite trance dances, they were quite dark dances probably. And a couple of different experiences. But I absolutely loved it. And I felt, at one point, I felt as if somebody had their hand on my head. I mean it was incredibly, moving in many ways. And... I felt, some people find it quite threatening, and I thought it was an area, I'm really quite timid about a lot of things, I felt incredibly brave, I felt I like the idea, I like this dark. I want to be here. And it was, after it had finished, we all had a cup of tea and a sit down because she told us we shouldn't go home right away, and for about two days afterwards, I felt incredibly calm but very

energetic. But then very peaceful. It was the most wonderful, wonderful experience really. And I haven't had that before. And that was something that happened, that was structured if you like, but I didn't know how it was going to affect me and I almost didn't go.... And we all had to wear black, so we were all dressed in black on that occasion. And I just found it absolutely brilliant. But not everyone did, and some people found it, I wouldn't say scary, but quite a lot of people were crying... just people had different experiences of it.. I thought... So that was an experience I had from dance. That was quite extreme... not something you would just find on a Monday afternoon. P. does sessions, she does some picnics at a stately home, I don't know if the girls told you about, and she has themes ... well you mention here what you wear, well for the theme ones, usually find I am quite interested and I usually look around and see if I can find things. Usually wear sparkly things because I like sparkly things and I think in normal dancing I quite often wear a sparkly sort of top because I like shiny things... But certainly if she's doing a sort of Eastern promise, I'll sew beads on things and sequins, just so I shine a bit (laughs). Which is a bit childish, but I quite like doing that.

I: So what sort of thing do you wear for U.'s class?

K: Well usually, I wear trousers for U. I have a class in the morning where I'm sitting down a lot, so I tend to wear trousers that are not going to show all the creases as much as... So it's a bit of practical bit there. But I quite often wear something sparkly on top or... Well to-day I've got my sparkly beads.

I: Yeah

K: Because I just... well I suppose really I am quite childlike, I've always liked things that sparkle. And I recognise that it's something quite childish. It doesn't have to be real diamonds...(laughs). But it's something I associate with dance, so I like to put something sparkly on... beads and sequins, things like that. But usually I just wear, I won't put beads and sequins on a top to go to P.'s class or U.'s class, but if I have one in the wardrobe, I'll probably wear it. Or wear something sparkly.

I: Do you feel the dancing has put you in touch with memories of being a child?

K: No I don't think so... no it's.... In fact, probably the opposite. It's not, it's.... I think as a child, I had all sorts of issues I needed to resolve, which I was probably even aware about even then. But no, dancing doesn't. Dancing, dancing makes me quite whole... a whole person, and quite grown up really, so although I say it's childlike to wear sparkly things.. I, I can do it from an adult perspective, say. Perhaps a child in me wearing sparkly things, but I'm really grown up ... I quite like myself the way I am (laughs). Sort of like that.

I: So how does Scottish/Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

K: I answered the Scottish. I mean physically, when I did Scottish dancing, it was incredibly good for you because it's so energetic, it's a real work-out... But... and it's also nice to do. Circle dance is not energetic in the same way, although it can be quite, more so than U.'s class is. Physically... I just think it's good for you. I think it's good for my emotional health, and I think it's probably good for my physical health. The only think is I hurt, I have this... heel spur... these things that you get on your heels, and that's why I couldn't, I dropped out of one of U.'s dances last term, I think it was, which I'd never done before, because really I shouldn't have been dancing at all. But I just couldn't bear not to so I was carrying on dancing although my foot was hurting me a bit. But generally speaking, I would say it's just very good for me, physically. It's very good also, because if you put a lot of yourself into the dance, you will in fact give yourself more of a work-out, if you use your arms for example, that you don't have to do, but if you do, you will give yourself more of a physical work-out than perhaps you are aware of. Even in a class that's generally for an older category of person, like U.'s class is. Because on the whole, although she's got a lot of younger people this year, she's had some very old people in the past and in their 80s, some of them, and they can still dance. But they obviously can't dance as fast and as furious and as many turns, as some of the younger people can. I'm 68 and I don't think of myself as being old at all (laughs).

I: Has your heel caused you much problem with the Circle?

K: No, no, it's.... I think I did it because I was standing. I didn't do it dancing. I did it because I was standing in my kitchen all afternoon in my slippers on a concrete floor, and putting my weight on the back of my heels. I was baking. And if I had given up half way through, I wouldn't have had any ill-effect. I think it was just enough to set the foot off... And as a result, I was limping in July and August and I didn't go to the doctor's, I didn't go to the doctor much, and I wasn't going to the doctor with it until about, I think it was about the beginning of October. By which time it was beginning to get better, but it was still so slow. I mean I'd had it for several months. These things go on for months, and go on for years really. And it's still a wee bit sore.... I mean it's still a wee bit sore now, but I'm, but I'm managing anyway... It's..I can now walk again, and I walk quite fast and that's important to me as well. So I'm dancing. But to-day with these sort of heels and stamps, I'm a bit careful and I'm sort of hopping on it, and that sort of thing. So I shouldn't really be doing that, I don't think. But anyway...

I: Are you still able to do Scottish dancing?

K: I haven't tried, not for a long time.... I think I would be out of breath, I would be out of puff. Because even though I swim and I walk, and I do a bit of weights at home, I've got some weights at home, things like that, I still think because it's so energetic, that I might feel quite puffed out at the time. Unless it's one of these dances where you've got a lot of people in the set, and you get a rest in between... I could probably do it, because I, we do the dances... the more common ones, anyway... But I think I would find that just a bit wearing now.

I: Ok. So how about... you've mentioned a bit about psychological benefits of Circle. Do you think there's anything you've not said ... on psychological benefits?

K: ... I don't think so. I think.... I think probably if I didn't dance, as long as I was moving, I think there would be psychological benefits to me. So that I might get some of these effects from swimming or aerobics or something or even walking.

I: Yeah.

K: But dancing puts the movement together with the music and that introduces I think the extra element which is really in your mind. When you walk, you might be thinking thoughts but you're not actually thinking dance, or you're not... walking is, walking is liberating but it's not, but you're earth bound. If you're dancing, you're not necessarily earth-bound at all... You can be away with the fairies really. That's how I feel about it.

I: So it's spiritual...

K: Yes, yes it is, it is.... Well I mean that probably sounds a bit airy fairy, actually a lot of people would say that's rubbish... but that's what I, and I think some of my friends feel too, like I said when we were dancing in the dark, I felt at one point as if somebody had their hand on my head. And I've never felt that before. I was perfectly aware there was no-one with their hand on my head but you're very, there's something very... Oh I don't know... there's something very freeing about it, you're not earth-bound at all. You're somewhere else, or you're something else, that I like about it... I don't mean by that... that I'm no longer aware of myself or anything like that, because I am, I mean I'm perfectly in my body, not trying to say I'm somewhere else but there is something that goes on when you're dancing. If you're dancing well and you're dancing in the right situation that gives you an enormous boost, an enormous lift, I don't do rugs but maybe it's something like that, I don't know (laughs).

I: So anything more? Any other injuries from Circle dancing?

K: No, no... in fact it would be wrong to say I got any injuries from that, I didn't.... the only thing I've got wrong with me is because probably I'm 68, and things wear out a bit, and because I walk a lot ...my knees won't walk all the way back to the village the way I would like them to, yet they'll tend to ache after that.

I: So how do you think Circle dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

K: I think.... I think it probably makes me aware that... I'm, I don't feel I'm growing older at all. I know I'm growing older, but I don't feel it. And in many ways I feel much more fulfilled perhaps than I did when I was working. Because I have, I have discovered myself again, and that's been just since retirement, that's since looking at age. I mean one thing about being retired is you have all this time now to look at yourself, which is probably why I quite enjoy belonging to my little group and all the rest of it. You really look at yourself when you're doing a management course of some sort, and you're told things that really you know but ....you don't kind of think about, so it's quite nice. If you're doing something like handling conflict or something, you probably know how to handle conflict anyway but it's quite nice to be out of the situation, just talking about it. On the whole, you don't sit down and think about yourself, and how things can benefit you. You tend to think how things can benefit the office or something, your job. I mean ultimately, that benefits you too, but that's not how you look at it. When you retire, you think how you want to feel and what you can do to feel good about you. Undeniably, if you're feeling good about you, you're much more likely to feel good about other people.... It's a question of starting off with I'm OK, you're OK. Sort of thing...

I: That's lovely... Anything else on that one?

K: I don't think so really... I mean I just mention them but I think I'm a lucky person. I think I... I like my life. I mean whatever life throws at me, I've had some very good years. I mean I'm sure everybody has bad years as well as good years, and I have had my share. But I have had some very good years too. And I think if you have that to bolster you up, I think that's wonderful, I think we can carry that through...

I: That's lovely... So how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

K: I'm not sure that it has because I'd already discovered the earlier kind of dance, not so much the Scottish dancing but the fact I discovered I could make up dances I would dance myself. And I would practise how it looked... I mean sometimes I would even look in the mirror and say "How does that look?"... But mostly I would just dance, I would do that, and I think that was when I became aware that I like the way I could move. And I like the way it made me feel. And I thought "I can do it."... I can do these high kicks, I can do these arm movements or whatever they are, and they make me feel good. So it was then that I really discovered and that's old, over 30 years ago, that I really started that. So all that Circle dance does, is make me aware that I'm still doing it, but in a perhaps less extreme form. Because I'm not throwing myself round the room anymore... I think that's what I might have done before. Hanging onto chairs perhaps but flinging myself about, because I did do that...

I: Anything else?

K: I don't... I don't think so. I don't really...

I: What about the last question.... is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

K: Well I don't, I don't really think, I think I've said it really but it's the sense of movement that's important to me. And moving to music. If you introduce, I think perhaps I haven't put this in words before, but I think when you introduce music

to the movement, that is when you get the... the sort of spiritual element of it or the emotional element in, although I like, you get a certain amount of emotion just in moving but moving to music has, I think, puts you on a different plane from just walking, just swimming, just playing a game or whatever. Because that's, the feeling of moving might be nice and it might be quite... just the energy you use. You might just enjoy the feeling of that but if you do it to music, it has a different dimension, I think... You're probably going to think "God! I'll scrub all this!" (laughs). That's it I think.

I: OK. Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview Four (2.C.4)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

S: Yes you can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

S: ...When I joined the retirement organisation, that was one of the classes that they did. And I hadn't tried it before, so I came along to try it.

I: So is this the very first time?

S: Yes, I'd never even heard of it before. I joined the retirement organisation.

I: Anything else about joining the retirement organisation?

S: Well... I do more, other dances as well. Do you want to know about that? We do Tap dance on a Tuesday, as well as the Circle dance and .... I do other classes as well but they're my best classes.

I: How long have you been doing tap?

S: Must be about three years, two years I think, two years, two full years....

I: And other forms of dance you do?

S: Not with the retirement organisation. But I have been to Salsa classes... not for the last two years. I went for a little while to the Salsa dancing. And I love any sort of dance so I'll do anything. I'll go anywhere to find dancing (laughs).

I: Did you dance as a child?

S: I never learnt formally to dance, but yes, I used to love looking at films where there was dancing, try copy them and when we were old enough, we went to discos and that sort of thing, so I've always danced....

I: Have you had any lessons?

S: Not real formal lessons.... I've been with a band of women who weren't teachers, but taught us how to do some dancing in the past.... it was just an informal group. That was in London, not here.

I: So what sort of thing did you do?

S: That was Tap dancing again.

I: And did you perform?

S: (sighs) Reluctantly (laughs). We put on a show in ... like the town hall... there wasn't very much in the show. It was just for amateurs (Laughs).

I: How many times were you dancing a week?

S: ... Well when I joined the dance, it would be mainly just once a week if it was just a class, and then if you performed, I've only done about three performances, that would be an extra class.

I: Right.

S: But it's never been altogether. It's always been one after the other.

I: So how many years do you reckon you've been Tap-dancing altogether?

S: I suppose about fifteen years. But with great big gaps inbetween times (laughs). It's mainly because you don't get the opportunity, stuff like that. There aren't that many classes around I don't think.

I: So how do you find Tap dancing?

S: I love it. Really love it. Never learnt Ginger Roger's style but I really enjoy it....

I: What is it that you really like about it?

S: I think it just takes you away from the present.... You can focus on your dreams. It keeps your brain ticking as well, you have to... to be really on your toes.... it exercises your brain, I love the music and... you just feel yourself in another world.

I: Can you describe one of the routines you've done in Tap-dancing?

S: I mean I can't describe because you'd have to describe all the steps, wouldn't you?

.... they're not terribly difficult steps, timed steps come into a lot of routines and... it's just people having a good laugh really. Difficult when people are doing it in a group, because it's very difficult to get it right altogether. I can't... how can you describe? I have to show you....

I: If you can describe one of your routines.

S: Well just everybody .... lines up and they do a series of... steps. That's it really. I really don't know the steps.

I: Anything else to say about Tap-dancing?

S: It's a terrific form of exercise. I think it... helps with all sorts of things. It lifts your mood, and .... you can feel a bit like Ginger Rogers when you get it right (laughs). I'd recommend it. I think it's a great activity (laughs).

I: And do you dress up for Tap-dancing?

S: Not really. Casual clothes, usually jeans or something like that.... it's just a group of women so we don't tend to dress up any more than usual (laughs).

I: And you wear special shoes?

S: Oh yeah, you have to get shoes with taps on the heels and the toes.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?

S: I can learn them... do you mean is it easy to learn?

I: Or how easy do you find it?

S: I think they're pretty easy.... you very rarely get them right initially but because they're repetitive, as you go on, it comes to you. What I find difficult is remembering the next time. I'd have to see it again, to do it again next week say.

I: Yeah.

S: But I find it easy to follow on the whole.

I: Can you describe how you learn a particular dance?

S: Well I'm a great mimic. I think I just copy, to be honest, I copy. I try to keep in my head what they're doing by the beat. I think if you go by the beat, of the music, it's a lot easier.... to get the dance right.... But.... that's really all. I think if you too much about the steps, it's more difficult, if you just let it come naturally, don't worry about it too much, and laugh if you make a mistake, I think that makes it a lot easier (laughs).

I: So can you give examples of how you learn a particular dance?

S: .... As I say, just watching somebody.... just watching the teacher. And repetition. They're the greatest things. And just listening to the music, trying to keep with the music, that's really important. Because if you go off- beat, you get mixed up... just keep... the beat in your head.

I: So how important would you say is memory?

S: It's important in so far I think... if you want to do the dance say another time or somewhere else, without the teacher, if you have a good memory you can remember it but if your memory is a bit, a bit difficult I think at this age... I think once the teacher's doing it in front of you, you just do it... you mimic it and you don't think too much about it, your memory's not that important. But I think it's good for your mind, because you're trying to keep up with the steps, you're trying to remember how many steps and stuff like that so you have to keep focused, keep concentrating, it's good for your concentration (laughs).

I: That's great. Anything more on memory?

S:... Well no. I need all the help I can get, my memory's getting so bad (laughs). I think it helps... the having to dance and that sort of thing helps your memory, I think it does.

I: OK. So anything else about learning to dance?

S: .... I think it helps if you're feeling down or slightly depressed or anything like that. I think it's a great way of alleviating those. It makes me feel really joyful. I can say that. It just makes me feel like a child again (laughs). So it lifts your mood (laughs).

I: Anything else about that?

S: Not really, no (laughs).

I: So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

S: ... I just find it very relaxing.... I find the actual dance quite relaxing and... I'm not a relaxed person... And it's just lovely. I love the music, and it just.... kind of takes you away from yourself a little bit, and lets you .... relax. I don't understand "experiences of yourself?"

I: How you feel about yourself?

S: So that's OK?

I: Yeah.

S: (Laughs). It always lifts my mood, I have to say that. It lifts my mood tremendously... I can be very... down at times and I feel young and .... a good mood and the music (laughs). It's a very positive experience.

I: Good... So what do you wear for Circle dancing?

S: Mostly trousers and tops and t-shirts. Trousers or jeans... I very rarely wear skirts but I think I've just become in the habit of just wearing trousers. I don't like skirts any more (laughs). We don't dress up, nobody dresses up particularly for the dance....

I: OK. So how would you say Circle dancing influences experiences of your health?

S; Well I've said what effects it has on your mental health I think. It's very good for your mental health. But I think it's also good for things like arthritis. My arthritis has definitely improved since I started all this exercise (laughs). It really has improved. And I think your body feels better. If I don't exercise, like there's no classes for a while, I feel, my body feels bad, it doesn't feel good.... It's much better when I go back to the exercising.

I: How does the exercise help?

S: You just feel you've got more energy... I can do a lot more. I feel tired if ... I'm not doing a lot of activity. I feel tired and I don't do so much in the house but once I'm active like with the dancing, I feel I can do a lot more. It gives me energy.

I: So how does the arthritis affect you?

S:... It's not severe arthritis but I've had trouble with my knee, I couldn't bend it, I couldn't .... and after I'd been.... doing a lot of exercise, I'm sure, I take glucoamide as well, but I think the exercise helps it enormously. I also cycle during the summer. So the more I've exercised, the better it got... Yes, it's very good (laughs).

I: Right... anything else about your health?

S: I just think, I can't find anything that isn't positive about dancing. I really can't find anything (laughs).

I: You said a little bit about psychological benefits of Circle... is there anything else?

S: Do you mean healthwise?

I: Health or psychologically.

S: .... Meeting people of course and getting to know people I think also has a psychological benefit... socialising. And people are very nice and I think that has a benefit as well on your psychological health.

I: Have you had any injuries from Circle dancing?

S: Not at all... no, quite the opposite (laughs).

I: So how does circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

S: Well like Tap dancing as well, they make you feel young while you're doing it (laughs). So I think... it must affect you for the better because... as I say, I feel like a young girl again when I'm dancing (laughs).

I: That's lovely... can you say a little bit more about that?

S: Well it's just in your head... you go back to being like you were as a young girl where you could dance and dream and and you don't have to, you're a business girl, you're in the business of being older where you're restricted in everything, goes during that time. So... I think it's great, that's why I like it so much (laughs).

I: So you mentioned a little bit about this... But how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

S:... Only in the sense that I've realised that the more you do of it, the better... your body is. It just makes you feel so good and... it makes you more active, energetic... and I don't know what else to say about it really.

I: So... onto the last question.

S: (Laughs).

I: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

S: I just want to do more and more of it... We were talking about ballet dance, I'd love to have a go at that, and I'd love to do more Salsa... I'd also like to do some Irish dancing. It's the opportunities that are lacking. If the opportunities were there, and... you could go and meet people of your own age, I would definitely join so... So... dance is very important to me (laughs)....

## **Second Circle Interview Five (2.C.5)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

F: Yes, certainly, I'm quite happy to do this to-day.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

F: Well I got involved in Circle dancing through the retirement organisation because it was one of the... possible things I could do, but also because my sister, whose six years older than me, does a lot of dancing where she lives and really, really enjoyed it and she made me think "Yes, actually I would like to do that." I remembered doing.. country dancing as a child... dancing round the maypole and things like that, and it all brought back really happy memories. So in my retirement, I thought I would try again.

I: Right.

F: And as well as Circle dancing, I do Tap-dancing, which I'd never done as a child, not until in my 60s, and I would come to it, but that's harder.

I: Right... and anything more about getting involved?

F: .... Not really. I didn't know quite what to expect, in that this was not exactly country dancing but I thought it would be somewhat similar. I think Scottish Country dancing is what I knew best. But I've only done it really as a child. But... it seemed like the sort of thing I would enjoy which you could do without the need for a partner, just go and do it.

I: And what about the Tap-dancing?

F: Much the same really, I did, I think I started both of them the same year, yes I did, and I was absolutely thrilled with Tap-dancing. I wasn't at all good, but I absolutely loved it. It was a much harder talent, shall we say.

I: So when was it you started?

F: I should think it must be about three or four years ago, three and a half years ago. I was just about 60 then.

I: Yes..... What was it like doing Scottish Country dancing as a child?

F: Well we didn't just do Scottish country dancing, we must have done English dances as well. And as I said, we did Maypole dancing which I loved. We also did... some Canadian Square dancing, because we had an exchange teacher at my school. This is, I suppose I was about eight or nine when we did it at my primary school. And I enjoyed them all. I really liked it, I really liked... I suppose they have patterns and ... you have to get them right for the dance to work, and I enjoyed both doing the dancing and seeing them come right at the end.

I: Mm. Mm.

F: So the sort of... pattern it makes and seeing it through to the end, was part of it, part of the satisfaction.

I: Anything more about dancing as a child?

F: Not really, we did all that at school. I never did any dancing... from my home. I don't think my mother, I don't think it occurred to her that I would like to dance (laughs). We are talking post-war, and there weren't so many opportunities then.

I: So when did you start dancing again as an adult?

F: Well I did ... a little bit of Jazz dance, probably in my 40s or 50s, an evening class, for two or three years, and then the teacher left the area so that came to an end. And I enjoyed it but I wasn't that good at it.

I: Mm.

F:... It's a way of exercising which is much more enjoyable than repeating exercises, and probably more social too.

I: So is it since you've retired you've found more time?

F: Yes, yes. Like many people, work was busy. And... I'd got a son to look after and so on.... Yes... no, I retired, first of all we decorated the house, top to bottom, and then I thought "Right, what am I going to do?" And... this took my fancy.

I: So, I'll move onto the next question. How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?

F: Right. It does depend on the dance obviously... and as I have been going to the same class for three years now, they tend to be repeats of something I have done in the past. More often than not. Not all the time.

I: Mm.

F: So that obviously helps. But... some dances have relatively few steps to learn and many repeats, and that's usually a lot easier than one that has many different sections, all different. And then that's a real challenge to my memory... And sometimes the music really helps you to do the dance, it reminds you this is the point when you do some step, and sometimes it doesn't help at all but I do... well I feel I have quite a feeling for doing it, and a lot of it depends on learning some basic steps, which I'm now quite familiar with, like..... what are they called? I shall remember it in a minute. That's another problem of growing old (laughs). The... Grapevine step in particular, once you've learnt it, it crops up in many dances. And, there are other steps whose names escape me of course. And if you know the name of something, it does, it's like a short-hand for learning to do the dance. And you can think "Right, it's that step followed by this step followed by that step." And that's much less for your memory to deal with than remembering all the steps that your feet have to take. And.... I like... I like the variety in terms of, I really like the challenge of something quick and lively, but I couldn't keep up with that all the time. So the fact that it has slow simpler ones as well as more lively and complicated ones, gives me the right balance..... One we did to-day called "Donkey-riding," which is a very jolly one, it's kind of like now ingrained in my memory because I like it so much. And if you like something, remembering it is much easier. And it has a very obvious tune to make you keep step. Whereas other dances, you are doing steps across the rhythm of the music, and that really relies on your memory, and that's not so good.

I: Yeah... can you give any other examples of how you learn the dances?

F: Well I was thinking of some of the ways in which it's different from learning dancing in Tap-dancing, because in Circle dancing, you're learning to do a dance, and usually they have several repeats, sometimes many repeats, so what you're learning is really usually not very long for the number of steps that you have to remember is not great. And then you do them many times, which helps you remember it. As compared with the Tap-dancing I do, where you're building up to a routine which is a lot longer, and that is much more taxing of my memory. But... you've got to learn a dance that will take you several weeks to learn, and every week you're going back and going over it, which makes it easier. But actually I'm better at retaining one short bit, short-term for that week, that I am remembering a longer varied routine, building up week on week. I feel I have to go back to the beginning every week and start learning again, because that's the nature of my memory... So memory's important, and it's important to me that I'm exercising my brain as well as my feet and body. That's what's good about it, I like the fact that it makes me concentrate.

I: Mm

F: But you don't have to remember anything for very long, and I think it's my longer term memory that's... finds it harder.

I: Anything more on learning the dances?

F: Well sometimes it depends on how well you're taught of course... And I have, I have done some Circle dancing with a different teacher briefly, and she had a different style, she would put on the music, and dance it herself first and it was quite helpful, because you got a feel of the speed immediately and some idea of the length of the dance, before you even began. And it gave you a framework, and I found that quite helpful. And in the case of the particular teacher, quite inspiring, because she was a very good dancer, very stylish, so it was kind of..... it made you really want to do it. She was so good at it. So, people teach in different ways, it can be more helpful or less helpful.



I: Yeah. Yeah.

F: I can't think of anything else really, about my memory.

I: So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

F: Well I'm not quite sure I understand the meaning of that. Do you mean "How does it affect me?" ... Well I can only really talk about Circle dancing in the context of the group we do it with.

I: Yes.

F: Of course quite a few of the people now I've built up a bit of a friendship with for meeting the same place for two or three years, in some cases. So there's a social aspect to the dancing anyway and... so I feel very positive about going there each week, seeing my friends and doing something together with people who also enjoy it. And... I like when a dance is more familiar with me, and I can try to do it with style, I enjoy that challenge of trying to do it well. Other dances, the best that I can do is do it, if I'm lucky.... So that's really nice, if we get one that I really take to and I feel I can do well, then that gives you a very good feeling about yourself. But exercising in general tends to make you come away feeling sort of invigorated and, and... positive, a bit like any form of exercise, there's a sort of high you get out of it.... So I think, I'm not sure if it answers the question, but I feel very positive about it, and I come away, sometimes I'm cycling home singing one of the tunes to myself... in a good mood. And... feeling good, both sort of in mind and in body really, being positive, and pleasantly exercised. And... feeling good for the rest of the day.

I: That's lovely.

F: Oh you should hear me sometimes, singing as I cycle home (laughs).... What do I wear? Is that the next question?

I: That's part of it, yes, a sub-question.

F: I might wear a skirt, if cycling wasn't so cold and windy.... but when push comes to shove, and I've got to get on my bike to go there, I think "Ah I'll wear my trousers." Occasionally, in the summer, I put on a skirt, and it's nice, it looks really good if you wear a skirt.... But I rarely do. But's that's for reasons other than the dancing.

I: Any more on that one?

F: Not really, no.

I: So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

F:... Well, I guess I think I'm fairly healthy for my age, and I do go to a gym and exercise every week, two or three times, as well as dancing. So I think of this as supporting other forms of exercise as well... Being retired, one has time to do these things which is lovely, and I certainly, if I don't exercise for a week or two, I feel I stiffen up. Now, I'm sure dancing is part of that, but as I do other things as well, it's hard to know how much is the dancing and how much is other forms of exercise... Once with the tap-dancing, which is not really the subject we're talking about, I got a horrible pain in my hip for a few days and I thought I might have to give it up. But it went again, and I think it was just a consequence of being sort of nervous and stiff, instead of relaxed, and that's how I did it.... I think really I find it quite nice because whatever you do, be it walking or cycling or going to a gym or dancing, they each use your body differently, and I think if you only do the same form of exercise, your body's only learning to move it's muscles in one direction whereas if you're dancing, it exercises the lot of you.... and, and in a variety of ways. So I think it does all add to a sense of well-being really that, that I do that. And it certainly does, I mean differently, I did two fairly fast, energetic dances this morning, to-day, this afternoon, and... I thought "Yes, I never do this at the gym, and I don't do this in Tap-dancing, this is another bit of me that's getting used." So I basically feel it's keeping me going and that must be good for me.

I: Anymore on that?

F: ... Just I'd like to keep going as long as I can really. I, I think it's good for me and I enjoy it.

I: Have you had any injuries from Circle dance?

F: Not from Circle dancing, no, no, I've been fine...

I: From any other form of exercise?

F: Well nothing serious... there was a time when I rather over-did it at the gym, I was trying to lose weight and I did several days in succession, and I decided that my body didn't really like that at my age.... muscles were slightly pulled, that kind of thing. But... on the whole, Circle dancing is not.... although it can be quite energetic, it's not ... for me, it doesn't seem to do any, it doesn't jar my body, or jolt it, and those seem to be the things that my body doesn't like.

I: Oh.... I've got a rogue question! (laughs)

F: I saw that (laughs). We'll change it.

I: How about psychological benefits of Circle?

F: Well I kind of mentioned it a bit, didn't I? That I came away feeling good afterwards... I quite like the fact that it's... the variety of it, sometimes it's, it's... you go through the gamut of emotions sometimes in one session, you can have a really lively... dance with the music syncopated and it's very jolly, and you feel very cheerful. And then you can have a calm dance, that you're in a much more quiet frame of mind. And at the end we always have a circle round the candle and send the light to people in need and somehow the whole mixture of doing that, and sharing it with other people, who enjoy the same experience, it's very... very fulfilling, and very... sort of uplifting I would say, if that's not putting it too strongly. But I think as

well as that, the fact you are energetic, breathing deeply, all those kind of things, puts you in a good frame, good for the body, good for your... breathing, generally a good frame of health, also benefits you psychologically.

I: Any other thoughts on that one?

F: .... Not really, no.

I: Ok.... So how does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

F: .... Well I suppose one of the motivations for doing it is that it's.... it keeps me going in my retirement years, but that's not really why I chose to do it, I chose to do it because I wanted to dance. And... but from what I've said before, you can tell I'm into fitness, and staying fit. They tell you that if you keep fit, the more chance you have on going on keeping fit. So both motives are there, and there are quite a range of ages of people doing Circle dancing in the group. And clearly some are more able than others and some do in the end, decide to leave the group, because they're not as active as they used to be.... So I reflect on other people and think "Oh my day may come one of these days when I can't do this any more." But at the moment, it's, it sort of re-focuses myself "Well this is good, this is positively good." Because by doing this, I seem to be able to go on doing it. And... while I'm doing it, I don't feel old. Sometimes, for a particularly energetic one, I think "Let's hope that the interval is coming soon." But... perhaps three years is not long enough to know how, how I will, how growing older will affect my ability to do it. But at the moment it is a positive thing that helps keep me young... and I think it takes a longer period of time before I can say much more really....

I: Anything else on that one?

F: No, not really.

I: OK. So number six. How has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

F: ... Well one of the things I like about it is that... it's one thing being able to do a Circle dance at all, it's another thing to do it with good posture, timing and good style, holding yourself properly erect and getting the movements... elegantly rather than flustered... It's good in that sense that it makes you aware of how you stand and whether you have poise and whether you're just muddled. And it's so rewarding when you can feel that you've mastered a dance, and can do it well and... when you have to point your leg you do it with style and not like a kick. And... I get pleasure from trying to do it well, as well as trying to do it at all. And... as I, I mean through my young adulthood, I didn't really dance, I didn't really do things which made me... show off in front of people, the way you do when you're dancing in a circle. So there's a bit of self-consciousness about it and... you are aware in a group of people that some are so, good at it, and have such style and poise, that, that this is something you would like to master yourself... It all falls apart when a dance is difficult or long or tiring, but sometimes you can achieve it... It's just a feeling of pleasure, if you've done it well.

I: Anything else on that?

F: Not really.

I: Ok... then we're onto the last question . Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

F: Right... well dancing hasn't played a huge part in my life, until actually fairly recently, and I was surprised what pleasure I got out of it and how much I really want to keep doing it now. And... on the whole I, I like it for its own sake, I like it because moving in time to music is somehow a fundamental thing, particularly some foot-tapping music, you, you just have to move with it. It seems to be an instinct for humans to do that. So to me, the main thing I would say is the right kind of music can make you positively want to dance. And it seems exactly fitting, part of what humans should be doing. But I'm not really... I don't really do Circle dance with a feeling that this is mystical or...in some ways... more profound than I feel it to be. I like the connection with different countries, the different styles that they dance in, that relate to their kind of music, and their kind of life-styles and their histories. So I like the, the, moving from perhaps a Greek dance one moment, to a Jewish one another time, and a Latin-American another, and immediately, with the right music, you're transported into those countries and their style of doing things, and their, ways of life.... So I like the sort of world-wide aspect of it and the mix, but I don't really go any deeper than that I don't think....

I: Anything else?

F: .... I don't think there is really.

I: I have one more little question to ask you. You mentioned that you're very involved in fitness and exercise, could you tell me a little bit more about what you do at the gym and other forms of exercise you do?

F: Yes, I can do that.... I try to go three times a week. Sometimes I go two, sometimes I don't go. And I spend time actually in the gym, it is a place with a gym and a swimming pool, and in the gym I do things like... a cycling machine and something called a cross-trainer and something which I think we call a... treadmill. So these are aerobic exercises to get my body moving fast and my, to get my body moving fast and my heart pumping, and doing all those aerobic things that are meant to be good for you, so you sweat a little. But I also do things like stretching and pulling weights with my arms and... various exercises, my feet and my shoulders, sort of loosening up kind of exercises. I spend nearly an hour in the gym, doing those things, it's partly aerobic and partly loosening up. And then generally I swim for about twenty minutes as well.

I: Mm.... And that's three times a week?

F: Sometimes three, sometimes two, sometimes less,

I: So how does that exercise, how do you feel about that exercise in contrast with the dancing?

F: Well... it's entirely different. Like I have a kind of love-hate relationship with it in that it's something that I feel I've paid a subscription, I must go, but actually when I do go, and when I do all that, and when I finish I have a shower, and I come away and I'm feeling great. It's... you feel... invigorated really by exercise followed by swimming followed by showering. It's truly invigorating. I always do it first thing in the day or else I don't do it. And, it really sets me up for the day when I do it. I don't do it on the days when I do dancing because my body's not that marvellous. You can't do everything in a day... but it's... a good social place to go as well, so you're meeting friends, which re-inforces you wanting to keep going. It's not just pain and....

I: OK. Thank you then.

## **Second Circle Interview Six (2.C.6)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

G: Yes, absolutely. Perfectly happy for you to do that.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

G: Because I was looking for something to do with the retirement organisation, and I wanted something that was different from what I've been doing previously, I always did classroom type things, languages or lectures, and I wanted to do something... physical. So I chose Circle dancing. Mainly because... you don't need a partner, and my husband's not interested, and I knew a little bit about it, I rather liked the ethos of it.

I: Can you tell me why you liked the ethos?

G: Well I'd... I knew somebody who was into it, in... rather... was interested in various things, in a sort of esoteric kind of way, which I am not interested in, but from that, I did know that Circle dancing was... not too involved, not too complicated, and that it was, that the music was probably very nice. So... so that's it. So I haven't done any other dancing, I'm not a dancer at all (laughs). I've never done, apart from at school when you do... country dancing and... in my generation, various things at parties, the "Gay Gordons", "Strip the Willow," like the one we did to-day, was a bit like that I think, but... no, it was just an off-chance. It wasn't my first choice, but I was lucky to be put on the list.

I: OK. Anymore about joining?

G: No, no, I just... thought I'd give it a go.

I: OK. So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

G: Well the steps are very easy, so learning the dances, once they've been demonstrated, and luckily, every lesson she demonstrates again. So... no, the ones that don't have too many parts are easy, I prefer it when... there's just simple movement and you repeat it again, then I find it much easier to learn. When you've got to keep listening to the music and changing what you do, then I get lost. But... no, they're not difficult to learn.

I: Can you give any examples of how you learn a particular dance?

G: Well... Memory is quite important. That's what happens. You're learning it, you've learnt it and you forget completely, that in the middle, that you're supposed to do something else. That's what I find, that... I don't remember, I don't remember from week to week and... so it's the ones that have got one simple movement, I can't remember the names of the dances, but you know the ones where you do something and then we repeat that, the ones where you've got to go in, and then you do a box, and then you do something else, those I get completely lost. So I like the ones where the repetition instills it in your memory, so... it's easier, and I enjoy it more, because then when everyone's moving together, we've all got it. It's much nicer than when... "Oh... I'm going the wrong way round the circle or something."

I: So what strategies do you use to try remember the steps?

G: Ah. Well... well you count, and then one just tries to remember. The problem is that you lose concentration I find. I'm concentrating at the beginning and probably counting or repeating what U.'s said ... "Side, one, two, three." And then something will distract my attention, often somebody else whose dancing very nicely. And I think "Oh it looks..." and then I've completely lost it. So it's concentration really. So I find, I find if I can not think about it, I can get it and just do it, then it's much better (laughs)... Yes, it's concentration.

I: And anything else on learning?

G: No, it's not difficult to learn, it's memory, it's remembering it. I haven't a clue about the names. I mean she tells us the names, I don't even try to remember the names.

I: Do you remember any names of the steps?

G: Yes, the Grapevine and the... Passadina, Pas de Bas is it?... No I don't, only the obvious ones.

I: Ok. So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

G: Well, you mean I've discovered how poor my concentration is? Totally. I always felt if you tried hard enough, you can learn most things, it's just a question of application. But, so yes I realise that my concentration is very, very poor, and also I realise too that I've never been very musical, but I thought I was getting better, I'd sort of trained myself, but I don't think I have. That's another thing that I've realised. Listening to the music. Quite often I can't see much correlation between the

dancing and the music... Sometimes I can but It depends. So I guess, really yeah with most things, it's taught me that my powers of concentration are very poor. Whereas I can concentrate on something that you are doing at home, reading or something, but when I'm trying, I'm very easily distracted, I suppose. And... well that goes onto the next question really, but physically I get tired much more quickly than I thought I would, I'm not nearly as fit as I thought I was... but... And what do I wear? Something light, layers...

I: Is there anything more about how it makes you see yourself?

G: No.

I: Shall we go onto the next one then. So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health?

G: Well I can say there are muscles that I guess I haven't used. I mean just leg muscles and things. I'm surprised how, how they can ache sometimes. I didn't, as I say, I didn't realise how little exercise I'd done. And I have done very little exercise. I never did sport or anything. And I don't now, apart from walking... and I guess I've realised, I can't even go, last for an hour, without being out of breath. It's appalling (laughs). So... and I don't think psychologically, it's of any particular benefit.

I: Not got any injuries?

G: No

I: Have you noticed an improvement since you started Circle dancing?

G: Not really, because we only go once a week, don't we?

I: Yeah.

G: But I mean it's part of the whole thing. I mean when I chose Circle dancing, I was aware that I needed to do something that was active. So that at the same time I've started walking, well I've joined a walking group so I suppose there is improvement, it's not entirely due to the Circle dancing. It's more of a realisation that I'm going to seize up if I don't do something.

I: So when was it you started Circle?

G: I started in September, when everyone else started.

I: September... So you've been doing it six months? Any other thoughts on how it influences your health?

G: No, I don't think so.

I: So ... how does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

G: It's quite nice to learn something new, and know that you can. And... also doing it with other people, who are ... well I suppose the older generation, it makes you realise that you ought to be able to do things.... there's none of that "Oh I'm too old to do that now." Because you look at other people your own age doing it, so of course you can, it's just a question.... And then you realise that, there's probably a whole chunk of my life when I should have been doing all sorts of things, and I didn't, and other people have been, well people continue to play tennis and do all these active things, which I never did, and so now they're quite agile and quite supple and quite able to do things... Whereas I never did so now I kind of (laughs) very stiff. Yes I guess, I don't think it influences my experiences of growing older. I'm still very much aware of getting older ... well it probably makes me feel older actually (laughs).

I: Right. OK. Anything else on that one?

G: No.

I: So number six... how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

G: Not in any way, I don't think so, no.

I: Is there anything more you can tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

G: No it's never been very important. Music has never been very important at all.... and I guess that goes with it. No, dance has not been something that played an important part at all. Since I was at school.

I: Do you think it's something you would get more involved in in the future?

G: .... No I don't think so. But I think if... I was twenty years younger, I might. But I'm not going to do it now, because I just don't think that I will. Because it's kind of embarrassing ...to be joining in now. I wouldn't try to do Ballroom dancing or anything like that. But...

I: Do you think you'll carry on Circle?

G: Oh I'll carry on with the Circle dancing, yes definitely. I do like that. And enjoy that, that maybe... But I mean I've been very slow to learn.... It's taken... I'm probably one of the weakest in the class, I'm quite surprised how quickly people pick up which is saying I think "Oh goodness me!" So I'm obviously one of the slower learners, I'll be better next year (laughs).

I: OK. Thanks. That's great. Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview Seven (2.C.7)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

D: You may.

I: Thank you.... So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

D: Well I was by myself and a neighbour decided I should join this retirement organisation, something extra to do, sent me a brochure, and it was one thing I picked out. Quite enjoy it. That was how it first happened.

I: How long have you been Circle dancing?

D: To be honest, I don't know. But must be about four or five years now, I should think.

I: Right, right.

D: It goes by so quick, doesn't it?

I: Anything else about getting involved?

D: It's... it's quite good to get out and meet people, and everything, and I found it, Circle dancing, quite relaxing. It's relaxing, if you've got anything worrying you, before you go, or anything, I find it... it does help. Especially some of the dances. I think it's quite therapeutic sort of thing.

I: Yeah.

D: I don't know whether everyone else feels like that about it. Everyone's obviously got different ideas. I find it does me good like that. And apart from the fact that I've never been very good at picking up things and learning things, and I think the teacher knows that, she'll say something, but she's very good and I feel quite "Oh I managed that. I feel quite good. (laughs) Cracked up in myself!" And that's another thing, I've kept it up because ....I think it is good for you as well, isn't it?

I: Can you say a little bit more about that? How it's good for you?

D: Well as I say I think it gets you out the house, I think it helps you concentrate, get out to meet people, and I found it quite relaxing, and... and after the aspect, the candle was a bit weird, a bit alien (laughs). Perhaps you shouldn't put that bit in (laughs)

I: Go on... what do you think?

D: I thought that was a little bit odd (laughs). To have a candle and dance round a candle, I thought it was some sort of... well it didn't seem right to me at all, to explain the idea of it. I still feel it's a bit, a bit dangerous, but that wasn't the idea at the time.

I: Yeah.

D: I just didn't, I just didn't feel it was, it was some sort of ritual. Yeah, I don't mind, I don't mind.

I: Religious?

D: I don't mind. I don't know about other people. Yeah. I still feel a little bit like that about that candle. I can never see the meaning of it... a bit more, actively worry about it... Ritual or something. I don't know (laughs). I didn't really, I needn't think of it in that way(laughs).

I: A bit New Age?

D: Yes, yes, yes, something like that or some sort of cult or something. I don't honestly know, it does seem odd to me. It was something I wasn't familiar with, wasn't it?

I: Yeah.

D: Not sort of seen before. And you don't... I thought it was going to be a little bit more like Country dancing. And then I found it's the other way, I think "Well I'm on my own, I know some of them there have got husbands." I find it's something that you can do that sort of dancing without a partner.

I: Yeah.

D: Which I think is very nice... for... for some ladies sort of thing.

I: Yes.

D: But you don't feel so silly. Mind you, I go to a disco with my neighbour and it doesn't bother. And that's another thing... yes, it has done me good.

I: Have you ever been involved in any other kinds of dance?

D: Any other kind of dance?... I don't know. Serious dancing?

I: Well as a teenager ?

D: Not really, no. I don't know, no, not as a teenager, no. Never been to Scottish dancing or anything like that.... Not seriously (laughs).... I don't know, I've been to dances, not, not Scottish dancing or anything, no, no, no. Or Country dancing or anything really serious.

I: So have you been involved in any other kinds of dance you can think of?

D: Are we going back to this?

I: Just to check it.

D: No, not for lessons or anything serious.

I: So Circle dancing is the only thing you've done?

D: (laughs) It wasn't that, I think I mean I understand a bit of ballroom dancing, I've never been to classes or anything.

I: Yeah, yeah.

D: I think we all have a go at these things, don't we?

I: Yeah.

D: Not as far as going to lessons or anything.

I: OK... shall we go onto the second question then? How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?

D: (laughs) Not very, not... I'm alright at those that are sort of repetitive. But those that we are sort of progressing, I always end up in a muddle. And as you know, I think she knows that. Well she's very nice to me about it. I think some people things come to, some people pick up things, I suppose I've never been very quick at learning, I'll be quite honest. I admire anybody who goes to university or anything... Not so easily as some people I suppose. But then I don't find things like that as easy in life as everyone else.

I: So what strategies... how do you learn the dances? What do you do to try and learn them?

D: You sort of go, you just have to... It's easy to follow round in a circle when you're all doing them. It's easy for me, for me to sort of follow. And sometimes, I don't know about other people, but when, when she plays the music, it comes, better than, than when she's showing us. It, it... makes sense, and it doesn't seem half as complicated as when the teacher shows you... I don't know whether anybody else felt like that. I think the music does sort of .... I'd be interested in what other people say. But no, I think it does help when the music's played, it sort of. Well I'm not very good always at the "brushing" (laughs).

I: It gives you a rhythm doesn't it?

D: Yeah, oh yes, I can see it. When it's repetitive I can sort of pick it up quickly because you sort of, some seem to be easier than others. But as I say, when you all follow round, I can, it seems easier.

I: Can you describe any of the dances you've learnt?

D: (laughs) You mean what kind? How do they?

I: Well any of the particular dances that you've learnt..

D: Ones that I like?

I: Yeah.

D: Well there's the "Elm Tree" and "The Bells of Norwich" which she hasn't done for a long time I like. She does one, she used to do one called "Marley" which I liked. They're all different, she doesn't usually do the same things repetitively, does she?

I: No.

D: Sort of the whole calming ones. The others are quite good for sort of, as I say, are quite good for taxing the brain, but some of them are quite, I find them more peaceful ones. I like that yes.

I: That's lovely... So how important do you think memory is?

D: Well I think anyone that's got a better memory than I, and I should imagine it... it, it could be a great help I suppose. But I suppose that I don't know how important memory is. I don't know. I suppose it must be. (laughs) I don't know what to say to this.

I: (Laughs) That's fine.

D: I honestly don't know what to say to that.

I: Yeah... I find I copy.

D: I find, I find some one like K., K. I think started after me, but K. also goes to another one, doesn't she? I think so. I don't know. It must be quite nice to remember the dances. But the teacher doesn't do the same ones does she, every week?

I: Yeah.

D: I mean sometimes it would be quite nice to sort of, go over the same thing, until you sort of got it properly. For me, but that's not a criticism. It could be quite important, I suppose, I'm not very good at learning curves. I don't know what else to say to that. That's an awkward one for me.

I: (Laughs)

D: Ok. I think some of the people who come to the class are probably a bit more academically minded, or pick things up easily.... learn things sort of easily.

I: Yeah...ok. So how would you say Circle dancing influences experiences of yourself?

How does it make you see yourself?

D: Which one?

I: This one.

D: Experiences of yourself.

I: Yeah... how does it make you think about yourself?

D: (laughs).

I: It's ok if you don't want to... you can take a moment to think.

D: Experiences of yourself.... I feel like the first one. I just think it's quite therapuetic sometimes... it helps you in that sort of way. With me it does, at any rate. Especially... especailly.... when I've been worried about my daughter, I feel a lot more relaxed or something like that. That's the way I experience it I think.

I: Lovely... so go onto number four... How does Circle dancing influence exeriencies of your health?

D:... It's relaxing, it's very good, it's very good for the leg muscles, sometimes, isn't it? I don't know whether you've noticed that. I think some of them are... I often think the exercise is, is very good... I think all dancing is meant to be, isn't it, meant to be very good exercise. Especially with old age, older people, they sort of encourage them to. To do things like that. So I should think it's quite good for all age groups in a way.

I: You're quite active anyway aren't you? You do walking as well?

D: Well I, I do walk about six miles sometimes. But it still uses different muscles, doesn't it? I think it really is important in this day and age to keep active, especially when you're living by yourself as well. It's important to anybody... If you can't get out, it must be pretty horrible... Well I think it's very good, exercise.

I: What do you think about the psychological benefits?

D: ... I've sort of said that, haven't I?

I: Yeah.

D: I don't know whether I was meant, have I got it all a bit tangled up?

I: It doesn't matter what order. No all the questions inter-mingle.

D: It does sort of thing, doesn't it?

I: Yeah.

D: I don't think I can say anymore about that.

I: I missed one of the questions out. What do you wear for Circle dancing?

D: I don't, I just wear flat comfortable shoes... they say, they say it's meant to be best to do it in bare-feet

I: Mm.

D: But I don't think I'd like that. Especially on those floors up there, they're a bit funny. I think that's what they like you to wear and you're meant to be, it's meant to be nicer to do it in a full skirt and everything else. But... I don't think I worry what to wear for it (laughs). But that is meant to be the idea, to do it, to do it... in a full, in a sort of full skirt and... not to wear any shoes, and that's meant to be, I suppose that's meant to be... with the, with the pagan, or relaxing side of it, I don't know. Safe shoes I suppose is the main sort of thing I'd say, to stop you slipping about, you've got to be safe, haven't you? And not have a skirt that was too twirly so you fall over! I think the answer's really meant to be your skirt and your bare-feet... and nothing else, that's what you do the thing in... some people say you should wear.

I: But you usually wear trousers?

D: I usually, I don't bother about that. But that's what I think the ideal's meant to be.

I: Yeah.

D: I don't know what other teachers say and that.

I: So have you been to other teachers in Circle ever?

D: No, no, no, no.

I: But you've just heard?

D: Only when they've done it instead of our teacher.

I: Have you had any injuries from Circle dance?

D: No, no, no I haven't, no (laughs). It's got difficult, hasn't it?

I: I mean another open question...

D: How have you changed... (laughs) It's coming after us again (laughs) No, I've not had any injuries. I've only had, perhaps you could call it a pulled tendon or something. I don't know.

I: It seems quite gentle....

D: Yeah, yeah. Have you come, does anyone else have any, do you know other people with injuries? (laughs).

I: I don't think so.

D: No. Well I suppose you could, it would be possible. I suppose you could trip over. Health and safety.

I: (laughs)

D: Only she says, I used to wear socks, she says "Don't wear socks," because you can slip in them.

I: Mm.

D: And so she has to safe-guard herself there. I don't know if there's anything else you can say about that. If you wore too long a skirt I suppose you could trip on it or something.

I: Yeah.

D: As well, or something like that, wouldn't you, as well or things like that.

I: (laughs)

D: I don't know whether anybody has, it could be possible... Well I must have trodden on a few toes myself, I don't know.

I: (laughs)

D: I think it's quite a safe, it's quite a safe thing, isn't it?

I: Yeah.

D: Yes, I think so.

I: Ok... so what about number five, another open question. How does Circle dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

D: I don't think I understand that one.... I don't know how it can influence it. I guess there's the health aspect as well.

I: Yeah.

D: Well the grand children used to think it was quite cool but I don't know if they do anymore! (laughs)

I: Why did they think it was cool?

D: Well it was Nanna going out dancing! (laughs). I think they've got over that now. I don't know. What does everyone else say? I think it's a bit repetitive for me. ... I suppose it could be a bit calming, couldn't it? I honestly don't know.... Experiences of growing older. I don't like that growing older bit! (laughs) I forget about that (laughs).... I suppose you could say it was quite graceful, it was quite sedate (laughs) I don't know. How is Circle dancing about growing older?

I: Ok.

D: Have you asked the teacher? Because the teacher's not very, she's not very sedate is she? (laughs) I don't know. I don't think. All ages could do it. I didn't realise it came from so many countries, and you sort of see them do things that you didn't think of as Circle dancing. They do it at weddings and things like that, it's something that's got them together and put them, some of these country dances there....Perhaps all age groups can do it. Even children might find it good fun, a bit like Country dancing at school.... I don't think it's something...It's not like Sequence dancing or something like that, that's much more... No I think any age can do it.

I: Yeah. That's great.

D: Yeah, I think it, I'm sure they could, they would probably enjoy it. As the teacher says, it was probably done at weddings. In other countries, these things do more, different things. They seem to have something for all moods. I don't know about that one to-day, but then they do sometimes.... I should think there's something for all moods in it as well.... for most occasions in some countries, I don't know. The teacher will probably laugh at these things "Oh we're dancing like that." I don't think there's an age thing in it.

I: Lovely... so do you want to go onto number six?

D: Has everyone been completely different?

I: It's lovely what you've said....So how has Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

D: (Laughs) I don't really know.... Experiences of my body..... Probably go back to relaxing again.

I: Mm

D: And some of them I should think are probably... Some of the movements are linked to being quite expressive aren't they?

I: Yeah.

D: If I think about it, it feels like that. I suppose it could help you in that sort of direction.... I don't know, I'd love to know what someone else has said.... Relaxation as well, that sort of stuff. I don't know.... I'd love to know what the teacher said, I'm sure she laughed at some of these interview ... Any more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life? I think I've said everything. I think I've said everything.

I: Ok. Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview Eight (2.C.8)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

C: Yes, yes. That's ok.

I: Ok. So off we go then... So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

C: Well... I used to do before, Ti Chi, but then I had an injury in my knee, left knee, and I didn't do Ti Chi for a long time, and I thought "I want to do something to move" and so when I looked at the programme of the retirement organisation, I saw Circle dancing and I thought "Oh that might be interesting." And that is the way I came.

I: How long have you been Circle dancing?

C: Just one year. It is my first year.

I: Right... So how long had you been doing Ti Chi?

C: Oh Ti Chi I did for several years, I couldn't tell you exactly, probably ten years or so, quite a long time.

I: Right... So have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

C: Of dance? No, unless you would say you used to be involved when one is young. When I was very young, when I was say at leisure, I loved... Ball dancing.

I: So did you do that in Argentina?

C: That's right, in Argentina. But I mean I never went to classes, I just went to dances and danced. I don't know why. I think I found it like tuition for dancing, I loved dancing really (laughs).

I: OK...So anything else to say about getting involved in Circle?

C: No, I don't think so, no.

I: That's great... So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Circle dancing?



C: Well, it depends which is the dance. If the dance, the step pattern is easy, I find it easy. When it is more complicated or longer I find it a bit more difficult. Not too bad. I think that the difficulty for me is, speed. When we're getting very fast, then I find it more difficult.

I: Right... so what strategies do you use for learning?

C: A variety I suppose....

I: Anything else?

C: Not that I know, I don't know (laughs)

I: Can you give me an example of how you learn a particular Circle dance?

C: Well... you see... the teacher for instance tells you.... "Right, you start with the right foot." So you say "Side together side in front or things like that." So I repeat it to myself.

I: Right... a repetition of the pattern?

C: Of the pattern....

I: Are there any other ways that you try to learn?

C: Not that I, that I realise let's say. Unconsciously let's say, but I don't know.

I: Ok ok.... so how important is memory?

C: Oh I think it is very important. Not only in dancing, but in everything really.

I: Mm.

C: I think in life.

I: Can you say a bit more about that?

C: I don't know what to say but I think.... I think as we get older... it seems to me it is very important to exercise your memory or your mental functions really because otherwise you will get.... left behind and I think that I wouldn't like that.

I: So would you see Circle dancing as helping keep your memory active?

C: Yes, why not? I don't, I mean I don't do it so often as to say it's one of the things that keeps my memory going because that I think to keep your memory going you have to do something more often and regularly... but of course, anything helps.

I: Yeah... So what sort of things do you do to help your memory?

C: Well, I practise music, I learn languages, I do cross-words, sudoku, anything... that keeps my brain cells going (laughs).

I: Lovely... So how does Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

C: I don't understand the question very well. What do you mean?

I: How does Circle dancing make you think about yourself?

C: Think about myself... I've never thought of that. I don't know how to answer that (laughs). I'm sorry.

I: That's great, fine... What do you wear for ...

C: Circle dancing. I wear just my ordinary clothes, except that I bring shoes which are totally flat.

I: Right.

C: Yes, that is the only important bit for me for the dancing, yes.

I: Why do you wear shoes?

C: Rather than be bare-footed. I never like to be barefooted except the sand. The sand, I love it, on a... wooden floor, I don't like it. If it would be carpeted, perhaps I would like it. Not... a wooden floor.

I: Ok. So shall we go onto number four?

C: Mm.

I: How does Circle dancing influence experiences of your health? How does it influence your health?

C: My health? .... Well I think that it is a good influence. No, I mean I feel very exhausted when I come out, but nice. I feel nice (laughs). I feel good.

I: Can you say a little bit more about...

C: I don't know what to tell you. What would you like to know?

I: What does feeling nice mean?

C: Well happy (laughs).

I: And how about psychological benefits of Circle dance?

C: Well I think it is to do, it is... mingle self and psychological self really. If you feel well psychologically, you feel well from the health point of view.... So it is the same really. For me.

I: That's lovely. Thank you. And have you had any injuries from Circle dance?

C: No, not so far, keep fingers crossed! That's ok.

I: You say about your knee?

C: That's right. That was one of the things really I was worried about... when I started. I thought "Will it be alright?... will my... knee or not?" But it seems to be alright. I didn't feel ....pain or anything in my knee, so I think it is fine.

I: How did you do the damage in Ti Chi?

C: In my knee? That was very long, long ago. I was skiing and I tore a ligament...

I: Right.

C: I mean in those days all that they did was plaster it and wait for the ligament to join together again but although I suppose it joined, the repair wasn't good because... what used to happen soon after I had the accident, once I had the plaster off, I would be walking and suddenly I would feel my knee going... one bone against the other, sliding, it was awful, really awful. And I, in that way, I think because the ligament was not holding, the two bones in it's place, they both, they joined in a knot. And that is the problem I have now.

I: And you found Ti Chi aggravated it?

C: No, at the contrary, at the beginning, I thought that it was helping because... Ti Chi in a way keeps the provision for the legs a bit similar, like in skiing, where you don't have your leg completely straight but a bit bent, and so I think Ti Chi helps to develop the muscles from... the upper part of the leg.

I: Yeah.

C: And so that helps hold the knee in it's place. It's all related. So I think that Ti Chi helps. But when I got a problem, I was gardening, more recently, I was gardening, so that means I was kneeling, and when I got up I could feel something like a crack... a noise inside and... and I think what happened then, part of the bone broke.

I: Yes

C: And so I had like loose peices.

I: Mm.

C: And that caused me a lot of pain. Really painful. So I started to take Ibuprofen but I didn't like the idea, because I was having a lot, a lot of Ibuprofen. So I started to go, first to see the GP, and the GP said "Well never mind. You can have Ibuprofen. You don't need to worry." Until I finally went to see a specialist, who was not helpful at all... He told me "Well.... you'll get worse if anything." So I went to see a second specialist. He said perhaps I could have... What is it called?... I don't remember the name. It is when they clean all the surroundings of the knee. And so I said "Well, perhaps you could try that." And... he said "Well I don't think it will be of any use for you.".... The surgeon told me "I will have fun but you won't have any fun and it won't be better for you."

I: Yeah.

C: Well then I went to see another... Well finally I nagged so much, the specialists, that one of them agreed to do the... operation and that made me feel much, much better. I think the way that I am now, much better without pain and being able to dance.

I: Did you go back to Ti Chi after the operation?

C: No, no, no I dind't.

I: OK

C: Because at the beginning really I am doing exercise at home, on my own, to develop these muscles, because that is the only thing you can do really to help the knee.

I: That's very interesting that the dance has helped you recover when you have had such a big operation.

C: Well it wasn't, it wasn't a very big operation. It wasn't a very big... it wasn't a change of knee. Only an... arthroscopy, arthroscopy, which is not too bad really but even so at the beginning... it took me probably one year to get over the operation properly.

I: Yes

C: But... then when I realised that I could start to do more normal things, I thought "Well I might just as well try and see what happens." So at the beginning really, when I started the classes, I wasn't sure whether I would keep coming or not.

I: But you've been every week nearly...

C: Well, every week, yes, yes. Fortunately (laughs).

I: That's great... So anyway, if we go onto number five... How does Circle dancing influence experiences of growing older? How does it make you see growing older?

C: Oh no I don't think I could comment on that. It isn't something...

I: So what about number six. Has Circle dance changed your experience of your body?

C: Well I think it makes me feel slightly lighter, which is good because I think because I had that problem with the knee, I started to move and walk and climb up or down the stairs in a very slow way because I was always... conscious that I have my knee there (laughs) troubling me. And ... so I think that this dancing makes me feel that I am a bit more trustful of my knee, if you know what I mean?

I: Yeah. That's great.... Anything else?

C: No. That is all.

I: Ok. Then we're onto the last question.

C: What is that?

I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance for you?

C: I don't think so, I don't think so. I'm very new to it really....I haven't been doing it even for two years. I mean it is my first year.

I: Ok. Thank you.

## **Second Circle Interview Nine (2.C.9)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

U: Yes, that's fine.

I: So how did you first get involved in Circle dancing?

U: .... I think I saw a notice about it ... and I thought "Oh that sounds interesting." And I really wanted to go but I didn't go for several weeks.... or months even, because this particular class was only every month on a Sunday afternoon. And a friend of mine also went and she said "Oh you should come Circle dancing." And I said "Yes I do want to go... I will go." So eventually, I found a free Sunday afternoon and I went and... I enjoyed it and started going regularly to that group which, as I say, was once a month on a Sunday afternoon. And the teacher came ... And I remember we found it very difficult, partly because we were only doing it every month, we sort of forgot inbetween. And I can remember some of the dances now seem quite easy and they were just... amazingly difficult at the time. I also... about the physical thing, I was going to say it, I remember my legs, after one Circle session when I started, used to be absolutely aching and tense, and I realise now that it was, even though I'm so much older now, I wouldn't get the same amount of aching in the legs simply because when it's all new to you, you're trying to do it right and... your muscles tense up (laughs) in your efforts to get it right. So... that was the reason really. So it's easier now (laughs). You learn to relax, even when you're still doing it wrong.

I: So about how many years have you been Circle dancing?

U:... I'll have to look this up, I'll look this up.

I: Roughly, just roughly.

U: I was asked... was it the 80s I started? Probably I started in the 80s. So... twenty years or more, yeah. I can, I'll find that out.

I: So have you been involved with other Circle groups?

U: Yes... we... that group came to an end and for a time we did it without a teacher. So we used to meet in somebody's house and try and remember the dance steps we'd been taught. And again we found it very difficult, and I especially remember the "Missolou" that was "Ah! " That was the zenith of .... Because then if we could manage to master the "Missolou" we thought that was absolutely incredible... Anyway, then we started having it regularly once a week, at the .... and with P. and J., and then they used to do it three nights, three out of four Wednesdays in the month and then we used to do, one Wednesday a month was a... a do-it-yourself night when anybody could teach one dance. We had about ten different people, each teaching one dance, that's how I first got practice of actually teaching as oppose to learning them. And for me, to learn something, I have to teach it so (laughs) that's quite... that's partly why I became a Circle dance teacher, to get them into my head, also because I realised it was a really nice thing to pass on. So I've never done a formal training unlike some of the Circle dance teachers.

I: Have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

U:... When I was young, at primary school, we did Country dancing with Mrs. N. and her accordion, and I always enjoyed that. When I went to secondary school, we learnt, well we did sort of what I call "Free dance," pretending you're a banana and things like that, which never appealed to me at all.... But Folk dancing always interested me, and then Ballroom dancing we learnt in the sixth form and I didn't take to that either and I always call Circle dance the non-dancers dance, the non-dancers' type of dance. People say "Ah I couldn't do dancing." I say " Well, you'll be alright at Circle dancing, if it appeals to you." But it's the music. To me, it's the music. If I like the music, I can dance to it. And now if like some other, more modern piece of music, if I like it, then I can dance to it. But what I have noticed is that now I am more open to Free dance because Circle dance has loosened me up a bit, I can now dance to other types of music, even more sort of Jazz. I never did Disco dancing or pop dancing or jiving, but that all passed me over when I was growing up, I never went with the... the dance crazes of the time. I wasn't that sort of person.

I: So how did the dance relate to your interest in music?

U:... Well if I like the music, and some of these old traditional Folk tunes, really make, they touch something very deep inside you, and to be able to move to that music is, really great. I mean Circle dance, I mean it's sometimes called Sacred Circle dance, and there is something that sort of brings out your very innermost being, whatever you define sacred as, because it started at the Findhorn community and ... that was sort of like a spiritual community in a sense. And that the person who started it ...was a master of dance, but I mean ballet- trained, with the experience of lots of different types of dance. But he started it because he thought that in Western Europe, we hadn't, we'd lost the tradition of dancing, although we still do have Ceilidhs, I mean especially in Scotland and Ireland.... Ordinary people don't do any dancing, apart from sort of individual dancing. Whereas Circle dancing, because it's done in a Circle, it's a sort of co-operative thing. It's not a performance thing. That's how it sort of differs from International Folk dance. It's often done as a performance, of countries which did have a strong dance tradition, perhaps like Russia under communism... there were lots of folk dance troupes but they would do it on

the stage, and perform it to people. Whereas with Circle dance it's the participation so... although you try and get the steps right, it's not the be-all and end-all, more the point of it is to feel it together, to experience the dance together. But I think it takes a long time before, many years of dancing, certainly in my case, because I'm not particularly a natural graceful dancer... or somebody who picks it up terribly quickly but through the years, now I'm just beginning to... to sort of, if you like, perhaps the ideal, I mean some people might not call it their ideal, is to, that the dance dances you. In other words, you just don't have to think about it and you're just, you're carried away by the dance. But that's only just beginning to come now, because I'm always... having to think of the next steps. And memory does come into it quite a lot... if you can't remember the steps, then (laughs), especially if you are a teacher, you have a certain more responsibility than the rest of the group to remember the steps, else you lead them all astray.... But if you are completely familiar with the steps, then you can just let yourself go. If you lose your concentration too much, you've still got to be focused on something, otherwise, even easy dances, as soon as you start thinking "Alright, this is great, I can do this now" then you suddenly find yourself doing it wrong... and it's.... even a simple dance.

I: So you feel it's something you grow into with more experience?

U: Definitely. And you get more out of it at different stages of your life. It... it depends... where you are at at the time. And one day, depending on your mood, you might just be... it might be just a routine, like you're teaching or you're doing, you're just doing the steps, it's a routine and you're not really particularly enjoying it. But other times, you just feel a part of it and everything seems to flow. I mean partly it depends on the teacher. I think ideally it shouldn't depend on the teacher, each person should bring their own energy to it, but if you've got a teacher who can sort of somehow inspire you... some teachers I don't like dancing with because... the way they teach it, it just seems like it's a lot of steps to learn and you go through them mechanically... But I mean most teachers aren't like that, but just occasionally that happens, with some teachers...

I: So are you involved in any other Circle dance groups locally?

U:.... At the moment, my regular dancing is just once a month on a Wednesday, on a Sunday afternoon in a village plus the retirement organisation Circle dancing which is weekly and which I teach. That's... I mean there are other dance weekends, occasionally I would go on one, or a dance day, just a whole day of dance somewhere.

I: So how do you choose which dances to teach?

U:.... This is a very good question.... (sighs). It partly depends how rushed I'm feeling. I always like to prepare the dances on a Monday night, ready for the next Monday, which is why I've forgotten them by the next week (laughs). I must say, I don't think my memory's getting any better with age... I do them according to the season, a little bit, if it's Spring I try to do some Spring-like dances, or... and so on. I try always start with a fairly easy dance, that isn't too fast and isn't too slow, to warm up with, and at the end, I usually end up with a slow one. And in fact, in the second half, I try and have slower dances, partly because... people have got rid of their energy or are just feeling... perhaps a bit tired as the session wears on and so.... but also I like to bring it to a quiet, quiet end.... In the middle, we have the more energetic or more complicated dances, and you need to bring your brain into gear as well as your feet.... I try and get a balanced programme. I mean sometimes, this sounds very bad but I'm afraid it's the truth, and as it's anonymous I don't mind being honest, the next dance on the tape, "Oh right we have to wind that tape, yes it's a nice dance. We'll have that one next time." (laughs). I suppose that's a way of choosing them... Repetition... I think probably I don't do enough repetition because people tend to like ones that they know or they've done already... whereas I like to always include at least one dance that I've never taught before to keep my own interest going. I want always to do new things. But this may not be so good from the group's point of view.... (laughs)

I: Any more on that? How you teach the dances?

U: How I choose the dances... I mean if I go on a workshop, and I've just learnt some new ones, sometimes I want to pass those ones on and to... if I teach them, it gets them into my head, whereas before if I didn't teach them, I wouldn't remember the new dances that I learn. In fact, I hadn't really learnt them, if you do them just once. But if you've got them written down, then you can repeat them and then I like to teach them... If I think they would be suitable for this group, but sometimes they're a bit complicated or... But... that's about all on that.

I: Well I've just remembered the question I wanted to ask you which is "How did you end up getting involved in the retirement organisation?"

U: In general?

I: Well teaching Circle dance?

U: ... Well I joined the retirement organisation because I wanted to learn Russian and there was a day-time Russian class that suited my time-table so... then I heard about the retirement organisation, and they're always asking for teachers and more groups and I thought "Ah. I enjoy Circle dancing. Maybe I can teach Circle dance. Perhaps people would like that." I can distinctly remember the first group... and I can remember doing the "Elm Tree" dance which is in a sense, you're all elm trees, and I was just looking at everybody's different style of elm tree. It's the sort of individual interpretation that's so nice. I know that some teachers, they don't look at the other dancers when they're dancing, but I tend to sort of notice everybody and notice whose having a problem. Funnily enough now, I'm getting into it as I was trying to explain before, that it becomes more of a part of you. Perhaps I can let myself go in the dance now so I'm not so worried about other people. Because I don't

think it necessarily helps other people, to watch their feet going right or wrong... and certainly, I've learnt in teaching that.... Some people it helps them to have just one little comment that's specific to them, but it can very easily put somebody off and make them self-conscious. So in fact they probably know they're always putting their right foot where their left foot should be, so to point it out to them is not helpful (laughs).

I: So quite a few people have said to me there's no wrong steps in Circle dance.

U: Yeah, that's commonly said. No wrong steps only variations. So that, that is a good motto and it's a good thing for me as a teacher to remember.... I mean obviously we try and get the steps right but it's not the end of the world if you get them wrong, that's what it means, you can just treat them as a variation... I was going to say something interesting... No I've found that some other dancers, with the best will in the world, try and help a new person standing next to them by whispering prompts to them, or even not whispering, saying them quite loudly, and I find that quite disturbing (laughs) to teach. I think it confuses the person who is going to need the help, and if they have too many teachers telling them what to do, I think it perhaps doesn't help. But anyway, that's just, that's just by the way.

I: How do the dances themselves tell stories?

U: I'm not quite sure that I know what you mean by this question. Do you mean.....

I: The meaning of the dances.

U: The meaning behind the dance. ...Well some of them are very old... very, lost in the mists of time, and some of them were obviously for a purpose, like we don't always understand the words, if they're in Serbo-Croat or something, but... it might be like a harvest dance or something and it would be about planting the dance on the land and it would be sort of to bring fertility to the plants and... have a good harvest... while stamping on the ground. So I mean some of those, there is a story behind it but usually in the Circle dance tradition we don't sort of go into that too much because it's more up to each person, it could... perhaps start something completely different, they wouldn't understand the words anyway, and it might mean something completely different to that person, which is fine. It's a bit like a poem, you can sort of interpret a poem or, but also that people find their own meanings in the poems.... I mean like sometimes we do a wedding dance, but we just do it, when there's nobody there who's actually getting married so... we might just see it as a joyful dance or there's one Israeli dance, and you bring down blessings on the couple, who are standing in the centre. But we wouldn't have a couple there, unless it was actually done at somebody's wedding. So... we perhaps just bring down blessings on anybody, or us all. I mean that's just sort of a simple example. I mean later on I might think of specific dances which have got stories that mean something. Also I think you tend to remember when you first learnt the dance, I can think of that, so it sort of has a meaning because of that. I remember one "Let's get together" which is modern music. And I first learnt it at dance camp, and we used to do it every morning before breakfast, or maybe it was just after breakfast, it was a sort of letting us all get together in the camp (laughs). A sort of uniting thing...

I: I was just thinking about the Rumanian dance we did yesterday.

U: Ah... which one did we do?

I: We did the one that everyone was interpreting as cutting pieces of a wedding cake and putting them in a box (laughs).

U: Oh that one! (laughs) Oh well in that case, yes, it's nothing to do with that at all, it's just that the cake slices and the boxes are simply a sort of visual way of remembering the steps of the dance. But the words aren't anything to do with that, and if you're really interested, I can find out from F., whose Rumanian, in fact before she goes, I want to ask her.... listen to all the words of the dance, and sort of just give a quick interpretation of what's in there because that would be interesting. No we often talk about cutting the cake but it's simply, it's when you go in, not quite to the centre, to the left of the centre say, and then come out from the centre, so you're making a zig-zaggy line like... cutting a slice of the cake (laughs).

I: How many different steps are there in Circle dance?

U: Oh... I should think an infinite number, but having said that, there are the basic ones like the Grapevine, the Yeminite, the Slip-Step, the normal walking, right- left-right-left.... sort of swaying... sort of touch and replace, but then you can touch your toe or you can touch your heel... there probably are lots of others. I mean turning, but that's just a variation of walking, so it depends how you, how you count the steps really. Chicassias, that's a common one in Israeli and Greek dances. But sometimes we do the ancient music, but the steps have been simplified or modified by modern Circle dance teachers. I think it does definitely engender a sense of well-being. Usually when I cycle home after Circle dance, I feel in a much better mood. Sort of a calmer mood, even if the dances have been energetic before. And I think it's the gathering together of all the people to do that one activity... which sort of helps with that and maybe other people feel that.

I: That's sort of moved onto the next question "How does Circle dancing make you feel about yourself and about your health?"

U:.... Yeah, well it probably loosens you up a bit as well... We tend not to do lots of terribly fast energetic dances in the group I teach. In fact I was interested yesterday because people, we did two dances, and only one I would have called fast, and somebody said "Oh we've done two really fast energetic ones, we're not having another fast..." Or words to that effect. I thought "Oh help! I hope the next one's not too energetic.".... I usually wear slacks and bare feet... I notice most people don't have bare feet and as people get older they tend to wear shoes, maybe it's more supportive of the foot to wear shoes. I know

people who do a lot of dancing professionally, doing it all the time they feel they have to wear shoes because it protects their feet more. I've never had any injuries from... Oh actually, that's not true, somebody did stamp on my foot once, and the next day I could hardly walk and I was doing a paper round at the time, and I had to literally stagger round (laughs). So if you're bare-foot, you are vulnerable, especially if your partner's wearing hob-nail boots (laughs). Yeah definitely there are psychological benefits to Circle dance... it's, it becomes, if you do it regularly, it sort of becomes, I mean almost like a group therapy without sort of talking. I find Circle dance is communication without speech, it's a sort of internal communication or... internal. Just a communication through, you become ever so sensitive to like, you're holding hands on either side of you and... you find this person's hands are cold and clammy, and this person's hands are very warm, this person's gripping me a bit too tightly and I just feel very slight, you can hardly call it a pain, but... "I wish they wouldn't grip quite so hard on this hand." And this one's a bit floppy, and this one's got the hand-hold the wrong way round because we tend to do it all, the right hand going up and the left hand going down... but I mean these are just, they're just on a fine level but they are interesting. You're aware of all these things. Just like when you meet somebody, you're sort of aware of their character, and you get to know them, you speak to them, you learn a bit more about them if you have a conversation. But this is all sort of at a non-verbal level and ... hopefully ... if somebody has got a thing like they've had a bereavement, or ... they've been ill or something.... it can sort of help, help in some way, when perhaps they don't want to talk about their personal problems....

I: I was just going to ask you a little bit more about how you thought the Circle dance facilitates emotional expression?

U: I think, especially if you do a day of dancing, a really long session... it can get quite emotional, and some people perhaps don't want to let it do that, they don't want to ... shed tears in front of everybody else or perhaps... perhaps they don't mind. I think it partly depends... how it's prepared and how well you know the rest of the group.... But ... no, it could bring up quite deep things.... Also the hand-hold sort of effects, I remember once going on a workshop, it was quite a long time ago now, and, we did something in a back basket weave, I don't think we've done in the group I teach, well not recently, and somebody said "Oh we feel so held, cared for." Because you're all sort of like in a basket... you have to do one to see what I mean. We've done a front basket, something like that, a front basket weave.... Feeling of protection... For some of the dances, the traditional dances were... you can see again, I can't think of any that we've done recently in the group I teach, but there's one called "Darymee", and it's a Turkish dance I think, and it's a fortress, you're in a hold, where you're altogether sort of like a wall, so you're closer than you are in the normal just holding hands in a V hold, and you're like a wall, and I think it was... people danced like this through... sort of solidarity.... when the enemies of course, invading their land and so on... sort of protection.

I: I've noticed that the group we belong to at the moment just seems to find the Circle dance great fun. I mean how do you see the group?

U: Yes it is, I mean it's a lovely group of people and they do seem to really enjoy it. The only slight qualms I have sometimes, I look at the list each year, there's, I think this year half were new and half had done it before, but as time goes on, the people who drop out, are the new ones, and I sometimes sort of wonder and worry slightly... if I should have done more to sort of keep those people. Perhaps I'm making it too hard in favour of keeping the interest of the more experienced dancers... and...or...perhaps they're sort of feeling that they can't keep up because it's obvious that the people who are more experienced, I mean the more dances you learn, the more easy it is to learn new ones... Because they're all variations on a theme and you get into the sort of way of picking it up. I mean you also get used to the teacher's way of teaching, I mean when you go to a new teacher, they teach in a slightly different way and you get used to watching them in a certain way... So anyway all these things, it's easier for the "old" people... I don't like the way that came out, I'm doing inverted commas (laughs) as opposed to the newcomers, or the people who haven't done it so much. But I mean it maybe just that they're busy or, anyway, that's just a thought.

I: It's very difficult isn't it, teaching a mixed ability group.

U:... It is, for any subject. You sort of try do some easy ones, and some more complicated ones.

I: Do you still teach music as well?

U: I do. I teach clarinet and piano privately, to individuals... I do find hopefully, although I haven't done any formal teacher training for Circle dance, that I am getting better at putting it over hopefully. It seems that to me. I shouldn't say that myself, I should ask other people who've been with me for a long time. But they're better at picking it up anyway so, they might not give a completely objective account. I realise when I'm doing it in not such a good way, I realise I've got to say it and do it slower. Having said that some people teach "Just get into the feel . Right, left, right, left, right." Whereas some people like it more spelt out. It's very... there's lots of different ways of teaching, it's interesting going to different teachers. I tend to be quite analytical, and spell it out, but having said that, I can't always get the words on myself, I might do the steps, but I can't think what it is in verbal terms.

I: But you work for the retirement organisation completely voluntarily.

U: That's true.

I: They don't actually, they don't pay any of their teachers.

U: But that's the ethos of the retirement organisation, you don't pay...

I: They just pay for the room.

U: They pay for the room, they don't pay the teachers. Right, yes. Because it's a privilege to teach, it keeps your brain going. Which is true actually, I do agree with that.

I: Right. Number 8. Do you have anything further to say on that? How does Circle dance affect your experiences of growing older?

U: I think my memory's worse, as regards teaching. My short term memory is definitely worse, and I sometimes think this must be very annoying, and maybe I should give up Circle dance teaching, because it is annoying if the teacher teaches you wrong in the first place, it's a long time before you can get the right idea about that particular dance (laughs)... But partly, it's lack of preparation. I don't make the time to prepare. So partly if I did that more then, I wouldn't make so many mistakes. Plus they're good, they're very sympathetic... to my mistakes.

I: No, I think it makes it easier for those who are trying to learn.

U: I sometimes think, well at least I preach "It's ok to make mistakes" But if I was always perfect, they might get a bit worried... So they will think their own variations are alright (laughs) because she makes so many (laughs)... I do admit that sometimes. Yes, hopefully. Other ways, getting older..... I don't think my stamina is quite as much, I do get tired if I have to do a long session. I mean one and a half hours is OK but... if I go to, most sessions are longer than one and a half hours, I mean the one in the village is three hours, with a break for tea in the middle... and I feel I like to sit one or two out, I think I'm a bit arthritic. But I think the good thing about Circle dance is you can do it at a great age, we've had people as old as 90 doing it. And, I think especially if they learn it younger. If they start learning it when they were ninety, then maybe they wouldn't find it so easy, but if they start when you're 60 or 70, keep doing it regularly, then you can perhaps as you get a bit stiffer or whatever, maybe you even have an injury... you can still do it, you can adapt the steps. Make the steps smaller, don't do your hops so high, hardly do your hops at all... there's always a way of doing it... to suit your own body, physically.

I: Any other thoughts on that one?

U: ..... I think in a way it's quite nice if you don't do it every single week, our Wednesday group folded, I think partly because we're getting older. It is great when you have younger people in a group... although on the other hand, you all grow old together so you're all doing perhaps less energetic dances together, whereas if you've got younger people they might get a bit bored because they want to do more lively things... I think it's really nice to have a mixed age-group... it keeps the group alive more. What's happened on the Wednesday group, we weren't getting younger newer people who stayed. We'd get one or two new people, again maybe we didn't treat them right, so they didn't feel welcome. So the numbers fell off, it was hardly covering the cost of the room... But Circle dance as a whole, because it started in... and I should really look this up... in maybe the 80s, or maybe it was the late 70s... the people who started then, if they're still doing it, they are older, and I feel every group of whatever type, never mind if it's dance, whatever type of group, it has it's sort of age and that can be a drawback, as I say, if you don't get new people, if you're not managing to attract new people by some means or other.

I: OK. So number 9. How has Circle dance changed your experience of your body?

U:... I do swimming as well. I'm very concerned, I broke my ankle a few years ago, and so obviously for a time, I was limping but the symmetry is important to me, and I've got this, just my own sort of feeling about health, that if you can be symmetrical, you are just sitting more symmetrically now.

I: (laughs).

U: Uncross my legs because that's an asymmetrical posture... I look round the Circle and I think "Oh yeah, she's got, she's got a stiff shoulder there, her right shoulder's sort of up more than her left..." You can see people, I've become very aware of other people's bodies, yes I am aware of my own body as well and what it's feeling like, especially when I'm dancing because that's a time when you can... well you are focused on your body, to an extent, and especially as a teacher, you feel you've got to do the movements perhaps a bit, more gracefully, or you attempt to do them more gracefully as you're being an example.... I mean I see lots of people who are much more natural dancers than I am.... dance with much more grace and poise, but this symmetry I think is a key thing for me, in fact I think it is for other dance teachers, because somebody who's been teaching for years and years and does it professionally.... as most of our dances go to anti-clockwise... and we always hold hands in this way, he felt that he's getting a bit lop-sided from doing so many dances, very few dances go the other way. So he's started teaching the ones that traditionally go the right, he's started teaching them to the left with the reversed hand-hold. There's a really funny feeling when you go to one of his workshops, but I do see his point. He actually wrote an article about it... explaining and defending this position that he feels very strongly. But perhaps I don't dance enough to feel that the dance itself is making my body lop-sided by going always anti-clockwise, or nearly always....

I: Anything else?

U: ..... No, I think I've covered most of the things.

I: OK then. We're onto the last question. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

U:..... Well as I said before, I think the social thing, continuity, it's a bit like going to Church, I mean going to Church, let's face it, is a sort of social thing as well, it's a sort of support group. Those people become your friends, also a lot of people I know in dance, I know in other capacities as well and... some of them become friends, more than just somebody you meet

every week at Circle dance. I must say we're very lucky in the retirement organisation, a very nice group of people.... So....yeah, it's got a, yeah it's something that you share, that you share... with a lot of people and.... obviously everybody gets different things out of the dance. Some people just come "Oh it's just for fun. Or it's good exercise. It's not too strenuous exercise, it just keeps me. Uses your brain as well." But hopefully.... sometimes it sort of has a deeper meaning as well, and sort of focus you and calm you, and... yeah, I enjoy teaching it...



## Scottish Interviews

### First Scottish Interview One (1.S.1)

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

R: For the interview.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

R: My wife used to teach dancing of all sorts, and she gave up most of it when we got married and carried on with the Scottish dancing and I was dragged into it.

I: So how many years?

R: Gosh, forty-five, probably more, forty-five or fifty years.

I: So how did you find it?

R: Much to my surprise, I very much enjoyed it.... It was... I suppose it appeals to my geometrical instincts. I like the figures.

I: Can you say a little bit more about that?

R: Oh yes... I find that I have a good memory for the dances. I used to say that my wife and I used to make a good team, she had grace and I had memory... But... she was the real expert, I mean she used to give classes for teachers and things of that sort... she did training for people with the teaching certificate, she was on various committees, and she... didn't run, I was going to say she never ran, she was much involved with the University Strathspey and Reel club and was a principal teacher for many years, and I think her heat was always on... trying to encourage young people to join Scottish dancing because the first group is ageing, and if we don't get young people in, it will die fairly soon. So that was her principal interest.

I: So how long have you been involved in the ....

R: Well I joined as a life-member when I started dancing. I have never been on, one of the major committees of the first group, I've been on the local branch committee off and on, ever since the branch was founded twenty-five years ago. Because the branch was founded much later than when I ... started dancing. So I was principally concerned with the University group and there was of course, as always with these things, rivalry between the University group and the first Scottish group. As always, the nearer the... thoughts, the greater the animosity... So there was a bit of friction there that I tried to smooth over, but I'm not sure that I was successful. But those who were opposed to co-operation with the University have now left so all is harmonious again, which is very nice.

I: Do the two groups communicate with each other?

R: The two groups are communicating with each other very much more than they used to... which is a good thing. Partly, of course, our numbers have gone down, so we have to communicate with each other.

I: How do you think your memory helps you in Scottish dancing?

R: Well that's my principal (laughs). I pride myself that I remember better than anyone else. That may not be true but at least I like to think so (laughs). I think I have a very, good memory of the Scottish dances, I don't think my footwork is very good, in fact I know that my footwork is not very good but I know what I should do, even if I can't do it.

I: What makes your memory so good?

R: Oh my goodness. I think memory is something you're born with, isn't it? ... I don't think... you have to keep in practice because I've never had any difficulty with memory, memorizing mathematical or geometrical things. Peoples' names I can't cope with at all. Remembering which is left and right, I can't remember, but the geometrical figures of Scottish dancing I've no problem at all.

I: That's fascinating because that's what lots of people in my class have said is difficult about Scottish dancing is the patterns.

R: Oh they find it difficult, do they? That's the part I find easy.

I: You said the footwork you find difficult.

R: Well I'm too lazy. I'm not very good, I don't point my toes.... (laughs) you know, K. the lady who was teaching it... she said to me, some years ago, "I'm not going to try and improve your technique any more. I think you're happy with it as it is." I was sort of... So I said to ... have you met ...? She's the lady who got a terrible rheumatic disease in her 30s, she's a very good teacher but she does occasionally teach on Tuesdays, so I said to her, oh I repeat what the other teacher has said, I said "I always know my pas de basque is out of time." "It's not your pas de basque it's your Strathspey travelling step that's all wrong!" So I was very put down, I was. But it's of little care. You don't get in anyone's way if your footwork is errant.

I: So how do you see the benefits of Scottish dance?

R: What for me?

I: For your health.

R: Oh I suspect it's good exercise but I suppose I get quite a lot of exercise in the garden anyway. Oh it's just fun, which I suppose is good for you.

I: Anything else?

R: Actually, I think it is very good for shy young men, particularly mathematicians, we get a lot of those in the University, because it's totally ritualized social contact. There are no embarrassing decisions to be made. So it fits that sort of person very nicely. And I'm not a great one for small talk and things of that sort, I like to do things.

I: So are you a mathematician?

R: Not within the maths department but I taught mathematics within the engineering department.

I: It explains your fascination with geometric shapes.

R: That's right, yes.

I: So can I ask you about the history in Scottish dancing?

R: Right, well I can go on for years about the history of Scottish dancing.

I: Great.

R: I think that throughout Europe in the eighteenth century there were dances for people in lines... you see them in the films of Jane Austen novels and things of that sort. Scottish dancing differed from most other work, in that, most other forms of dancing, in that the footwork was more ritualized. There was a French influence, which you can find in some of the terms like pas de basque, things of that sort. So it's perhaps a rather refined version of what was common throughout Europe... And it survived well I suppose until the 1880s, and then began to degenerate, and became a sort of rather riotous village hall sort of dancing. And in the early 1930s, I can't give you a precise date but I can look it up if you're interested, there was a woman called Miss Milligan, who was a teacher of physical education in some college in Glasgow. And she thought it was a shame that Scottish dancing had become...in-elegant. And so she founded, she and a Mrs. Stewart, founded the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society to try and revive it. And she did so very successfully. She collected together old dances and she published them. And she was a very forceful character, you need to be a forceful character to do this sort of thing, and she went on and on and on and as with all monarchies, there was a problem with the succession when eventually she died. So she had been ruling it for fifty or sixty years with an iron hand, during the course of which, things evolved a little bit...she produced booklets of dances (scrapping of chair as T. gets up to find some)

These are the ones, now up to book forty-five, and the early books contain the dances that were still being done, and to a certain extent, they are satisfactory. Then by book four, five and six, she started to look up in old manuscripts and in old manuscripts she just found hints of how to do the dance, you know, they were written to remind oneself rather than clear exposition. And many of those turned out to be really, rather unsatisfactory dances, and I think that by about 1940, of course there was a break for the war, we had learned how to compose a good dance from ideas in a manuscript. So we then went on for a period up until about book twenty-three, which are really rather satisfactory dances. And by that time, she had run out of manuscripts that were worth publishing. And they then produced a couple of books of modern dances, composed dances, and I'm afraid that some of those were really not at all satisfactory. And they really got their fingers a bit burnt with that. And at about this time she was getting either

very old or retired...she might even have died by then, anyway they then went back to her old collection of manuscripts which she hadn't thought worth publishing and so we then went through a period of really rather trivial dances. And then of course, things have...in the first group, there are a lot of old... well, (laughs) my wife used to say, "It's run by old women of both sexes." (laughs) ...who are, a lot of old women who are much more interested in footwork and they do find the geometry rather difficult. So the first group has gone in for elegance rather than elaborate figures. And there are other composers who are much more interested in elaborate figures and aren't a bit concerned with footwork. So there has been a parting of the ways that is a great pity because I think you need both. But the old guard of the first group is very much against what they call the 'mathematical dances.' So you will find the second group does fairly complicated dances without any regard for footwork whatsoever, whereas the... first group lays on quite a bit of footwork.... technique tuition and... of course with some of the people who go, you do need the simple dances, you see this is it, you do need every style to satisfy every sort of person. And... but the first group won't listen to that and they, those like the second group, aren't concerned with the simple dances ... personality problems get in the way.

I: The teacher was telling us there are thousands of different dances.

R: There is one man whom I know well, who is now actually very old, I think he's composed, he's stopped composing dances, who...in the middle, sorry, fairly recently, composed what he called his 'D' dance, 'D' being the Roman numeral for 500, it was his 500<sup>th</sup> dance. All his dances are excellent and I love them.... The first group keeps at a slight distance from him. But occasionally he composes a dance, one of his simpler dances, which they accept. But I think that he composes some very good dances. There's also a man, was a man, by the name of Hugh Fosse, who was concerned with the Enigma project at Bletchley Park, and of course was a mathematician. Considerable talent, and he composed a small number of very complicated dances .... And the first group won't have anything to do with those at all. And I run, once a month, well I suppose it's six times a year because we don't do it in the summer, what I call the Fosse and Drewry Society, where I teach to a carefully selected group of people, these very difficult dances (laughs).

I: You have to be advanced?

R: They have to be not necessarily advanced in their footwork but they do have to have a lot of experience and a very good geometrical memory.

I: Can you describe the patterns?

R: You mean to you now.... There are too many of them. But.... One of Fosse's more complicated dances has the ladies in a row up the middle of the dance doing a Reel of Four, the men in a circle dancing round that Reel of Four, and when two people get to the top, the one who is in the Reel of Four comes out into the circle and the one who is in the circle comes out and into the Reel of Four, and then of course, the next time through, you pick up your partner in promenade hold, and all in all, it goes on like that for 120 bars without any repetition so it's a feat of memory. And... there are very few people locally who are prepared even to try that sort of dancing.

I: Do you go to the second group?

R: I go to their dances. I go to enough dancing without going to theirs because there's the Reel Club on Mondays, there's the Tuesday class in town, there's the Reel Club on Wednesdays, there is often a dance on Saturday, Sunday there's either the Ladies' Step dancing or my Fosse and Drewry dancing. There's quite enough without going to the Scottish Society.

I: So it seems having a sense of Scottish culture and history is quite important?

R: Most of them have no sense of Scottish culture whatsoever... I'm not sure what Scottish culture is really. There are various sorts of Scottish culture, there's the old Celtic stuff in the West, and there is sort of Edinburgh/Aberdeen sort of culture and then of course there is the Scottish music hall that is the worst sort of culture you have. This is true in Scottish music. There are all sorts of strains and I think that the Hebridean songs are beautifully melodic and the Peabrock is mathematically inclined... there's some excellent fiddle music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Aberdeenshire and as I say, the Scottish music hall is quite dreadful. So you know, you get everything.

I: So there's a lot of variety in dance and music?

R: There's a lot of variety in the music. Most of the Scottish dancing is done to really the Aberdeenshire style of music.... Neil Gow... oh dear, and what was his name? Sorry, I haven't got a memory for names. Scot Skinner. Scot Skinner particularly could compose an awful lot of Strathspeys. And Neil Gow. And they borrow things from the Celtic West that ... turn it into a non-Celtic sort of music for the Scottish dancing.

I: So you were telling me a little bit about these books. How have these Scottish dances been passed on from person to person?

R: You'll find, possibly not in that one, but in this, you see here is a particular one...and it was dated in 1749. So there were a lot, the Castle manuscript contains a lot, there's a Plantar manuscript... there were various people, you can see their dates, Hume, 1750 and 1760, Walsh there, who made notes about dances... 1772.... And as I say, not always... very well written. And a few on, in curious places... there is a fan, on the back of which a lady has made notes to remind her of the dances, so when she got lost, she got out her fan and waved it. So there are old manuscripts, very few, apart from the ones in book three, were still being done when Miss Milligan started to collect.

I: It's interesting how they have geometric shapes sort of the direction of the dance at the top of the page and then just a description in words underneath.

R: Yes... that's the way they do it.... I will get you an example of something else though I'm not very sure... Hugh Fosse with his mathematical mind has a description of the dance in ordinary words and every two bars, an indication of what you do.

I: The patterns look very, very complex.

R: This is a moderately complex dance, yes.

I: So this is one of the Hugh Fosse ones?

R: This is one of the Hugh Fosse ones. It's by no means his most complicated one but here you are, you see people chasing each other round two inter-locking circles.

I: How do you make sure no-body gets injured?

R: Oh they do occasionally but you know, you don't move that fast (laughs) in Scottish dancing! You see that is one of his more complicated ones.

I: I can't quite express this (laughs). So how long does it take you to learn one of these dances?

R: Oh if I was teaching this one, which I have taught to, as I say, a very carefully selected people, I would probably decide to chose to teach it about a week or so in advance and look at it from time to time beforehand and I more or less know it by heart, and then it would probably take me about an hour to teach the brightest people locally to do this.

I: So you actually visualize all forty-eight moves that are in the dance?

R: Yes.

I: That's quite a remarkable feat.

R: Thank you. I'm the only person who tries to teach these dances.

I: So how did you train as a Scottish dance teacher?

R: I'm not an official Scottish dance teacher. That is why the first group won't allow me to teach. I teach as my own private affair, I'm the rebel you see. I'm the rebel, you see.

I: Oh right. So did you research these dances for yourself?

R: No, no, no, no, no, no.... we bought these.... we've had them a long time.... You see this one was sold for 6d.... It probably has a date on it somewhere. Copyright 1966.... No we bought them and I just read them.... Not really research.

I: Where do you buy them?

R: Oh well the first group dance things can be bought from the organization head-quarters, there are lots of groups...sorry lots of, I don't think groups, what do I mean? There is... there are several firms that tend to, well they are two or three man firms, to tour round Scottish dance events and set up a market stall, and sell the booklets. And you see lots of people compose dances and produce their own booklet. (scrapping noise of chair as gets up to get booklets from shelf). Here's just a handful (noise of placing booklets on the table). People just produce and sell them. Further copies at 75p each can be obtained from W... mill at such and such an address.

I: How many Scottish dances do you think the average Scottish dancer will remember?

R: Two or three. I'm appalled by the lack of memory in the average Scottish dancer. I mean it all depends on the ... circumstances. There are many people who don't seem able to remember a dance when they have been taught it five seconds ago, other people, I can think of a dozen or so in Cambridge, probably do a hundred dances from memory.

I: Because that's one of the things that I notice about writing about the dances ... it's my memory.

R: (Laughs).

I: That holds me up.

R: Well it's all a matter of practice... And you mustn't expect to learn them quickly. If you're wanting to be a concert pianist how many years would it take you? As with everything else, you practice and practice and have your technique corrected by the professional and you go back and you practice, and you practice and you practice. It's the same with, it's the same with the piano, isn't it?

I: So do you feel it's your forty-five years' experience that has developed your memory?

R: I always had a good memory for dances because I was keeping it, keeping in practice is a good thing. And I ... I'm proud to say, people like one of the teachers sort of look at me while they're teaching and I occasionally sort of jerk my head in surprise, and they go back and check that they've said something correctly.

I: Ah

R: Sorry, I'm very conceited about my memory.

I: So is there anything more you can tell me about the history of Scottish dancing.

R: Not really... as I say, it evolved or somehow or other, went into decline, was rescued by Miss Milligan, became popularized then has diverged into both the traditional stuff, which the first group keeps on with, and all these multitudinous publications. Now in the 60s, 50s or 60s, when there would perhaps be twelve of the first group's books containing twelve dances each, and no new composition, people would attempt to go to a social event having memorized the dances because there weren't enough of them. But now there are so many, it seems obligatory to provide either cribs or call them out.

I: And you said you can talk about step-dancing.

R: I can talk to you about step dancing if you like which is... I've got two things for you (rustles paper). I think the top page... that one, which is a, you can keep that, that is a speech given by Lesley Martin, more or less as a dictation of ... Tibby Cram, and... So then we begin at the beginning... Ladies Step dancing flourished in the late eighteenth century and disappeared completely. In 1940, let us say, Mrs. Cram, who was interested in every sort of dancing, was given a note-book which was written by Hill, what was his first name? Anyway, it's in there.... Dated 1840 something in which he had made a rough note of the dances he had learnt. And there were Country dances and there were Highland dances and there were Ballroom dances and Ladies' Step dances. And he learnt Ladies' Step dances so they obviously weren't entirely Ladies' Step dances. And what he had written down was incomprehensible, let me get you... This is Cram's transcript of Hill's manuscript... it goes something like this "Beat in with the R. and balance once, beat with the heel and toe to R. side, close and shuffle three." Now can you imagine doing a dance from those instructions? (laughs) So you see she was totally mystified, it didn't mean anything to her at all... And so she did suggest "Hop one, two, three, four with the second position then hop on R. and take up L. behind then before behind again going round."... So she was intrigued by this and discovered (rustling of paper) that there was a Miss Cruickshank, who had taught Ladies' Step dancing. She was the last person to teach Ladies' Step dancing in Aberdeen. And had given up her dancing school in her early twenties, and was now in her late eighties, looked after by her great niece, I think it was. And Mrs. Cram asked permission of the niece to go and see Miss Cruickshank and she said "Of course you can come and see Miss Cruickshank but I have to warn you, she's very elderly, crippled with arthritis, and doesn't take much interest in anything. So they had a rather sort of difficult conversation until Mrs. Cram mentioned The Earl of Errol's Reel. At which Miss Cruickshank suddenly woke up and said "The Earl of Errol's Reel, that was a wonderful dance." So Tibby Cram said "Can you tell me how to do it?" "No, but I can show you how to do it." So she got up from her chair and she held two chairs like that to support her (T. gets up to demonstrate) and went very slowly and faithfully through the Earl of Errol's Reel, comparing it with the manuscript, told Mrs. Cram what all those words meant. And so Mrs. Cram taught Ladies' Step dancing at St. Andrew's... taught Ladies' Step dancing at St. Andrew's for many years and my wife fell in love

with Ladies' Step dancing, that was her main interest. And she collected all sorts of notes and things of that sort and... Mrs. Cram published four of these dances and Mrs. Cram was a beautiful dancer but didn't have the gift of expressing herself clearly in writing. So those are almost as bad as the old manuscript. Various notes have been given out by teachers on duplicated notes from time to time, and my wife collected them... and the chairman of the first organization, who is married to a Japanese lady, who is a beautiful dancer, tried to persuade my wife to publish her collection and my wife died before she could. So I started to try and publish the collection and this is a first draft of the preface to my collection that you can have.

I: Oh lovely.

R: It's very much a first draft. You'll find bits of paragraphs just sort of fade away and start, I mean... Anyway I produced a certain number of dances and I discovered that the first group was having a committee meeting about Ladies' Step dancing with the intention of producing a booklet. So I sent up my manuscript and I was invited to join the committee and... there may be a booklet. But there are internal divisions within the ladies who do the Ladies' Step dancing and that first meeting was really very depressing. There was one lady who said "Such and such a dance was collected by my mother! They're my dances! I'm not having the first group publishing my dances! ... I'm going to publish them myself." Well she's every bit of sixty-five and hasn't started. Then another lady who composed some rather nice dances said "I'm not having my dances published at all! You can't express in writing with sufficient clarity how to do these things. Only those who have been to my class can do my dances." So I plucked up courage at this stage and I said "Well surely it's better if people do them badly than not at all?" "Oh no!" she said. So you see there are problems. There may be a book that has fifteen of them being produced shortly which is based rather loosely on my typescript. But they don't like the way that I do it, so I'm not sure that I'm going to be very popular because you see I feel that you should express these things in conventional ballet technology. That thing which we did right at the beginning of the dance, I'll come round here so I can show you, the ballonee compose, which is that...

I: Yeah

R: Is described by the first group as hop-step-close. Well I can think of all sorts of other things that could be hop-step-close whereas in ballet it is ballonee compose and you get any dictionary out of the library and you have a perfect description of what ballonee compose means. So I think that's much the more sensible way of correcting something like that. If you want to do it in our own phraseology, "So that everyone can understand it." Anyway... things are coming along. And those that haven't been selected for that... booklet ... I am typing away, just in the hope that there will be some more to come. And indeed, I spent yesterday evening, typing up "The Thistle and the Rose" in a clearer way than it is normally, really a clearer way than it is normally written. So I am, in loyalty to my wife, working hard to keep Ladies' Step dancing alive. And see what I can do. But Attsico, who is the Japanese wife of the former chairman, whose name you will find scribbled there... because that was a photocopy of a photocopy of her copy of this thing, she is very supportive. But she is a very polite Japanese lady who knows an awful lot but is too shy and polite to thrust herself forward whereas there are several, rather fiercer ladies who (laughs) want things done exactly their way. But this is true of every society, isn't it?

I: So do you use the resources of the University library? They have quite a lot on Scottish dancing.

R: Do they, indeed?

I: I haven't explored them yet because I wanted to do the field-work than go back to the literature and see how my findings relate, rather than reading it all first and prejudice, not having an open-mind.

R: Yes. Have they anything on Ladies' Step dancing or don't you know?

I: I don't know but I can find out.

T: Oh well that would be useful.... But I'm sure they would have lots of things on ordinary country dancing but Ladies Step dancing was a very specialized thing... And as you will see, if you read these, it was... done quite a lot by the daughters of the landed gentry, very much Jane Austen sort of style, they would do it as an after dinner entertainment, for their fathers' guests and things of that sort. But it was also done by the villagers as well. There were itinerant dancing teachers who went round, particularly in Aberdeenshire, went round giving private lessons and public lessons.... And there was one... person who was appointed dance-master of Aberdeen and in fact... for as long as his good behaviour, or some phrase of that sort and he obviously must have behaved well for he kept the post for sixty-five years. (laughs) And he had pupils who went out round Aberdeenshire. But this as we know it, is very much Aberdeenshire, Ladies' Step dancing. There was Ladies' Step dancing elsewhere probably... but Miss Cruickshank was the key figure, Miss Cruickshank from Peterhead and Frederick Hilll from Aberdeenshire..... are our only sources.

I: It sounds as though you are piecing the dances together from different strands?

R: One picks up such dances, well there are probably a dozen traditional dances, and

how accurately we understand them can't be determined at this stage. And of course I don't think there was ever any right way of doing them, the dancing teacher would have his own style.... So I object to people who talk about the right way of doing things... it's Miss Cruickshank's way of doing things. Nothing more than that... and then, as with yesterday's dance... many of the good teachers have composed their own... and alas, they're not very good at expressing things in writing. As the teacher admitted, she couldn't quite understand some of the things and hence was going from memory. And my memory of what the teacher said and looking at Renee's book, I see there are certain, slight differences... See that ... bit. Was it in the

fourth step? Where you balloned away from each other turning? Bourreed away from each other turning. Well, as far as I can understand Renee's rather confused presentation, you did your bourre away from each other and then turned whereas the teacher had the bourree away from each other as you were turning. And this sort of thing. So you see (chair scrapes as gets up) Really I think we have behind-side-close-turn and step whereas the teacher was teaching us behind-side-close. You see it probably doesn't matter as long as you enjoy doing it. You see this is one of the things I said at he committee meeting. We have this group of twelve ladies, roughly twelve ladies, who come along, and some of them aren't very good dancers. And they don't do it properly. But they thoroughly enjoy themselves. Why shouldn't they do it badly if they enjoy doing it?

I: It seems the enjoyment is a very important part of it.

R: It's the only part of it... (laughs) I mean if you're laying on a display, then you want to get all of your ladies doing it exactly the same, if you're charging for it. But if you're just doing it for your own entertainment, on a Sunday afternoon, does it matter what you do? And particularly as they're solo dances, it doesn't matter if you're hopelessly wrong. Whereas of course in the Country dances, if you're hopelessly wrong, you might upset the other people which of course is a different matter altogether. So this is one of the reasons why the Country dancers are much keener on getting the figures done, in the agreed way. I was going to say properly because I don't believe in properly, in the agreed way because if you don't do it, the other people are inconvenienced. But if you close, don't point your feet, turn your feet out, you may look inelegant but you don't upset anyone.

I: I was going to ask you... how does the Scottish dancing make you see yourself?

R: Well I'm conceited because of my memory and ashamed because of my footwork.

I: Anything else?

R: (Laughs) Sometimes I get irritated by those with no memory.... No I'm not sure that I know how I see myself.... You see I'm not a psychologist! (laughs) You have to treat me as a mathematician. (laughs)

I: So ho do you think the Scottish dancing influences your health?

R: Oh I'm sure the exercise is good for me... whether it will wear out the hip joints, the knee joints, early, I don't know. I think this is one of the things you do notice, C., her hips and knees are going, probably from doing too much dancing... I do worry a little about my left hip... my knees are alright... and I'm sure it's good exercise, well it is good exercise, so it is healthy. Mind you, I know of two people who died of heart attacks on the dance-floor. So perhaps it's not that healthy. But I'd rather die of a heart-attack on the dance-floor than die of boredom in an old peoples' home.

I: Any more?

R: That's all I can say on how I regard myself as a Scottish dancer. (laughs)

I: You've partly answered my next question. How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of getting older?

R: You do ask difficult questions (laughs). Walking around the supermarket, you see an awful lot of elderly people who can't walk properly. And I sometimes feel if I didn't take quite as much exercise I might be in their position. I'm sure it keeps one able to move. Then my brother, who doesn't do any Scottish dancing... moves perfectly well anyway, so it may be genetic. He is five years older than me and has recently... been telephoned by someone from the social services whose ringing round old people about their mobility. How far can you walk? And he said "Twenty miles." She said "Did you say twenty yards?" "No, I said twenty miles" he said. (laughs) And she said "Do you have more difficulty getting in or out of the bath?" "I don't have any difficulty getting in or out of the bath except when I'm drunk." (laughs) She slammed the receiver down at this stage (laughs). I think you're as old as you feel, aren't you?

I: So that gets onto my last question. Is there anything more about what Scottish dancing means to you?

R: Well it has become so much part of my life that I couldn't, there'd be a big hole if I gave it up... Being an irritable person, I get irritated with some of the other dancers, I get particularly irritated with the politics which has, has declined in irritation recently due to the departure of certain people...(sighs) rivalries between groups... fighting over who should do the tuition, teachers do tend to be a set of prima-donnas who want to push themselves forward rather than help the system in general but that is just life, anyway, isn't it? ... On the whole, it's a great pity it has declined so much. The university club, fifty years ago, had four hundred members. Now they get thirty if they're lucky on a Monday.

I: And figures for the Country dancing?

R: The first group? Well.... The branch of the first group was founded twenty-five years ago after the major decline in Scottish dancing. So our numbers have always been, paid up members, thirty or forty... but that of course isn't the sum total, number of dancers around. Are you a member of the society? You are. But many of them aren't... we're lacking people, so one of my little hobby horses is that we need more openness and co-operation. There are three basic groups here. There's the second group, the university club and the first group, all really too small to be viable. So they really must co-operate and you know, you can't take a hard-line about footwork and things of that sort because it puts people off. But the real political problems were all due to ambitious individuals.

I: Anything more you want to say about Scottish dancing?

R: I don't know. I've probably said an awful lot of libelous things already (laughs). Not really.

## First Scottish Interview Two (1.S.2)

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

C: Shall I just say "Yes, I consent to the interview?"

I: Yes.

C: OK.

I: OK. So how did you first get involved in Scottish/Celtic dancing?

C: Mm. Well it was sort of by chance, when I went to university I did international folk dance and I had a friend who was....who also did international folk dance when she went to university and the two of us had shared this with each other and we talked about how much we enjoyed dancing. And then there was a couple who came to Canada and they had learned Scottish Country dancing and ....(inaudible) Step so they were starting a Scottish Country dance group and this friend who had also done the Scottish Country dance was all excited about it. And she was rushing around, we were University- students together, and she was rushing around trying to look, find somebody, who would go to the dancing with her. And most people thought that she was a little bit crazy, but I thought it was an exciting opportunity to get to do dancing again. I didn't think I'd ever be able to dance again ..... So.... I just got involved as people who had done Scottish dancing somewhere else came to Canada and they wanted to start a group. Yeah...so...

I: And anymore?

C: Well I really... I fell in love with it. I thought that it was a great dance style and ... so I stayed with it of course ....I like the fact that it's actually less vigorous, no it's not less vigorous, it is vigorous, but it is a more gentle stylish kind of dancing than a lot of international folk dance, and I like that, I like the group thing, and it got that a lot of my friends were country dancers, those were the people who became my friends, so I kept dancing ..... that's about it I guess....And how did I get involved in teaching perhaps? That wasn't an intentional thing either. The people who started the dance class left, and we were looking for someone else to continue it, and there were two groups of people, there were the Irish people who were doing Scottish Country dance and there were Scottish people. And the people who were Scottish and just wanted to continue Scottish Country dance whereas the Irish people were just doing the Scottish Country dance for the sake of doing it, what they really wanted to be able to do was Irish set dancing, and I liked the Irish set dancing so we divided into two groups. And I took the one group and I was just acclaimed as the teacher because I was, had been a PE teacher and I was the only one who could read the instructions and understand what they said. And I guess I had the organizational ability to organize and get music that I needed and get the instructions that I needed to carry on. The person who took the Scottish Country dance group was strictly Scottish Country dance because he ...oh I told you, he was an accountant and he was able to understand the patterns in the instructions. Now he wasn't quite as much of a teacher when he started but so we sort of complemented each other and I helped him with developing learning experiences and he helped me figure out the instructions so we worked together so that's how I got involved, I was the only one there who could do it. I'm not a trained teacher, I'm not a trained Scottish Country dance teacher and neither was he. But in Canada it's really hard to become a qualified Scottish Country dance teacher ... there is only a summer school in Toronto and it's very expensive for someone from Western Canada to do the training in Toronto ... so most people are not accredited Scottish Country dance teachers...

I: So how was your physical education training helpful?

C: Yes as far as.... I mean in teaching my classes I had done a few basic Scottish folk dances. And I understood them, there are only certain types of step that you would do. Like "pas de bas" is a "pas de bas" no matter what type of dance.... step two three, step two three or there are grapevine steps or there's chartise steps, so there are only so many types of basic steps, steps that your feet are going to do and they're consistent across all types of folk dance. So I have the basic steps and I mean I have the experience teaching so I have the confidence that I'd be able to organise a bunch of people and teach them how to dance (laughs). It was just the fact that I had had the experience and a little bit of background in dancing. And I think also no-one else had the perseverance to go and look on the internet to find out where they would get the instructions in dance from. But I had the interest to do that.... so...and I don't know...hang on, let's say the background and the teaching, earlier in my teaching career....

I: So what other forms of dance were you involved in? In your teaching?

C: Well when I was a teacher, we did a little bit of Greek dance, a little bit of Russian dance, some German dances.... there was an English dance that I usually taught "Green-sleeves." Mm a little bit of very simple international forms of dance. And when I taught it, I taught it more in terms of teaching kids a grapevine step. And then we would do a dance from some country that used that step. Or I'd teach Chartise step and then I'd find a dance where they would do a Chartise step. So.... and when I went to University, I did it. Mostl y..... I'm from a town where there are a lot of Polish and Ukranian people there so there was a predominance of Ukranian and Polish dances and stuff...A smattering of other ones.

I: So were you involved in dance as a child?

C: No, I didn't have the opportunity to dance until I got to university and I took three classes. I took a modern dance class, and a social dance class, and a folk dance, international folk dance class. I totally loved the international folk dance and the ... modern dance, the creative dance and I was a member of the group that was the first creative dance group at the university at that time which I loved, I really loved. I would never do it now I don't think. I don't think I could just freely get up at any moment in front of people on a stage but at that time I liked doing it...yeah. But no, I didn't dance until I was a late teenager... I marched though when I was in school and it doesn't sound the same but I can recall, when I was in elementary school one of my favourite activities in PE classes was marching to music. So ... I had done that .... That's as close as I got to dancing .....

I: Anything more about your university experience?

C: Not really... except that I was excited just a little while ago, the creative dance group that I was a member of when it was first created is still going on and they've just started publishing a newsletter and sent me a copy of the first newsletter so I was pleased to know they still had a record of the people who were involved and there was a picture of the woman who started the group, and she of course now is in her 80s but yeah so...can't think of anything else about the University ..... I did jazz at the university too, actually, (laughs), when I think about it. And I really enjoyed dancing and I wanted to dance as a child, so I looked at it as a chance at University that I hadn't had.

I: Were you involved in performances?

C: With the creative group I was. It was creative dance where we put on.... I can't really describe it ....free expression, modern dance, the Isadore Duncan type.... a type I really enjoy .... And I think that...you're doing research on circle dance too.... I think that (sighs) it's more connected with creative dance in that it's free spirited, emotive, feeling kind of thing.

I: How do you choose which dances to teach?

C: When I chose dances ...well there were two things that I did, one was.... at the start of the year, because you always have beginners so you have to teach simple dances that include the basic steps but also in Canada, everything is so far away from each other and there are a number of balls in larger communities and everything is geared up to going to one ball a year so ... we typically went to the city ball. So and the city ball programme was set up in September for October, so they would send us a ball programme. So it was a combination of teaching the simple dances to learn the basic steps and then teaching the ball dances for the city ball. And usually I mean we had a group of 25 people, sometimes 30, typically about a dozen of us went to the city ball so it was important, there was a large group of people, so it was important for them to learn the dances for the ball. So that's how I chose... And from the ball... it was always in conjunction with a workshop. So if we learnt really interesting dances at the workshops, then we'd come back and do them in the classes. That pretty well covered you know the focus of what we did. I: Can you name any of the dances that you taught? C: The names of the dances that I taught? .... I could name most of the dances I taught (laughs). Usually we'd start off with a simple dance that was actually considered a ceilidh dance like "The Gay Gordons," but they involve ... the reels and the setting steps .... then the first and the first four dances I was taught were taught to us ... because they were basic dances and because we were going to do them for the Highland ... They have Highland games in Prince George and we were doing a demonstration and because they were the simple dances that I learnt, those were the ones that I went on with, "Barley Bree" and "Cooper's Jig," oh ... "White Cockade" and I've forgotten the fourth one we did .... It's gone (laughs) it's gone. And sometimes I taught dances because I just liked them myself. "Marie's Wedding" and "Irish Rover."

I: How would you teach the dances?

C: How would I teach the dances? (sighs) ... most... when I started off people in the group, had the basics, of .. of how the dances were organized, Scottish Country dances being in the two lines so I wouldn't have to back up to teach that format thing, formations. So the strategy I would use would be to have the top couple walk the dance and then no, no actually, first of all, before they even did that, we would ... learn the patterns in the dance, so that say if there were Rights and Lefts, and if there was a Reel for Four, we would practice the Reel for Four. So we would do the different parts of the dance and then get into dance formation and have the first couple walk the dance. Depending if it was a simple dance, I would have each of the couples walk it and then we would all dance it. If it was a more complicated dance, I would have the first couple walk it and then dance it. Stop. Then have the second couple walk it and dance it and stop. So everybody and dance it all the way through. And ..... and I always tried to work it so that each class there were dances from the previous class people were familiar with... and introduce a new dance each time so that there was always an overlap. So that people could remember ..... because people got frustrated always doing ..... I think people get frustrated if they have to keep doing new things and they don't have a chance to relax and do things they already know.....

I: So how important is memory?

C: Well ... it's less important than I used to think it was. I, when I first was dancing, I felt like you had to memorize, every dance and you had to have the whole thing in memory before you did it. And may be it's just a cultural thing and the way they were done in Western Canada, everybody seemed to know the dances, have the dances memorized, whereas since I have come here, people seem to, they know the patterns ... and some people in each set will know the dances but I find that if you know the basic patterns, I can go into a dance now and just take up clues from people who are in the set and do the dance. So it's not as important to have a whole dance memorized now to me as it used to be .... I think previously if I hadn't known a dance I



wouldn't get up to do it, if I hadn't memorized it in my mind but now if I ... get up, yeah I'll do it, because it's not as important as it was .... It's more important to be in touch with what everyone else is doing and just look for clues .....

I: Any more on memory? .... How do you look for clues?

C: Well ... most people when you're dancing they see if you have the glazed eyes that say that you don't know what they're doing and they'll either point or else they'll call to you or else .... So you have to look .... For what other people are doing rather than being absolutely blank, and staring off to space and go winging off. You have to look for people who you know are going to know. Or what I do also, if I am in a row of sets, I look for somebody whose in my place and I just follow their pattern. Or I look to my partner and hope that my partner knows what I'm supposed to be doing and tells me .....

I: So how do the dances tell stories?

C: Well most Scottish Country dances now are written for occasions. You know, they're written about people or they're written about places and so most of them have some little story .... I don't know about the original ones.... But I know ... there's dances like "Flores Jack" where it's a dance about a dolphin that was ... I think it was in New Zealand, and there was a dance written about "Flores Jack" and it has a figure in it that is typical in the dolphin dances. And ..... different peoples' anniversaries and in Canada, the fellow who taught the other class, he actually wrote a lot of dances, every time there was an occasion, when someone was leaving or somebody was having a wedding, some special event, he would write a dance. So most dances, so most dances now are written for events for people .... And it's nice if you know the story, it adds a little more meaning .....

Some dances ... like "Shifting Bobbins" the patterns are actually reflective of the activity of weaving like the looms going around, bobbins going down then going back up. Yeah ... they're reminiscent of the activity of weaving ... "Machine without Horses" is one where the shape of the dance actually makes the shape of a wagon and you dance in ... four hands around, so you make the patterns of the wheels going around .....

I: Any other examples of stories?

C: Not really ..... some of the dances go with familiar songs like "Marie's Wedding" or "The Wee Cooper of Fife" and I think that like with "The Wee Cooper of Fife" there are patterns in that go with being a Cooper but I can't describe them. Like I think really those dances are made so that the patterns fit in with the music... it's a familiar tune that someone has made a dance to .....

I: Something you said earlier was about the Chartise step....

C: Chartise?

I: Can you describe that step?

C: It's three steps, step, step, step, hop, step, step, step, hop, three steps and a hop. Sometimes it's a hop, step, step, step, a hop, step, step, step. But you find it in most Inter-national dances in some form.....

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing makes you experience yourself?

C: Well ... I like to do physical activity, I'm quite a social person .... What I like doing about Scottish Country dance, is that it's not something that everybody does. The average person does not dance, and I like to do something that's a little bit out of mainstream, not totally outside. So yeah... it helps me be just a little bit different .... I think that I also like to be a person who challenges status quo ways of thinking and status quo ways of thinking is not for a bunch of people to go out and get together and dance together. Most people go home and they watch TV or ... read a book whereas I like to go out and do something that I think is healthier.... And so... I think of myself as a person who, I like to live life, I don't like to watch life go by, I like to live it. And so... Scottish Country dancing is a way of going out and just being rather than just watching ... .. I'm a fairly competent dancer so when I get up and dance I have a feeling of accomplishment. .... And it helps me to meet people .... Sort of facilitates my social activities and puts me with like-minded people who go out and do things rather than, you know, be spectators. So yeah .... It helps me participate in life and when I go to work and talk to the young people, and they're totally amazed that an old person like me can go out and do the things that I do. And .... I finally, two people finally joined me, two younger women I must say, one of them in her late, one of them has just turned 40 and the other one might be about mid 30s, a young mother, and the two of them decided that they wanted to get some exercise. So they joined the Scottish Country dance and they were amazed because half way through the evening there's all these grey haired people who haven't even broken into a sweat yet, and these two young women that were just absolutely beet red and dripping ... and .... realizing that older people can move, and they can do things like that, they can be physical, can go out dancing. So it challenges the way people think about older people ... and yet Scottish dance was not as way out as creative dance. I couldn't go that way out (laughs) ... Now Scottish dancing also would include the step dancing the Highland step dances and also there's a Highland dance class here locally that I'm a (inaudible) member of, and I find that a real challenge because I'm not as good as some of the other people. I'm learning the fling and I think that one day when I go back I'll go to the Highland games and at the Highland games they always have a mass fling and all these little people are going to be, usually it's all the little girls that are doing the Highland fling and I will be able to join them in the fling at the end of a gathering of the clans, not the Highland games, clan gathering, so I will be able to participate in the mass fling. I love the Ladies' Highland step dance but I'm no good at it, and I find it really hard (laughs). It's my challenge.

I: How do you find it hard?

C: Well just ... making the connection between my brain and my feet. I mean I understand what I'm supposed to do but my feet won't necessarily do what my brain is telling them to do because the steps are so different, and they're so quick, and the patterns that I'm not familiar with, so I find that hard .... And when it's taught ... you learn a whole dance in one day and it's beyond what my brain and body are able to manage, I can manage maybe, the Highland, the Ladies' step dancing usually has four to six parts to it, my brain and body can take in three, they can't take in six, I fall apart by the time I get to six so I find it a real challenge. I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences your health? C: ... well I look at it really as my stress management ... my strategy for, it gives me a total ... an evening where I don't think of anything except the dancing. It's a total break ... from my work, from home, from anything else, I can't worry about anything else because all I can do is think about the dancing. It's a total mental health break. It's fun, I laugh .... I'm together with my friends .... So it's good for my mental health and ... it keeps a reasonable level of fitness. I don't think you get as fit Scottish dancing as you would say rowing or biking or jogging but it's regular light exercise. It maintains a reasonable level of fitness and it's doing exercise in a fun way....

I: Any more ... how it influences your health?

C: Actually ... it was at one time ... my feet were suffering because of the dancing. I had trouble with my Achilles and started wearing orthotics and when I started wearing orthotics, then I ... had trouble with my toe joints ... and for a while, the dancing wasn't doing my toes any good but I still danced I would take Ibuprofen and go and dance and I persevered ... I won't dance say on ... cement floors or I won't dances places now where it's going to affect my feet. At one time I would, I would just have taken Ibuprofen and kept dancing but I don't do that any more. And I have ... I have trouble with my feet. So I have to make sure that I don't put on too much weight because I can't dance and you know, have my feet carry a heavy load so it sort of encourages me to keep my weight down otherwise I'd have to give it up ....

I: Have you had any other injuries from dance?

C: Mm ... no ... no, no and that wasn't from dance, that was actually from jogging and it started with an Achilles and then it was because I was wearing orthotics I started having toe problems but then the dancing made the joint problems with my toes even worse. But the dancing didn't cause those problems... but no, no otherwise no, I haven't had any problems ... I think I'm lucky I've got a fairly strong body and I do know sometimes people do have problems with their arches or ... strains here and there from not dancing in control. I think people who are not as good dancers are more likely to dance out of control and loose ... hurt themselves....

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

C: Well when I started dancing and going to the balls, I saw women and some men, mostly women, in their 80s, dancing. And I wouldn't have thought that people when they are in their 80s, would be dancing. And so it has made me aware of the capabilities of older people. And older people not just dancing but partying, staying up all night ... The last ball I went to, I took my daughter and it just blew her mind because there was a group, a core group of older people between 70 and 85, and after everything else was done, they had a party. And ... they invited anybody to come, but it was this core group and they were playing their music and having their Scotch, and my daughter, it was the first time in her life, where she'd ever been in a party that was shut down by management because of the noise and the time of day. So it just broadens ... I mean it has broadened my thinking as to the abilities of what I might do and what other older people can do. If you keep doing it. Now Scottish country dancing, you can't spring quite as lightly when you get older but it can be done, at any age and you get to the point where you are walking the steps .....

I: Any more on that?

C: Also I'm more in contact with older people and have a good time with people. I'm one of the younger dancers in the group here .... At 60, I'm one of the younger dancers, so I .... socialize with people who are a little older, hear different stories broadens my social opportunities .... I think that's about it ....

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body?

C: ...I don't know ... I've always ... I mean I've always been very physical. I grew up in a family where it was more important to be able to run fast than it was to get high marks in school. So I've always been very physical and I've always been in touch with my body and almost had a drive to do physical things so I am in touch with my body. I would say though that ... I was just thinking when I started, when I was doing my research actually, I was going to be teaching the class, and I thought that if I was teaching this class for my research, I ought to look like a dancer. And then I said to myself "What does a dancer look like?" And I've been dancing for a few years and it took me a while to realize that this is what a dancer actually looks like. You know ... so ... Just ... the realization, the fact that a dancer can have any kind of body. And the body doesn't determine whether you are a dancer or not. But I am in touch with myself, if I don't do physical things, I'm not happy.

I: Is there any more on that?

C: Well .... Actually my life circles around dancing. It really is my life. My rowing is intruding on that but before I started rowing, I would say that my whole life centred around dancing. In fact, I was dancing four or five nights a week before I started rowing. I mean that it is my social group, it's my recreation, it's my health programme, it's everything ..... my mental health programme .... and I mean I promote it, I invite other people to do it. Gives me a sense of who I am, I'm a dancer, I'm a

person that dances and ... I'm a person who will continue to dance and I think that .... Lucky to be a Scottish Country dance because also I'd like to go travel round other countries in the world and I know that wherever I go, I will find other people who dance. Probably Scottish Country dancers. So I know that.... I'm always going to fit in somewhere..... I think that's about it ..... my whole family thinks I'm crazy ... that's ok .... My sisters do status quo things like playing football and swimming. I do things just a little off, like dancing and rowing..... I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

C: I thought that was what I was just answering .....

I: I've got one further question .... I'd love you to tell me a bit more about the research you did for your MSc.

C: Ok.... It was on dance and stress management... ..and it's, it was mid-life women and the reason I did it on mid-life women, was my experience was that those were, that was the type of person who was most attracted to dancing, were women, and in mid-life, younger women were not interested in it as much. Of course I was a woman in mid-life too. So that gave me a personal interest. I was interested in stress management ... because, I got interested in that because I had a professor who had done a lot of research on ... running and stress management..... and I really thought of dance as .. probably a more valid form of stress management, my exercise form for stress management and it rather intrigued me. So I ran a class for six weeks and I used two dance forms. I called it Celtic dancing but I used Scottish Country dancing and Irish Set dancing. Three classes of Scottish Country dance and three classes of Irish Set dance. And I had the women..... on two occasions I think it was, prior to the dance Class and following the dance class they did a Spielberger's stress .... My goodness ..... I forget the name of the test, state-trait anxiety test, that's what it was and so that they measured their anxiety levels pre and post class on two occasions and following every class I also had them ... record how they were feeling and I had a series of guided questions so they did a journal at the end of each class and ..... Then once the classes were finished, at the end of I analyzed the data from the ... testing and it showed that, except with one exception ... the reduction in stress was statistically significant for all age groups, the one exception, I forget if it was in the state anxiety or the trait anxiety for one group. So .... but that wasn't what was important, what was important were just those results and then taking them to the women and asking them why they felt that dancing reduced their stress. And I had a little group project where they had a piece of paper and they would write .... I had divided questions and they wrote down their answers on a piece of paper and put the sticky papers up and then they could go and look at each others'. So I got their input as to why they felt that there was a reduction in stress. And then I also interviewed five women and the women that I interviewed, except for one, one was a little bit younger, but I wanted mid-life women and ... they had to be women who had been there for most of the classes, and I interviewed them about their experience of the dance and .... what I was most interested in was why they felt that, what their experience was of course. Their phenomenological status of experience was important but it was also important to me to me to know why they felt that the stress was reduced and ... the reason for that was that in most research on stress reduction, exercise reduces stress but you can't prove, because of all the other factors, the fact that it's in a group... the fact that sometimes we were socialising, there's always these other things going and you can't tell for sure whether it's the actual exercise or one of the other factors so I wanted to find out from them what were the factors they attributed and .... I'm trying to remember, I'm struggling .... This is a long time ago and I'm an older woman you know with short memory (laughs). It consumed my mind for a year and I haven't thought of my research now until just re-reading it again. But they didn't attribute the reduction in stress to just the exercise. They gave equal ... importance to the fun and laughter and the fact that it was a break from everything else and it was social. And what did come up that I think was equally important and deserves more attention that while it reduced stress it also created a different kind of stress. And when you look at stress management, people always think about reducing stress and thinking of stress is not good but really a reasonable amount of stress ... some sort of a challenge, is good for people and it ended up as a side-thing, the women did, when they talked about stress reduction, talked about the stress that the dance put on them so that sort of deserves more study, more research....

I: That's fascinating... Anything more you want to tell me?

C: Well one thing and it sort of goes with women and stress management and doing activities is that ... one stress the women really had was actually getting there. And ... .., getting somebody to look after their kids, stress of partners not wanting them to go out in the evening, having to get transportation, having to rush to get there from work. It's quite stressful for them just to arrive and to take an evening off for themselves to participate in something like that .....

I: Is there anything more you want to tell me about dance?

C: I think that pretty well covers it.... Two more things about Scottish dancing ... I do think and it might be why I'm involved in it too, I think that Scottish dancing and rowing are very much alike in that you're working together as a team, you have to do it in rhythm to do it together ... you have to help each other.... it's a team effort and I think another thing about Scottish Country dancing and it's one thing that attracts it to me is that it has real rules of social etiquette, I like rules, I like to know what I'm doing, I like there to be a right way to do things and I think it is interesting that Scottish Country dancing, golfing and curling all come from Scotland, they're all very popular recreational activities that you can carry on into old age, and they all have real rules of social etiquette so I think that it's interesting that they all come from Scotland. So those are just two reflections.

I: Thank you.

### **First Scottish Interview Three (1.S.3)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

F: Yes that's fine.

I: So how did you get involved in Scottish dancing?

F: ... Well I usually, I like to do an evening class every year and ... so I usually look at the sixth form college programme because it is a convenient place to go and in the past I've done all sorts of different things, and then this year I saw that Scottish dancing was a new... item on the programme so I thought I would give it a try because I have done it in the past when I was much younger.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

F: Yes, my mum and dad, well my dad was a Scot, so my mum and dad used to go to Scottish dances, they belonged to their local Scottish Society and my father was a past president of the society. So they always had some, you know, some kind of dinner dance once a year and we always have a New Year party at home... when we occasionally danced. It has been known for us to have a reel in the hall of our house when I was a teenager. And I suppose I must have learnt some Scottish dances. I used to go to ballroom dancing classes on a Saturday morning from when I was about five or six, until I was about fifteen and we did some Scottish dances then. You know, easy ones like Gay Gordons and the Dashing White Sergeant and I've never forgotten those. And we also did quite a lot in sports' lessons at school when it was raining and things like that so, so it's something that's been with me all along really.

I: Anything else about dancing as a child?

F: .... No I don't think so, I mean I started off with ballet, I had flat feet and it was recommended and my ballet teacher switched over to teaching ballroom which is why I started doing ballroom dancing. And I did quite a lot of ... ballroom dancing medals and things like that. And then didn't dance for a long time, went back to ballroom dancing evening classes when I was first married, and my husband and I went along together. And then I had to pretend that I didn't know what to do so I wouldn't be that much better than him and (laughs). But I think that even then, I'm talking 30 years ago, even then, there wasn't much opportunity to use it. My parents' generation probably went to quite a lot of social events where there was ballroom dancing and or Scottish dancing. And now it just doesn't happen because people can't dance. And I think it's a great pity. And I've also, I mean we're talking about dance generally here, I've also lived in Latin America for a while, and dancing is very much a part of social occasions there. And people learnt to dance as children, basically from dancing with their mums and dads, and grandparents, at these parties and with each other and so you know everybody just sort of automatically knows how to dance. And I mean couples' dancing that looks nice, and not just jumping around in time to the music. And I think it's a social skill that seems to be disappearing here and it's a great pity.

I: Have you done any more dancing?

F: Yes I have. Just trying to think when, about... well I can't remember but in the last ten years ... I've done some dancing through the University dance club and I've done a series of dances for a couple of years called alternative Latin which was Salsa, lambada, mambo, a bit of Argentine tango... what else? That was about it I think. And oh merenge . Then I also, a couple of years ago, went back and did some more ballroom dancing then and I also did swing, which is a precursor of Rock and Roll. So I've done all different kinds of dancing.

I: Anymore on that?

F: No, I don't think so.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different Scottish dances?

F: ... It depends, some of them are easier than others. And obviously the ones I've learnt as a child, because I've done them so many millions times, they're kind of ingrained. And I don't have to think about how to do them. So when we do Dashing White Sergeant or Gay Gordons, I just don't even think about what foot I'm starting on or anything because it's something I just know how to do. I think that in a way it's a pity that we don't repeat the dances more, because I'm sure A. wants us to learn as many new ones as possible and that's nice, to have a lot of variety, but I think that maybe if we returned to some dances within the term and did them a bit more often, then I would, at least, would have a feeling that I knew them because now I feel, if somebody put me on the spot, and said "What dances did you learn last week?" A. I wouldn't remember what the names of the dances were, unless I write them down immediately after the class, and B. I wouldn't have a clue how to do them.... So they're easy to learn, I don't find them difficult to learn at the time that we're doing them but I do find it difficult to remember them afterwards. So ... and for me, that means I haven't really learnt them. The odd one, where maybe we've done it at the class and then maybe we did it at the joint class, and then we did it again, like St. Andrew's Fair which was one that I particularly liked, that one I feel I've learnt although if you asked me now how to do it, I wouldn't be able to tell you (laughs). Whereas if A. started giving the instructions, I would be saying "Oh yes, I remember that one. And then you do this..."

I: So that leads on nicely to my next question. I was going to ask "How important is memory?"

F: I think it's quite important ... And ... I think maybe younger people find it easier to remember the dances from one week to the next, I'm not sure, I'm not sure... But I think that this repetition, I mean I know for a fact that repetition aids memory because I've done a lot of studying on re-cycling and it's effect on remembering and that's why I think if we repeated the dances, even the same dance three times a term, I think I would remember it better.

I: Any more on learning the dances?

F: ... No, I don't think so. I have, I think I have got at home one of those little books like A. has, where it gives you the instructions for the dances and with pictures of feet and that sort of thing. But I've never found it very easy to follow those instructions... because they tend to do them in note-form, and I suppose if you're a teacher you get to know what the notes mean but I find it quite difficult to learn them from instructions without actually doing them and having somebody shout out the instructions.

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences experiences of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

F: Oh... that's interesting.

I: You can think for a time.

F: No, that's alright... Well... I've just remembered, I'll tell you this now, I've just sort of remembered another time when I did Scottish dancing, which was, there was a time when I was living in France and we had ... a British cultural fortnight and a group of us, who had sort of background in Scottish dancing, Scottish ancestry or whatever, got together and did some demonstrations of Scottish dancing at a dinner dance. And ... this is relevant to my perception because I felt that I was quite good at it compared to some of the other people. At the class at the moment... I think I'm not bad, but as I say, I'm very bad at remembering the figures and you know, quite capable of forgetting half way through what we're supposed to be doing so I think in that respect I'm not so good at it as when I was younger. ...But I enjoy it because I think it's something that I can do well and I think it's something that you can learn to do well, even at an older age. I mean if you've ever seen a film of the Queen mother doing Scottish dancing when she was in her 80s ... you think. "Well if she can do it, then I'm jolly sure I can." Because you don't have to jump up and down and leap about. The other thing is I know at the end of the class, if I look at myself in the mirror, I know I don't feel very attractive (laughs) because I feel kind of out of breath and sweaty, but again, that's your age.

I: Anything more on yourself?

F: No, I don't think so.

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

F: Well... I'm very bad at doing sport and exercise, I have to say that I am basically a very lazy person... So at the moment, Scottish dancing is about the only exercise that I do. I used to swim, and I've got very lazy about, I haven't been swimming for years, several years. Some friends of mine, we used to go together on a Sunday morning and then they emigrated to Canada and I got out of the habit of going, and I think... you have to be in a routine and really make yourself go. And I suppose I might try again in the summer. In the winter you don't feel like getting up at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning and going swimming. And I must say that I've been very pleased, even during the winter, when it's raining, I have still wanted to go to Scottish dancing. So in that respect, I think it's been good for my health. And... I haven't generally felt stiff afterwards because I think that the warm-up and the warm-down exercises have been good for that. Maybe the first couple of weeks, but not since then. So... I think in general, I'm not in that bad shape and I do cycle to and from work and walk a lot, I don't have a car so... And I'm sure it is good for you to get a bit out of breath, you know, speed your heart up a bit so generally, I think it's a good thing in health terms.

I: Any more on that?

F: Well yes I think it generally, even like last week at the beginning, I said to C. "Oh I don't really feel in the mood for this today." But actually, once you get into it, it does lift your mood psychologically. I think it makes you feel good in that respect as well.

I: Any injuries?

F: No, no injuries (laughs)... My feet get tired a bit like because when I went to the tea-dance, because you are dancing for a longer time than you do at the class... after the tea-dance, my feet felt a bit tired but that was also the first day that I'd had my proper dancing shoes so I think it is getting used to that as well... but no other injuries, no... (laughs) Nobody's pulled my arm out or anything (laughs).

I: So would you say Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body?

F: Not really, no. No, I don't think so.

I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

F: ... No I don't think so, I can't think of anything else really... I think, oh yes, wait a minute, I think that one of the things I like about the Scottish dancing is that... and in particular, this class, everybody dances with everyone else, people change over all the time and there's no 'coupley' sort of stuff. Because occasionally when I've been at dance classes, if people have come with their life partner, they've not wanted to dance with anyone else. And sometimes it's quite hard for the teacher to make people swap partners whereas I think at Scottish dancing, there's not really any problem about that... And I also... I like the

figures in Scottish dancing. I mean I think that it's very nice to watch as well as to do.... And particularly if you are watching people who are really good at it, I think. But it's, you know, the figures and things are... beautiful in their own way and much more interesting than Irish dancing (laughs). Not wishing to be prejudiced at all but (laughs) I find Irish dancing a bit boring!

I: Do you watch dancing then?

F: Yes I do. I like ballet... in fact, I'm going to the ballet in a couple of weeks' time in London... and I quite like modern dance and I love watching people who dance salsa well... you know, and any kind of Latin American and Tango and so on. I really like watching that as well. Yeah, I think that's about it really.

I: OK.

F: Ok. Going back to childhood dancing. When I was at Sunday school, we did maypole dancing and English country dancing. And my father, who'd been brought up a Scottish Presbyterian, quite disapproved of this and he said "What's this got to do with Sunday school? (laughs) And it's a fertility ritual, and all this kind of stuff." And we had the May Queen and there was a festival of queens and all that kind of stuff and then there was a men's Morris dancing group as well, and they were part of the congregation. And we had this, this kind of May Day party for the Sunday school when they would do their Morris dancing and my dad also thought that was a bit "off" and shouldn't have been connected with the church. Sorry, nothing else, but I suddenly remembered.

### **First Scottish Interview Four (1.S.4)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

A: Yes absolutely.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

A: ...I saw it on the website of a college that I'd done other dance classes with and thought I'd give that a try. So I didn't seek it out, it was something that I just saw and thought "Oh I've never done that... I wonder what it's like?" So I signed up for the course.

I: How much have you been involved in dancing before?

A: ... I did ballet... sort of as a school kid ... did a lot of ballroom dancing as an adolescent... then I've done various forms of dance that I quite enjoyed but they were all solo dances, sort of flamenco and belly dancing and things like that and I guess I was sub-consciously looking for something I could do together with other people without the need to bring a partner.

I: Ok. Any more on that?

A: ... I think with things like flamenco or belly-dancing, you miss the social aspect, because it's all girls getting together and it didn't really have a sort of atmosphere of... it led to acquaintances and going down to the pub and things like that... it was quite a lonely business in a way... the dancing itself. And I expected that the Scottish dancing would be rather more convivial and also a great deal easier than flamenco for instance. That's what I've found, that it's quite easy to pick up... and you can easily get to know other people and mix with other people in a sort of easy and convivial atmosphere, without having to make a commitment to one particular dance partner or something like that.

I: How easy do you find it to learn the different steps?

A: ... I find them easy once they've been demonstrated. There are some complex permutations that I can't simply pick up watching them. So I find it helpful to go to a class and have somebody walk through things with explanations, slowly, kind of once, then I get it... I mean I've gone to non-class events and sometimes it's been easy to pick up what's going on and at other times, I got completely lost so it depends very much on the complexity of the individual dance sequence. With a teacher, I find it quite easy.

I: So how important do you think memory is?

A: ... Not quite as important as with other forms of dance I should think, because the modules are quite short and usually because somebody is there to call the first few moves... you've got a bit of practice time and also... as compared with ballroom dancing for instance, if you don't know how to do more than a basic figure in Jive, well there's nothing you can do about it, whereas in Scottish dancing it's quite easy to add something on during the dance or somebody will show you or shove you in the appropriate direction and you can pick bits up. It doesn't work like that in ballroom and also I mean I know that some of the teachers are quite hot on technique and pointy toes and whatever, but actually the dancing works if you've got two left feet and crooked knees because as long as you get to your next place in the formation, it doesn't really matter what your feet do... I think.

I: How much were you involved in ballroom dancing when you were younger?

A: .... Reasonably... I mean I went to successive courses and I would go to social dancing every week... and it was something we did while I grew up because my home- town is one of the centres of ballroom dancing in Germany, professional ballroom dancing. So I went to a dance school and enjoyed it and kept on doing it and then it all ended when I went to university and it wasn't so easy to find the same setting again. But I did a little bit of ballroom dancing with the University dancers' club. Well they're all so young and gauntly, it's a very sort of... the classes that I've been to, when I was at college, it was a very young

scene, I didn't really feel comfortable there and what I like about the Scottish is you can do it from seven to 70 really and that's a nice mix of ages and that sort of thing. Takes the competitiveness out of it I find. That's good.

I: So how would you say the Scottish dancing makes you see yourself?

A: Well, I think it gives me sort of a lot of confidence.... And... I don't think it's really changed the perception of myself as a person or as a character or something but I do find it has a beneficial effect so that at the end of a lesson one evening, there's a feeling of having achieved something in a sort of small way. And I think the achievement... is kind of underlined by the fact that I've managed to do something as teamwork, together with other people. And I think that's important to me.

I: Any more on that?

A: ..... Well... I mean, maybe, maybe, maybe the whole thing has changed the perception of what I'm like very slightly in that I don't think I've ever realized quite how sociable I like to be... and yeah, that's been, not necessarily a surprise but that's come rather, that's come out rather more, the Scottish dancing than it has in other kind of communal activities I've done as a hobby whether learning languages with a study group or going to painting classes. It's not so easy to make a connection with other people so basic things like, yeah, doing something in synchronized fashion... it does something that sitting next to each other reading out a short story doesn't do, because you are still sort of, very much your own entity. You sit in a language group or belly dance or whatever.

I: So how would you describe one of the Scottish dances?

A: As a typical Scottish dancer?

I: Mm

A: Very sociable, sociable above anything else I think... and on the whole I think the Scottish dancing seems to go with a sort of easy and open mind-set if I compare it with ballroom dancing or things like Salsa where people often have an agenda... proving something and it's got to be up to a standard or desperately looking for a mate, or something like that... Scottish dancing doesn't seem so hung up on other stuff, it's just sort of a mellow way of whileing away some time together.... And with only one exception in our dance class, I think everybody's been incredibly friendly and relaxed and I think that may well have something to do with the Scottish dancing itself and the rousing music and that it is fairly easy to do and yeah, you can sort of switch into it in a way that I think isn't possible with you know Flamenco and that sort of thing.... And at the same time, what I like about it is that it has a certain amount of complexity, I wouldn't just want to kind of hop around in a circle holding hands chanting something or something like that... So you know, if you want to make more of it, you could always do more complicated dances for instance. That's quite cunning that that's kind of built in to satisfy ambition if one had it, that sort of thing.

I: Can you give examples? Can you describe any of the complex dances?

A: Well... the Scottish stuff?

I: Mm.

A: We haven't really done very complex ones yet... except for at the stately home in the first half of the programme, and I think there are modules, individuals, sequences that require more skill than the basic ones that we've done so far, where there's more criss-crossing, sort of more position changes, where one needs a sort of slightly bigger memory span for all the things that need to happen within the next minute, sort of executed, and more complicated... kind of changes of position of the couples down the dance line and that sort of thing... and I mean there were some where I thought "Well. OK. I wouldn't have been able to do this, not without slow teaching, but I can't describe them because I've sort of forgotten the sequence, I could just say when looking at them "Gosh, I couldn't remember how to do that. I've never done this before. And where did that come from?" Kind of thing. And I think there are also much longer pieces where instead of having three or four modules, like we've had so far, I mean you've got kind of eight or something like that. So that obviously needs a little training and getting used to and practice.

I: How does the music make you feel?

A: I like the music for dancing because it's always kind of jolly and up-lifting and has a certain something to it. It's music I would never listen to as music. But I mean I've actually tuned into sort of inter-net radio, and looked up what BBC Scotland runs as a week day programme, and at least three stations devoted to Scottish dancing. And I listened to some of that and after five minutes I'd had enough. And I'd rather listen to some classical music or put on a pop song or something if I want music just as music. But as dance music I like it lots... I wouldn't buy CDs to listen to them in the car... but I find it sort of encouraging and sort of... spirited dance music... And I think it would probably be enhanced if one had live musicians to hand, but it is good enough as it is, canned... I think, you know, a fiddler, an accordion would be even better.

I: How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

A: ... Well first of all it makes me think I'm in reasonable nick... and then it's something, I think it's something I could do even if I had a slightly painful back or ... had twisted something or had stiff muscles whereas I definitely couldn't do belly-dancing or Flamenco if I'd hurt my lower back. Because you basically only need the good safe upright walking position to be able to do it, you don't have to do anything frightfully athletic, not with the Scottish dancing we've been doing, I don't know

about the Highland but... I think that's quite jumpy and you need a lot more sort of lower body strength, all the jumping in the air and bouncing and turning and that sort of thing but...

I: Any more on your health?

A: ...Yeah, and I think it probably has a positive effect in that it is always a good experience, you know, it must definitely feel like chocolate-like endorphins or something because... everyone seems to go away happy at the end of the evening, the end of a lesson so I think it's, it gives good vibes.

I: Any more on that?

A: .... Well I'm guessing it's got something to do with the communal activity stuff and the music. If there was really doleful music, it probably wouldn't be quite as happy-making I think. Yeah there's something kind of rather forceful about the music in a good way....

I: Have you had any injuries from Scottish dancing?

A: Well I've had sort of stiff calves very occasionally... that's been it so far. I mean I could see that one might kind of sprain a wrist you know or collide with somebody in a sort of quick turn or something but usually you are at a safe distance from people, it's not as if you are going to get trodden on or kicked in the heels or something like that. Nobody's going to stand on your foot as they do in ballroom dancing sometimes... and well I mean ... if one had sort of... a broken foot or something that obviously wouldn't work. But I think if one's feet or knees are in reasonable shape it's doable.

I: Have you been injured when you were doing ballroom dancing?

A: Yes, quite badly. Somebody dropped me in a tango or hold once in a competition... and there's a thing in ballroom tango where the man's supposed to kind of grab the lady's hand behind her back and she kind of leans ... and he lowers her kind of over his knee. And my partner dropped me. And... yeah I mean I hurt my spine because I fell flat on my back from some height. Yeah, that was the end of a beautiful friendship (laughs). That was incredibly painful, it hurt for weeks. And ... I've been trodden on and with Flamenco, I've had sort of repetitive strain injuries from forcing arms back sort of beyond, beyond the normative plane of one's shoulders, so it's quite an unnatural position. And I've had lower back strain from all the arching and stomping and things one does and that's definitely carried on into the belly dancing. I don't think the belly dancing's made it worse but you have to be quite careful with your lower spine and make sure you move in a safe way so that you don't aggravate it. And I have yet to see... a sort of figure or a sequence in the Scottish dancing where "OK. I've got to be careful here or I'll do myself damage." Maybe there are some but I haven't seen any yet.

I: So you feel quite safe?

A: Yes, yes I feel quite safe. Yeah, yeah, safe. And well I mean I think the safeness is born out by the fact that there are loads of elderly people doing it. I mean many of the 'proper Scots' that we've seen at the sort of tea-dance at the stately home itself. Definitely mature gentlemen, ladies, and they seem to be doing just fine...

I: That leads quite nicely into my next question that is "How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?"

A: Well... it's kind of tricky in that... I'm, I'm still kind of refusing to believe that I'm actually growing older (laughs). But... it's more about observing other people you know, and seeing that there are people there definitely beyond retirement age who seem to be enjoying the Scottish dancing quite actively and do lots of it and look competent in it, and not just stagger about but you know sort of look well set, and... well lit and well put together and you know, yeah. Yeah... so I think it's something I would feel confident doing for another three or four decades or however long I am around whereas I don't think I'd be doing Flamenco by the time I hit 70 because my knees probably wouldn't be able to take it or my lower spine and I don't think Scottish dancing has the same kind of age limit. I mean I've come across some, some... quite mature ballroom dancers too occasionally... but I think that's been more kind of the slow waltzing and fox-trot rather than doing jive and rumba or pas a double or that sort of thing. So it's... yeah I think the ballroom dancing would work... in old age in a much reduced way, where certain things would just not be possible any more because of fear of injury or knee replacements or something like that. And I think with the Scottish dancing that you, you're... the range won't shrink very much even if there was a bit of stiffness and joint pain. I mean there was one gentleman at the stately home who I thought was... who had to sit down because he's got a rheumatic foot and when the pains come on, he just can't step on that foot any more. I mean, you know, that would keep you from walking as well, it wouldn't just be the Scottish dancing. So yeah... certainly a non-age discriminatory kind of dance I think...

I: Any more on that?

A: Well I'm chatting away all the time!

I: This is how I want it!

A: I think I've said all I want to say on this topic.

I: Has the Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body?

A: ...Maybe in that I think it's a dance where I don't worry particularly which surplus bits wobble and that sort of thing, I don't worry very much what it looks like, which I have with kind of solo forms of dance, because then there's more emphasis on perfection... and yeah, I mean if you look around they seem to come in all shapes and sizes and there are some shapes and



sizes that wouldn't have worked with some of the more solo forms of dance I've done, because people would get problems of either carrying a certain amount of weight on high-heeled Flamenco shoes or ... yeah if you're sort of stiff and lanky you can't really belly dance very gracefully and that sort of thing. And with the Scottish stuff, because the emphasis is on co-operation with others, well as long as you manage to get the hand-holds right, and get to your place in the formation, it doesn't really matter whether your hips wobble like mad or ... sort of something comes unstuck or whatever because that's not really what it is about. But also because there's a sort of... easy going atmosphere to it... yeah, I don't kind of worry so much ... about balcony and hips and that sort of thing (laughs).

I: So how was it different in ballroom dancing and Flamenco?

A: In ballroom dancing I was always very conscious, very self-conscious... about my body partly because ... you're always dancing with somebody of the opposite sex, well preferably... and that's a whole different theme and I was always very self-conscious about ... are there any bits sticking out? And being kind of pressed up against somebody... on the whole I think I was more worried, if that's the term, about whom I was dancing with at such close quarters in ballroom. And not everybody is nice to hold and nestle up against, and breathe in at close range in some of the ballroom holds, so it can be a pleasant experience or it can be quite punishing... depending who you get, I think. And again with Scottish, there's a kind of... there's a safety margin, built in... you are doing something as a couple but if you don't sort of find your partner particularly (smacks lips) appetizing physically or something, well you don't have to get that close. So you know, it's alright... because you're always sort of at half an arm's length or something like that. And I mean with the ballroom, gosh most of that's quite a long time ago now, and I think as a teenager, one's in a different place... looking for a mate and trying to impress and that sort of thing so that was quite a different experience in a way but I mean the, last time I tried doing a couple dance was going to a Salsa class together with a few friends so we went as three couples and I found that quite uncomfortable because it was so close in many ways, and ... we had to change partners every two or three minutes, so I actually danced with my husband very little on the whole. And there were some men whom I really dreaded because they were kind of breathing prawn and onion in your face and talking loudly and ... squeezing you so that it hurt, or, yeah I mean I think the skill level needs to be much higher for things like that to make them enjoyable... yeah. And it's not easy, doing a dance-hold and steering somebody and sort of making it... a nice experience for the woman you are squashing (laughs) that sort of thing. And none of this comes up in Scottish dancing, so I think it's a damn sight easier, and it's easier just to feel good about the whole setting because you aren't so frightfully dependent on other people's skill level to make it an enjoyable experience on the whole I think.

I: So it seems less competitive?

A: Well ... no, I don't think it's about competitiveness... I think it's about really basic things like degree of physical closeness and I mean if I compare it with things like Salsa and ballroom... you, you are up against somebody's skill level at very close quarters, and if that doesn't work, it can be catastrophic... And I think it puts a lot of, a lot of strain on the men... in a, in a way so I think it's about trust, it's about trust and having to give somebody control over your body up to a point. If they don't exert that control in a nice and comfy way, I find that, intrusive and I think, I think sometimes downright dangerous. You know if somebody tramples on you, yeah, it's sort of invasion of one's private space if it goes wrong ... And I think I've wanted that safety margin of personal space more as I've become older, well older as in twenty upwards... But I don't enjoy sweat and steamy discos as much as I used to and that sort of thing. And ... I think Scottish dancing strikes quite a happy balance between being by oneself as a dancer and being very dependent on somebody else. It's quite polite in a sort of old-fashioned way. And I think that works quite well... of course, especially for social dancing because I find it less of a, it takes less effort to kind of go and trust a stranger with one's appendages and that sort of thing because you, you always have... a few safety inches... So I mean it's quite a basic thing for me but I mean, yeah...

I: OK. This is my last question. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

A: ... Dancing is one of very, very few activities that I do where I don't think so much about other stuff simultaneously. I mean I kind of verbalise thoughts all the time. I mean whether I'm doing my homework or doing stuff, doing things for language classes, going shopping, I think in words all the time. And the only opportunities when that doesn't happen is singing, if I've got a really difficult painting project on and I have to concentrate hard, and dancing. Probably now I guess dancing, dancing and singing are the ones where I kind of fall internally silent in the company of other people. So I've got that in common. It's... it's ... dancing is a sort of activity when the internal machine stops for a while, and I find that very relaxing. Because usually I'm focused on three or four things simultaneously and dancing is an activity when I'm only focused on the dancing. And I find that restful, only thinking about one thing at a time. That's about it (laughs).

I: Anymore about the meaning of dance?

A: ... Yeah, I guess it's also a means of self-expression... it's also something I feel I can do well, where I have some confidence that I'm going to execute it competently, and it's something that I've always enjoy doing I mean from when I was really little, I mean I can remember my sort of three and a half, which is probably my earliest memories, dressing up in my mother's sort of discarded clothes and sort of doing my own ballet stuff to my parents' record-players. And I've always done it... not necessarily gone to dance classes all the time but I've always wanted to dance as a sort of... Yeah, you know, it's a means of self-expression, not necessarily to do something fancy but just... had a need to do it I think.

I: Anything else?

A: No. (laughs)

## First Scottish Interview Five (1.S.5)

I: So how did you get involved in Scottish dancing?

C: Well I think that's my fault really. Because my parents did Scottish dancing, in fact they were both teachers of Scottish dancing, so I grew up with it in the family and my parents used to take us Scottish dancing, so I grew up with it in the family and my parents used to take us Scottish dancing from the time we were old enough to go out and enjoy it. So I was about eight, seven or eight when I started. And ... I carried on Scottish dancing ... right up until my sort of teen years where it wasn't quite the thing to be doing. Teenagers go through the time where they don't want to do it, it's not something they would actually admit in front of their peers. So I sort of kept doing it, but on the quiet, not so much as I had been previously. And then at about sixteen or seventeen, I got bored, and I left home and I wanted to go out and meet people, so I went back to Scottish dancing again. And I've been doing it ever since. And when I met my husband, that was when I was about seventeen, he... he started coming dancing too. So I said to him "What do you do?" He said "Not a lot." So I said "I do Scottish dancing. Are you interested?" And he came along. So...

T: Yes if I wanted to go out with C. I had to learn to dance. There was a big incentive there (laughs).

C: But as a child, I had gone along. I mean my parents were very much into Scottish dancing, they taught lots of classes, and my dad organised trips overseas for Scottish dancing, onto festivals and on, on the Continent and that sort of thing. So I was taken along not just to do Country dancing but also Highland dancing, so I was doing the Highland Fling and that sort of thing as the solo point in a programme of dancing. And they would get up and do their team stuff and then I would come on and do the fling or the sword dance or something like that and they would carry on afterwards. So ... yes it was good fun, we did exchanges with... dancing groups on the Continent, not just Scottish dancing but all sorts of dancers. We got very friendly, particularly with a crowd in Germany who were... doing German Shoelatter and that sort of thing. So it was very interesting.

I: So any more on getting involved?

T: Well I got involved obviously when my wife was... up in London and she was a member of the London branch and she was also a demonstrator. She was a demonstration dancer for the London team as well ... and at that time I, I used to go along to dances and things with her and ... but I couldn't really dance very much at all. I used to join a local branch where I was living down in London but they were a snooty lot and, I was quite young, only about eighteen or nineteen I think and they danced in a dark dingy hall and it was only about one set, one and a half sets I think, so if anything that slightly put me off a little bit (laughs)... and it wasn't really perhaps until we went away perhaps for a weekend. I can remember going to ... a weekend school .... And ... the whole atmosphere and energy of the dancing came out to me at that point then I think that really kind of got me hooked and going you know. And my wife's step-father was a very good teacher as well, because he was part of the family, married my wife's mother ... And then of course going up to London weekends, where my wife was living and working at the time, we used to go to some of the Reel club dances. And we got involved with some of the musicians and ... Ceilidhs and things like that so I started getting drawn into it.

C: It was a very vibrant scene. We're talking late 60s and it was very vibrant and we got to know a good crowd of people and we got to know all the bands that were playing for the dances and that sort of thing. And ... I mean I'd moved away from home so I felt I could dance whenever I wanted and ... I was dancing most nights of the week at that time. You could dance Monday to Friday and if you were there at weekends as well, you could dance on Saturdays, but quite often you had to travel to see each other so we didn't do quite so many dances at the weekend then.

T: It wasn't really till ... I suppose after we ... got married we started mostly dancing together then, and we joined up with ... local dances and societies wherever we were. And ..... we got involved... with demonstrations quite a bit, didn't we? Because my wife being a London dem. Team dancer, because anywhere she went she was sort of pounced on rapidly, and ... well you've got to dance so you've got to find a partner. And it was ... I can remember when we both started dancing together .... Her step-father died and he actually let me have his kilt, again that's, if you have a kilt as a man, Scottish Country dancing becomes... much more a thing to do, you know.

C: You feel part, it's not the same as trousers.

T: You feel part of it. The dress is part of it, certainly for a man anyway, and if you've got a kilt, then you use it. I find I like dancing in a kilt, I mean I much prefer dancing in a kilt, because ... it's much more comfortable ... you can see the legs working, you keep cool and ... you feel the part, you know, it's kind of...

C: And you can do the footwork more accurately in a kilt than you can wearing trousers. You can't put your feet in the right positions if you've got trousers round your legs. Same for women. When you see women who turn up at classes and they're wearing trousers I think "Well they really haven't grasped the concept of what dancing is all about and the fact that you need to have your legs free to be able to do the steps properly."

T: Mm mm.

C: ... So anyway we carried on dancing all the way through the married life and even through children and everything else, we kept on going.

T: Mostly because we've actually got some baby-sitters or friends of ours, who liked country dancing as well, so .... we used to take it in turns to baby-sit the kids and ..... then we moved from there and down to the South coast, didn't we? On the South coast and again we joined up with a local branch there ... which kept us going for a little while. And then we moved overseas and we had three and a half years. Overseas in Cyprus, where there was no dancing.

C: Except that there was a Scottish Regiment that came to the island and ... There were pipers but there was not much dancing, but I expect within the Regiment they did their own dancing. But we got involved in different things and eventually decided to start up a

class out there and it went quite well, it was really very good, but we had no teaching qualifications, it was just that we knew better than anyone else. So we just started the class up. And it proved useful because we got invited to dance in all sorts of things that were going on out there and one of the things was ..... a production of Macbeth, a Scottish play ... which was being held in the Roman amphitheatre. And we were part of the banqueting scene, we were all in medieval costume, and we came on and did, a sort of little set piece of dances at the banquet. It was quite fun.

T: And Banquo's ghost came out.

C: (laughs).

T: I don't know whether that was a result of our dancing or what (laughs).

C: Anyway, we got involved in things out there and that was very good.

T: We got to quite a lot of mess functions as well, didn't we? The mess nights... It was not just Scottish country dancing but all sorts of dancing...

C: Yes.

T: And ... plays and sketches. There wasn't a lot on television in our house anyway (laughs).

C: Well there was no television in our house anyway (laughs).

T: We didn't have a television then ... and a lot of the life then, we're going back to the early 80s, 1980s, and that revolved around what you did for yourselves.... So in fact you're stuck back in time, I suppose... twenty or thirty years post-war sort of era when you know you got out if you wanted to, entertained yourself, you had to get up and do your own thing with other people. And we had the time the energy to do it and so ... I think ... you know, it was just something that we did.

C: We tried to get our children involved in this but they were quite resistant to it. "If mum and dad do it, it must be what old fogies do."

T: Yes.

C: And so they weren't very keen. So they came along and they just went through the motions. In fact I started off a children's class at one time, because I thought if I was getting other children to do it, then my children would be more interested. But it really didn't work very well so I think it was because we were in a village where people had to drive the children to the class and the mums would sit around the edge of the room and watch everything that was going on and talk amongst themselves and if I dared to correct any of their children for doing anything wrong, then it was immediately pounced upon ... "You're picking on my child, that sort of thing." It would have been better if the children had just been dropped off and left and went away. But ..... so the class ran for a couple of years.

T: Mm.

C: Because it then sort of fizzled out again and it was obvious our children weren't madly keen until the girls did it for their Guides' badges... And they wanted to do a badge so they got a group of their Guides together and we taught them how to do it and then we got someone to come along and assess them and they got their badges. And then instantly they dropped it, that was it, they only wanted to get that badge... Our son was never very good, was he? I mean...

T: He learnt the steps.

C: He learnt the steps but he never really did it for any... He didn't have any goal to achieve at that stage, he did it because the girls were doing it.

T: He was interested in other things. But ... yeah... when we got involved in the local branch here, and ... we started getting involved with the committee, so again, we went onto the organising side of things, and as my wife had been teaching out in Cyprus, and she taught a children's class, she felt, you felt that you would like to do some teaching, didn't you?

C: Well ... I was invited to do the teaching certificate. ... The leading light in the first Scottish group at the time and she suggested that I might benefit from doing the teacher's certificate and ... so I thought "Well I've been doing teaching all these years so I might as well get the piece of paper for it." So I went along to the certificate class and ... after a few sessions... You do it in two stages. You do the preliminary certificate first and then you have to wait two years, get your teaching practice in, before you can get your full certificate. And ... I went through that process and finally got through the full teacher's certificate 1990. And immediately the teacher who obviously had an ulterior motive, said "Oh good! You'll be able to start up a class then, won't you?" Well she didn't quite do it immediately, she did allow me some breathing space, and let me get my own class up an running first, and after a year of doing that, I was invited to teach one of the branch classes, they wanted to get a

beginners' class up and running. So I started that then. But then, after a couple of years, you decided to do the certificate as well, didn't you?

T: Yes, you encouraged me and the teacher encouraged me as well ... and I'd been going along ... to all of my wife's training classes as a stodge, because if you're teaching teachers, you need material to work on but you don't need or don't want particularly to have beginners. You need people who can dance to a reasonable standard so that the teachers ... can teach them. And the stoddges also are just that ... they are invited ... actually to make mistakes, so you've got to be at a reasonable standard to dance incorrectly (laughs).

C: It's like Les Dawson who plays the piano. He knows perfectly well or he knew perfectly well how to play.

T: Yes, but he never played the right notes. So ... yes.

C: It's like that with the footwork, you try to make mistakes or go wrong in a formation deliberately to allow the trainee teacher to pick up on that mistake. And see if they've seen it and corrected it and all the rest of it.

T: Yes, I got involved in this and quite enjoyed it, thoroughly enjoyed it really. And of course it brought my own standard up ... quite well as well. So ... in the end, the teacher and my wife suggested "Well go on, why don't you do it?" So I did ... I think about ...

C: 1997.

T: 1997. ... I can't remember now. About ten years ago. So yes, yes I went through the hoops that my wife had been through ... I think ... we kind ... of bolstered each other up .... and that, that worked pretty well, didn't it?

C: We seemed to have been in constant demand ever since to teach a class somewhere. But it's getting harder as the years go on. My joints are not what they used to be and we've knocked up, how many years between us? Nearly a hundred years of dancing now between us.

T: Yes ... with you starting at eight.

C: So your joints start to age and you can't do it as easily as you used to be able to. So we enjoy it when we can, that's nice.

T: We have to pace ourselves a bit. We did go in the mid 90s up to the ... the summer schools in ....

C: St. Andrews.

T: St. Andrews, that's right. And that's where we got a week or two weeks if you want, of constant tuition and social dancing.... And we did that for what, three or four years running? We might have missed a year in between?

C: We were doing it alternate years, three or four times we went up to St. Andrews.

T: And that was the time when I was taking my certificate as well, my full certificate you know so it was a bit of a learning curve for me as well.... And I think the last school that I attended ... was after I'd taken my test so I'd got my full certificate. And I can remember about being very nervous about going along to the teachers' ... class.

C: (Laughs).

T: They have classes for all different levels of ability, including those for ... the teachers ... the senior teachers as well so I went along to the teachers' class, and that is the most nervous I've ever been.

C: It's very nerve-racking because the people in the class with you are all teachers, and they expect you to know your stuff. You are also wary of each other you're on your metal.

T: That's right.

C: You're really put on the spot. But it is an excellent grounding ... it keeps you up to the mark and it gives you the latest dances, latest tuition on what the thinking is on the footwork and formations and all that sort of thing. So it's well worth doing.

T: And the methods of teaching as well.

C: And the methods of teaching as well.

T: Because the methods of teaching change over the years from one generation to the next. And ... it's interesting to learn how we can improve our methods of teaching ... apply the teaching methods to different abilities and different ages and that sort of thing. So we get involved in that as well.

I: That's actually one of my questions. How do you teach the dances?

C: Just basically the format is, usually you work out in advance what you are going to teach from programmes that are coming up, programmes in the area, social programmes. And then you take a dance and you break it down into component parts. You teach the footwork first, you make sure that people are aware of the footwork and know the footwork and then you put them into a formation, so you build on the formations. So you know you've got to do Rights and Lefts, Down the Middle and Back, and so on, you break those up, you do them in bits in the class and then you get each set to do it on it's own. ... make sure they're all proficient at it. Every couple should have a go if they possibly can. Obviously it depends on the level of ability of the people in the class. If they're all advanced dancers, they wouldn't need each couple to practice Down the Middle and Back, as long as we'd sort of covered the main elements of the dance, that would be sufficient. But obviously at beginner level, you need to make sure that you've broken it down sufficiently for every person in the set to understand it. And then, having done that, you can put it all into the dance and say "This movement leads into this movement" or "These are the links between the movements," "This is how you get from that movement into this movement," "This is how you step up, step down," "This is

how you get down to the bottom of the set.” All those things come into it. So you have to really look at each component part of the dance and see where the pitfalls lie and particularly pick those out and make sure you’ve covered them.

T: Well you’ve also got to make it fun for them to do as well.

C: Oh yes.

T: ... I mean as teachers we can look at the technical ... aspects of the dance. I think one of the most important ... points in teaching is obviously, well, is the psychology but ...the ability to break a dance down into it’s basic components ... how to assess the ability of students that you are teaching and then ... work your teaching plan out accordingly. One so that they get to know the dances and improve on their technique and their steps etc and also to enjoy it, that’s the main thing that I think we’ve been taught. Yes, technical ability ... learning the dances, there’s a historical aspect of it as well, in as much as a lot of these dances are several hundred years old and we’re actually advancing a traditional ... dance-step here, and traditional movements ... in conjunction with tunes, music for the dance and the musicians, who if we’re lucky enough, we can get along to play for us as well. So there’s all of those aspects.

C: I think we are constrained by the guidelines laid down by the first Scottish group. Your class must contain these elements. So you must make sure if you are teaching a class, you make sure that you include all these elements. So that includes a warm-up at the beginning, a certain amount of technique, footwork, warm-up exercises, things that you actually have to do, before you can properly get into this teaching framework, structure of the class.

T: Yes and as teachers you have to be satisfied with small things. I think that’s always the way with teaching if you’re teaching a class of people, ideally you need to see some improvements somewhere. And if you really feel you’ve got some improvement ... that helps you as a teacher because you can see them progress, it helps the students because they’ve learnt something new and mastered something a little bit better. And ... hopefully they have got some enjoyment out of it so those are the invigorating aspects of being a teacher, in a dance class and try to ... get things across... One of the more interesting aspects of it for me, I think, were identifying ... the level of ability of students and then finding out the methods by which they learn. You use several different or alternative methods of teaching ... particular moves throughout class because ...

Students ... absorb or learn in different ways, they all have slightly different ways of learning things and being able to identify those or at least utilise those which ... you know ... will work ... is part of the class ... and that came into part of the teaching for us as well, you’re actually taught how to recognize and use the different methods of teaching, so that you can apply those to students who have different learning capabilities and ... abilities in themselves for dancing... I think when I started, certainly when I started anyway, I was very conscious to try get the technical ability of it across as much as possible. People did not have to be perfect dancers, I’m not a perfect dancer, nowhere near it, but you’re trying to attain a high level or a high standard of footwork, music interpretation, patterns, that sort of thing. And yet the people that you’re working with, most of the students that we’re working with ... aren’t really aware that that’s a good thing.

They are there to enjoy themselves and if they can get up and do some dancing, get some exercise, that’s fine as far as they’re concerned, as long as they enjoy it. .... So in many ways, we can be as teachers, quite frustrated, at the ability of people to get on. They never get on as fast as we would like them to. So that’s one of the things I find, well not frustrating, I have to be content ... and ... yeah.

I: Can you describe how you teach some of the steps?

T: Yes, we ... there is a set method of doing it.... We put some music on and we try to get students to listen to the music, to try to understand the beat. Stamp your feet to the beat.... Then we would demonstrate ... we would show a step, skip change of step. Then we would put everyone in a big circle and we would just dance around... And without any more ado, we’d just say “Right, get up and have a go.” And it’s surprising how many people, probably 70-80%...

C: Well I think it depends on the age of the class. I mean kids pick everything up straight away... they don’t think about it.

T: Straight away... the older they are, the harder it is.

C: The harder it is.

T: So it’s surprising actually how many people pick it up very quickly, straight away. So they’ve got the step. Then ... ok you then have to break it down, go back to basics, so you actually stand in front of the class and we step out the footwork to the beat. And it’s left and right feet ... you have to say “You do a step on the right foot and then on the left foot.”

C: We do it mirror fashion so they can use us as a mirror.

T: If they stand in front of you, and you stand in front of them, we would use the left foot and say “Right.” It’s surprising how many people don’t even notice because it’s a mirror fashion they automatically go with that. I mean it’s very much like somebody’s got a speck on their face... it’s on the right cheek.... You actually point to your left cheek to show them whereabouts it is. And they automatically go right to the spot (laughs). So that’s part of the method that we use. And then gradually you build up that footwork, that step... if you’ve got a musician it’s even better because the musician can start off slowly and then gradually speed up the pace of the music, the speed of the music until you’re dancing at the right speed.

C: We are fortunate that we do have music machines with a tempo control but as I say you can turn it right down and gradually increase it, so it brings it up to speed and hopefully they stay with you and keep going on their own.

T: Once they've mastered the step you've practiced, you then put that into a simple dance ..... and... more often than not, as soon as they start dancing ... particularly with beginners or those who are learning how to do it, the footsteps just go.... As they're trying to find their way around the pattern, for example.... So ... with more experienced dancers ... you still use the same technique, you go back to basics, listen to the music.... Make sure the beat is there, make sure they're all on the beat and watch the heads to make sure they're going up and down at the same time ... that they've got the right feet working...

C: Their posture is important as well.

T: Exactly. All the rest of it ..... and even with very experienced dancers you can always improve on their stuff, their technique and ... so you always go back to basics, build it back up again. And as teachers we're always looking for an improvement from what we first saw... That's good because as I said before you feel as though you've done a good job, they've learnt something, but not only that, you can praise them for it. You can say "Well done! You've actually improved. I can see a great improvement there. Fantastic." And that gives you a lift. Gives a class a lift, they all feel they've improved, even if say a smidgeon. People genuinely say that and because they can detect you are genuine in what you are praising them for, they actually get a lift out of that. That actually does, the class starts to take off from that point ... and then you can bring in, you know, different dances, and different dances will have different moves in them, perhaps they haven't done before, or they need to brush up their footwork, their technique, and ... as a class teacher, it's useful to have ... an opportunity to teach the same class over a period of time, so you can actually see ... not just the individuals ... a group that did the dancing, but also the set which is six, eight, ten people, whatever, you can see their ability to dance together improving as well and ... you can work on aspects of that as well, can't you? From one week to the next. And as my wife said, over a period of time, when you've got ... the class working well, you're looking ahead at the dances that are coming up, and you're looking at the individual dances they may possibly be doing, if they go to the dance and looking out for the dances which have a particular movement in them ... or technique which ... from your knowledge of the class, you know they would ... appreciate learning and putting a bit of practice in. So you work towards those dances and that actually when they get to the dance, because they've been learning and they're familiar with it ... they have more confidence in getting up onto the dance floor, asking a partner to dance with, and then actually enjoying the dance so much more.

C: One of the complaints we hear from beginners is that .... We do different dances every week, and they feel that .... They forget the ones that they've learnt.... you teach them a dance and they might not see it again for weeks or months or years. But then there are so many dances to choose from. There are thousands and thousands of Scottish dances. So it's so difficult, yes, you can repeat a dance, perhaps every so often, and say "Yes, but we need to keep moving on. You can't stick to the same set of dances all the time. A) It would become boring if you did that, and B) You'd never cover the kind of dances you need to cover to keep people's knowledge base, especially for experienced dancers, they want to learn new dances, they don't want so much technique, as they feel that they know that. So it is very hard to keep the classes fresh and interesting for all of the people in the class, you've got to get the balance just right.

I: That leads onto my next question "How important is memory?"

C: (Laughs). For the teacher, or the class, or for both?

I: For both.

C: Right ... well from the teacher's point of view, memory is very important. I'm not so good now as I was but I used to try and confine my entire class plan to memory every time, so although I'd drafted it all out on paper, I would need to remember it in my head so I never had to refer to it through out the whole of the class, I could take a whole two hour class and never once look at my plan. Know exactly what I'm going to do, what order I'm going to do it in, know all the dances inside out, make sure I've done all my homework before the class so it's all in here. And then I wouldn't have to stop for any reason and interrupt the class... for any reason apart from perhaps having to change the music if working with a music machine or something... So that was really important to keep that in there because otherwise if you've got to keep stopping and referring to your notes, firstly it doesn't look good to the students, the pupil in the class does not want to think the teacher does not know what they are doing, they like to feel the teacher at least is on top of it and knows. They should be the foremost authority in the room so they should be on top of it. So that instills confidence in the class. And that's really important. Now because I'm getting older, I find it harder to do that now, so although I still draft out my plan, I try to remember it, quite often I have to read through it again, before the class starts. I might have to refer to it, several times through the class. But even so, so long as you've got the bones of it in your head, as long as you can keep the flow of the class going, that is very important. From the class's point of view, memory is important just to get through the dance. You've got a lot of information to absorb, you've got a lot of technical things which get thrown to you, you've got a lot of dances that you're taught, literally three or four dances minimum per class, that you'll learn then you'll need to retain that if you're going to be able to apply it when you go out to a social function. You've got to be able to put what you've learnt into practice otherwise, what's the point of the classes? So, yes, memory is important, and another thing as far as the teacher goes, it's so important to learn the names of your class members, even if it's only their first name, you don't have to know everything about them but you need to be able to refer to them by name and make them individual, make the class personal for them because otherwise, they feel like they're just one in a number of sheep of a flock and they don't really feel that they're being treated as an individual. And if somebody

is doing something wrong at the far side of the room, you need to be able to say quickly “Turn right, Sarah” or “Do this.” ... And know that they’re going to do that and respond to it. If you’re trying to say “Hey you in the yellow shirt down there” it’s never going to work so you need to be able to do your best to keep the names in your head as well.

T: I’ve never had a good memory for names ... I must admit. I tend to use other methods and ... rather than perhaps, well one’s not supposed to pick out an individual, in teaching, it’s always “This is how we do it.” And ... unless you’re at a very high standard of teaching, with a very advanced class, it’s not the general practice to actually pick on someone and say, no you can’t say that you’re doing it wrong, you can only really show them.

C: You don’t want negative feedback really.

T: You show them the positive aspects of the dance, and you do it by picking on ... a person, or you do it yourself and you say “This is the way we do it.” And you hope the person you’re actually trying to impress the most, picks it up. And generally that works.

C: But quite often people say to me “How do I know if it’s me you’re trying to tell this to? How do I know if it’s me that’s doing it wrong?” Because quite often they’re not even aware that they’re the ones who are doing it wrong.

T: That’s right.

C: And if you just say it bland “Well actually there are one or two mistakes there, let’s just look at this. And this is how it should be.” And you show them the correct way to do it. But those who are doing it wrong quite often think “Oh it’s somebody in the class who’s doing it wrong, it wasn’t me. So why should I take any notice?” And they carry on doing it wrong. So I have this sort of you get to know a class, and you get to know who you can say to individually “So and so, you’re doing that wrong.” And there are those that you must never do that to because they would react badly, they would feel that they’ve been made an example of in front of the class or something, they would take it very personally. So you try and make sure, you know, that you don’t embarrass anybody by singling them out until you know your class well enough to make an educated judgement on who you can correct in front of the others and who you can’t.

T: Recently I’ve been up at St. Andrew’s. At some of the day schools or weekend schools that I’ve been to, the most advanced teachers have some very good methods or knack of making everyone feel that they’re dancing to the best of their ability ... And indeed they can point out faults in dancing ... in some cases ... we can go along, for example if people are ... going round in a circle with partners ... as a teacher, if you spot something which isn’t quite, you know there’s a definite mistake there, there’s nothing to stop us going along to that one or two people who are dancing and just joining in, say “Like this” and do the dance in front of them and you show them how you do it. And that works.

C: Never replicate their fault never show them something that is wrong.

T: It’s always a ... a positive method of teaching to get across... I mean we have suffered with teachers ... who have negative methods of teaching ... the numbers that attend the class go down ... people become disenchanted and start leaving, or they might for example say “Oh when is so and so going to be teaching again because they do it so much better.” ... So you know those positive and negative aspects of teaching are very important.

I: Can you tell me how you talk about some of these steps?

C: You talk all the time you’re demonstrating. You say what you’re doing, you explain what you’re doing, you try to give them the feel for the step, particularly by saying “This is a lilting step, like the Strathspey Setting Step, it’s a lilting step. You rise up at this point. So you’re swinging from side to side but it’s a lilting movement.” On the other hand, something like the Skip-change of Step, is very much up on your toes and it’s lots of lift and flight, it’s sort of “Up-down-down-down, Up-down-down-down” and you get that rhythm going, so you can see when they’re dancing, you don’t have to look at their feet, you know if their feet are right by looking at their heads and seeing if they’re going “Up-down-down-down, Up-down-down-down.” So you can see the rhythm from there ... Just different things. In a circle when they’re doing the Slip Step, you need to get them closing the heels together all the time, and ... pointing their toes into second position and so on. And you do that mostly by demonstration. But by saying “And lift” at the very beginning when you’re trying to get them dancing from standstill. You go “Ready ... and lift” and you’re into the dance so you start moving “And away we go” ... that’s one of the things you teach very much in the first Scottish group. You’ve got to give them a good lead in you can’t just say “Go” and let them get on with it. You’ve got to make sure they’re lifted into whatever it is you’re teaching them. And the steps are really important, they need a good lead in, they don’t need to practice for more than eight bars at a time, really eight steps is probably as much as they want to do, and that should be enough for you to get a general overview of how well they’re doing it. Then if you want to, you can break it down and get each line doing it separately so that you have a better, closer look at the people within that line and pick out the faults. And the thing about doing it in lines is if one person is doing it really incorrectly, it will stand out like a sore thumb because everybody else will be doing it right, so if you get them lined up in the correct order, that’s another way of noticing the faults. But as far as your voice goes, you’ve got to talk and encourage them, keep them going all the way through. You don’t do all the talking first and then leave them you’ve got to continue coaching.

T: Coaching.

C: To the music. And that is really important to keep the flow going, make sure that they’re still concentrating and still absorbing even when they’re actually doing it.

T: There's a difference again there between ... beginners or ... elementary dancers and ... advanced dancers ... in as much as with the elementary dancers, you really do as my wife says, have to keep coaching them ... to say right ... each group as it comes up ... half a bar or a bar in advance, any change of direction or change of movement, then you announce it. And so ... not only are you watching for the standard of dancers, you are making sure that they are aware, because their memory when they're learning the dances, they're ... there's so much going on in their heads, it's useful to have a running commentary or ... just be a bar or two ahead of them "Right ... this is where we're going next." So they don't have to remember it all.

C: So as a teacher you're thinking ahead of the music all the time. You know what's coming up. You've got to make them aware of what's coming up before they get to it. You've got to keep just that little bit in front of them.

T: And hopefully if you've done your homework and also taught the class correctly, when you're coming to an important bit of technique or a new formation or a new movement, you have rehearsed that before the dance, so that as it comes up in the progress of the dance you can say "Right now we're coming to the Rights and Lefts or the ...

C: Or the Tournee or whatever it is.

T: Immediately they can remember and it's a seamless movement from one stage of the dance to the next hopefully. And so you have to keep that going all the time. Actually when you've finished an evening's dancing, an evening's class ... the throat muscles are quite sore.

C: You're actually physically and mentally exhausted.

T: Exhausted, yes.

C: You probably haven't danced that much as a teacher, you demonstrate, you're watching other people, you're coaching them, but actually dancing, you do very little. You're out there telling them what to do but you're having to concentrate hard yourself to make sure you're still on track with your class plan and you've still got control of the class. And you need to be able to have eyes everywhere to know exactly what's going on in that class at all times. And so it's really very demanding and you get, when you come to the end of the class, you're actually quite tired and shattered.

T: Well it's a performance, isn't it? You're actually putting on a performance for the whole of the time and at the end of the evening, yeah, you're pretty tired, quite often you go home and you can't go to bed because your adrenaline is still running.

C: You're still thinking about it, you know. Did I teach that the way I wanted to teach it?

If something didn't work out quite how you wanted it to, why did it go wrong? You're still teaching that class in your head for another hour or two after you've finished it. So we go home and we have to do something completely different, put the television on, put any rubbish on the television or something you know and have a wind down and things just to stop thinking about it.

I: How do the dances themselves tell stories? Can you give me some examples?

T: Well ... you mean stories about themselves?

I: Stories about the dances themselves.

T: Oh yes. We're quite lucky with Scottish Country dances. We know and have taught quite a lot of dances, a number of them have unusual names or they come from certain parts of the world, which we don't really know much about but it's quite nice when you're saying "I've got this dance, we're going to teach it now and you give out the title and you can invite the students "Does anyone know why it is called this?" I mean sometimes if we know the answer, it's still nice to invite them to make a contribution and it's surprising what comes out ...

C: And actually we learn a lot from the students in the class.

T: We do.

C: They do tell us all sorts of things about the dance that we'd never have know. I mean ... things like "The Wild Geese." We would have thought that's a dance about flying geese but it's not ... It's about a military formation, isn't it? It's a military manoeuvre or something. "The Wild Geese" were a military regiment and it was a particular movement they did on the battlefield or something that we found out. So it's really quite amazing the stories that come out. I mean "Ship of Grace" is the story of a lifeboat and you learn that the lifeboat is going away to sea, you see it launching down the slip-way, you see the bow wave as the boat hits the water, and then it's going over the waves to get to the rescue, to rescue the boat in distress and then you see them tying the knot and then the lifeboat leading the boat back home again. So it has a whole story and you can see it in the pattern of the dance. And there are a lot of dances that are based on a story or a particular pattern.... "Old Nick's Lumber Room" is another one and various ones "The Machine without Horses" ...

T: Yes, you would think that's a motorcar but in fact it's not, is it? It's like a Spinning Jenny or something like that.

C: Yes, with the wheels going round.

T: That's right.

C: And again like "Shiftin' Bobbins." And they're not all dances from the first Scottish group but a lot of dances have stories and they're really interesting if you know what the story's about. You can sometimes see it in the pattern of the dance, like "Humphrey's Brooch" that actually describes in the pattern of the dance, the shape of a Lochenbooth brooch that is a Celtic brooch.

T: What does Lochenbooth mean? We did discover up in Scotland this year, and I can't remember now.



C: I've forgotten it already (laughs).

T: Lucky brooch? I can't remember now. Should have written it down. Somebody described it to us in Edinburgh.

C: We do learn stories from the class and I think sometimes we can give them a bit of the history of the dance if we know it. And ... a lot of the dances do go back a long way. Some of them can be 250 plus years old. So ...

T: That's when they were first written down. Yeah.

C: But I mean the first Scottish group was only formed in the 1920s, so it had quite a job to do to collect all the manuscripts and ... record all the dances that had been handed down by word of mouth in families over the years, to make sure they collected them all so they weren't going to be lost because at the time when the group was formed it was becoming a dying dancing thing. There were things going on after the First World War, television was coming in, radio was certainly there all ready and all sorts of things. So through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, certainly towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all of these dances would have been lost forever if the society hadn't been formed in the first place to collect them and save them. And ... they did do a grand job of doing that. And as people became interested again in Scottish dancing towards the end, well later on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I think it sort of had a revival.

T: Well 50s and 60s there was a revival, wasn't there?

C: There was a bit of a revival then which was at the time that we were starting to dance ourselves. And I think that people were so interested in the dance, they started to say "Well, why just have the old dances? We can have more dances, why stop at these ones?" And so there have been quite a lot of new dances that have come out since, over the last 30 years, which has almost doubled the number, I would say, of dances that there are.

T: Yes, and there's some people who are regarded highly as good devisers of dances ... there's, John Drewry is one.

C: He's done over 600 dances. Phenomenal.

T: John Drewry and ... well there's probably half a dozen that we could reel off and say "Right, these over the last 50 years have been the main devisers of dances." And musicians as well, musicians and bands. And they've all become famous in their own right over the last 30 or 50 years.

C: Yes and sometimes the dance has been devised to go to a particular piece of music and sometimes, the dance is there but it needs music and the band will do, compose a piece of music for it so ... there's no hard and fast rule about which comes first, the music or the dance, but ideally they go together and what the music should tell you is what the dance is all about. The music should tell you what you should be doing next, and if there is a particular piece of music for a dance, you should try always to use that correct music for the dance whenever you can because again it will tell you what you should be doing if you get to associate the dance with the music.

T: Yes the dancers tend to associate tunes with the dances that they're doing and there are again... probably a couple of dozen dances that you could name off the top of your head that have a particular tune which as soon as it's played, if you're getting up at a dance, and the musicians strike up that tune, you don't even need to think about what you're going to do, you just get up and the music tells you how to do it... they're so well ...intertwined if you like ..... and that works very well. I mean that's always one of the nice things I find with a dance, if you've got a good band or even just ... you know one or two good musicians ..... they have an ability to connect with the dancers. So the band strikes up, the dancers start to dance and ... there is this inter-relationship between the band, the music and the dance. The whole thing just lifts off, and you feel as though actually you're dancing two or three feet above the floor... The set that you're dancing with, everyone's dancing it right and you get ... a real lift from just that particular dance, from the music and from the movement of the dance as well.

C: There's one dance called "Trip to Bavaria" which came up on a programme at a dance in a local town and the band of the day

T: Oh yes.

C: Said "We're going to do this dance and we're going to play it and we're going to see who gives up first." Now this is a dance where everybody is dancing all of the time and so you needed to have quite a lot of stamina to keep dancing and the band says "We're not going to give up until you stop." So it was a case of, who was going to give up first? The band, because they were too tired playing it or the dancers because they were too exhausted dancing it. And in the end, I think they both crashed out at about the same point. And they couldn't just quite keep ... I mean the band was flagging a bit because obviously it's very hard on the fingers to keep playing constantly for that length of time.

T: Yes there was one demonstration I seem to remember we did at a mess? Remember?

C: We went to a mess night.

T: It was the officers' mess and they wanted to do "Strip the Willow." This was a dance, we had a mess meal I think it was Burns night or something.

T: They were well oiled and ... yes ok, "Strip the Willow" and they wanted to do it Aberdonian style. So you start at the top of the set and you work all the way down to the end. It would be about 28, 30....

C: 28 couples long it was that night.

T: 28 couples long and that's just one long set, all the way down the room. And they start at the top and work their way down and then back up and down and they just keep going. And I think it was about 30 minutes....

C: It just went on forever.

T: Before they just fell down. I mean they...

C: (Laughs)

T: Literally fell down. Falling around like ten-pin bowls. And the band thankfully had to stop then. The band had by then, had already been taking it in turns to play the tune and it was only a four-piece band I think and... they did well. But ... yes, we never went there again.

C: Too exhausting.

T: (Laughs)

I: So how does Scottish dancing make you see yourself?

C: Ah (sighs)... how does it make us see ourselves?

T: Well I suppose a certain amount of...

C: Well it gives me a certain amount of pride. It's about the one thing that I feel I've excelled in. You know you need to have, feel that you've achieved something. And it's the one thing that I feel I've probably been as good as I'm going to get in anything.... So you have a certain amount of pride in that, it's achieved a lot, it's taken us to places we wouldn't otherwise have gone, it's given us experiences we wouldn't otherwise have had... As a teacher, it makes me feel I have a certain place. You can be lost in a class, you can just cower at the back of the room and nobody will see you. But as a teacher, you've got to be out at the front. So it's done a lot for my confidence.

T; There's a certain amount of showmanship in it, I think, which ... you know I'm quite happy to get up and ... spout ... any time really. My wife says I talk too much but she's right it's something that... we can do. We've learnt how to do it we've been taught ... we've had the benefit of some very good teachers ... and having been around when my wife was actually demonstrating, in the younger years, younger years when she was a member of the London demonstration team. I mean dancing at the Royal Albert Hall ... with television demonstrations and things like that. There's a certain element of that which I suppose appeals to being a bit of a ... showman really... it's nice to be part of that and it's nice to be able to feel that you are passing something on to other people who get enjoyment out of it... It's really nice at the end of a class ... when somebody comes up and says "Thank you, I really enjoyed that. You've made my day." Or "You know, I've been wondering how to get round that movement or learn that particular dance for years and years and to-night, you did it." .... There's a lot of satisfaction in that. And ... so that makes me feel ... that was all worthwhile.... if you've got a two hour class, you spend two hours prior to that doing the lesson plan, working out the ... teaching moves you are going to make and sorting out the music. And then you all get the kit together and it doesn't matter whether you've had a bad day at the office, whether it's chucking it down with rain, whether you get a puncture on the way there ..... it just needs one person or whatever to come up to you at the end of the class and say "Well thank you, that was very worthwhile." And all of the agro, all of the work that you've put into it, is well worth it.

C: And not only that. It does actually take your mind off everything else that's going on in your life because you can't think of anything else when you're teaching it, you have to concentrate so totally on it. So it is in ... a way, a form of escapism, if you like, you know you've just got to have your brain cleared of everything else.

T: Yeah, that's true it's a good therapy in that regard. It can be, yes, because you have to switch off to everything else. And ... as I think we've said before, teaching a class you're actually 110% committed while you're doing it so you can't ... think about anything else ... So it does take you away from ... the things which might otherwise be worrying you or whatever you know, it is a therapy in that regard.

C: But I think we've had a lot of benefits from it and I think it's given us a lot of self-respect as well, you know. We think "Yes I can do this, I can put it across. I am or have been at the top of the game and we can look at others and see how they progress and help them on their way and all that." So I think it's ... it's been good, I wouldn't change it at all.

T: I mean we can actually have a technical or a philosophical discussion between ourselves on different aspects of the dance and how to teach it and so forth so ... as a means of communicating with one another it's been oil in the wheels, in that regard as well, so that's quite good. And ... it's surprising I think how many people come up and say "How do you do this?" You know people who haven't done it before, any country dancing. "How do you do that?" You can actually get up and show them. And they say "Wow!" There's a "wow" factor to it which is very nice. Mind you, as we get older, that's diminishing rapidly (laughs). We can't do what we used to do!

I: That leads onto my next question. How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

C: Ah right, as well I say, I think from my point of view, it has taken its toll on the joints, hips and knees particularly have had quite a pounding. But I put a lot of that down to the fact that I did a lot of Highland dancing as a child while the bones are still forming and I think if you do that, with Highland dancing you're very much pounding on the spot ... you're hop-hop-hop-hop and that is punishing at the joints and I feel perhaps if I hadn't done quite so much Highland dancing in my formative years, then I wouldn't be suffering quite so much now. But ... and again we did an awful lot of dancing in our youth. We did as I say we were dancing four, five nights a week sometimes weren't we?

T: Mm.

C: And I think just the cumulative effect over the years definitely does take its toll. But at the same time, aerobically, it's excellent, it gives you as good a ...work-out as any other sport that you can think of really... You don't have to be able to sustain it for the length of time that you could, you're not running a marathon, but for a dance you've got to get through 32 bars, 64 bars, or however many times as first couple, to get you to the bottom of the set, before you get a breather. And you have to be able to do that it's still a form of exercise that you can do well into your advanced years. And we do have people who have turned up in class, sometimes 60,70, sometimes 80.

T: 80.

C: Years old. And they're still doing Scottish dancing and they're still doing it to the best of their ability. Maybe they didn't start as young as I did and that's why they're able to keep going longer because they haven't had the same pounding on the joints for the number of years that I've had. But at the same time, I still think it's the best form of exercise that you can get, or as good as any.... Just for personal fitness and if you can keep it going, that's great....

T: There's a mental aspect of it as well, because not only are you using the muscles and the bones in your body, you're actually using your brain...to learn the dances, memorising and remember the patterns... and indeed ... you don't go in a certain direction without your brain telling you where to go. ... So I think, one of the things that I've found through dancing, it has improved, kept up, the mental capacity if you like... particularly as a teacher, because as my wife said before, you have to be one step ahead of the rest of the class... Having planned it all, you've got to memorise it as best you can.... You've got to be able, very quickly, to assess a situation in a class ... and turn it into a positive advantage. ... perhaps when you haven't got a class, you haven't got a set... when the class is due to start. And yet you've got a programme perhaps with ... four couple dances in it. Wow! That means then you've got to have something at the back of your mind already prepared, perhaps to do a two couple dance, or you might have forgotten a CD, and then you haven't got the right tune for the dance so you've immediately got to put the brain into gear and say "Well how do we get round this one?" So yeah there's a mental aspect of it as well.

C: But the physical part as well is really important, to have that structure in the class where you have that warm-up at the beginning because you are just as ... conscious as the teacher that any person in your class could slip or pull a muscle, do themselves damage, so you have got to make sure that they have warmed up properly and that you've taken all precautions to make sure that they're not going to hurt themselves. So you need, the floor might be slippery, you've either got to make them aware that they've got to take precautions or provide slip-stop so that they don't slip around on the floor. And you've got to make sure that they've thoroughly warmed-up or if somebody comes into the class late, you've got to tell them "Make sure you do some stretching and some exercises before you start joining into the dance because to go into it cold, you could do yourself damage." So there's all that sort of thing that you have to bear in mind as well.

T: Yeah.

I: Any injuries from the dance, you've had?

C: Personally? No I haven't really had ... the occasional pulled muscle or something, but I mean they heal quite quickly... I did have somebody who fell when we went to a dance demonstration once, and ... we had done our demonstration and then the idea was that we would get the people up who'd been watching, to do a little... a dance or two, some very simple dances. But unfortunately the floor was slippery and although they had seen, when we were doing our demonstration that it was slippery, because we were slipping and sliding all over the place. But anyway they wanted to get up and they wanted to do their own dancing, so we got some people up on the floor and we warned them that the floor was slippery and to be extremely careful and we went ahead and did, I don't know ... "Dashing White Sergeant" or something I think it was. And this one lady slipped and fell very heavily and she didn't get up for the rest of the evening, she sat in a chair in a corner and later on we heard that she was actually suing the village hall for having such a slippery floor and then putting on this particular evening of entertainment for them which wasn't really appropriate with the type of floor that they had. So I had to make a statement about what we'd done, didn't I? Do you remember all this?

T: Yes.

C: So I had to make a statement about it and we never heard any more but yes, you have to be very clear in that situation that you could, as the teacher in that situation, we could have been liable, but as we had covered ourselves by saying "The floor is slippery. Take care." You know, we'd been through that so we had covered ourselves by saying that so everyone who got up was doing so really at their own risk. But yes it's...

T: I mean we have known people slip and break a wrist or...

C: My mother broke her leg dancing, so yes, people do, it happens.

T: I've pulled muscles in the leg before now and that probably I was not fit enough or I was trying too hard. But you do have to, it's not just teachers, you have to be very careful with students... particularly those who are very keen to learn and improve, to make sure that they are fit enough to do that... the level of ability that you expect of your pupil is, has to be commensurate with their physical capability (laughs). And you've got to weigh that up. That's a fine judgement sometimes. So ...but I think one of the good things particularly about dancing for middle age and older, is that you can, you have to learn to pace yourself and ... we've known several octogenarians who come up on the floor and they literally just walk around, but they've been

dancing so long that they know the dances inside out, know where they have to be at the end of each bar phrase, and therefore they do not interrupt the dance for the others... well not too much anyway and...

C: They walk round the dance and they get to the right place at the right time.

T: And other people, there's one of our dancers here who had several operations on his hip and his leg ... big fellow, totally immovable on the dance floor if he doesn't want to go and you ... literally dance around him. In a circle, you would be taking very small steps and the whole set, everybody realises the circumstances of the particular person and they will adapt accordingly and the dance is still enjoyed, nonetheless.... But yes... it's amazing to get up and watch people, see people in their late 70s, 80s actually, getting up and enjoying the dance. I'm sure a lot of them are a lot fitter than they otherwise might have been if they hadn't been dancing.... They haven't got the best technique, they sometimes forget where they are in the set, but they're enjoying it and that's the main thing.

I: Ok. So would you say Scottish dancing has influenced your own experiences of growing older?

C: Yes ... so how has it affected our experiences of growing older?

T: Well yes, I think I'm conscious of the fact that I can't... do as much as I did... you know, even five years ago, ten years ago, because when we were dancing two or three times a week and going along to dances and doing all twenty-six dances on the programme ... and the repeats and so on and then coming home in the evening and... not feeling it at all. Certainly now we can't do that. We go along to a dance now and I might do all of the dances in the first half and probably half the dances in the second half, on a good night ... But I'm starting to find excuses not to do the dances I don't particularly like.... Or the ones that are most stressful, where there is a lot of setting, turning and that sort of thing.

C: I do remember as a child looking at people who were, when we went to social dances, with my parents and so on, I would look at people on the dance floor and think "Gosh they're old!" I mean they probably weren't that old but when you're a child everybody over the age of 30 is old. "How can they get up and dance like that? They look awful, they shouldn't dance when they're that old." And when you're at the other end of the scale, "these children have got far too much energy!" (laughs). And they've got.... they bound around, sometimes keeping them contained can be a problem in the class. But now we're at the other end of the scale. We're slowing down they've still got their get-up-and-go, whereas ours has got-up-and-gone.

T: I must admit I enjoy a good Strathspey these days as opposed to a ... really fast dance. But that has its limitations because in a Strathspey you're using much more muscle control ... it's a slower speed and a lot more control is required so perhaps on a dance programme, one or two or maybe three Strathspeys, that's me done... I think I try to... enjoy the dance ... that I get up to do, it's a bit more special I suppose than getting up and doing the whole lot. I look at a dance programme now and say "I'd like to do that one and that one and that one." Who is there in the room whom I know, apart from C. of course, that I know would also enjoy that dance? ... So as I've got older, I've started to become more selective I suppose, in what I would like to do. Indeed, who I would like to do it with. So ... that's, that's the way things have changed as I've got older, I think.

C: Now one of the things we've always enjoyed is dancing together. Actually, as teachers, you don't get to dance together very much, you tend to be either dancing or teaching but not together. And... I think because we've grown old doing it, or are growing old together doing it, we are actually adjusting to the pace of the dance more or less at the same rate. Perhaps you've probably got a bit more energy and a bit more get-up-and-go than I have at the moment, as far as that goes but I feel that I enjoy dancing with T. and sometimes I feel that because he knows of my health problems, I would rather dance with him because then I don't have to apologise for it... and if you get up and dance with somebody else, you're probably feeling that you're not producing the sort of ... partner for them that they would like, because you're not quite up to the mark any more. And so you do sort of feel, partly that you're letting them down because they look on you as the teacher, and you should be dancing better than this so you feel like you're apologising for it. Whereas I know if I got up and dance with T., he would accept that's how it is, that's the way it's going to be, but we'll do it any way, you know. So I feel more relaxed in that way.

I: I've heard one or two stories of people literally dancing themselves to death in Scottish dancing... I wondered if you'd heard any stories of that happening?

C: Well you can do, it's like any exercise...

T: Doesn't happen very often.

C: Yes we have a story. My step-father died dancing. He was actually over-weight, well he was a dancing teacher. He... liked his beer on a Sunday after his Sunday lunch and he also liked showing off his dancing when he was a little bit over... he'd had a few too many drinks. And he got up and he tried to do the Highland Fling in a pub, after he'd eaten a heavy meal and had a few beers, and he literally dropped dead on the spot. So ... yes it happens, but then it was a foolish thing to do and really he was asking for trouble. And he was only in his early fifties at the time. So yes, these things do happen, you do know of people who die doing that. But then you could die running a marathon, you could die doing any other kind of sport, so I mean... I don't think it is any more dangerous in that way if you are sensible and you take precaution and you realise you are putting your body through a certain amount of strain and stress, which is good for it in moderation, you should all have a bit of exercise everyday. But if you don't take the...

see the warning signs... take the precautions that you need to take, then you're going to be asking for trouble.

T: I had one very old lady come along to one of my classes ... a few years ago and it was obvious from the first warm-up and... one or two dances that we did, that she was not fit enough actually to do some dancing... So... really it was a question of very much quietly saying at the end of the class "If you're not feeling well... go and see the doctor." Or something like that. I mean you have to be very careful how you judge it... How you sort of speak to people but ... I think you have a duty, if there is obviously somebody who is unfit or unwell... then we have to, as teachers, or indeed as colleagues in the dance, you know, as part of a set...then we have to say to people "Well is this really for you?" And... a duty of care comes into it, I suppose.

C: My father had a story that there was... He used to teach a regular weekly class in C., and one time this elderly gentleman turned up, white-haired, lots of energy but very white-haired, obviously not in his youth any more. And ...he introduced himself and dad thought "Well, give him a go, see how he gets on." Got half way through the class when they stopped for a drink and just for some refreshment, and, dad asked this guy how old he was, if he didn't mind him asking "How old was he?" He said "I'm 93 and I thought I'd better start before it's too late." So (laughs).

T: (Laughs)

C: And he carried on dancing. He danced every dance and he was a lot fitter than some of the people in their 50s and 60s who were in the class. And he actually did very well. I mean he hadn't been a dancer before, but he had obviously kept himself fit. And he carried on coming for quite a while, quite a few weeks or even months and then suddenly stopped coming. And dad didn't know whether he'd just dropped dead or what but never heard anything more of him. He just came along, he did it for a few weeks, he enjoyed it, he seemed to be ... very at ease. He might have just died in his sleep or something. And ... he had no way of knowing what happened. But ... it just shows you that you can stay fit and can take things up even well into your later life.

T: I think we adjust, don't we? I mean the ... the standard of dancing I suppose is not quite as it was... the technique is not always there. It's much more probably about... getting, going through a dance... enjoying the people in the set that you're dancing with and making sure that you're not... upsetting the dance for them. So you've got to still be able to go with the flow as it were and make it enjoyable for the rest of the set as well as your partner...

C: You still have a lot of knowledge, you can still help the set through a dance, when you get one or two people who are in the set who perhaps can't do the dance or don't know it. And you as the person who knows the dance can actually guide them and help them through. So even though your own dancing is perhaps not up to the mark any more, you can still give a lot of knowledge to that person and still help them. And it's often appreciated. At the end of the dance they think "Thank you. We wouldn't have got through it if you hadn't been there." Sort of thing. And that's quite gratifying.

T: You don't have to say anything. It's a question of the lead, and you can lead with any part of the body. With a hand, with a gesture, with the shoulders, with the eyes or a glance in a certain direction. Provided you've got a communication with your partner and other members of the set... you can command the way in which the dancers actually get through that dance... Hopefully sometimes they don't even appreciate it's happening but you can be working jolly hard sometimes to make sure your set actually gets through the dance. Not actually by telling them about it but leading them through, steering them, yeah.

C: (Laughs).

I: That leads very nicely to my next to last question which is how has Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body? You said about the non-verbal cues...

T: Yeah. I think ... probably watching other people and assessing how they learn is one thing I've learnt and then judging and deciding which method of teaching to use in certain circumstances ... There's also a confidence thing about it, as C. said, I mean we are as the teacher expected to know what it is all about... Sometimes that gets challenged. There are people, there are people in the set not necessarily..

C: Your body language is really important to the class. You have to look confident, you have to be composed, your own posture is so important because you are putting that across to them "This is how it's done. You are a dancer. I am a dancer. I'm telling you how to do it." So your whole body should say that to them. And as a child I grew up and I was taught, footwork very early on, as I say, I was only seven or eight when I started. And the first thing you have to do is get your feet to turn out because a natural dancing position is with your feet turned out. It's almost at right angles to each other. So you have to get your feet to do that. So now I can't put my feet together. My feet are naturally turned out, when I'm walking my feet are turned out... the whole time. My feet are naturally turned out. And that's because I was trained very, very early on. So yes it has a bearing on your own development and also you're very aware of hands, and keeping hands at shoulder height and the whole posture in your upper half of your body is important and as a Highland dancer you also have to learn about the technique of moving your head in the right position according to which leg was working and that sort of thing. So it's the whole thing, it's not just from the waist down, it's not just what your feet are doing, it's a whole posture, physical awareness and knowing what your body is doing and is it in the right place at the right time. And, and presentation, it's all about presentation. And covering, and seeing if you are doing the same thing as somebody else, and making sure that you're, you're together.

T: The spatial awareness is advanced as well because we teach and we learn as we go through, that you're part of a set, it's a group of six or eight or ten or however many people, and you have to be not only dancing for yourself and with your partner

but you're dancing as part of a group. And you are spatially aware of whereabouts they are... and that's one of the things which ... I think dancing actually does teach us... the ability to know where you are at any given time.

C: In relation to everybody else in the set.

T: In the dance, in the set, with the music and on the beat. So ... it's interesting sometimes to see pictures, photographs, of ... sets of people dancing and from that you can tell immediately who's on the beat because they're all in the same position. Heads, the body posture and everything. Yeah. They're right... One of the things which I get really cross about sometimes, particularly with beginners, you set them up as a set and you're teaching the set to dance, a particular dance, if it's a fourth couple, are leaning against a post or a stage or something like that. "Hang on a minute, you're still part of the set. Although you're not actually dancing, you're still part of the set and you should be there, waiting, attentive to the rest of the set. And ready to dance." And... it's learning to do that ... which actually changes how you feel about dancing and being part of a group of people who are dancing. Well that's another aspect of it.

I: Last question... is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of Scottish dance in your lives?

T: I quite like listening to it and C.'s not so keen because she thinks that ... she hears enough Scottish dance music as it is, particularly as a dancer.

C: I do like it, I mean I like Scottish dance music but I do think that we overdo it in our lives. We've had so many years of Scottish dance music and it's, yes, I like it when I'm dancing.

T: Mm.

C: But when I'm not dancing, I like to get right away from it and do something completely different. Or if I have music on, it's not Scottish dance music because as I say, I have done that to death really. You know what I mean.

T: Well I'm the other way round. I'm quite happy to put on a CD or a record of dancing and I'm quite happy to listen to it. Particularly driving, it's very good for driving, keeps the concentration going, you've got the beat.

C: (Laughs).

T: You can actually be going through some dances while you're doing it. Shouldn't be doing that when you're driving, maybe but .... Yeah, I appreciate the music, I appreciate the music and I love it when you get the dancers and the musicians... working as one. It's really good.

C: I'm a bit sad that it seems to be going through a ... not so popular time at the moment. Scottish dancing is on a wane, you know, everything goes in peaks and troughs and ... For a while it was on a high, say back in the 60s, 50s and 60s, it was very much on a high, and it was on a high right up until maybe the 80s but now it just seems to be sort of, it's tailed off and it's sort of going through a not such a fashionable thing. And I think that's to do with the fact there are so many forms of dancing out there that people are taking up. There's Salsa, there's line dancing and there's Ceroc and there's these other different types of dancing so actually Scottish dancing has got too much competition and it's viewed by a lot of people as something that the blue-rinse brigade do... the oldies do it. And so you haven't got the young people coming into dancing as you should have. And it's very hard to encourage them to come in unless you first of all get a nucleus, a group of people who are of their age that will attract more in but getting that group together in the first place is the hardest thing. And they're not readily able to get that group together, it's... just hard work.

T: The first group's method of teaching and the way of dancing... is seen by an awful lot of people as a little elitist or has been in recent years I think. And that has probably resulted in it being a little isolated. I've also taught some Reelers and Celidih dancers and the difference between them is that... they are dancers who go along to social events, watch others doing what they think is Scottish Country dancing, and then getting up and doing their own thing as well... And it's interesting that it is still social dancing, it's still country dancing, because this is a generic form of dancing, as opposed to the first group's version of, if you like... a saved historic version of dancing... and trying to tie... these two forms of dance together, and to encourage those who... like Celidih dancing... to perhaps appreciate the historic forms of dancing a little bit more and perhaps... to become a little more expert in what they do, with their footwork and their appreciation of the dance... rather than dancing as individuals which is what it is.... I would like to... sort of progress things along a little bit more that way. And the first group I think is sensitive to that now whereas perhaps ten,

C: It is evolving

T: Fifteen years ago, they weren't. They were going their own tack and it was quite a straight furrow... whereas now I think we are looking very much more openly and are absorbing... more of the... ways that... other people dance Scottish. And you'll notice that in the first group... I think it's now called... dancing Scottish or just... Scottish Country, that's, that's the buzz-word now, the buzz-words now are Scottish Country. They seem to be going away from Scottish Country dancing, yeah, quite a mouthful, to dancing Scottish and that I think probably envelops a wider view of what is Scottish Country dancing, which I think is probably a good thing. But... we'll wait and see how it goes really. But I'm open to that. As I say, I've taught and been involved in... Ceilidhs and Reelers ... whereas I think possibly... twenty years ago, my dancing teacher, my dancing master would have had nothing to do with it at all so I think we've got to envelop the lot, and try get as many people involved as possible.

C: I think we're there!

## First Scottish Interview Six (1.S.6)

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

II: I consent to being interviewed and taking part in research.

A: I also consent.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

II: Well having grown up in Scotland, I learnt it at primary school and every Christmas dance, there was some Scottish dancing, nothing terribly involved but we did it at Christmas parties. After that, my only experience of it was either at Hogmanny or at weddings, generally, a little worse for wear, and when we moved here we started, we thought "We need to get out a wee bit. Let's take up a sport or a hobby" and the hobby was Scottish Country Dancing. I don't know if your experience is any different...

A: Oh it certainly is. I too did, did... I think the technical term for it was "Ceilidh dancing", when I was a school-boy, about ten or eleven I suppose, that was "Dashing White Sergeants" and "Eighth-some Reels" and things. And I ... left that behind me at one stage, but then when I met II., we went to one or two functions together at which I had the chance to demonstrate what I thought were my skills and it was quite clearly pointed out to me that I was "deficient" in many respects, and that I would have to learn to do it "properly." So...

II: You were probably deficient because you were dancing like an Englishman.

A: (Laughs). Well I am an Englishman.

II: Well an Englishman doing Morris dancing in a Scottish Country dance style. You danced fantastically well you just ...

A: Didn't do Scottish Country dancing. We want to do it properly, that was the idea. As well as having a social day out.

I: So how long have you been doing it "properly?"

II: I think you should ask A. that (laughs).

A: We've been taught it properly for eighteen months. Whether we've learnt it properly is perhaps questionable.

II: Yes... Highly, highly doubtful.

I: So how many groups do you go to at the moment?

A: Well I suppose we only consider ourselves part of one, we have, have dabbled in another one, on a sort of ad hoc basis, and now the class has finished, we'll be going to another one, concentrating on just the one I think...

II: Mm.

I: Which is the...?

II: Well it was the Thursday night but with the closure of that class for the time being, we go to the Wednesday night advanced class.

I: Can you remember anything about being a Scottish dancer as a child?

II: Always being the man (laughs). Always being the man. It was ridiculous. And as a result, I can't, I can't not lead.

A: (Laughs).

II: It makes me terribly bossy. That was the main thing. I mean it wasn't... none of them were terribly difficult. The "Gay Gordons" and a bit of the "Dashing White Sergeant" the same as A. ... but...

A: There was one exception to that which is our next door neighbour, when I was a child, heard that I did, I must have been a bit older actually, I must have been in my teens, and he turned up with his recorder and some music and he put two swords in the middle of the floor, and taught me to do a version of the sword dance to the music on a recorder, if you can imagine such a thing.

II: That was extraordinary (laughs).

A: Well he was an extraordinary man. And I have had some other slight exposure to, well he was a Welshman so whether you call it Scottish dancing or not, I don't know, Celtic or Gaelic dancing of a kind.

I: How did you find this sword dancing?

A: Well it became a challenge not to cut your feet.

II: (laughs)

A: I seem to remember, we ... we practiced, my brother and I practiced it a lot for about three months and then of course, we found something else to interest us...

I: So have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

II: No... actually I completely forgot, I used to go to classes when I was wee, and we did the festival of the arts, we went in for competitions. Completely forgot about that.

I: How old were you then?

II: It was primary school, so I was under twelve. We used to go, I think it was just an excuse for mother to get us out of the house for an evening. To get a bit of peace.

I: Do you remember what sort of dances you did?

II: It was more on a par with what we did at the classes. At school it was all really basic, because I think it was just what the teachers could dredge up from their memory. Whereas as I say, it was actually proper dancing and going in for competitions, as part of a much bigger festival of the arts. That was all very... good fun.

I: Did you have a special costume?

II: Oh thank God, no. I think it was school uniform probably (laughs). It was about as far as it was meant to go. No, there was no tartan involved, no sashes. Thank goodness.

I: Do you have anything more to add?

A: I have done another sort of dancing... when I was a student, I used to... see the Morris dancers around parts of Sheffield, well I always thought that was something that appealed to me. And... I went to work in Sheffield one day...

I: Mm.

A: And took shelter from the rain under Sheffield town hall, and who should turn up but the local gang of Morris dancers, with whom I fell into conversation so I did Morris dancing in Sheffield for five years... But it was time to give that sort of thing up, so I stopped after five years and then spent lots of years without doing any sort of dancing at all.

I: How did you find Morris dancing?

A: Oh I loved it. It... it used to... used to hurt. There was a thing called splints that you could get, it used to hurt your feet and shins. But it was...

II: Deliberately?

A: No, no... it was just from the pounding on the ground... But I really enjoyed it as a social activity and it used to involve families and all sorts of things. It was a, it was a day-out, in the evenings in the winter, inevitably followed by a pub visit. And then during the summer, there was a gang of people used to go on summer holidays together and go packing together and all this kind of thing so it was a real social sort of event as well as a dancing event.

I: So did you perform publicly?

A: Oh yeah. Yeah we used to... well yes we used to be called "the collective with extortion" because we made sure all the Americans coughed up. It was traditional. Now occasionally we used to go off from Sheffield to York, and dance about the place, you used to have to get a proper permit and things, otherwise you couldn't. So that, really what that did was to finance other trips, by collecting, although we did, there were some festivals and dancing occasions we'd turn up to, or there were open days for other things, school fetes and various things, and you'd go along and collect money for other people. Yeah. So we... we thought we were socially useful but I suspect it was pretty poor...

II: You kept yourselves off the streets.

A: We kept ourselves off the streets.

I: Anything else about getting involved in Scottish?

II: Mostly my experience, after primary school of course, usually involved lots of drink. At weddings. at Hogmanies. Generally, and occasionally Burn's Night but not really terribly much then. But... taking as much alcohol as we could and then dancing like mental, person to person, (laughs) and I don't suppose they could stay upright....

I: Do you remember much about the dances?

II: ... It usually involved many more bruises, than we get on the average Thursday night, it wasn't a good Ceilidh if you didn't have some sort of displayable injury (laughs). Great fun. It makes Thursdays seem terribly sedate (laughs). It's not Scottish Country dancing at all, this doesn't count! I am both sober and unharmed! (laughs). Peculiar....

A: Well as a result of being with this gang of people Morris dancing, a lot of them musicians as well so they used to play in parks and gardens. So I got interested in playing for dancing and... then I got interested in listening to some Scottish tunes, the old Scottish tunes are really very lovely tunes, and unless you've danced them, you can't play them properly, because you put the emphasis in the wrong place or go too fast and so on. There's a sort of spin off for me between the dancing and the listening and the playing. You can't play a Morris tune like you can a Scottish dance.

II: And you cannot dance a Scottish dance in the way that you would a Morris dance.

A: So I'm constantly told.

I: What's the difference?

A: Oh it's in terms of the lightness and the emphasis. The emphasis in Morris dance is very much on coming down... and English dancing is very one-two, one-two (bangs on chair)... Scottish dancing is much, much lighter... sort of....

II: Up on your toes.

A: Up on your toes and skippety round, a bit quicker. But if you play too quickly for Morris dancing... it just looks silly, whereas if you play too slowly for Scottish dancing, it will lose the lightness. Those kind of things... just quite useful to pick-up.

I: Anything more about the music?

A: ... We often ask who the bands are that are playing the music for the dancing. We have even bought some of their CD's so our CD collection has expanded as a result of the... dancing lessons.



II: I played a little bit in the past but usually, thankfully overwhelmed and drowned out by the sound of an accordionist next to me, which was a huge relief. And it was, it was always good fun playing the music, but it was never as much fun as you could have had dancing. Well I thought.

I: What instrument?

II: Oh violin, very badly. Very badly. But good fun.

A: I think I would rather play than dance. Although it's a close thing.

I: What do you play?

A: A fiddle...

II: A perfect combination in that case.

A: Just... being in a group of people playing, it's very attractive.

I: Do you practice at home?

II: Certainly not... What, the playing or the dancing?

I: Both.

II: The dancing, yeah, we're a bit sad that way (laughs). We've been known to practice a Poussette (laughs) or whatever. Not the playing, no I don't.

A: With the cat and two cushions... It worked quite well like that (laughs).

I: Shall we go onto the second question?

II: Are we only on question two? (laughs).

I: How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

II: I think it varies from night to night. Some days you just have, I have a blankness of brain that staggers me and I wonder how I actually remember to breathe. But most of the time, they all make sense, once you go through it, and walk it a couple of times, it starts making, making good sense. And once you've got all the different... movements, and you know what a Poussette is or a Half-Star, or whatever the different phrases are, if you can recognise those, you can put them together in different combinations. It all makes very good sense. It's just doing it in the time required or just remembering what order they go in (laughs). I can do any of them individually, it's just in different combinations makes it more fun.

I: How about you?

A: Well I'm intrigued because there seems to be a standard way of teaching, which is to do it very slowly, and then to be told the moves again. But that isn't actually how I learn them. I think I find it easier to learn dances actually dancing them, I'd rather make mistakes in time to the music... because that's the only way which you get the whole pattern of the thing. Because unless you, unless you can work out where you've got to get to by a particular piece of music... you can't get better. I hope I'm now getting better. So I sometimes find, although I find it difficult to learn the dances, I'm not very quick at picking them up, the way we're taught I actually find... frustrating because I'd rather get on and make mistakes, trying to do it, properly... that's how I tend to learn, by form.

I: You learn by doing?

A: Actually by doing it.

II: It's interesting. Ones that ... we've been to a couple of these formal dances where they have all these little books with all the instructions in, and once or twice, we've tried before the dance to... go through it and just anticipate what it's going to be like, and you don't remember it completely at the dance, and you've got all these bearded, kilted men growling at you and ruffling their moustaches, but... seeing it written down is actually quite difficult as a way of learning. We have to, I mean I'm sure A. could see in a set of instructions and picture the pattern of the path in her head, but actually doing it is important. About getting shouted on a regular basis going through the dances, is also quite handy. Because when we moved to the advanced class, I felt that such a shock, because she would maybe call it for the first couple but then by the third and the fourth couple, if you hadn't really got it by then, you were... you were a bit stuck because she wasn't calling the dance in the same, with the same sort of consistency as A. had.

A: ... I find it increasingly complicated and difficult. Because it's not only the business about, about teaching the movement to the music, so you end up in the right sort of place at the right time... then there's the actual steps that you're taking. What really throws people, of course, is the complexity of all the movements going on... and as... and as we... got better last year, the level of complexity seemed to increase about threefold.... And I found that quite disorientating. There were times when I just could not, I could not visualise what was supposed to be happening with these... patterns.

II: Sometimes it just comes down to how fast the other people around you are picking it up as well. If everybody's having an off-day...

A: Mm.

II: Then you've seen some of the chaos that can descend, it's just, I think "A., oh should we just stop now, it's not going to, we're not going to get any better to-night. We just need to go home and come back and do it again next week." So a lot of the time it's, you can think "Fools around me, this is outrageous, I'm being held back, I know, I understand what's going on!" And then as soon as I become first couple it's like "Oopsy. Why have I suddenly changed steps half way through? It wasn't

quite as easy..." Or if everybody's at the same sort of pace, then that's fine, I don't actually feel the same way when last term in the college, when occasionally a rogue stranger turned up and they had never danced before and you used to think "We're never going to get it now because we're so busy either trying to shove this person in the right direction or compensating for the fact that they don't know what they're doing, that we're never going to get, very far to-night."

I: Mm.

II: Because... it's too much discrepancy between the different standards of ability. If everybody's pretty much alright, then you're OK, whereas if there's huge differences in the ability and skill mix, very new stuff can be really hard. Because you're trying to teach them the basic stuff, well A's trying to teach them the very basic stuff, skip change of step and all the rest of it. It's frustrating.

A: I suppose it becomes like a craft. Then it does require constant attention.

II: Mm.

A: The mistake I make most often is that I think "Ah well, I know this bit, I can relax." And if I don't pay proper attention, I end up in the wrong place or doing, do something wrong. So it's actually quite in a sense, mentally demanding, not intellectually but mentally demanding, which I find quite refreshing, because it's a bit of the brain perhaps that I don't always use very much.

II: Physically it's not, it's only occasionally demanding, as you say, intellectually it's just full of innovations in different directions, it's not rocket science. It's the tension of having to be in the right place at the right time because of the completeness of the thing, sorry to have interrupted you, but part of the learning is if you just do a little segment, it isolates each bit, whereas if you did it as a whole, then the completeness, then the completeness, it's the flow between movements, that's where the problems start, because you're in the wrong place, because you have forgotten that the next thing that you've got to do. So it's the anticipation and the completeness of the whole thing.

A: And getting it right gives you a real buzz. I can remember that sense of exhilaration we all had when we got Posties' Jig clued up for the first time. We knew that we didn't have to keep

II: We could enjoy it.

A: We could actually enjoy it. Yes. Then of course you learn that actually that doesn't really help with the dancing finesse. You then have to constrain that kind of mood.

II: Mm.

A: Again. That's my...

II: Or if you get that, then you've got to remember the fact that you've started to have feet like a, cart-horse so you've got to think about the steps that you're using to get from A to B. You can get, end up in point B perfectly well, you're there and you're ready for the next point, but you've "galloofed across" or you've used the wrong step or you've not, had as much, finesse in the positioning of yourself as you could have done. Because that would always, improvements on the way that you can make. I challenge you to spell 'galloof' right when you write down the tape by the way.

A: (Laughs).

II: I won't go into that! (Laughs loudly).

I: So how important would you say is memory?

II: ... It depends what situation you're in. I think, I think that I have different, if somebody said from one Thursday to the next, "Do that dance." I'd be like, there's only two or three perhaps that I would know what I was doing straight off, and I would launch into them. With all the rest of them, if you, if you get them started, then I might remember it, so once you're in it and talked it through once, it's fine, you can keep on going... But remembering the three dances that we did on the first Monday of term in comparison to the three we did on the last... Ah! There's no chance! (Laughs) Apart from the odd one like Posties' Jig that we've done pretty regularly through-out.

A: Yes. I agree with that. Well... I sort of assumed after a while I'd be able to do twelve dances from memory but then you see the teachers, and of course they all, they all have to refer to books before they call the dance. So it seems as though there's no expectation that anybody would, that anybody would, would actually remember all these dances.

II: There's a few standards perhaps.

A: There's a few standards. Particularly there's a few standard patterns, and as long as you recognise the patterns, then it's a sort of business of "This counts as pattern A together with pattern B and pattern F. Put them together and we've got a dance." So there's a bit of, of remembering the suddenness of things, that very often I can't remember the names of the dance. I'm much more likely to recognise the tune actually, than I am to remember the dance that goes with it. You'd think that I would be able to put the two together. Doesn't happen.

II: It's almost disappointing that you can't ... by the end of a term. You could do any of the dances again if you were led through them. It would be nice almost to get to the end of a term and say "Right. I am now certified as competent in doing dances A, B and C." And if I turned up to somewhere in a year's time, as long as I kept dancing regularly, then I could do a dance and just not look at, not be led through it, or I'd be able to dance reasonably competently in that, without any practice.

And I don't feel that's come. I could turn up to a dance and get through it, but I wouldn't be able to say "Ah yes! I know this one!" And lead a beginner necessarily.

I: How important do you think are non-verbal cues?

II: What?

I: From other dancers.

II: (Laughs loudly) Depends who's giving it. I don't give non-verbal cues. I only ever say "To me! To you! Over there!" (laughs).

A: There is, there's a certain sort of experienced person who, who can point, very subtly with a finger, and you gradually learn who they are, I've learnt who they are so that when we go to this... other class, the one we'll be joining next term, if you're with several people in a set and you suddenly think "I don't know where to go next." I know that if I look at one or two people, they'll just indicate one way with their head or...

II: Or you will be taken very clearly by the hand and led. So it won't be a case of saying, of you having to say "Hh... I don't know what I'm doing." They can see you don't know what you're doing and if it's our, our move or whatever, then you are very clearly led, quite firmly, and placed in position... So hugely useful, as long as they know what they are doing as well. Because I often, often look at them, non-verbal cues as well, which are completely misleading and wrong, because I've just lost it (laughs).

A: When you're asking about non-verbal cues, are you talking about normal everything or expressions and things?

I: Everything.

A: I'd love to see my own expression at the moments when I get panicked, you sort of think "I do not know where to go next." Does this look of horror come across my face of complete panic and do people respond to that? I don't...

II: A deeply furrowed brow.

A: I don't know. There tends to be, I don't notice, I don't find that I notice watching peoples' faces very much, because there's a lot of, a lot of Scottish dancing is quite, is, well nothing much happens above the knees almost. So that watching peoples' feet is almost, you can tell which way their feet are pointing, then you can tell which way they are going to go... so I'm intrigued by that question because I wonder are you, when you say non-verbal, I think first of watching peoples' faces, and I'm not sure how much I watch peoples' faces although I watch their feet or where they're going.

II: I often watch faces because if someone is smiling at you like it usually indicates that you're supposed to be looking back at them

A: Well that's true.

II: (laughs) Which helps. And if there are, if they're going, shaking their head or frowning or whatever and you start looking round for the person that's smiling at you (laughs). Invites you to start doing something with them instead. Corners are a clear example of that (laughs).

I: No, I just asked that because I go to a different, more advanced group, and that is how I personally cope with the more difficult dances, is by mirroring the person whose opposite me.

A: Yes.

I: I'll be just a couple of seconds behind them in the patterns, and that is the only way to survive.

A: Yeah.

II: Yeah. What's it called when you're... there's a word for that, isn't there, when you're shadow... you're covering? Yeah... You're covering them when you're doing a figure of eight or whatever and you're supposed to be coming out or coming in together. And you can do that. There's so many things, it's just, it's when the men start doing a particular movement and the women are standing still and you think "Oh I'll start moving as well. Oh no, oopsy-daisy, I should be standing still there." (laughs) I know what you mean... but sometimes it back-fires.

I: Anything more to say about learning?

A: About learning?

I: Any particular examples of learning dances?

A: Well I just, I just wish we had the chance to re-inforce. There doesn't seem to be, considering we are taught by a teacher, it does seem to be strange that we don't recapitulate the new dances that we learnt last week... I find it harder and harder to remember things these days but ...

II: Yeah, is it better to get through twenty dances superficially than ten with a bit more depth and just going over and over and over them.

I: OK. So shall we go on to number three? How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

II: Sweaty. And usually with a hang-over previously (laughs). Covered in bruises.

I: That's thinking about your earlier experience?

II: Yeah.

A: ... Well I think that's interesting. I think I was rather shocked to be told that I danced Scottish dancing like an Englishman.

I: Who by?

A: By II. That was basically "You're about as bad as you could possibly be."

II: By no means. I said I always thought you just got round, and you did everything and you got to where you were supposed to be, you just...

A: Did it wrong.

II: You danced like an Englishman. Yes, it wasn't meant as a criticism.

A: There's a lot of energy in the dancing and I suppose my assumption was that you had to be energetic to create all that energy and what I've learnt, I suppose, is that actually it's a bit like jazz or anything else, you get a lot of tension and excitement, not by being undisciplined in your energy but by focusing it very carefully. There's, there's more energy in the timing of something than in the vigor of it. So, so actually people can move quite quickly in Scottish dancing, and it doesn't look as though they're moving very quickly. Or you can do quite... quite difficult things that do require, that are energetic, they require a lot of muscular activity getting off the ground, or sustained muscular activity by keeping on the balls of your feet. But of course that's not something that the music shows up, And anything that involves sort of... high kick type of visual demonstrations such as I was used to in the Morris dancing, you would want to leap as high in the air as you possibly could, that was exciting, giving it some wellie, but there isn't... Scottish dancing is much more restrained in that sense. It, it doesn't lack energy....

II: It's a bit controlled.

A: Well I suppose it is controlled, isn't it. Because there are all these societies that spring up that tell you how to do it, properly... and who knows whether it's proper or not, who cares whether it's proper or not. But I think for me the point is actually you can get as much enjoyment and interest, stimulation and relaxation out of it, not by being completely laissez-faire but actually you've got to be quite controlled...

I: Anything more?

II: I'm not entirely sure that I understand the question.

I: How does it make you see yourself?

II: In relation to the dancing?

I: Mm.

II: .... I don't know if I ever think about it to that extent, or in that way at all. It's just something that's good fun that we've done on a Thursday night on a very regular basis. And... I have my good moments and my bad moments (laughs). It's just something I see myself as getting better at... but still cock up (laughs) on a regular basis. I just enjoy. I enjoy it.

A: There's a typical satisfaction in doing a Strathspey Poussette correctly.

II: There is (laughs).

A: I always feel quite good when it happens, when it happens right.

II: (laughs) Like the rest of the dance group, hopping up and down, dancing on the spot.

A: It certainly makes you fitter. It's obviously good exercise. I mean of an interesting kind (laughs).

II: (laughs).

I: So what do you wear?

II: The only thing that is consistent is the shoes, which are really, really comfortable or uncomfortable, depending on... how you put them on. That's the only consistent thing.

A: I don't know what it's done to the muscles in my feet. They always feel slightly different.

II: On a Friday morning or a Saturday, you say "Oh I've got dancing feet." (laughs).

I: What do you wear when you go to these formal dances?

II: ... A skirt... a skirt and top, has been my dress. On a Thursday, I go after work and nine times out of, I wear trousers and that's fine. But if I'm going to a dance, stretch myself, put on a skirt, but then it makes my shoes more uncomfortable because I wear tights with the skirt, and shoes aren't as comfortable with tights as with socks.

I: Did you ever have the national dress seeing as you grew up in Scotland?

II: ... Thankfully, no, never... Ugh. Women don't really have a national dress in Scotland.

I: Well there's white dresses and sashes.

II: Which make me feel a little bit poorly (laughs). I don't really approve of that. There are a bit too many novices. Anyway, that's my own personal opinion (laughs). In the competitions when I was in primary school, it was school uniform, and now just skirt and top. Yes, I don't much agree with tartan (laughs). Just me.

I: Do you have a tartan?

A: I don't. No.

I: You can wear the Stewart apparently if you're English?

A: Well I'm descended apparently, like all English men, I'm descended from a Scotsman somewhere. There's a rose element and there's a rose carpet somewhere... But there's something about the kilt. And somebody said to me something about Scottish dancing. What is the image that comes to me? And it's a sort of flowing image. I guess the kilt sort of contributes to that. The flow and the swish. I find it aesthetically pleasing, watching men dancing in kilts.

II: Only if it's a well made and a well-fitted kilt. Kilts on men that are below the knee, are just an absolute nonsense. So it's got to be the right length of kilt. I'm very pro-kilts, even if I'm very, sceptical about them.

A: But then I have a very... I have a very low desire to wear a kilt because I have been brought up with a body-image, I'm long and thin like Don Quixote and the very idea of wearing a kilt, just somehow doesn't go with that body-image, and knobbly knees.

II: De rigouer!

A: I was so envious of all these men who obviously had sturdy calves and they sway around. And then I discovered that actually they wore "falsies," there were ways of padding out your calves, to make them look more impressive than the white woolly socks underneath your kilt. So I, I was pleased to find that out.

II: (Laughs).

I: Can you tell me a little bit more about how the kilt should be worn properly?

II: Well you see it too many times below the knee, or sometimes they've got it well above the knee, particularly point, it's either right or it's wrong. You've got to get that. And I mean there's any number of different jackets and styles of jacket but... I'm not personally a great fan of these gangly shirts with this string-on tie. I don't personally like them very much but... as long as you wear it with a bit of a swagger, you can get away with pretty much anything!

I: OK. So if I can go onto number four, How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

II: Sort of... makes me, makes me actually do some exercise, which is good. So you come out of it feeling a bit more weary, having an enormous curry afterwards (laughs) Clearly, I come out from one of the full day, there was a full day thing, ages and ages ago, and there was practicing during the day and then there was dancing at night. I could barely walk. My goodness. The next day, it was just... quite extreme discomfort in the leg region after that. After such a sustained period, it's not surprising really. Gets better every week.

I: I remember that one. It was an afternoon workshop...

II: Yes, yes.

A: That was within about three months of us starting, wasn't it? December time.

II: But it's great. Get less out of breath every week, which is good.

A: I seem to remember the first few weeks, I was completely knackered ... I'm sure that's got less, even though I've had periods of illness myself, and I can sort of gauge how fit I am by it. How puffy I get when I do the Scottish dancing. Because it's nothing like as much as when I first started. I should think it uses a fair number of calories as a form of aerobic exercise it's quite (laughs), it's quite good and in terms of... of mental benefits, it doesn't matter what sort of bad day you've had, "Oh can I be bothered to go?" And always, within about fifteen minutes, you're just thinking "Oh this place is just giving me the most wonderful benefits, in spite of that." As a recreation, a re-creation... it's, it's good.

I: Mm.

A: Because it combines all sorts of things, physical fitness...recreation...sociability... good mental exercise... yeah, and you meet some nice people, every one of them crazy. Just like us (laughs loudly).

II: (Laughs).

A: It's good.

I: Do you have anything else to say? What about psychological benefits?

II: Well just as A. said, it's good to, not just to go home at the end of a day's work, even if it's only one, one night a week, going out and doing something different is always good. It breaks up, even if it becomes routine, it breaks up... a good thing to do.

A: Well it's done a whole number of things for me... partly because tunes go round in my head, so if I'm walking, anywhere, my mind is wandering off, and more often than not, a Scottish dance tune will pop into my head, and I can whistle it ... and half an hour will go by... and of course, it's linked with me picking up the fiddle again and trying to learn some of these tunes, which is fun. So it's had sort of recreational spin-offs.... Yeah, I certainly sleep well after, (laughs), after Scottish dancing nights.

II: After the curry?

A: Yeah.

I: So have you had any injuries from Scottish dancing? Over the last eighteen months I'm talking about.

II: I think I talked myself into having a twisted ankle one night, which didn't last very long. It lasted as long as it took to get some sympathy from you and some frozen peas and then, it seemed to, calm down a bit... and apart from that, it's only ever been substantial bruising at weddings and Hogmannys.

I: You mentioned something about your feet getting sore...

II: Yeah, that's more like a, just a, I don't think I'd count that as an injury, it's just an inevitable after-effect, it's like being out of breath after a dance. I might be a wee bit sore, but you recover.

A: It must use some muscles that don't normally get used, and it's the feet, not so much, well I can't remember was it my calf, have I ever grumbled about my calf being sore? I don't recall... it's...

II: Dancing feet.

A: It's dancing feet. So that's what's happening, I don't know, we're standing on tip-toe more, spreads the feet and there's pressure in different places...

I: Do you think it's the hard floors?

A: Well I suppose it might be... but we're doing it only for forty-five minutes ... it's not as, it's not as... as damaging to feet, I wouldn't, my, the place where I can get it badly is knees. So if I go running, my knees hurt afterwards. My knees don't hurt after Scottish dancing so for me, I don't think it's to do with the impact on the floor. It must be something to do with the way you have to come off the ground.

II: Sometimes it's when, it feels like the floor's a bit too slippery and you're sort of trying to get to where you need to be, and everything else and you're not scoot anywhere. You see sometimes people put down some talc or some sort of powder, and you think "Well those nights, it might be a little bit easier, if I didn't feel like I was potentially going to slide all the time." So may be that kind of constrains your, my enthusiasm. Probably just as well.

I: Some of the dancers I've spoken to who've been doing it for fifteen, twenty years, talk about the problems of dancing on hard floors continually... end up with shin splints.

A: That was certainly the thing with Morris dancing because you end up coming down, you'd get that a lot and have to stop dancing for weeks. Because it was so painful. But I haven't had that. I used to get it....

I: Your ankle? Did actually you hurt that during the dance or was it some other .....

II: Yes, I think I just turned on it... and then moaned for the rest of the night until I woke up in the morning. It just went you see.

A: There's a great difference, isn't there? If you come...I suppose this comes back to the discipline of knowing how to do it well. Because if you know how, for example, if you're spinning somebody else, oh yes, and you know how to do it, both partners know how to do it, you can get a lot of energy into that with very little risk. But if somebody doesn't know how to do it, so that one person is having to dance round the outside, travel the wrong way, or somebody's having to pull them round...

II: Or if the grip is done badly.

A: Or if the grip is wrong, yes. Then you're more likely to strain something. And of course, if you're traveling at speed, round in a circle off-balance, then you would be likely to turn, turn things over. So I guess something I've learnt to do, is not to move so far, but to pivot more, keep your balance, so my balance has improved...

I: It's technique, isn't it?

A: It is a technique, yeah, yeah.

II: All the more violent bruises were always the result of a "Strip the Willow" where you, when you were turning each other, you would hook by the elbow, as oppose to trying to grab a hand, and you would just "hook" and "round" as a result. Absolute blood bath (laughs) ....

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

II: Well, this is not necessarily my experience of growing older but I have seen extraordinarily frail-looking old ladies, frogging it in an absolute storm on the dance floor and thinking... "Quite impressive" (laughs) So in terms of a past-time which renders everybody absolutely equal, I think this is pretty good. I mean any wedding I've been to, it's always Scottish Country dancing which gets everyone onto the floor, as opposed to the disco rubbish and there are only three people who like that particular tune. It really is an absolute... what will be the word? Can't think of it now...

I: Universal?

II: Utterly universal. And almost the old people are at an advantage because they've got, they're steady in what they're doing. It's hugely inspiring in relation to growing older because you can just keep on doing it....

I: Positive?

II: Hugely positive...

A: Mm... I suppose it's, I don't suppose people with bad arthritis would go dancing in the first place, so I don't, I can't recall seeing somebody cope with a mobility problem in that kind of way.

II: Yeah but...

A: Many of the people that you meet are of an age where you would expect them to have mobility problems. And indeed, they don't move so quickly when they're going back to their seat, or something like that... But in terms of the dancing, I suppose it's just a technique and the expectation of precision, I don't know if it actually... mean that it would improve the arthritis, it's just that their sense of place and anticipation is good, so that they can get to the right place at the right time and enjoy it, whatever disability they have doesn't really...

II: Yeah, a great leveler.

I: Any other thoughts on that one?

A: Well it helps me continue with the fantasy I'm the right side of 40 (laughs).

II: (Laughs).

A: If I'm still dancing!

I: You mentioned something about noticing your memory being more difficult?

A: Yes, I'm sure twenty years ago doing things that ... I could have picked up and remembered. I have to be reminded, more reinforcement these days... OK I'm aware that some people say that music and engagement with music, particularly through playing it, helps memory function in some way. So... I listen carefully to the tunes in the fantasy that if I whistle them in the street, then I'm playing the music (laughs). It will never turn out to be true. Yes... yes, and the interesting thing is I suppose that you're, you're remembering patterns of things rather than events and facts. So I am using, in terms of the dancing, you're remembering things in different ways from what you usually do. When you say talk about memory...

I: OK. So how has Scottish dancing changed your experience or your relationship with your body?

A: .... I feel less like an Englishman (laughs)

II: You look less like one.

A: No... Yeah. Well I've always had this I suppose I don't have a tremendously positive body-image, I was always very skinny as a kid, and knobby elbows and knobby knees, and quite thin, and I could imagine myself gradually going quite seedy, obviously round the middle. Actually, there is something about the process of dancing, coordinating it all and feeling as though things all flow and work in an integrated fashion, but ... there is, is sort of positive reinforcement to the fact this body is still working even though I'm no longer the right side of 40...

I: Do you have any thoughts?

II: ... I think possibly the main thing is that I think about where I'm putting my feet. Normally I just barge around, you walk around, and the feet are your last thing, unless you stub your toe, they're the last thing on your mind when you're actually getting to somewhere else because it's what you're going to do when you get there that's the main thing. It's not really the journey. Whereas with ... every so often, I sort of notice that I'm thinking "Oh... I need to move my feet a little bit or I need to think about where I'm putting my feet, and try to make them into the right shape." Whether it's steps that I'm doing. So yeah, thinking below the knee.

A: That's interesting. Because if you get the feet right, everything else sort of follows.

II: Mm.

A: And you're feet are kind of important. I can remember once, I used to go running at dusk, and I said to somebody, at one stage, "I like it because nobody else can see you running, so all the performance goes away. It gets difficult though because you have to concentrate terribly hard, looking for trees and things" And he said to me "Well how often do your feet let you down?" Very rarely. How often do you see things wrongly? It's interesting, because we don't, on the whole we don't trust feet, because we don't think about them. We... the eyes are kind of connected to the head. So if you've got a problem with movement or whatever, we gauge our heads and our eyes and don't allow our feet to do what is natural to them which is actually get themselves onto the floor, and hold us upright. I think, I suppose there's a bit of Scottish dancing that's a bit like that, if you practice the technique and allow your feet to take you in the right place, the rest of you will follow...

II: An extraordinary statement (Laughs)... I... sometimes when you're, the difference between the Strathspey and a Jig or a Reel and... rather about how I relate to my own body and how I move around but seeing a demonstration of people who have no connection between the music and what their bodies are actually doing, so they get into the right place, but they're just shuffling, they're not actually dancing, in a Strathspey particularly, they're not actually dancing at all, and as soon as somebody starts, getting up on their toes and is thinking about music and having, creating a rhythm, it's slow but there is a rhythm and a momentum behind it, it changes the whole dance, and it just lifts your mood. If people are just shuffling, effectively, or walking, even worse, from one point to the next, it changes the whole flow of the dance whereas if you're, if you're actually listening to the music and having a lightness in your feet that comes from, from not only them being in the right place but in the right position, on your toes or whatever, then it just changes the whole experience of it.

I: So it's how you perform the footwork?

II: Yes... it makes a huge, huge difference to the whole thing, and to how it all looks, and also how... I don't know, it's, it's just about you and the music interacting, and so whether that's aurally and mentally or whether that's aurally and physically is, it does make a big difference. Because the shuffling is not dancing which I find perplexing. How can people not hear what's going on, and then move their bodies accordingly? I find that really hard to understand when I, in myself, when I realise that I've been galloofing as I said before, or when I'm watching other people thinking "Oh how can you move like that, when the music is doing this?" I don't understand. And therefore, how can you, and you're clearly not listening to the music because you're, you're either at the wrong point, or you're trying to "Oh yes I forgot that movement, that physical movement, therefore I'll try to get it in, regardless of the fact that the music's moved on three bars and you should be doing something else... " So it's all that sort of thing. It's not combining the two things, the hearing and the understanding and the feet, and it's

that coordination of them, eight, nine or twelve times or however many people are actually in the same group, it's all about the coordination of all these bodies doing the same thing at the same time.

A: Mm.

II: Which is the interesting thing. Making sure that you, you're working in partnership with the rest of the group. Because one person on his own is all very well but if the rest of them are moving like piglets, then it's not going to work (laughs), everybody's got to be moving because that's what gets the whole lightness of it, and makes you feel like, makes me feel like I'm dancing properly, as opposed to just...shuffling to the music...

I: How did you find the Schiehallion Reels?

A: (laughs)

II: Beautiful. Because you could, I could picture it from above almost, and seeing, seeing the floor of it, and it was beautiful. It was like, you know how you watch synchronized swimmers, like all these 1950s swimmers making V's and all that sort of thing you can picture from above, you can see the shape of it and it was gorgeous, how it flows and swirls ... (laughs).

I: So we're onto the last question... is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

II: ... It gives me and my mother something else to talk about.

A: (laughs)

II: She goes to classes up in ... near where she stays and she says "Oh yes, have you done the Reel of the Fifty-first division yet? Oh it was madness, everybody was a disaster" (laughs) Or we actually manage it, just talking about these little things... that's added an extra interesting dimension to that relationship. And we went to W., to one of the classes so that she could show us off. "Here's A... Hello, here am I." We were a very happy addition to the ladies of Scone and their dance class...

A: An Englishman who dances (laughs).

II: (laughs) An Englishman under the age of 80 who dances (laughs).

A: I suppose if I were on, if I were on a desert island, there would be days when I would have to dance... I've done it sometimes, you come home from work and you put on a piece of music and OK you just need to move about ... I wouldn't call it dancing but the fact that you move with music, I sometimes need to do it. And actually that's a personal, solitary thing, it doesn't matter whether you're involved, it's probably better if you don't watch... but Scottish dancing is about doing that with other people, doing things with other people hasn't always been my great forte... so there's, there's something about it... it just pulls me out into relationship with other people which is, which is fun...

I: The social aspect?

A: The social ... yes, yes. It is the social aspect. And it's...it's slightly, because there's a sort of element of teamwork in it, isn't there? You all know, we've been in those sets when we've done a dance and it's gone way out and we all get a buzz out of it, and we all get a buzz out of it only if each of us does it reasonably well... So there's a sort of team buzz as well as the interpersonal thing that it breaks down barriers and actually the fact that we're doing, that we have this common enterprise but actually, it's not that important to do it that well so that if we make mistakes, we can joke about them and laugh about them, we don't have to sit down and have a team meeting and discuss how to do it better next time, sort of stuff. It's not, it's not a competitive team.

II: It is a hugely supportive thing to do because every, every time someone cocks up or says "I just don't understand," the teacher will try and contribute, three other people will try contribute their demonstration of how it's... I think it's a hugely supportive thing, because everyone's trying to get themselves and each other to the right spot so they can have all achieved it ... which is good. And I think, going back to number six about your experience of your body, I think my, my comment about "How can they not be listening properly?" Is part of my worry that I'm not listening properly (laughs). It all comes back to how are... they, they seem like they're shuffling. Oh God, am I shuffling. It makes me aware of trying actually to do things more positively myself because I think "Gosh, if one person's shuffling then I'm probably shuffling as well...."

A: As an observer, it tells me a lot about other people as well. Watching how they dance. Because there are some quiet, quiet people who dance from a very ... un-flamboyant way, but they usually get it right. And then there are other people who dance in a terribly flamboyant way, have fantastic fun, and sometimes cock it up for other people but nobody really seems to mind, it's sort of the playful bit. On the whole, people sort of tend to ... to conform to a particular type so you can learn quite a lot about someone just by seeing how they are at group setting and dancing.

II: Yeah. Definitely.

I: Anything else?

II: (laughs).

A: (laughs).

II: I've discovered dance without drink. It's a marvelous thing! (laughs).

I: I don't know how to say thank you!

## **First Scottish Interview Seven (1.S.7)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?



A: Yes you can.

B: Yes, fine.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

A: Well I always wanted to do Scottish dancing, right from being a little girl, and my grandfather was Scottish and he used to encourage me to... dance around the place doing things. But I never got the opportunity of doing, learning Scottish properly until I had finished at college, training college and was starting to work and I looked for a Scottish dance class in the local area, and that's when I first started... I didn't go for very long because I got married the following year and went abroad for a year, then I came back and we got a house and I had a baby and it was when my baby was a few months old, I began to want a night out away from the home situation and my husband was happy to sit in with the baby. And there was a better class going at that time, and that was the one I joined.

B: I had done dancing at school, English dancing, but had never done it seriously until I started teaching, and the school I went to did a lot of English country dancing and I got involved in that, and I did that for about six years, before I started Scottish when we moved here ... and got married. A teacher at my husband's school came to our English club and encouraged me to go to the Scottish, she was going... so I joined the class in October '66, and I've never stopped since... really enjoy it, it's part of my life now.

I: So how many years have you both been Scottish dancing?

A: Well I first started in 1960.

I: 48 years.

A: So it's an important part of my life too.

B: And I started in '66.

I: So how many classes have you gone to throughout your life?

A: We had a very good teacher at that time in the area, he and his wife ran two classes. She ran a beginners' class and he ran one for rather more advanced dancing. And really we went there for, so that was one class, one or other class a week for quite a lot of years... and he also... moved us onto teaching, learning to teach Scottish dancing if we wished to and organised teaching certificates... as they do in Scotland. So we went there for a long time really, until he moved away. And then we were left with... a collection of teachers really, in the class... so two of them took over two classes which have run since, and are still running actually with their ups and downs... And we've moved on, the classes have changed a little bit, we now have an advanced class once a month which I go to and we have a Ladies, a Highland class which involves Ladies' step once a month as well here.

I: So when did you do your teaching certificate?

A: Well it's a two year course, well it's more than two years really, it's a preliminary certificate and then a final one. It's quite involved. It involves your own dance standard, how to teach and there is a written... theory... section as well and you did it at a preliminary stage and got a preliminary certificate, and then if you wanted to go on, you went on one or two years before you took the final as well. I believe they have, the last few years they have been adjusting the teaching certificate, it will be slightly different now. I'm not sure what the criteria are or how they do it. It's all done from the first group and that's their test.

I: So how many classes do you have to teach during that training?

A: You just have to get as much experience as you can, of teaching... and... then you do very intensive week or fortnight before the certificate with everybody who was involved in doing the same thing.

I: So how many classes were you doing a week?

B: Well I started off with this same class, taken by this gentleman, which was sort of an advanced class, started as a beginner in an advanced class (laughs) and then that was six or so months later, I joined the beginners' class, so I went to both for several years, well until they left. Then I stayed with one of the classes that started up as a result of them moving, for quite a few years. But I then took up running, and it was on the same night, and I used to try and do both, but unfortunately the hall where the Scottish took place was very, very cold, after you've been running, it's not a good idea to do anything and get cold. So I stopped going. So I then didn't go for quite a few years... recently I've started going to the other one which is in a (laughs) warmer hall but I also go to the advanced class on Sunday and to the Highland on Sunday as well.

I: So Scottish dancing has been a large part of your life?

B: Yes.

A: Yes.

I: For a very long time?

A: A very long time.

I: Can you tell me about other forms of dance you were involved in?

A: (to B) You perhaps ought to start with the English folk dance because you were in there first.

B: Yes, well I've done it since before I started Scottish. And when I met my husband, who was very interested in Scottish, in English dancing and Morris dancing. And when we moved here, we immediately joined the local club. And he joined the Morris-men. And after... about a year, he started a country- dance band, from people who lived locally and were interested in

doing so. And that band is still, is still running... And I'm a part of that now. I wasn't to start with but I am now... So we did the English dancing to start with, and we still do that so that's another form of dance. Also for a while I did Irish, for about two or three years, before we had our daughter, then we stopped that because we couldn't go out enough (laughs). Had to cut something out... So I think that's about it.

I: Sounds as though you've been very involved in dancing.

B: Yes. And playing.

I: What instrument do you play?

B: I play the bass guitar, my husband plays the accordion, and over the years we've had seven other musicians joining us, playing different instruments, and we've got a fiddler at the moment, and we still go out and play for the dances. Barn dances or ... club dances, which could involve modern dance or the eighteenth century Playford type dancing. The sort you see in *Pride and Prejudice*. So that keeps us very busy, at weekends.

I: The music seems to be a very important part of it.

B: Oh it is... there's so many lovely tunes that when you hear them you just want to dance to them... they're so lovely. Both in the English and the Scottish.

A: They are fairly similar in a lot of ways, the formations, so I didn't find it difficult to transfer from Scottish to English, with knowing my friend here. I first went to English because my children had had measles during the summer holidays, one after the other, and I'd been stuck at home for five weeks and not going out at all, even down to the shops... I couldn't go unless somebody sat in, and so I was tearing my hair a bit, and there was an English folk dance at the beginning of the autumn term locally, run by the local club, and my friend said "Why don't you come along? And see whether you would enjoy it." And it only took one hit really and I was (laughs) involved forever in that as well. So I joined the club after that and... I'm still doing it.

I: How did you get involved in Ladies' step?

A: It came a bit later. It's really a matter of whether there's anyone to teach it. And we were lucky that we had somebody who moved to our area who came to our classes, who also had done quite a lot of Highland, this is a gentleman... he'd done a lot of Highland but that involved some of the Ladies' dances as well. And we asked him if he would run a class for us. So once a week, during the summer term for several years, out at one of the village halls, he... ran a... Highland class really, but it had mostly Ladies' step dances in, but more Highland type... "Flora McDonald" and the "Scottish Lilt" and those sort of dances. We didn't do the ... slower elegant ones that we're learning at the moment. They don't go quite so well with a man doing them. There are some that will go either way, and there are some that are very much more ladies' ones. So... that's where we started really... We did do a little bit early on, didn't we? "Blue Bonnets" and I remember learning... what's the one "Johnny..." Or something because our teacher had been to summer school

B: And learnt those

A: And been to the classes there and brought them back.

B: So we had that taster but then there was a long gap between

A: A long, long, long gap.

B: Between this class and the other class starting. So that's just kept going.

A: There was a class going in C., and as you know, it was one that R.'s wife used to take... but we didn't sort of, I don't think we were free, it was in the years when our children were growing up, I did know, but it got into the background really. And... because we were busy.

I: You joined the same place as your friend, Ladies' ...

B: Oh yes, oh yes. I'm not sure that I joined at the same time or a little bit later... but not much later. And I know I found it very confusing to start with... there was just so much to take in. But gradually it sort of fell into place and became easier...

I: So did you find Ladies' step more difficult then?

B: Yes...

I: We're getting to the second one.

A: We're on here really.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

B: Well having done English first, you've got all the figures already. Most of them. So that helps. It's really the steps that are the, the different thing.

I: So are there the same patterns? Sort of Reels...

B: Reels and Rights and Lefts and Stars and... they're all the same, with variations

I: Yeah

B: You always get a few different things... it's just the language.

A: And the language, yes. It's called different things.

I: Right.

A: The Hayite is the Reel, there are not so many, well not so many Reels in the English dancing but there are, but they're called Hay. And...

B: We have different figures like set and turn single, which you don't do in Scottish.

A: You don't do. There are things in English that you don't do in Scottish and things in Scottish that you don't do in English. Scottish is quite formal really, and it doesn't move outside itself very much. It doesn't... alter very much really.

B: English has a lot more variety, if, I mean they don't always do all the varieties. But you've got Waltzes, Hornpipes, Jigs, Reels.... Rants, so that's five different, three-two, rhythms... of dancing, and you do different things to them, different steps... quite a lot of them are walking, but not all.... So, and all different shapes of sets, aren't there?

A: Yes.

B: But basically, they're very similar.

I: Can you explain a little bit more about how the steps in English are different from the steps in Scottish?

A: Well you've got very basic, Scottish steps are, as you know them... you do a Skip-change of Step in quick time and a Pas de Bas Setting. And in slow time Strathspey you do Strathspey Travelling Step and a Strathspey Setting or a Highland Schottise, which is nearly a Highland Step. And then there are the dances that involve Highland Steps as well. But that's very standard, all the time, isn't it? In English, it depends on the music you've got, what type of rhythm you're using... There are various different forms of stepping which are difficult to explain really.

I: Mm.

A: But they are different from Scottish.

I: Are they as balletic as the Scottish?

B: They're as energetic, I wouldn't say they are as balletic.

A: No, some of them are more... a Skip-change of Step gets used, and the Slip-Step gets used but what's called a Dance-walk is used a lot which is a pussy sort of walk, and then there's the Waltz Step, there's a variety of Waltz Steps really and a Hornpipe step which is a step-hop-step-hop-step-hop step... Do you want a demonstration? (laughs). And then there's the Rant Step which is very different because it's up in the air, taut sort of step, and there's two varieties of that, there's one where you move, and there's one where you're setting, but that's not being used as much as it was twenty years ago.

I: So what strategies do you use for learning the dances?

A: Learning the dances?

I: Mm.

A: I think it's having learnt to teach Scottish dancing is very valuable in learning... memorising things or learning... kind of pattern groups to think in.... So I don't find it particularly difficult, but we had a very good grounding, we worked through everything in detail in our classes so that we understood the different figures. Once you understand the figures, you can put any dance together, just with a... memory... somebody saying "You do this then you do that, then you do that." And you know what it means, so you can just do it. So it's important to have enough memory for each, the construction of a particular figure like a right-hands across or a rights and lefts or whatever, basically understand them. And then whatever order things are put in, you can just do them. I do understand not everyone finds it....often it's because they haven't had a good, a good background. They've come into dancing and been expected to keep up, and people just said "Do this, do that." They haven't been taught. And I do think teaching the basics is very important. Teaching the basics and teaching them how to listen to the music, and phrase and things because very often you can get back too soon, and then you don't know what to do at the end of the figure. And understand the differences between the different sorts of Reels. A six bar Reel or an eight bar Reel makes a difference, because you, you need to have after a six bar Reel, you need to have two bars to cross over to whatever it is, to finish it off. So basically the phrasing of the music is a very vital part of learning the figures, and it helps you to learn them if you understand the music.

I: So how many dances would you say you know completely off by heart?

A: (Laughs)

I: What a question! I was just curious.

A: I couldn't put a number on it... There are dances we've done over the years that we learnt thoroughly originally, will come back just with a quick read through, read the instructions... and there'd be quite a lot of them, but they will all come from... the era when we were learning in class. Dances we've done since then, we probably haven't memorised.

B: Well that's because there are too many.

A: There are too many, yes.

B: So you've got to do lots of them.

A: And people are not producing the same ones, over and over again in programmes. They're going for new dances... with a smattering of old ones... there are just such a lot of dances at balls. You can't be expected to, memorise them, which is the reason for needing to learn the structure of a dance in the different units. Because if you thoroughly understand, even a... modern construction that's cropped up, like what? In...

B: Pass and Turn.

A: Or... the Dolphin thing, oh the Dolphin Reels, yes, sort of thing, once you've done them, if you've learnt them properly, how to do them, then another dance comes along, and somebody says "You do this and you do this, then you do that... the Dolphin Reels, you know how to do it."

I: You just translate those skills?

B: Yes, you need to have, it's like having the letters of the alphabet before you read probably, or the sound structure in reading, and then you can put it together however. So quite often, a dance that has an unusual figure in is one that you'll remember. Or you might not remember the whole dance, but you'll remember that it's got that figure in it. So it's a start, to remembering the dance. In fact it's quite true, it's the ones you learnt early on, and that you did thoroughly, that you really remember.... But there's just too many dances these days to know, know a lot.

I: So, so how important would you say is memory?

A: I think concentration is very important while you're doing it... you've got to have enough memory to work through 32 bars and then do it again, haven't you? So people have got to concentrate properly on what they're doing... I don't have a problem with this myself, but I know, I can see that other people do. You're always coming across people who cannot think what's coming next. They're still within this eight bars, and they get to the end... So they have a memory....

B: (Laughs). I find that I don't remember them as well as I used to. I do struggle sometimes, to get it into my head. I can dance it once I know what to do but memory lets me down, which it didn't used to...

A: So memory's not the most important thing by any means. Really the music's the most important thing.

B: Music, concentration, memory. The people around you in the set who either help you, as they should do, or don't. All sorts of things. If a person puts their hand out, you know you've got to do something with them, but if they just stand there, then you're lost, if you can't remember. They can help you, when you can't... So it is team-work in Scottish dancing.

A: Definitely. Ladies' Step, Ladies' Step is different. I think it's good to have a background of Scottish Country dancing because you've got the basic moving to music, in phrases of music, already established... I would have found Ladies' Step easier if I'd have done ballet, as a child, which I didn't, because it involves ballet notations and ballet, quite a lot of ballet movements. But that hasn't meant we couldn't learn it. It's just meant we perhaps took a bit longer, I think, to understand the ballet movement, which somebody brought up on ballet, would have understood straight away... And then the more you do, the easier it gets because the same little bits of step, come again and again in different dances.... So it's learning the basics really, but of course Ladies' Step you're involved with one dance so you learn what goes on in that dance but later, in another dance, you think "Oh we did that." And it's not so hard. So it gets easier (laughs).

B: Yes, I haven't anything to add to that really.

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

A: I feel that I have got... because I've got a Scottish background, I feel that it's sort of born into me, the need to do it. And I have two little grand daughters, who are lucky enough to live somewhere where there is a good Scottish class on the go, from three and a half, from the age of three and a half. And the elder one I feel is the same, she's just got it in her. And they both go, and they both do it, and they've done it for several years now, and they absolutely love it... But I think it's because it's in them...particularly the older one, she's a natural.... So I feel that's where my need to do it, I would miss it dreadfully if I couldn't do it for any reason.

I: It's so much part of your life....

A: Mm.

B: I've got a Scottish background as well. Well partly Scottish, partly other things.... But I never had the opportunity as a child to do it, or hear the music, or anything really. It wasn't until... I started teaching, and got involved in, and the only other dancing I did was wet PE game sessions (laughs), but I just loved it from the start... And I would miss it terribly if I couldn't do it. It's just fun, a very important part of my life. And it makes you feel good. Very satisfied when you know you can do it. That's about it really.

I: How does it make you feel good?

B: Because you can do it and it's, the enjoyment of doing it, with other people, in a set and sort of interacting with them... the social dancing, well and also in the Ladies' Step really, when we do Duets and Threesomes, whatever, you're part of a team, it's very satisfying. When it works.

I: So anything else on that one?

A: Not really... No. We just, you know what we wear, we wear skirts for rehearsing but shoes are important, if you have the right sort of soft shoes, they're very important otherwise you wouldn't be comfortable.

B: A skirt is very important, particularly for Ladies Step.

A: For Ladies' Step it is.

B: Because you need to hold your skirt, and if you haven't got one on, what do you do with your hands? (laughs) And as long as it's not too warm clothing as well, it's nice and cool and loose.

I: So what sort of shoes do you wear?

B: ... Well they're not exactly ballet pumps because they've got a very small sole, and they're very uncomfortable. But they're similar but they've got a wider sole, leather, but we do also have some with composition sole if we're dancing anywhere outside or on a very slippery floor, it's quite useful.

A: Very thick, very soft, flexible leather.

B: Yes.

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

B: Well it does help to keep you healthy, obviously, the more you do, the better.... But I had... a scare a few years ago, four and a half years ago, when I developed bowel cancer and had to have an operation... And it, the dancing was vital, and all the friends associated with it

I: Mm.

B: And it also made me determined, I'd got a goal in view, I wanted to do a solo, with my friend, at a function a few months later. And that was my goal, to do it. And I did. And things like that ... all help to get you going and it can get you over these things.

A: Yes I completely agree with that. I found the same. I was widowed a few years ago.

I: Mm.

A: And keeping going with the activities I really liked, although I didn't enjoy them the same for a long time, I do now... that kept me going, both the social side of it and the fact that I was doing something I'd always loved doing, and I didn't get the same love for it for quite a few years, but when I got it back, it was a relief, to feel happy doing it again. It made me happy and, when I could feel happy doing it again, I knew that... I'd made progress mentally, during that time.

B: It's all the people you're involved with help you as well.

A: Yes

B: Your dancing friends. Keep you going. It's very important.

I: A community of dancers?

B: They're like your extended family really... I mean that lady we met in the car park is one of our English dancers. And she's been doing, she was a member of the English club before I joined it. She was not a founder member, but not far off. So she's probably been going about 50... 55 years. She still comes.

A: I have had a few injuries recently but they seem to be coming, since we were 60.

B: Yes (laughs) with age. You go to the doctor and they say "Well you've been doing this all these years. What do you expect?" (laughs) Sort of hips and knees and ankles.

A: Particularly feet. We seem to, through the group, we have the same foot problems haven't we? ... And various other ankle problems or athletes' tendon, things like that. You do need, it's even more important to do a good warm-up before you start dancing. You get away with not doing it when you're younger. When you're older you don't really, you really need to do it, so that you don't... pull anything, over stress any muscles or tendons or whatever. Because if you do do that, it's so annoying, it puts you out.

B: It takes longer to get better, the older you are.

A: Yes, probably.

B: One of our advanced classes, we just got one set, and we stood there and we looked round, every single one of them had got some sort of problem that they were nursing (laughs). They were all different.

A: They were not all Scottish dancing induced but they affected the fact that we couldn't carry on with it in the same way, till we were better.

B: Like shoulders...

I: Do you find you're able to modify the movements in practice then to cope?

B: Yes. We find ways round it, yes.

A: We've done enough, you know how you can still do something without... We've both had shoulder injuries from falls, which are nothing to do with dancing but they take a long, long time to get better.... And it was either not do any dancing, for a year or something, or getting there as soon as you can. Don't use that but use the other hand for various things. We got by.

B: And I think it also helps you to get better more quickly. Because eventually you start using the injured limb, perhaps a bit sooner than you might otherwise. And I found particularly with Keep-Fit, I'm sure that really completed my recovery. All the Keep-fit I do.

I: Mm.

B: As well as dancing. Because you do a lot of arm movements and I'm sure, if I hadn't have done that, I wouldn't have got better as quickly as I did.

I: It was the exercise?

B: Exactly, yes. (laughs)

I: Do you have anything more to say about psychological benefits of Scottish?

A: I don't think so.

B: No.

I: How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

A: Well I'm afraid I just expect to be able to carry on. I think because I've always done it, I just expect to be able to do it, and I'm very put out if I can't (laughs).

B: You might sometimes have to modify something... perhaps not do a Pas de Bas quite so energetically, because you can feel tired a bit more quickly, or something like that, but otherwise you keep going. Hope for the best (laughs).

I: That's great... anything else on that one?

B: Not really.

A: No.

I: How has Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body or your relationship with your body?

A: When I was teaching a beginners' class, I did tend to get middle-aged people joining the group who had not danced Scottish dancing before. And they did find physically that they had to be careful... Because if they did too much at once... they would suffer a bit afterwards. The same as doing any physical activity really, that's new to you. Uses muscles that you haven't used before and so on. And I know quite a few of them would find that they would have to think about that...

I: Whereas you've been dancing most of your life, so you find it quite easy?

A: Yes, or if we haven't done it for a while, we expect that we might feel stiff or something and we do something about it. We keep our muscles warm after we finish, we have a hot bath and so on... to minimise any aches and pains.

I: Do you have anything to add?

B: Not really, no.

I: Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

B: It's just a very vital part of our lives. I can't imagine not doing it.

A: Can't imagine it not being there.

B: No. And if ever we couldn't do it, we'd be devastated.

A: And I do, going back to my grand daughters, I do get a tremendous buzz dancing with them, which I get the opportunity to do, just a little bit, when I go to see them, I can usually go to their weekly class and sit and watch. The teacher knows I'm a keen dancer. And she always works in a dance where I can go in and dance with them. And it gives me a tremendous buzz. I love it. And sometimes when their, their daddy had a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, and the two girls and I invented a little dance for a Scottish dance as a surprise to dance for him, at his party... and we got a real buzz out of doing that. And he got it, he loved it.

I: Anything else?

B: I can't think of anything, no.

I: I had another question about teaching. Can I ask you how you actually teach Scottish Country dancing?

A:... Well you take your class each week, you do a certain element of step practice, with perhaps one. I wouldn't do all the steps at once obviously. But I would build each week on what I did the week before, as far as steps go and as far as figures go. And I would always start with, simple dances, simple figures, which I thought they would be able to achieve, learn them thoroughly, do them, and then we might do another dance, which involved some of the same figures, perhaps in a different rhythm... and the next week I would use those figures but add another one on, and I would do a building programme of formations and keep practicing the... steps as well, and using them within, within those formations. And just keep going like that.

I: You know there are many thousands of dances, do you know many of the stories behind the dances?

A: No, not really.

B: No

A: I mean anything published has one or two sentences about it if there's anything to say about who created it and for what reason. It's usually on the publication. If it's done for a particular occasion...that sort of thing. The older dances, I don't think there are any notes to any extent about where they came from. Sometimes they have a date or where they were collected, that type of information but not more than that.

I: Do you have books with the Piling in?

A: Yes.

I: Or do you use the written instructions instead?

A: We've got both. The written instructions are the most important ones, the Piling is just a reminder for you... when you're out on a social occasion really. You shouldn't teach from Piling, you teach from the written instructions because they've got more detail in there. And they phrase it... I know it's phrased in Piling but sometimes it's a little bit...

B: Only in four bars or eight bars. Sometimes it's two bars, and they don't put that.

I: Which books do you particularly use then?

A: Scottish Country dance publications. I think there's some other very good ones. Newcastle University used to have a club and they produced some, that's going back twenty or thirty years, they produced some music on LP and some dance books. Whether that's still going on, I know it went on for a few years, whether it still does or not, I'm not sure.

I: OK. Thank you.

## **First Scottish Interview Eight (1.S.8)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

C: You certainly can. You have it.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

C: Well I suppose originally I did it at primary school in Scotland, and that would have been between the ages of... about six and ten. And I enjoyed it, and I think I got to silver medal standard, and then we moved and I didn't do it again after that. So my next experience was, recently, in the last year, getting back into it. And the reason I... the reason I ended up doing Scottish country dancing is that... I'm a single parent and I look after H., whose seven, and she goes to her father's house on Wednesday evening and a Sunday evening, those are my... I've always restricted my social life to the two nights... And I wanted to do some form of exercise that I could do on a Wednesday night (laughs). And I fancied doing dancing... I've always loved dancing and ... I've done other sorts of exercise, I've done aqua-robics, I've done aerobics in the past, but I've got joint problems so I needed something that... that I could do, that wouldn't interfere with my joints... and I happened to find the class on Wednesday and all that so that's how I fell into Scottish Country dancing again. And I have done other dancing in the past... I've done ballroom, I did evening classes in that, and I loved that, I really enjoyed that. And I think, to be honest, if there had been a ballroom dancing class I could have gone to, I would have preferred to have done that... if you could go without a partner... yeah, so that's how I got into it again.

I: So how did you find the first term of Scottish?

C: I loved it, I really loved it. We... I started off in a different class from you, I started off in beginners of course. And... unfortunately numbers dwindled. So we started off, there must have been about twelve of us, and the last few weeks, there were only three or four and sometimes A. had to make-up the numbers so we could do any dancing at all... So it wasn't so good in the last, in the last few weeks...because it restricted what we could do, but I absolutely loved it, and I was really surprised that... that I hadn't completely forgotten everything I knew from primary school. I could remember the, I could remember the basic steps of the dances, I could remember the basic steps. And it was just, I found it really up-lifting, and invigorating and fun... It's a fun way of doing exercise whereas things like going to the gym, have never appealed to me because it's so boring. But...I think dancing is good for your health, it's good for you it's good for your... mind certainly, because you have to concentrate on what you're doing, and also it's very, sociable, so... you're doing lots of things all at the same, and it's fun... if you're with the right sort of people, it's a big giggle... and the... It's a shame I'm the only person from the beginners' class who, who enrolled... when A. amalgamated the two classes really, because there were a couple of other women there, who I think would have, would have, they said they were going to carry on, but in the end they didn't. So it felt a bit strange, joining another class where everyone seemed more advanced than me, but I still enjoy it enough to carry on, and I would carry on now if it was still there.

I: So how do you find the Scottish dancing affects your joints?

C: ... There are some things that I can't do, or some things I think that I can do then I get a sharp stab of pain in my joints and... not always, it's not predictable, but it's not bad enough to stop me doing it... I need to do some weight-bearing exercise and I also need to lose some weight so... two reasons for doing it. It's my knees and my hips mainly, I mean I get pain in a lot of my joints, I had an arthroscopy in one of my knees... and I've had problems with my knees since a teenager really... I was told then I would probably have a knee replacement at some point, in the future, and... I think it's getting towards that time (laughs). But... sometimes... I get, I can't do any twisting movement, it really hurts... but I can still do it. I don't think anybody else would have noticed... because I don't sit out of anything and ... no, I can do it... without it bothering me.

I: And in ballroom?

C: I did ballroom when I was very pregnant so (laughs). There were other things to think about then as well. The reason that I did ballroom was that it was something that... my husband and I could do, because I wanted, I'd been very fit before I was pregnant... cycle all round Europe and cycled round Ireland just two weeks before I got pregnant with H.... and I didn't want to stop exercising so... But it was a very precious pregnancy, it took me seven years to get pregnant and a lot of medical treatment, so I didn't want to risk... anything... with that pregnancy so that's why, that's why we took up ballroom dancing so I could carry on exercising safely... that was something that I did almost up until I went into labour ... We could barely reach each other by the end (laughs). It was really good fun. Really enjoyed it. I think any sort of dancing is... fun.

I: Have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

C: ... I had a go at Salsa, but I wasn't very good at the wiggle. I went to keep a friend of mine company, because she wanted to go... and I didn't keep that up. And I've done Ceilidhs... at weddings, and different events, and I loved them, really enjoyed them. And H. and I dance a little at home (laughs) we do a lot of dancing. But other events, no.

I: Anything else on getting involved?

C: I suppose, I used to do a lot of keep-fit to music, and I sort of... that's a bit like dancing, isn't it? Not aerobics but more exercise to music, I used to do quite a bit of that, a number of years ago... yeah and I suppose my past, my motivation this time round is partly to do exercise that I can do without it affecting my joints and ... partly to do something sociable that I could do on a Wednesday, and... and exercise and lose weight in a fun way. So I think that's all.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish?

C: I find it really hard to remember the names... in the class that we're based in, everybody seems to know the names of it all or most people seem to know the names of the different dances, and I haven't got a clue... I found it easy, I found it easier in the beginners' class. I think A. took things a lot more slowly, and... sometimes I do struggle with it in the intermediate class... and I, there have been times when I've got a bit anxious and I've thought "Oh no, I'm letting people down because I can't remember this and people are having to steer me round here and steer me round there." But... after a few weeks, it didn't matter that much because I could see that other people were like that sometimes as well (laughs) So it really, it didn't really matter... and it didn't... if I was like that in every dance, I think it probably would detract from the enjoyment of it, but it hasn't, it hasn't so far.

I: Can you remember learning a particular dance?

C: Are you going to ask me the name?

I: (Laughs)

C: (Laughs). Yeah I can remember quite a few, but I couldn't tell you the names of any of them. And it is, I think you do, you do have to concentrate, quite hard actually... to learn the different steps and, well not so much the steps, the steps seem to come automatically, it's just where you're going, where you've got to end up, and how you get there, that can be ... quite hard.

I: So... any more on learning?

C: .... I don't think so, I don't think so.

I: So how important is memory?

C: ... Well there are different sorts of memory... You can sometimes retain something without being aware that you've remembered it.... sometimes... how you can if the music starts and you think you've done it, the words or something when the music comes on, you remember the lyrics and it's automatic. Sometimes dancing works in that way as well, when the music starts and you start a few steps, then it comes back to you. Whereas if you were to try and explain to somebody what you do in this dance, I wouldn't have a clue. So I think, I think, yes memory, you do have to have some memory but I think maybe, because it's to do with music, it involves parts of the memory that you're not entirely aware of... in the same way that stroke patients can sometimes not speak but they can see... I wonder if sometimes you can reach different parts of the memory like that because... A. will say sometimes "Right. We're going to do such and such." And everybody says "Oh yeah, good." And I think "What on earth are they talking about?" And when we start... and after the first few steps, I can remember it. So I suppose memory is really important, but it's not everything. I imagine you could do it if you hadn't got a 100% memory.

I: It feels automatic almost?

C: Yeah, yeah. Not at first, but I think the more experienced that you get. Yeah, I think it is automatic. A bit like driving a car or riding a bike, once you get to a certain point, you do it without thinking.

I: How does Scottish dancing make you see yourself? Or think about yourself?

C: I'm not quite sure what you mean by that... Sometimes it makes me think that I'm very unfit. I go to an aerobic class on a Wednesday for middle-aged over-weight ladies... I get more out of breath doing Scottish Country dancing and sometimes I get a definite wheeze... in the fast ones. And that makes me think "Goodness me, I'm really unfit" (laughs). But at other times, it makes me feel... it makes me feel really good, especially, what do they call it? ... The Strathspey ones make you automatically seem to have a better posture... and... and I can just picture myself in a big sweeping dress... doing those steps and it makes me feel good, and... I was going to say elegant, elegant, it feels nice, it makes me feel nice...

I: Anything else?

C: About how it makes me see myself?... I think because it's the sort of dancing where you do acknowledge other people, you do have to make eye contact... and there's a lot of touching as well, of hands... it is... not all dancing, modern dancing, is that sociable... it can be... but I think Scottish dancing is very sociable and... so I think ...when I've been doing it, I have felt part of the group, I've been aware that... it's nice to be part of a group and everybody doing something together. So that... that makes it feel good too... Even though I don't see anyone outside that class, apart from the class, it's nice to be part of it.

I: What do you wear?

C: I just wear ordinary clothes. I don't wear anything special... but I do, I don't think I could do it in trousers. It's funny, I rarely wear trousers at work because you don't feel smart enough... what I like to wear, what feels nice to wear, is...is a longish skirt that sort of flows, that's what feels nice, feels right to me. And on my feet, I haven't bought any special footwear. I just wear a pair of... a pair of shoes, that I can point my toes in, and are fairly light and comfortable.

I: You said quite a bit about how Scottish dancing influences your health. Do you feel you've anything more to say on that one?



C: ...Well I think, not so much about the physical side of it but I think on the psychological benefits, I think... I find it very up-lifting, and I find it fun and I think... like a lot of things that are to do with music, and being sociable...it's very... doing something as part of a group, and also doing something to music, is somehow a very good anti-depressant. And ... it is, it is very uplifting. Yeah, and I think the benefits tend to last after you've stopped dancing a while... because sometimes I'm aware that I can go more or less, straight after work and I stuff something down my throat to eat and dash out again at the last minute and I can be feeling totally run out, and by the end of the evening, I feel really good and ... I carry on feeling good after I've left the class. So I think psychologically, it is very good.

I: And any injuries?

C: ... No...no...not yet (laughs).

I: How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

C: ... I suppose it does because I do get these... I get these stabs of pain in my joints and I think "Oh no, when I used to be doing this in primary school, this didn't happen."... But it's also... I mean I'm glad that I still can do it and people can do it, well into old age, you just adapt. It's not something, it's not something that you necessarily need to stop. I think you can just adapt... if you've got problems with your joints. So... I don't think I've really thought of it in terms of... ageing.

I: There's no reason why you should necessarily.

C: No, no. I have thought of it in terms of my joints and what I can and can't do.

I: And do you have anything more to say about how Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body or your relationship with your body?

C: Well I do feel, I'm actually about two stones overweight... well over the weight I was when I got pregnant... and I have been heavier... and... and I was, and I still am, very embarrassed about my weight, but... I think Scottish dancing is something that, that I've been able to do without being that aware of my body, I just make sure I've got a sports bra (laughs). Yeah, so it doesn't...it doesn't really matter... it's made me feel, it certainly hasn't made me feel bad about my body, and I think it's... helped to make me feel better about my body or helps that to be less important than it used to be....

I: And the last one... Is there anything more you can tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

C: ... I wish I'd done more of it in the past, I really do. It does make me feel so good...I don't think there's any more to add other than what I've already told you actually.

I: Well thanks.

## **Second Scottish Interview One (2.S.1)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

T: Yes.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

T: Because I decided I needed some exercise and so I discounted keep-fit, swimming, aerobics or anything like that because I knew I wouldn't keep going. And I wanted something that I was getting exercise but didn't know I was getting exercise. So I came down to dancing and it came to a choice between line dancing and Scottish. And I decided I would get very bored with line-dancing, so ended up with Scottish. So that was the train of thought that started that off back in the end of 1998.

I: Any more about getting involved?

T: ...Well I did some research on the web and eventually came up with names and address, got in touch with them, and started with the beginners' group at the time. You've met them teacher?

I: Yes.

T: She was doing the beginners' class at the time. Then I moved up, after a year, went up to the intermediate class on a Tuesday, and then I found out about the second Scottish group so I started going there as well. Because they don't teach steps, they only teach dances. But I'd already got the grounding in step practice from the first Scottish group.

I: So do you go to the intermediate class?

T: No. not any more because I now do the accordion, learning the accordion, and the accordion club is on Tuesday evening which is the same day as the intermediate class. And because they were short of people at the intermediate class on Tuesday, I did at one stage rush down from another village after my accordion practice and take part in the second half. But then their numbers went up a bit so because I was doing it for them and not for me, I decided I didn't need to do it any more. And so I stopped. And I understand the numbers went down again but (sighs) I don't think I'll go back.... Because they do an awful lot of step practice and I don't need it. I can't say I'm perfect, obviously, but I'm as good as I'll get, I'm not going to get any better... and I was going to make up a set, not to do step practice so I don't know what they're going to do next year, because of course now it's finished for the summer. I don't think...I won't be going back on a Tuesday.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

T: Luckily, I appear to have the kind of mind that manages to hold strings of instructions, so I've found it reasonably easy. I mean obviously there are times when you go wrong because there are thousands of dances and things like that, but generally speaking... I've found it not too difficult. And I was also able, at the beginning, if somebody gave me some ten seconds

warning in a dance, gave me ten seconds ahead of when I was required to do something, then I was able to do it... quickly and pick up. So I was able to keep going in the set without getting in peoples' way and stuff like that. So it was the right medium for me. I've often wondered why my daughter's quite good at ballet and learning strings of ... instructions and it wasn't until I started doing the Scottish dancing that I realized that she must have inherited it from me (laughs) because I didn't know I could do it obviously until I went Scottish dancing but obviously it works for me. She's better at it than I am, but... I can do it reasonably well.

I: So do you do it with your daughter?

T: No, no, no, no. She did ballet... But the physicals of this are all the same. The teacher would stand in front of the ballet class and say do eight of this, four of that, "Da-de-da-de-da" and it was the same as instructing a number of us for dancing in a set. So it was the same principle. And I used to watch her when we had parents' visits "How does she remember all that?" And it wasn't until I started doing Scottish dancing that I realized it, that I could do it as well, which came as a surprise. Other people see it through patterns, I just do it from memory. I don't think I see the patterns, at least I don't feel as though I do. I feel as though I do it from the instructions.

I: I was going to ask you "How important is memory in Scottish dancing?"

T: Quite important. Well it's very important. If you don't see the pattern... well if you see the patterns then probably I don't know how the memory thing comes in. But the way I access my information, it's important. And there are people who've been going longer than I, and they still haven't got a clue. You can tell by their eyes, they get this sort of panic look in their faces. And you know they don't know what they're doing. And they've been going for years! And I'm thinking "What? What do you think you're playing at? You should give up, you know. If after all this time, you can't do it, you're just a liability." If after a couple of years I'd have found that I wasn't remembering the dances, I'd have given up. Because you know, it's a team game, it's not an individual thing. I've got a lot of patience for beginners, people who've been doing it a long time and still can't do it... I've no patience whatsoever, because I don't think they should be there. They should be doing something else to get the exercise. Because it's, it's alright to mess a set up once in a way, we all do but to do it all the time, I don't think it's on, it's not fair on everybody else... As an experienced dancer, you expect to have new people in and help them along, but people who have done it for years and still haven't got it, I don't think it's very fair. So they annoy me (laughs). Sorry, that's the way it works. New ones, fine, I've no problems with that. Two new ones dancing together is a nightmare ... they just can't do it, because they can't help each other whereas if a new one is dancing with an experienced dancer, if they do what they're told, they should get through it right. So... it sounds very hard but you know, that's how I feel.

I: So how would you describe someone with your level of expertise?

T: Quite advanced. Very advanced. I go every year to the Winter school, the first Scottish group's Winter school in Scotland, and I book in as very advanced. There are some people in the class who I would not describe as very advanced, actually, so it's flexible, you know, it's how you perceive yourself which is dangerous really because you always think you are better than you are. But (laughs) I think I get through alright. So, after nearly nine years, I ought to be really. At this stage of the game, it's just a question of knowing more dances, you know, so if you get up for a certain dance, most of the time you think "Oh yeah, I can, I know that one. I know that one." One or two you're not sure about, once you start you're ok and there are some which you've never done before because they're sort of localized, groups have their own ones and sometimes when you go to a dance outside the area, they'll put dances on that they know quite well, because they do them regularly, but as an outsider... you're not, you wouldn't be sure about. And that's why I think it's important that they should give you the crib as part of the ticket as oppose to waiting till you get there and then giving you a crib or not giving you one at all and expecting you to have sussed it out yourself. Especially these days when, when there is so much ... so much else to do that I think the groups have got to make it as easy as possible for people, if they want them to come to the dances. Otherwise they just think it's hard... or they're not being treated fairly, they just won't come. And I mean we're all getting so much older ... there are not, in Scot Soc anyway, you know, the age limit is quite high, I mean the age, average age is quite high as you saw when you came... It's just there's so much else to do in C. So it's difficult. But it's great, it's great exercise. It's absolutely great. I don't think I quite know how fit I am. But when I've done, when I've been to a dance, they usually have twenty-two dances, plus repeats, and at then end of the evening I'm hot and probably a bit tired but then the next morning I'm fine. So my level of fitness, in that respect, is quite high.

I: So how would you say the Scottish dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

T: ... It, well I don't feel as if, I feel as though I'm not growing older, if you know what I mean, because I can still do. My perception of being old is when you can't do, this. And the age when you come to that is going to be higher. I can't see my mother having done what I do at this particular age, when she was sixty-three, even though she was quite fit. She went out, you know and all the rest of it, but I don't think she would have been able to, to do it. On reflection, I'm not sure that that's correct. She didn't have the opportunity, so I don't know, but I get the feeling that her generation generally would not have had the... physical ability to sustain it although when you look at people like the old chap who was there Thursday, I mean he must be in his upper eighties now so... he's round about the same age as my mother and he's obviously been doing it all his life, for a very long time. So ... there were some people who did. But generally I think we're stronger these days than we were...

I: Anything else on that one?

T: I don't think so.

I: Ok... so just probing a little... How would you say Scottish dancing influences your experiences of your health?

T: .... Well... great.... I don't know that it does really. Just take it as a matter of course really... Not quite sure what you're trying to get...

I: When you mentioned earlier how fit and well you felt after you'd been to an evening of Scottish dancing,

T: Mm... mm

I: Just wondered if you had a little more to say on that.

T: No... just take it as a matter of course. It's only when something happens and you can't do it, then you realize in hindsight... but I haven't got to that part yet (laughs).

I: So how say Scottish dancing makes you see yourself?

T: Well it gives you confidence because it's something you can do... and do reasonably then it sort of must boost your confidence.... Not that I've ever been lacking in confidence whatever. You know, I'm not a shrinking violet... But... knowing that you can do something like that gives you, I suppose, quite a bonus... I don't go any deeper... I'm not a deep person. I live my life on a very shallow level and I'm quite happy there.

I: Would you say Scottish dancing has changed how you see your body?

T: ... No, I don't think so, although you're asking me to remember back, before 1998. It's quite a long time ago. But during that period I've gone up to a maximum of fifteen stone and back down to twelve so that, nothing to do with Scottish dancing, but I didn't even, when I was at my maximum, I didn't feel any different. It's a pity really because, you know, I know I'm a different shape because people tell me (laughs). And I know I'm a different size but as far as my energy is concerned and my ability to cope with whatever, it doesn't seem to have made any difference.

I: So your level of dancing was the same?

T: Yeah.... It doesn't seem to make any difference. That's why I get reasonably irritated with step practice because I don't feel it's any good, it doesn't do me any good... and I feel the first Scottish group use it, just in case somebody pulls a muscle and they feel like suing them. You know how people are these days. But if you go to a dance, you don't do a warm-up. You go to a dance and you start. So if you can do that at a dance, why can't you do it in class? It's no different. In fact it's less strenuous in class because it's only a couple of hours. A dance goes on from half seven to half eleven... So... that's part of why I get irritated with having to do so much step practice... because I think it's, I don't think it's very helpful.

I: So that was why you moved away from country dancing?

T: Why I didn't go on a Tuesday, you mean?

I: Mm.

T: I haven't moved away from country dancing, yeah. Part of the reason.

If they hadn't done so much step-dancing, step practice on a Tuesday, and even after I got there after an hour, they were still, they'd been doing Strathspey first of all and then they'd change to quick time and then they'd do some quick time practice. And I turned up and they'd be doing quick time practice so essentially I was paying for a full evening and getting about half an hour's dancing, which I... I mean it's not a great deal of money but I just thought "The principle of the thing!" (laughs). But this isn't cost-effective. But, it's just me. I don't know why it's me that can manage to do things without having to warm-up or whatever, but I don't. And the same principle applied when I was so, much younger than I am now. I'm still overweight but... a lot less overweight than I was.

I: Is that why you were looking for some exercise in the first place?

T: No, no, because at the time, this was '98, I wasn't that large then. It's just crept up over the years... No, no, I just wanted exercise because, you know, I though I probably wasn't as fit as I could be. So that was the sole reason for doing it in the first place.

I: Were you involved in dancing at any earlier point in your life?

T: No. When I was late teens, early twenties, it was ballroom dancing but I mean that was a long time ago. I enjoyed that as well... But no, not really, no.

I: So how much ballroom dancing did you used to do?

T: I used to go once a week to the local... dancing school. Did a number of medals and things, as you do... But never took it any further than that because there weren't dances where you did ballroom dancing, it was just for the sake of learning ballroom and ... Latin American, which I think probably with a small amount of practice I could take up again if I wanted. But I do this because you don't need a partner... So... this is much more energetic... so it fulfills the criteria... Did you know that Weight Watchers rate it very highly? You know, how they work on a point system?

I: Mm.

T: Well I caught sight of... somebody's book, and you could earn bonus points, and the second highest number of bonus points, along with hill-walking, was Scottish dancing. I think the only thing that is above it is mountain-climbing and squash or something like that. It's certainly... they should promote that really (laughs). ... I mean they rate it, so it is obviously quite

energetic, it must burn off a number of calories. I have one of these books, I've got it but I don't use it any more, one of these... pedometers, and on the days that I didn't dance, I was doing about six thousand steps, maybe six and a half. On the days I danced, it was about eleven. So you know, because each time you move your feet it registered. So... it's obviously why they rate it so highly.

I: Do you think it's the discipline of the dance that makes you use a lot of energy?

T: No, it's a physical effort of doing the steps. You... when you move quite a lot.

I: So how do the different movements make you feel?

T: Mm... I don't think it makes you ... unless it's a difficult ... set of moves which at the end of a dance makes you think "Cor. Yeah! I managed that." I don't think it makes you feel anything really. Quite satisfied I suppose.

I: You talked about memory earlier. How do you think through as you're dancing?

T: Oh god, yeah. That's a very difficult question. On the dances that you know, you just work on auto-pilot, it just flows from one to another because you know, you've done it so many times you just know it. Ones that you half know, you have to concentrate a bit more. (asks for tape to be switched off as she is struggling to think about this).

I: How many dances would you say you can remember at once?

T: Forty, maybe fifty. And there's three categories when they announce them "Oh yeah, I know that one." There's a middle section "I know that one." as soon as you start it, meaning you didn't know what it was when you started but as soon as you start it and hear the tune and what have you, then you know what it is. And the third category is "What? I don't know this one." (laughs). So there's three. And you start off with a huge "I don't know that one." Possibly, and none of those, none of the ones you know and you just move from category to category until you've got a ... bank of the ones that you know... or ones that you know once you've got going. And a number of ones that you don't know. But there are thousands of dances and you only scrape, and there are more coming on all the time... And so obviously there's thousands you don't know, and unless someone decides to throw one in as a wild card onto one of the weekly dances ... you don't come across them... And the wild cards are usually thrown in because somebody's been to a dance outside the area, and done a dance that they do in that area and liked it so they do it in the programme, like I did the other night...

I: So you say you remember the moves but you don't visualize them.

T: I don't think I do, no, no... no, no.

I: So you would say it's just like automatic?

T: Yeah. ... Oh yes, on the ones you know you just go on auto-pilot. It's like any activity you do regularly, you don't think about it.

I: And how do you like to dress when you go dancing?

T: I usually like to dress up, long skirt usually... And... no make-up because I, well I sweat so much it would be horrendous so I never wear make-up. But the people who don't sweat obviously can wear make-up. I forget and wipe my eyes and then there'd be black everywhere and all, so I don't. But I do like to ... dress smartly. I don't usually wear... trousers and if you're in the first Scottish group, yes, they actually frown on you wearing trousers. And you would be very... castigated... Well you wouldn't be castigated, but it would be pointed out that the norm is to wear a dress or skirt purely. But they're the guardians of the... standard. So ... they work differently from the second Scottish group.

I: How are they different from the second Scottish group?

T: Well the second Scottish group don't like to be teached stuff, they leave it up to you to get round the class, they just teach the dance. Whereas the first Scottish group will teach you to do the steps properly. So ... because when you're in a set it's a team game, it's not an individual game, it's a team game and they're all supposed to ... take part in the set, whether you're dancing or not. So if you're the fourth couple and you're standing waiting, you're supposed to stand properly, like with feet in first position, and look interested. And they also like you to acknowledge your partner by looking at them... not just dancing with them. It's never referred to in the second Scottish group., they just want you to do the dance and get round... in the best possible way and if you're not doing the steps right, or if you're not looking at your partner, or if there are two couples doing the same thing and you're not covering, they don't mind, it doesn't matter. So there are two different standards there... If I'm doing the programme on a Thursday, I very often throw in a ...comment such as " And if you're at the door, do it together, it might look rather nice." Don't normally, people don't normally do that.

I: So are you involved in designing the programme?

T: Occasionally, yes, yes. It takes the pressure off. If you had one or two people doing it all the time, one of them would be this teacher and she has got enough to do. So a few of us will take over.

I: So is there anything more you want to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

T: Well it's got to... the whole thing has come to be a large part of my social life... because there's not only the meetings and there's also the dances, you can go to, there's Winter school, you can go to Summer school if you want to, ... which I don't do these days because it's too long... A week is just too much whereas the Winter school is only a long weekend, from Thursday night until Tuesday morning, that's just enough. So... you meet all sorts of nice people... if you're going abroad somewhere, you can go on the website and find out where the local branch is, you can go along to one of the classes while you're there if

you want to, we have people come. and turn up at one of the classes and also the second Scottish group. So it's as a community, very large... international. Scots get everywhere (laughs) And the reason I've taken up the accordion is in case I should ever have to give up Scottish dancing, I would lose a lot of my social life. So I thought I would learn one of the instruments that they use. Fiddle playing is too difficult to play and I play the piano so obviously the accordion. So... yeah ... what started out as exercise has turned into really a major part of my social life.

I: Anything else?

T: No.

I: I just wanted to ask you... Are you Scottish? Or do you have any Scottish family members?

T: No... well I think they're might be ... but ,, not, in the distant past. And I'm not sure really whether the ... tales that have been handed down are anything like right.

I: Ok. Well thank you.

## **Scottish Society Interview Two (2.S.2)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

C: Yes you may have my consent.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

C: There was a class in the next village to me in L. and they were a bit short of members and I had a friend in L. who asked me to join and I went along and I've been doing it ever since. That must be now six years.

I: Have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

C: Not in recent years. I used to do ballroom dance in my twenties. So I used to do a lot of ballroom dancing, Latin American.

I: Anything else?

C: No I can't think I've been involved... only the Scottish Country dancing.

I: Any more about getting involved in Scottish Country dancing?

C: Not really... In my twenties, I did join the Scottish Society in C. but I didn't keep it up because it was some distance from where I lived. So that was it...

I: Are you Scottish?

C: My father was. My grandmother was Irish (laughs).

I: Were you involved in Scottish dancing as a child?

C: No, not at all.

I: How easy do you find it to learn the dances?

C: ... Reasonably well, having done ballroom dancing, and timing and listening to the music, that's no problem. You do need to listen to the music and the beat in Scottish Country dancing. Everything seems to be on the rhythm and the music tends to give you an idea of when you need to do the next step or the pas de basque or whatever it is... no I didn't... I do find it's difficult to remember the names of the dances, we do so many in an evening and when it's mentioned again, I can't remember the sequence, but if they then call it through, I'm alright, it comes back to me. But... I find, I must admit, I do find it difficult. If somebody said to me... "Gates of Edinburgh Reel" I couldn't immediately tell you the sequence. If someone just suddenly goes through it, then I'm fine I can do it.

I: That leads onto my next question. How important is memory?

C: ... It is important in the fact that when you've learnt a new dance, you've got to remember the sequence and also, it all depends whether you're taking the man's part or the lady's part. And you've got to remember in the sequence, where you need to come in or where you need to take the lead. So ... you either spoil it for others, if you're not ready to do the next movement, if it's a reel, and you're still standing there and then started moving, you've got to remember to get in. Sometimes it's difficult, your mind tends to go on other things while your standing there.

I: So how do you actually learn the dances?

C: Well it's bit by bit. It's normally broken down into segments. So you do the first eight bars or the first sixteen bars and then you do the second part, and you usually walk them through, dance them through, each section and then you do the whole dance through once and if it's going alright, then they carry on the music and you finish it off when the fourth couple's done it.

I: I notice they seem to expect you at the Scottish Society to know the dances.

C: Yes, we've got a list of dances. Now I haven't got it with me but we're ... they won't walk them through... there you are, they are set dances for each week, and we have to know those two dances. I mean obviously there's going to be somebody there say "I'm sorry, I haven't looked them up." But I do try to remember to look them up and... in the book and so I remember them before I go there. So normally, if you get into fourth place, by the time the first two couples have done, you've got some idea of what you should be doing, but you always make mistakes.

I: Which book do you, use to learn them?

C: There's several Scottish country dance books... Next time, I mean I'll show you the two I use. One I like and one I can't understand very well but you're willing to see it.

I: Any more about memory and learning to dance?

C: Not really... It's always a question of you must remember who your partner is, you must remember to do it with your partner, but I can't think of anything else. E. might be better, you're going to interview E. She's done some teaching as well so she'll have a bit more to say on that.

I: OK. So how does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of yourself?

C: Not really... just I go, I go because I enjoy the company, I go because I feel it's my work out each week. But I can't be, ... I find it boring going to a leisure, keep-fit club or going to use the bikes and the swimming and that. I think the two hours dancing I get as much exercise as I need, plus doing my gardening, walking six miles once a week, gardening, house-work, running up and down stairs... but that's my work out for the week, my two hours, and I reckon that makes me sweat, it makes my heart beat faster but I'm doing what I should do... But sometimes I do it twice a week...

I: Where do you go?

C: I go to N. to the Scottish Country Dance Society lessons. You go to the one that's run by A.

I: Yes.

C: Well she teaches at N. sometimes. Yeah... we had C. last night at N. But I only do N. every other week. because I go to a bridge club that I joined (laughs). Yeah.

I: Any more on how Scottish dancing makes you see yourself?

C: Not really... No, I mean I don't know how much longer I'll be able to carry it on. Depends on my health and how I progress.

I: How would you say... that leads into my next question... How would you say Scottish dancing influences experiences of your health?

C: Well only because it's good for my ... it's good exercise.

I: Mm.

C: Because it's, as you say, you've got to use your memory, you've got you've got to use your brain, you've got to listen, and then you've got to follow the rules. You've got to use the correct step, you've got to listen to the music, so and perception and you've got... there's audio, you know... audio, understanding and receiving information,

I: Mm

C: Carrying out that information, I'm just trying to think, just trying to do it, then there's the actual doing of it. So ... carrying the exercise through to the end. Is that sufficient?

I: I was just going to say... Any more on that?

C: No I mean I can't really think of anything... just using your brain, exercise, talking to people, being sociable, learning to behave and not say nasty things ... that's it.

I: Have you had any injuries from Scottish dancing?

C: ...Only pulled a muscle, that was at the Scottish Society, on a Thursday once, I was a bit too energetic and I pulled a muscle in my leg, but that's the only one. With the normal classes, you always do your warm-up exercises. With the Scottish Society, if you want, you've got to do those exercises first. And I often forget. And I should do them before we start but we tend to go into... If you've been cold from outside and you come in and then you immediately start dancing, you haven't warmed up the muscles. That's fatal.

I: So how did you pull this muscle?

C: Dancing I pulled the muscle in my calf. So obviously being over-energetic. So that leaves me for the rest of the evening.

I: How long did it take you to recover?

C: It took nearly three weeks... so but of course I had to walk on it so it wasn't that I could rest it for a week, I had to still get on with everything... Yes so it teaches you a lesson, that you really should do a warm-up well exercises before you do any... it's still going?

I: Yes.

C: (laughs).

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

C: I don't really know... I think you do it because you hope you keep yourself fitter longer, I think that's the main thing. Do the exercise. But sometimes your feet get sore (laughs). No I can't really see how it influences ... you either can do it or you can't do it. If you're not fit enough then you can't do Scottish Country dancing, that's the trouble.

I: What do you think makes you fit enough to do it?

C: (Sighs) Well I think because I've been reasonably well, I eat a healthy diet, I do exercise, walking, gardening, I did have a dog, I used to walk him every morning at least two miles and in the evening but I don't have him now. I do a walk once a week, about six miles we do, all over the country.

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body?

C: I don't think it's changed me at all, I can't see how.

I: And is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

C: I enjoy it ... no not really. I go principally because I like the people, I like doing the exercise, it's a nice way of doing it. That's the main reason. I can't say if I miss a week of Scottish Country dancing I'm bereft or anything, no.

I: You were saying about people laughing.

C: Well they do laugh a lot and they enjoy themselves. That is a good way of relaxation, it takes away tension, people feel good. I must admit, if I go to, on a Thursday evening, and I've left home at quarter past seven so I think "I don't really want to drive fourteen miles into C." But once I've done two hours dancing I come away and I'm not tired at all. And when I come home, I don't really want to go to bed, even though it's... we leave at ten o'clock and I don't get home till twenty to eleven, I'm not tired then because the... the adrenaline's been going, you've been laughing, your tension's gone and you don't feel so tired.

I: And you were telling me something about dancing just for the sheer pleasure...

C: Yeah... well people do dance just for the pleasure. You wouldn't go make a fool of yourself and do it all wrong if you didn't really enjoy doing it. Yeah. So you just do it with people, if you make a mistake you just laugh and they shrug it off and push you into the right direction and you carry on.

I: You also mentioned something about the footwork.

C: Yes I mean if you go to several classes, they expect you to do correct footwork ... the pas de basques and the skip change of step, especially in the Strathspey because of keeping to the timing because the Strathspey, the music is so much slower but at the Scottish Society, it's really for fun. A lot of people have had formal lessons but some just picked it up as they've gone around with different clubs. I mean there's one where, you're going to talk to E., she's got a club at T. but they've got a teacher. So they do teaching, whether they do footwork, or whether they just teach the dancing there, I don't know, you'll have to find that out.

I: That's great.

## **Second Scottish Interview Three (2.S.3)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

E: Yes of course.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

E: Well some years ago I had a little experience.... I'm going back to 1956, when we lived in London, my older daughter was two I think, and evening classes then, catered for, I expect as now, for all sorts of things. I think there was more opportunity. And I saw an advert for Scottish Country dancing at a school which was within walking distance. So that's where I went. And I thought it was wonderful. But it only lasted a short time because the numbers declined, you know, without the right numbers, the class cannot continue. So I had to leave. And if you read that little book, there is a prologue which tells you exactly what I've just said. Right? And then because my first husband was not a well man, I didn't have an opportunity to go back to it or do anything like that until after he died and I'd moved to another city with my two daughters and my sister, who was un-married, we bought a little bungalow on the out-skirts. And I went back to work part-time and the welfare officer was Scottish and she told me of the group that met in the city. So we used to cycle from the village where we lived.... I think it was once a fortnight or something, to the Presbyterian church. And I went there for a while and my sister became ill, had to go into hospital, so I had no-one to be at home with the children. And.... so again it fell apart. And then nothing happened until I came to live in this town after I had re-married and my husband was ill in 1982 with encephalitis, was left brain-damaged, and I came here in 1991 to be nearer my daughter. And she told me, as soon as I'd moved actually, that there was a class starting in a nearby village so I went back there but I could only stay for the first hour of the two because my husband couldn't be left for too long. And.... Christmas 1993, he died, he had a fall, otherwise he might still be alive now, he had a fall and ... hit his head and within 24 hours he was paralysed. So.... after he had gone, then I was able to go back regularly and stay for the two hours and... took it from there. And then ultimately I joined the second Scottish group and that's where we are now. OK?

I: So any more about getting involved in Scottish dancing?

E: Well we had a wonderful tutor in the village group... I think she was at the second Scottish group a week last Thursday, I think she was there. And.... we had her five years, which was fantastic, a fantastic teacher. Not everybody can teach, as you well know. They may know what to do and how to do it, but when it comes to teaching somebody else, they don't have what is necessary and .... I learned a lot from her. And of course you learn a lot by watching other people. The first couple of dances I went to locally .... I think if I did two dances, that was all. I just, you know, I just couldn't cope with what was going on. But gradually I became more experienced and enjoyed it and ... was on the committee at various times and in 1991 when we had to move from the village hall, we now dance in the leisure centre locally, and there was a change of committee and I became chairman.... And on and off I've been chairman ever since (laughs) and because we .... you know we've gone through the people that are willing to serve on the committee, I am now chairman, secretary, tea-maker, everything if you see what I mean. So I'm very tied up with that. And the second Scottish group, there used to be two committees, one for the dance circle, who

used to do all the dance things that go on through-out the year. And the other one was the main society who organise things like Burns Night and ... the November St. Andrew's Ceilidh, things like that .... Well then, as numbers fell and we used to meet at this lady's house, did you meet her? She was there (laughs). She was on the main committee and her husband was on the dance circle committee. And he brought it up at the AGM ... a couple of years ago, he said "May I make a point? Is there any point now in having two committees, because numbers have gone down such a lot for dancing and it's the same people that come through our door, which ever committee meeting it is?" And it was right (laughs). So the two committees were combined and ... the rule was, and as far as I know it still is, that after three years, they sort of say, well you know, "You stand down." But I seem to have been on one or other and now both for- ever ! (laughs). So there we are. But I do get involved quite a lot with the ... publicity. That's really what I'm doing now ... I have done minutes ... I have done ... newsletter, stuff like that but ... I've enjoyed what I do, producing publicity, the dance tickets and everything like that. And that's where I feel happy so I won't take on anything else. But ... it keeps me occupied anyway. That's all I can tell you really.

I: I was just wondering, you know this group locally, is that also called the second Scottish group?

E: No, no, it's just the local Scottish Dance Group.

I: So is it a little independent group?

E: It is, yes. We're closely associated with the second Scottish group because when it started, we were in a local hall, we were supported so much by members from the second Scottish group but as time has gone on, this was in 1991, as you appreciate, sixteen years ago, people who came then ... they're all older age group. This is the problem, we find it difficult, almost impossible to recruit young people. And as people get older they find they can't dance, so we ... we have only one man left who comes from the second Scottish group (laughs). All the others have fallen by the wayside. But we were greatly... members of the second Scottish group do support us a lot for our Annual Dance otherwise we couldn't run the dance. So we're sort of allied to them but we're not part of them, if that makes sense. Right.

I: Have you been involved in any other forms of dance ever?

E: Well after my husband died I tried line dancing that I did for a year and I gave that up because I prefer the Scottish. I was doing both actually but with line dancing you are looking at somebody's back. I went on my own, there were other groups of people and friends and so on that I didn't know, and I went on my own and I came home on my own. This is how it worked ... you don't ... Scottish dancing is so sociable, you are looking at someone else the whole time. It may not be the partner you are dancing with, it may be somebody else in the set, but you are looking at other people and the ... normal pattern is that you do not dance the next dance with the same person. You change partners. Now I danced some years ago in 1998, I did a once only trip round the world to see cousins, relatives, friends and I was in New Zealand for their day-school and the same applies. You do not dance the next dance with the same person. And it was wonderful to do the same dances to the same music (laughs). So that I find is a great way of making friends. Also you can go to a dance if you're on holiday or visiting somewhere, you can turn up at a dance, nobody minds and you just join in ... somebody might say to you, as I've said to people "Hello. Where are you from? Have you come far?" And ... that's how it goes. You might dance with somebody two or three times and never know who they are, or where they come from. You know it's polite to ask that but ..., there may not be an opportunity... that's what I find so ... so very, very enjoyable, is the social side. Right... I tried Tap dancing and I was alright until she put a routine together and my head didn't tell my feet what to do. So I thought "This is not for me." I would have loved to have dancing classes when I was a little girl, that was always what I would have liked to have done, but I was the middle one of a biggish family, and in those days, we didn't have the money, there wasn't that sort of income to do it. So that was Tap dancing. I bought the shoes so I put them in a charity shop and that was the end of that one. I tried Barn dancing but I found the group that met at the college, just down the road, were ... they were very sparse and some people knew what they were doing and I don't know ... I would have liked to have done it with a proper group but this was just a motley collection of people. So that didn't work. So I didn't go there any more (laughs). Funnily enough though, through going there, I met up with a couple of ladies that lived in another village, one of them has moved away, and I said that I was trying various things because my husband had died. "Oh" she said "You should join the theatre club." I know I am going off at a tangent. "You ought to join the theatre club." I said "I'm not interested. I can't do anything like that." She said "No" that "the theatre club, theatre-goers' club ... visit theatres and you go as a group and you get discounted seats and you get picked up in town by coach and dropped off and so on." So I did. So I made another host of friends that way. But ... so it was, it was worth going Barn dancing otherwise I wouldn't have found out. But ... so I just concentrated on the Scottish.

I: Any more about getting involved in Scottish dancing?

E: (Sighs) Well only if I if I would arrange the entertainment for the ... November Ceilidh, The St. Andrew's Ceilidh And I said "Ah, I don't know what to do!" They said "Don't worry, people come up and show you some of the ... oh yes in the year 2000, I was asked to offer to entertain because it's members who entertain the people who are there." So the Ceilidh is a mixture of entertainment by members or friends, and dancing. And they said people come and offer to do things right up to the last minute. They gave me an A4 sheet from the previous year and I thought "Hang on. I don't like that." (laughs). So I did the programme, the president sent me the list of dances that he or she wanted and I had to gather people to perform and



then arrange the performances within the dancing to make a reasonable programme. And ... everybody was pleased. So I started doing it the next year and the next year and I'm still doing it (laughs).

I: Which group is this for?

E: It's for the second Scottish group.

I: It's the second Scottish group....

E: You will be invited. You will be invited (laughs). Do you sing or do anything? You don't... because I've had to keep, you know, ferreting around for people. One or two that used to entertain have moved away and people get older, one or two sadly have died and you know, the various people that would have done... certain things for you are no longer able to. So it's getting more difficult. But, because I said last year "I'm not doing this anymore because.... I think it's time somebody else arranged it because it could have a different flavour." And they said "No, no, we like the way you do it." (laughs). My trouble is finding people to do, the entertainment. I said I don't mind if somebody else will help out and go through their friends and see what they can organise. We don't mind someone coming in from outside, enjoying the evening, and performing for us. I mean we have one lady, we haven't seen her for sometime, her husband is a wonderful pianist and he sings as well. So he came along last year and he played for us. And.... There was a small group that... sang, he played for their singing, so that was nice, you know....

I: Why do you think younger people are not involved?

E: Younger people will go to a Ceilidh. Now I went to a village a couple of weeks ago with a friend from the Friday group to the church at the village to a Ceilidh, where you tend to get children as well but Ceilidh dancing is a lot more, shall I say "rambustous?"

A lot ... it's not so skilful ... it doesn't matter quite so much what you do with your feet and to that end, people come in outdoor shoes and you get your feet trodden on, your ankles kicked and things like that. It's a different sort of evening altogether ..... as I say, young people will go to that but I don't normally enjoy a Ceilidh because I find it's too exhausting. I prefer the set dancing that we do with a normal Scottish Country dance group, whoever they are, because ..... it's more orderly somehow. There's a list of dances, you know what you're going to do, you either do that one or you don't, depending on how you feel... And it's not nearly so exhausting. And as you get older, you can't do with it, you know? (laughs)

I: I wondered why you thought younger people were not getting involved?

E: (Sighs). You could use one of their words, 'these days.' And of course they do have opportunities to do so many more things these days... The leisure centres offer all sorts of things and because a lot of young people, their idea of an evening out is to go to a club... They spend a lot more than we do but.... On the other hand, if somebody does come that normally doesn't do it, they enjoy watching but if you say, you know, "Wouldn't you like to join us?" "Oh no, no I couldn't do that, couldn't do that." I think the fact that we know the next move can be a bit off-putting. Now we've six new members at the local group that started the first week in September ... three couples .... husbands as well. One of the husband's isn't dancing because he's had a stroke, but the other two join in ... But I mean how have you found your classes at the first Scottish group, do you find it difficult?

I: No. It tends to be the age-group, it tends to be 40 plus with maybe a couple of people in their 20s ... but no, it's done very slowly, she teaches the steps very slowly and carefully, so that people feel they can get to know the dances which is good.

E: Well, from what you're saying, I would agree, that Scottish Country dancing, to learn the moves, the steps, what you do with your feet and so on and so on and various figures ... Young people pick it up a lot more quickly. We have had young people, there was a folk dance in town, I think they have one every year, and there was a dance, a Scottish Country dance in the evening, and you could go to whatever dance was on in the various halls. And our hall, at one time, was so crowded you couldn't move. A lot of young people came in for the folk dancing and they picked it up very quickly but again, they're a lot more ... sort of, they like to throw each other about and so on, you know if they're doing a right hand turn, it's all ... energetic, if you see what I mean. Scottish Country dancing is probably too precise for young people. They want something they can do quickly and go on to something else. I think some young people don't have the patience to ...to ... persevere. I can't really tell you apart from that.

I: Ok. It leads onto my next question "How easy do you find it to learn the different dances?" Say if you give an example of one of the new dances that you've learnt.

E: Well only because I've been doing it since 1991, and we had a good teacher as I said ... various figures in dances, they might be slightly different to others, but once you've learnt certain moves, you can adapt it to anything else. So the more you do it, the easier it becomes to learn the new dance. Ok? (laughs)

I: So how much do you learn a new dance before you go to a dance session? Do you look at the....

E: The instructions? ... Yes. But I've got to do it, before I can learn. You know the instructions are really a reminder as far as I'm concerned.... It's nothing like actually doing a dance but watching maybe to start with or actually taking part, when you've been in a set and taken part in a dance that you didn't know, at least that's easier than trying to learn it from a sheet of paper. It's like any skill. You've got to actually engage yourself in it, before you can go away and do it yourself.

I: So it's actually practicing?

E: Just practicing, yes, yes .... At Friday group this term, at least our tutor, she was one of our members, and we lost the tutor we had at the time because she went into school teaching and she finds by Friday, she's really exhausted, so she had to let us down. A lady took over, but we don't think that she's a qualified teacher. She's a beautiful dancer and she knows the dances, but she's not a good teacher. These six new people have had no instruction whatsoever.... I can't say anything to her because obviously without her we'd be stuck you see.... I mean I can show people more or less what to do but then my dancing isn't perfect by any means but ... it's not a good idea, they need someone who has learned to, taken the teacher training course really.

I: Do you walk through the dances first?

E: Yes, oh yes, yes.

I: How important is memory in learning Scottish dancing?

E: Very much. We have a lady who has recently had her 80th birthday and she is a wonderful pianist, so she knows about rhythm and timing ... and you can see her face, she is concentrating so hard but she cannot remember what to do next, so you've got to help her through all the time. And she said she cannot remember the sequences. Now again, if you learn when you are younger, you know the various moves, Rights and Lefts and Corners and Reels, things like that, they come natural to you, whereas it doesn't come natural to people, as they get older. I mean to start on it when you're nearly 80 is a bit late in the day, isn't it? So memory is important.... The chairman, you know in the second Scottish group? He was asked by one of the ladies, who was then the dance circle secretary, she said she'd had a call from... the local radio, they'd seen our advert for the Annual Ball in May... that was taking place the next day so she gave them his telephone number for interview. I think I've got it somewhere, I could find it for you... He was asked "Could anybody go along to the dance and join in?" He said "Some dances, yes, but not to the Annual Ball. You've really got to know what you're doing because they're not walked through.... He said Scottish Country dancing is a bit like a mixture of a driving test and A-Level mathematics exam." So there you are.

I: How much do you find you use visual clues from other dancers?

E: What do you mean by visual?

I: Watching what other dancers are doing.

E: Oh yes, yes, yes. If you're not sure... you think "Well I'd better watch her or her or him... then I'll know where I'm going." Some people can give verbal help to people that are not sure, that they're dancing with. But I can't. I can't dance and tell somebody. I've got to point (laughs). I can sort of, you know, I usually say "Come on" and they get the message. Or ... if you want someone to pass you by that or that shoulder, I usually say "Come this way, come this way." I can't speak as well but you see some people are good at it. You see the secretary will, she can tell you and dance at the same time (laughs). So can the chairman, he is very good. He will organise. But he's been dancing about 50 years you see, so he does know. And he still goes to many dances in the area and beyond but... you know, he said to me "You can always come to me and then I'll take you." But then he's over 20 miles away from me, and it means coming back, I've still got that drive afterwards. It makes a long evening really.

I: So I was going to ask... How does Scottish dancing make you see yourself? How does it influence experiences of yourself?

E: I think it helps to keep you alert, certainly, because it's a mental and physical exercise... And by so doing, it affects your mental and physical health.... You can't sort of stand there and go to sleep as you've got to keep your eye on and your ear on what's going on. Not only that... but at Thursday dancing, we walk everything through. But at a dance, we have 20 dances on the programme, we have an interval for supper, but there are 20 dances, and unless you're going to sit a lot of them out, you've really got to be prepared to do the next one, even if you've got the instructions in front of you. So you've got to be alert, physically and mentally to... the next one on the programme.

I: So how many would you dance say at the dance last Saturday?

E: Well because I've had all this hassle with the instructions and on Thursday evening I sat till late doing them, and I had a late meal, fell asleep watching television, went to bed at three o'clock, was still awake at five so I got up. So come Friday and Saturday I was still suffering because I was still tired, so Saturday evening I didn't do as many as I might have done normally. But normally I wouldn't sit out more than a couple out of 20 ... I can't remember... Bonnie Lass of Bon Accord ... I wasn't sure my instructions were right for that one... I'll get the ticket and then you can see them properly ... five out of 20 ... I don't often leave out more than that...

I: You still did 15 dances?

E: Oh yes, yes. And I said to the caller "Some of us want to do The Cooper's Wife instead of The Wee Cooper of Fife." It's the same music. It's .... did we do it the week I came when I met you? It's done in ten bar phrases. Because I said to the accordionist afterwards "I had to be first couple in that set, that must be difficult to play, ten bar phrase, but it's still 40 bars if you understand me." And he said he had to concentrate. And there's another version...it's called "The Cooper's Wife", well some of us think it's a more enjoyable dance, but you do it to the same music. So I said to the man who was the MC "Would you mind if some of us do "The Cooper's Wife"?" He said "No, so long as you know what you're doing." And he was very good, when he came to announce it, he said "I understand some people want to do "The Cooper's Wife". So we're going to

have "The Cooper's Wife" over that side and "The Wee Cooper of Fife" over that side." There was only one set that wanted to do "The Cooper's Wife". So I did that one...

I: Why do you think that was?

E: Well probably more people know "The Wee Cooper", it's a much older dance and ... the reason I don't like it is because it's a two couple dance. By two couple, you have four couples as usual, but the dance only involves the first two couples. So then you do it a second time, and because you don't need the third couple, you could do it a third time. So instead of doing the dance twice through which is what we normally do, four couples do it twice each, you actually do it three times through and because... as a first and a second couple you are involved in the dance, you end up doing it six times, but in a different position. And I find that very hard going (laughs). But "The Cooper's Wife", you need three couples, so you actually do it twice and you get involved twice more, so it's not so hard.

I: So you have a rest time when you're not doing it?

E: That's right, yes. So ... I mean some people like two couple dances but I don't. But the friends that I was with on Saturday, it was one man who said about "The Cooper's Wife" before we went. And I said "I don't think it's "The Cooper's Wife", it's "The Wee Cooper". So he said "Why can't we do it?" I mean there's another dance called "Waverley", and there's another version of that called "Fugal Fergus", and ... on our local dance, I had both lots of instructions on the programme. And on the list of dances, I had "Waverley/Fugal Fergus". So again we had whoever wanted to do which. "Waverley" is easier for beginners but it's a 48 bar reel which is a lot. 48 as opposed to 32... one sequence is half as long again so instead of the dance lasting, instead of the music playing for about four and a half minutes, you've got nearly seven minutes continuously, which is quite a lot. Whereas "Fugal Fergus" can be done to the same music, but it's not so exhausting.

I: So how do you feel after dancing for seven minutes?

E: Well, you want to sit down for a minute (laughs). Well I do now. Come February I shall be 78. So you know, time marches on you see... but that's the little ticket I produced.

I: Is this the accordionist?

E: Yes.

I: So any more about how Scottish dancing makes you see yourself?

E: I think it keeps me younger... partly due to the social aspect, you see. I could go walking, jogging or that sort of thing but you might be in a group of people, but you're actually doing a Solo performance, aren't you? But with Scottish Country dancing, you cannot dance alone, you need other people. So you have social feel for the whole evening. And people get confused, people that don't do it, get confused with that and Highland dancing. Because they immediately, if you mention Scottish Country dancing, they immediately talk about swords and bagpipes. Nothing like Highland. Well it is, it's allied. But it's a different skill altogether. That is a solo performance. You might be dancing with a couple of other people but initially it is something you can do on your own.

I: How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

E: It makes your feet and legs ache (laughs). No a week before my 75th Ceilidh, because I had another one when I was 75, just in case I'm not dancing when I'm 80, this is my idea. And a week before, here, it was my turn to do the teas. I went out to the kitchen, just as they were walking through a Strathspey which I knew was going to last ... it was an 8:32 so we're looking at between seven and eight minutes with the music. I took the trolley to the doorway.... I took the trolley to the doorway, and I thought "I've just got time to go to the loo while they finish this dance." Well they were dancing and as you know, there were chairs along the side. So I was carefully manoeuvring past the dancers and the chairs to get out of the back to go to the loo, and all of a sudden I found myself.... One of my friends said one of the legs of the chairs was bent. Can only think that as I was walking straight, looking where I was going, my foot caught on this bent leg. I didn't know I was going to fall down, so I didn't put my hand out, maybe it's just as well because I might have broken my wrist ... And my knees have never been the same since. It's here. But I wear knee supports. I went to the doctor after a while because it didn't improve and he said "Well if you've got to your age without any arthritis, then you're lucky." But ... I mean I've other aches and pains, the same as other people when they're getting older do. But... it's my knees.

I: I was going to ask you if you've any other injuries from dance?

E: No, no. Well I wasn't actually dancing then you see (laughs). It was just on of those things.

I: So do your knees affect you when you're dancing?

E: Well I wear the knee supports and I find that...that's a great help. I don't like too many ... bars, do you know what I mean by ... bars? But apart from that, you know, I'm ok. They get stiff, if my knees get cold they get stiff and if they get stiff then they hurt. Or if I'm on a coach seat that isn't very comfortable, Ely Theatre Goers' coaches. And... sometimes then, I go to get out my seat and my knees are really, really stiff. But so are a lot of other peoples' as they get older. That's just life, isn't it?

I: Any more about the psychological benefits of dance?

E: (laughs) That's all I can say. I mean I do spend a lot of time on my own although I have a daughter living down the road, she's very busy, she works full-time as a GP nurse and ... very involved with Guides so she's hardly ever at home. I almost have to make an appointment to see her, if you see what I mean... So I do spend a lot of time on my own and it's the one thing I

enjoy when I go out. Well one thing, I do enjoy going with the theatre group. And I'm on that committee as well so... I suppose you could say I'm a people, I quite enjoy my own company at home but ... or if I'm out shopping, I don't want people around me. But if I'm going out to enjoy an afternoon, I try to be positive. I think that's important. One of our ladies in the local group is a worrier, and we were going up to Scotland, in June, for a weekend's dancing at a hotel... It was on every evening with a different band. The atmosphere was absolutely gorgeous, you know there were about, well over a hundred people there and the friend is the sort that worries about her health and the week before, I said "Now are you sure you want to go?" In fact I said it more than a week before because "I don't want you to feel you've got to go when you're not feeling quite like it." Because she says, quite often, she never knows how she's going to feel when she gets up in the morning. Now if you think like that, it's not very helpful. And... "No" she said, she wanted to do the driving because she said I was a better navigator. I said "Fair enough. Your car is newer than mine." So I thought "Maybe if she's driving, she won't think about how she feels." I was right. Because we left here on the Thursday, stayed over in Carlisle, and carried on to Scotland to be there after lunch on Friday, and we came back on Tuesday. She did a lot of driving, she didn't complain once of her back hurting. And she drove all the way home from Scotland... where we went to see some friends who were dancers. She drove all the way home in one day. She dropped me off here at quarter past eleven. She still had to then retrace her steps and go back to another village. She's a good eight to ten miles from here. I rang the next day at lunch -time, I thought I'd give her time to recover. And I said "Fine. How's your back?" "Oh no problem." So that proves my point that I think psychologically ... you have to feel positive to enjoy good health.

I: So it's keeping active.

E: Keeping active, yes. Physically and mentally. You have to keep active and then your health is better. I mean that proved a point. And that was ... Wednesday when I spoke to her and she said she was fine. Come Friday we had our last evening's dancing for the summer, in the local group, and she rang me Friday morning and she said "I'll come this evening but I don't know that I'm going to do much dancing because I don't feel very well. I've made an emergency appointment at the doctor's." I thought "Here we go again." She went to the doctor and he said there was nothing wrong with her (laughs). She thought she might have picked up something. She'd got a bad throat and she was hot. I said "Well I woke up hot this morning, it was a hot night, you know." It's a question of being positive about life. I think... there are people that suffer interminably with physical things and mental problems that they can do nothing about but... in the general run of things, people enjoy a reasonable state of health, if they stay positive about things and stop worrying about their health, I think they come out better.

I: Your dancing is an important part of that?

E: Well I think it is, well it is for me.

I: It relates to my next question. How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

E: Well I think I've said it all (laughs). I don't think I can say any more than that. You know it's a big part of my social life and the friends that I've made because of dancing..

I: How would you say Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body? Do you have a different relationship with your body as a result of Scottish dancing?

E: Well you need to hold yourself in a good position. You need at least try to stand up straight. And... I mean for instance my eldest grandson, my eldest grandson, for a while he went into teacher training via the inter-net. He didn't continue, it all fell apart, and he's doing what he really wants now but that's beside the point. And he spent some of his practical time at a school down in a nearby village. And the headmistress there takes a country dance class. It's a primary school, a small church school and she takes the children for country dancing once a week. And he told her that his grandma was involved in Scottish Country dancing. So I was then asked if I could take a team down there and involve the children. Well I managed to get the chairman (laughs) as usual, and two other women, there were four of us. And we demonstrated, just two couples doing something that the two couples could do, and then we could have the children join in. And I had a lovely letter back from the children, and one of the things she said was "I learnt something to-day, I learnt how to stand still." Now that is important because if you are going to learn Scottish Country dancing, you've got to stand still and listen and watch so you've got to be composed. That's another thing I've noticed, a lot of young people, their bodies are always on the twitch... children particularly they don't know how to stand still. So how can their minds be concentrated on anything if their body's not ever still. It's all a question of being self-controlled and ... being composed. I can sit still, I can sit here like this and if I want to know the time, I pick my arm up and look like that, because I can't be bothered to move otherwise (laughs). But you know, maybe I was born that way, I don't know.

I: Any more?

E: Any more on what?

I: On the composure.

E: (laughs) I always think of that poem "What is this life if full of care? No time to stand and stare." I mean I can sit here and watch the clouds. So I remember doing that when I was little. I was lying on the grass and watching the clouds. I suppose... your general make-up has to be that you're able to relax and yet have the energy to get up and do whatever you have to do when ... the day demands. I can't say more than that.

I: Lovely. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

E: The whole sphere of dance is international. You're expressing emotions and feelings and everything that the body needs to express. I know that there are modern forms of exercise such as yoga and all this, that and the other to music, things they used to have at school called music and movement for children. After I'd finished school this is... so it really... is important in your life, as is music. Music is also international as is sport. It surpasses language.... it is important. I would have liked to have gone into ballroom dancing, but both the husbands that I married were not ballroom dancers so that did not happen (laughs). So I missed on things like Rock and Roll and Jive and so on, which I would have enjoyed. But because I met my first husband when I was seventeen, we didn't marry until I was in my early twenties, probably because I was that much younger. But I loved dancing at school, and the gym teacher there said "I make this plain right from the start. I do not teach ballet." But she taught dancing as near to it as possible. She taught us the arm movements and the foot movements. And we had a pianist and I remember she used to say "May we have a Waltz now?" or "May we have a Polka?" And also that was the first time I heard to appreciate Chopin's music. And every year we had a competition or what we used to call a drill. But it was gymnastics and so on. We had a competition for dancing so we had a dancing captain, a drill captain and so on. But I was dancing captain for five terms in a row because I was voted. But I so enjoyed it and I would have loved to, as I said earlier I would have loved to have had proper dance classes but there was just no money for that ... I was growing up during the war years. My time at the grammar school was during the war years, you see and there were things ..... It also introduced me to... watching and learning as far as dance was concerned. We used to do international dancing and we had dressing up costumes. We had a cupboard or a big box with interesting costumes in. We did some Russian dancing and we had some Russian boots to wear... all that sort of thing. I've done all that, only at grammar school level. So I had a love of it even then. And in the fifth form, because I left at sixteen, it was only the elite who used to go on to do high school certificate in those days. We had dancing classes in the fifth form because we were all girls. So having met my husband when I was seventeen, and he wasn't able to enjoy anything like that. I'm very keen on watching dancing in particular... on the television or something like that.

I: You said something about dance being important for emotional expression... Can you give an example?

E: You can't really be miserable. I mean there's some international dancing which is very, very expressive, more so than what I normally enjoy doing... there are sometimes dances that tell stories such as opera and ballet. That's another area I would have loved to have been involved in... but I was... ballet in itself is story set to music, isn't it?

I: Could you tell me a little bit about these poems that you wrote? Could you just tell me a little bit about that?

E: This one.... Is a souvenir programme for the last evening at the local group. We had an extra Friday evening and we invited people, saying "It won't cost you anything. Just come." And that was the souvenir programme in 2001, and the last verse of the poem that I had written about the group's "Lament". I hadn't done the last verse until then and I printed it on the back.

I: Will you read it to me?

E: (Laughs) Oh yes another hall we've found,  
Whose walls will echo to the sound,  
Of music as we circle round,  
The little group is hereby crowned,  
The jewel of survivors.

I: So tell me about these dances you wrote?

E: Well the first one I did is called "At Water's Edge" and it's meant to depict the waves as they come in and then they ever flow. So you are standing at the water's edge, and the water comes in and it ripples around the stones and rocks and it goes out. But as it goes out, it tends to go side-ways. So this is the dance, the gist of it. You have four couples and you make little circles each end, half-way. Those that are now in the middle, which were not in the middle to start with, make a circle the other way. That's the water going round... like that. Then you have two Reels, the centre couples go to their right, the two in the middle go that way and those go that way. The water's swirling at the water's edge and there are Four Half Reels along the side. And the two couples which are then in the middle, which are not the same two at all, come back and everybody turns right hand. So it's meant to be the water when you're standing, looking at the sea towards you. And to get in the mood, it's got to be... a calm sea. Nothing very sort of 'rambustous' if you know what I mean. So I thought that's the only way to deal with this is to compose a dance. Then my friends, my three friends that I met at stately home on the coast. There is dancing on the lawn every year.... If it's wet you have to go to the village and dance in the hall, but it's not the same. Something about dancing on the grass in the open air. And because I used to live near, I had been to the stately home with my husband. When I married a second time, I enjoyed being able to travel around in a car, which I hadn't had before that. And my husband, would go anywhere. So I saw a lot of the British Isles that I wouldn't otherwise have seen at that time anyway. And that stately home was one of the first places that he took me to... enjoy. So when I heard one of the local groups was dancing at the stately home, I made my way there. And I met these two, this couple and they've been really quite close friends ever since. They're a lovely couple who ... embrace people with their lovely sort of... affection, if you know what I mean. And so I danced with them at the stately home and got to know a lot of the people from the area. Because I got to know people from the area, then I go, sometimes, I haven't been recently for various reasons because dances clash, dates clash and so on. And I go to another

city, their dances, so I know a lot of people from that city. And when it comes to advertising a local dance, I can then send copies of the programme to the city. It's a question of really knowing who to get in touch with when you hold a dance. Who to get in touch with so that you have a lot more people coming who might not otherwise come if they didn't know about it. Because as a group, most groups, especially these days aren't frequented by enough people to make up the numbers for the dance. You have to know who to get in touch with. So that was, having met this couple, and I was invited to the man's 65th birthday party and I made him a card and I wrote him a poem to go with the dance that I created for him. Now he is a wonderful... he's a lovely man and at a dance, he will go find the lady he's promised the next dance to, he'll escort her to the floor, and at the end of the dance, he will take her arm and he will take her back to where he found her. Now not all men do this, but I think it's absolutely delightful. So for his 65th I wrote this poem. And the dance is called "A Jig for Jack".

"He is ever the gentleman,  
When dancing with the lasses oh,  
I've called this one Jig for Jack,  
Had a problem choosing the music track,  
So take your pick,  
Dance it slow or quick,  
Whatever takes your fancy oh,  
That brisk young lad of 65,  
He loves to dance with the lasses oh,  
You need to choose just three more gents,  
Then find eight ladies making sense,  
To form a square,  
Face others there,  
Each man between two lasses oh,  
But we're here to-day to wish him well,  
There's you and me and the lasses oh,  
We hope the sun will shine for him,  
The future will be kind to him,  
There's little more for me to say,  
But hope he will have a happy day,  
He's a favourite with the lasses oh."

Which he is you know, he is. Just a thorough gentleman. And another one I wrote for him ... I've done one or two on the way, they're not all in here because they're not all to do with dancing... We also dance with the first Scottish group if you're still a member next summer, dance at a stately home on the lawn?

I: I did it this summer,

E: I didn't go because the weather was so undecided and the number of times I've driven over there and it's been called off or part way through you have to up-sticks and go to a local hall and I find that's a miserable place to dance. It has a hard floor and I thought if this happens another time, I won't come to the hall, I'll just go home. And we have, not this year, we have danced at Bletchley Park.... the Enigma place... on the lawn there. But they were having it at a recreation ground where they had it the previous year, and that wasn't nearly so enjoyable. And in windy weather, it would be most un-comfortable. So I didn't go this year. So that's all I can say really.... This is different, this is for his 64th

"Oh Jack you're such a gentleman when dancing at the ball,  
Escort your lady to the floor,  
Then take her back an'all,  
You look resplendent in your kilt,  
So elegant, so new,  
The tartan purple, green and black,  
It looks so good on you."

The rest of it is just because it's...to do with dancing (laughs)... I'll make you one of these.

## **Second Scottish Interview Four (2.S.4)**

J: I consent to be interviewed in conjunction with this project on my experience of Scottish dancing.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

J: Well way back in pre-history, between leaving school and going to university, I worked as a CHA secretary for some months. And as a CHA secretary, the job was to lead the walks in the daytime but take part in the evening entertainment. And the evening entertainment, when we didn't have beetle drives and such things, was dancing, and that was the first time that I ever heard there was such a thing as Scottish Country dancing. And we didn't do very much by the ... my standard

nowadays, we probably did the “Eighthsome Reels” and the “Dashing White Sergeant” and that was it. But I... it was just what I wanted to do. So when subsequently I came up here, the first thing I did was go and track down the Strathspey and Reel Society and hastily join it. And I wouldn't say I've never looked back but it's been on ever since ... Almost ever since, as a fundamental part of my life.

I: So how many years have you been Scottish dancing?

J: Well that was in 1950 that I started... We did have a substantial break... after finishing... as an under-graduate, I stayed on here to do a PHD and at the end of that time, essentially the people that I Scottish danced with all left, somehow, although I got a job nearby and continued to live here, at that point, for some obscure reason, we gave up going to the Reel club. I think in those days it was very much more an undergraduate society than it has become since. I mean if you turn up at the Reel club nowadays, you are likely to find more non-undergraduates or even non-members of the university than you'll find members of the university. I think in those days it really rather was a noticeably younger society. So perhaps that was why we stopped. But certainly we did stop at that point so there was a five year gap then when we didn't dance. And then I got a job in the United States, and we simply couldn't find any Scottish dancing there, so we had to learn how to Square dance and interestingly we never became competent at Square dancing. Of course Square dancing the point is you never know in advance what you are going to do, you have to respond to the caller, although the Connecticut accent wasn't in any way obscure, I do wonder if there was just a faint time-delay in translating expression in... Connecticut English into our own brains. So we were just a little bit on the slow side. So we did graduate, because it was a serious affair was this, but... we never really became competent at it. So we then came back to England and were living in Lancashire and made various attempts to Scottish Country dance there but really never found a totally satisfactory society. Our local one in Ormskirk, it did seem to have this principle that after every dance, you had to sit and rest. And you must never ever do an encore. Of course at this point we'd really had quite a long break without a great deal of dancing... So the first time through we always got it wrong. So we desperately needed to do it a second time to get it right. So... that wasn't too satisfactory either. Now the other strand under all this is going back from undergraduate days, we also used to go to the Round English Country dancing. But that's probably very misleading because the Round is very much Playford Country dancing, rather than what most people think of as English Country dancing. And perhaps the third strand that comes into all this is that we were members of the university Rambling club and essentially being a member of the university Rambling club implied that you were a member of the Strathspey and Reel society and that you were a member of the Round. And the friends that we... the group that we were part of those days is indeed still a group. And we recently... one of the more competent people organised a Youth Hostel weekend to celebrate one of my slightly older friends' eightieth birthday and.... The same group of us who danced in the 1950s, were there to... for this weekend. So the English Country dancing strain has gone on all the time, for some reason, when we gave up Scottish dancing, we still continued going to the Round when we were here. Well OK... I don't know. And when I finally came back to a job here, in 1970, we still knew people from the Round, because the Round has always had an annual Playford ball which old, anyone could go, but particularly old members of the Round tended to go. So we've been in touch with them really all the time except the time, except the four years of the United States. So we knew something about the Round, so we started going back to the Round. And then it dawned on us that actually we were too old for that, that we ought to start Scottish dancing, so at that point we joined the second Scottish group and there was this abominable clash that both the Round and the second Scottish group did meet on a Thursday evening, so you couldn't belong to both. And we had a year or two when we went alternate weeks, and that, really meant that we never became part of the second Scottish group and we gradually dropped out of contact with the Round so finally we decided to make the break and gave up the Round. So we still go to the annual Playford Ball but apart from that, we're Scottish dancers. Well I say we, I met my wife Scottish dancing here as an undergraduate, sadly she died a couple of years ago so now it's me... most of the time it was we.

I: Ah... It's lovely you can continue though.

J: Yes... well... what do you do when your wife dies? Sit at home and mourn. And clearly the old, Victorian idea was that you, put on black and stayed at home. I do think the home was probably rather, the home was a family, you weren't staying at home alone, you were staying at home with a family of half a dozen people. You weren't just sitting and moping. Well my daughters, our daughters, my daughters are now married and off so it would have been sitting at home so I vowed never to spend a Saturday night at home if I can (laughs).

I: That's great... that's lovely. You said something about feeling too old for dancing in the Round. What was it about that style of dancing?

J: Oh no, nothing about it, nothing about it. Certainly no implication that we were getting too elderly for it... it is rather noticeable nowadays that people of our generation are really rather a lot more vigorous than most of the young.... The other thing about the Round is that, when we started, the Round used to work on exactly the same principles as Scottish societies work on. You've got an ordinary club night, every dance will be walked through and then it will be danced. Whereas English Country dancing has now got to the point where there is an M.C. who does not dance and all the time is telling people how to do the dancing. And this used to grate on us... We felt that people ought to learn the dances, that the walk through was a reminder, but actually you knew it any way didn't you? And the Round has now given that up, and it had given that up, even

as I say, in the 1970s. It was getting worse and worse...there was more and more of this tradition that the MC, wasn't a master of ceremonies at all, he was a caller and of course couldn't dance because he was busy telling people how to do it. Well one sometimes gets that in Scottish dancing. I've been once or twice to another group, and there is an absolutely wonderful man there with a throat radio microphone, who will take part in the dancing, all the while giving out all the reminders he needs, and every word he says is absolutely on spot but at the same time he is doing his dancing absolutely perfectly. Now, I don't see that one can object to that sort of caller, but a caller standing there telling you what to do and expecting you to need to know it...is not, is not the thing at all. I never used to think that the English dances were more stupid than the Scottish dances, but... somehow that now seems to have become the tradition...

I: So... do you have anything more to say about getting involved in Scottish dancing?

J: No I don't think any more. As I say, when I first learnt, it was just it, and essentially, I mean in a sense, Country dancing rather than Scottish dancing... was the idea, but the way the world has changed, Scottish dancing is now more, more my style.... Well now your next question, "How long have you been involved with the organising committee?", is in a way a misunderstanding of how the second Scottish group runs, which is that people who take evenings, are not the organising committee. It may well be of course, but essentially, there is a general appeal for any member of the second Scottish group who feels the urge to take an evening. At one point, we used to try to encourage people to take the evening by inviting them to offer to take one dance or half an evening, but that... rather seems to have gone by the way these days. But essentially, it is for any member of the society to take an evening... Now thinking back, I don't know whether I first took an evening before I was put on the committee. I would guess that I had done. In fact the first post I had in the second Scottish group, rather incredibly, was not on the dance circle committee, but... my first post was chairman of the main society and this took place really in an incredible way. In those days, the second Scottish group and the Round, used to, once a year, have a joint dance. Now this was an absurd thing to happen. I mean if the English and Scottish dancers of the university wanted to get together, the obvious thing was for the university Strathspey and Reel club and the Round to get together and have a joint evening as indeed they do nowadays. But in those days it was the second Scottish group and the Round... And... I happened to do the Round's half of the joint programme on a couple of occasions. And somehow, out of that... when they were desperate, I hadn't realised how hard it was to find a chairman of the second Scottish group in those days. I was rung up, and to my astonishment... "Would I care to be the chairman?" So shocked, I said "Yes" (laughs). And I can still remember the first committee meeting when I didn't actually quite know who was who... Well, yes... from then on I have occasionally been the member of one committee or occasionally been the member of another committee and... (sighs).

I: For how many years is that... you've been on the committee?

J: Oh dear, oh dear... Well as I say, it's not continuous, the chairman's appointed for three years, ordinary members are appointed for two years, and must then retire and may not immediately be re-elected so... in no sense have I continually been a member of the committee... On and off for twenty years I suppose... How do I choose the programme? Well the first rule, and this is all part of my objection to people being callers rather than MC's, is that I intend to dance every dance on my programme and therefore my programme is dances I want to dance. And I do sometimes wonder when you get a non-dancing caller, whether the caller isn't relying on the fact that he isn't going to do the dances, so it doesn't matter if they're horrible ones. So the dances that I haven't done recently, and I would like to do.

I: Because I notice that you have a book of Piling that you use...

J: I do not use a book of Piling. I use a book of Piling when I am going to a dance, because the Piling, the description of the dance in diagrams, is indeed a very good way for a quick reminder. If you're almost sure what you're doing, at a glance you can see the whole dance, instead of having to read word by word. But the number of people who are capable of simultaneously translating with the diagrams into instructions to announce, seems to me to be severely limited. I mean even the best of us aren't reliable at that. So I'm afraid I stick very much to the principle that if I'm going to court I will read my briefs through, and... having chosen the programme, I print out a programme for my own benefit and I tend to have it around on the table, or at mealtimes or something... Just keep looking at it, and I expect to be able to instruct all those dances without my notes. It doesn't always work, but... that's the ambition and I think that is an important ambition for an instructor. And particularly, if it's a dance you're not quite familiar with, really to walk it by yourself and make sure you see how the figures flow into each other, otherwise something will go wrong on the evening, and that's embarrassing.

I: Which books do you use for the instructions? I mean can you give me the name or the author of one of the books you use?

J: No, there's no such thing.

I: Right.

J: Over the years, you go to various balls, and most of the balls come complete with a crib and you register a few names and you say "Hmm alright, I will remember that dance." This goes back to the days before one had to switch on a computer every day, or one was out of touch with the modern world. So I have got a vast number of slips of paper with dances that I rather like on, now in case I've also got a rather large stock on the computer, but essentially they're dances whose, I've... done in the past at some ball, which have clicked... I happen to be going to take the programme on Thursday and I'm doing a dance that I'd never met before till I went to a dance ten days ago, and that struck me as a wonderful dance so we shall be doing that



dance on Thursday. And of course that's how most of the dances come in. You pick them up from other societies and other societies pick them up from other societies. And so it goes on. So no, I mean I do have a selection of the first group's books, but... no, I wouldn't say I have a book as a source of my dances. It's all in the head really, in the sense there's a name in the head and there are some instructions around somewhere.

I: Because I noticed K. with the book of Piling. And I just wondered who'd written or compiled that particular book.

J: Oh Piling, well that's been around a long time, the original Piling was produced by Piling surprisingly and... and volume one was really a comparatively small book or so the first edition was a comparatively small book. And I can't remember at what point he retired from doing it, I suspect he probably did the first two or three, expanding each one... He then retired from doing it and I imagine he is now dead but a committee took over his job, and every two or three years, prints a new and enlarged edition so it's now gone through, well I've just acquired, my daughter gave it to me for Christmas, the eighth edition of Piling, it's getting very much larger than the others. The rules by which dances get into Piling, it's published in Cheshire, and presumably these are the dances that diffuse from neighbouring counties into Cheshire, and so get into the book. It's interesting that dances that we know well, don't get into the book... And there's a group of societies in Hertfordshire and surrounding counties which meets once a month, called the Silver Cross dancing group, and for January this year, the Silver Cross programme decided to repeat that very first dance from 30 years ago, and... most of the dances that are being repeated are dances that are still in peoples' current repertoires. But the tradition for the Silver Cross programme is that those dances which are not in Piling, will have cribs published with the programme so they're available in advance. It was really quite surprising how many of the dances, although most of us knew them, still weren't in Piling after 30 years. So... dances migrate slowly from one part of the country to another, and the thing which is well known in Hertfordshire and the district, still haven't reached Cheshire after all these years.

I: I was going to ask you... How often, how many dances have you composed? Because you told me about "Hobson's Conduit".

J: ... Well no, my basic instinct is that there are... ten thousand Scottish dances and this is at least nine and a half thousand too many, and that it is almost a crime to write a new Scottish dance. But for the 60th, 60th year of the, yes, our diamond jubilee, the second Scottish group decided that it ought to publish a book of dances, so all members of the group were invited to try and compose dances for this. And then they were tried out on the group at various meetings and indeed, one or two rehearsals before trying them out, and at the end of that, I think there were twenty dances... submitted. The committee went through these, deciding that the book was going to be twelve dances and my two were both rejected, and I have always been furious about this, but... well that was the decision. Now the one that you mention, "Hobson's Conduit", was one of the two. I thought it was a good dance and it wasn't in the book so too bad. But... in the days before the final decision was made, there happened to be one of these joint second Scottish group and Round evenings, and I was doing the second Scottish group part of it. And it seemed to me to be a rather good idea to do my "Hobson's Conduit". And I thought it went down well at that society. And indeed... one or two people who hadn't been at the rehearsals said "That was a good dance. I liked that..." Now the trouble, and I'm sure this was the reason the committee rejected both of them, was that there was a real sense in which they were not new dances. They were improvements, removing what I regarded as unsatisfactory features of existing dances. And "Hobson's Conduit" was set out to be an improvement of the "Flowers of Edinburgh" and I was brought up to believe the "Flowers of Edinburgh" were really the "Flowers of Edinburgh", sewers, and "Hobson's Conduit" was therefore the appropriate equivalent. Well, after all these years, it seemed to me that I was doing the Burns night, it wasn't a proper evening, I was going to put it back on the programme, so I did. I've not dared to put my other improvement back, but that too was a good thing. That was an improvement of the "Dalkeith Strathspey" and now, one of the suburbs of "Dalkeith", is called "Eskbank", for my improvement is the "Eskbank Strathspey". Maybe I should put that on the programme. But those are my only two contributions. And they haven't really caught.

So... How easy to learn the different dances? Well it depends on the dance. Some dances just take, and others don't. I mean I don't think I'm, I don't think I'm often in the... bottom half of the class learning a new dance, but I'm certainly not always at the top. But then some dances just seem right. I mean the one I mentioned that I met for the first time ten days ago, I hadn't met it... we hadn't, yes I think I had managed to download a crib off, off mini-crib before I went so I hope I read it through. But we stood up and we danced it and I know how to do that dance now. Very easy indeed... Some dances that don't seem to me to fit together... I... I find difficult to learn. Now, whether that's I find them difficult to learn so I think that they don't fit together or they don't fit together and so I find them difficult to learn, I wouldn't like to say... There is a feeling in the second Scottish group certain dances are teaching certificate dances, which is to say a dance that really doesn't fit together but which the first Scottish group requires people applying for a teaching certificate to get a group through. There is a very real sense in which that is a good test. Teaching a dance that flows is straightforward so everyone will pass, so one needs an examination which is difficult. So we try to get people to teach a dance that doesn't fit. Well, that is a charitable view of the first Scottish group... (sighs).

I: So how important is memory when you're learning the dances?

J: ... That strikes me as an unanswerable question. I only have the memory that I have, I don't know whether it's simple for learning them or not important for learning them. I mean surely it is... I suppose some peoples' memory is suitable for picking up combination of figures and other people, others are not. Whereas some other peoples' memories are particularly good at peoples' names and I'm bad at that (laughs)... It was very difficult indeed in the days when I was a director of studies in college. It really was my duty to learn a dozen under-graduates' names a year reliably... Since I've retired, I haven't had to do that, I let the names slowly diffuse into my mind and it's rather shameful. But yes, I suppose it helps that I have a memory... Scottish dances of course, the tradition is that the band will play the named dance, the named tune for the dance once and will then go off into half a dozen variations and finally, for the eighth time through, will go back to the original... tune. Which, if you danced a dance often enough, you can still associate a given tune with a given dance. You may remember that we had a quiz at the Welcome New Year party, in which we played a few bars of twenty fairly well known dances and there were one or two, the winner got nineteen out of twenty I think... and other rather good dancers got hardly any. Now I started this because of the comparison with the Playford dances which certainly in the hey-day of the Round, we danced to one tune all the way through. And you could argue that this was boring, I mean the absolutely extreme example is...oh dear, oh dear, dear, dear... the "Old Mole", where the instructions simply say, play the tune twenty-two times. OK. Or "Picking Up Sticks". Play the tune seventeen times. Well, they are both jolly good tunes but the fact is, one does know what tune goes with those dances. But the other half is, that as soon as anyone plays that tune, you also know exactly what figures to do. You cannot go wrong when the tune tells you explicitly what to do. No whether that's memory, I don't know, I would almost say that it's not going through the memory, it's going directly from the tune to the legs. So... I can still turn up at the Playford ball, I only dance those dances once a year, and most of them I know the tune and therefore I know the figures. And it's relatively hard to decide what to do when I hear a Scottish tune. I perhaps identify the dance, but I can't in the same way say "And therefore that's what I must be doing."

I: Because I find people help me at the second Scottish group with lots of non-verbal cues...

J: Oh yes. Oh yes.

I: Or just one word... Or say "Just watch me and copy." Do you find yourself doing that ever?

J: Oh I think I help people, yes, yes. The second Scottish group is definitely a society where we're prepared to be helpful. I mean I always try to persuade us to actually publish a motto "We giggle and we go wrong"... Now there are societies that don't work like that, and there are definitely some purist societies where anybody going wrong is going to be scowled at and anybody who needs help is really, unless it's officially a beginners' dance, really shouldn't be there. I went on a Scottish dancing walking holiday this last summer and it was a good week, and I was happy with the instructor but one of the instructions he gave on the first evening, first morning workshop actually, was the question of anticipation. And he explained how important it is, at the end of one figure, to be aware of what the next figure is. But he emphasised that this must be a mental awakening. You don't start putting out your hand to turn somebody half a, half a bar early. You warn yourself that that's what you're about to do. Well, of course he's right, if everybody in the set is perfect. But if you are dancing with people who are not perfect, the last thing you must not do is not anticipate the figure. You must put your hand out in good time so that they have the opportunity of working out what it is that they are expected to do. It's all a question of whether... It's all a question of whether it's something you need to fight, or whether really you're wanting to be on display. If you're on display, then really you must not put out your hand till the appropriate note. If you're dancing for fun with people who haven't been at it as long as you have, you put out your hand in advance.

I: It's this element of competitiveness that I've noticed, that some people feel more competitive about Scottish dancing?

J: Do you? ... I don't know that I've noticed it.

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences experiences of yourself?

How would you say it makes you see yourself?

J: I don't know that it does. Do other people know the answer to that question?

I mean it's all back to "I am me." Dancing is a part of me and I am as I am, still moderately healthy, my joints don't creak too much but is that because I'm Scottish dancing or do I do Scottish dancing because my joints don't creak too much... I don't know... I'm sorry, I can't imagine that.

I: How would you say Scottish dancing influences experiences of your health?

J: .... Well as I've already said, every now and then I do register that my knees are thinking of creaking but... I don't know about any real experience of my health. Every now and then I pull the odd muscle which is rather deplorable. There was one absolutely splendid occasion when I was M.Cing the Summer dance and we had got to the third dance in the second half. And I emphasise that, that it wasn't immediately after the interval when my joints might have been a little bit rusty. We'd done two perfectly good dances and indeed... reasonably sure because of the way the programme would be set up, that they would be fast dances, Jigs, and then the third dance was a medley, a Strathspey followed by a Reel. So... I'd been up on the platform and announced that, danced down the steps to go off and join my set, and as I got right down the steps, there was a "Ping" and it wasn't just a "Ping" that I heard, it was a "Ping" that a number of neighbouring groups heard, and I assumed that my garter elastic had snapped. Then I realised that my leg hurt and I went off and attempted to go through that dance and... it

was all rather unsatisfactory. So... at the end of that dance, someone, and I can't imagine how, had a bag of frozen peas. Now I never take a bag of frozen peas with me to a Scottish dance. So if I'm buying frozen peas at the supermarket, I make sure I'm going straight home afterwards. Anyway, I spent the rest of that dance with... somebody's bag of frozen peas round my calf... calf? Yes. And handed over the MC to somebody else. I still don't understand why it happened, as I say, not immediately after the interval. If you go to the society that worries about warming-up, we'd warmed up by that point and... Fortunately, in those days, I still had a wife and I learnt that there was a sports' clinic at the hospital which was prepared to accept Morris dancing injuries as being sports. The only remit is that you have to turn up within 48 hours and so within forty-eight hours of the Saturday evening I turned up at the hospital sports' injury clinic and they... nursed me back to health over the next fortnight. So, yes, Scottish dancing is definitely bad for the health.

I: Any other injuries?

J: Well again, I pulled a muscle half way through... at our last dance, our start of season dance. Fortunately, not so seriously, but again, not at the obvious point. It was the pre-interval dance. So just when one doesn't pull muscles.

I: Did you get your packet of frozen peas?

J: No, I hobbled through the evening.

I: So what do you think are the psychological benefits of Scottish dancing?

J: I don't know. I mean, since my wife died, I'm sure it is extremely good for me to go out and hold peoples' hands. Staying at home would be appalling. And I'm not sure that going to the local historical society is quite, getting in touch people in the same way as dancing with them. So yes, I should think there are psychological benefits but I don't know.

I: When I first met you, you said about Scottish dancing being fun, and that that was the most important thing.

J: .... Well, what more can I add? ... Now I'm retired and alone, you could argue that...why would I do anything that wasn't fun? So... when the sun shines, I got out for a nice long walk and when there's an opportunity of going dancing, I go Scottish dancing. The rest of the time, I still go on dabbling in research. Good for the brain I'm sure, makes me feel I'm still useful. I mean one of the appalling things about retirement is the feeling "Well that's it. Now... why don't you just get on with it and die?" ... And the second Scottish group is short enough of numbers for them to miss me. You can't argue that that's a reason for staying alive, but I can still argue that "Yes, I'm doing some useful research... Yes, yes... Yes, there is a reason for staying alive." So yes, it is a psychological benefit or something but I'm not sure whether it's the dancing.

I: I think you've probably answered the next question already... unless you've anymore to add to that.

J: I think the real answer to that is that I haven't any experience of growing older. It's just that other people are getting younger... But I'm sure this essentially is what almost all old people think, they are still the same. Sometimes it's less obvious. You have to look very hard to see that it is the same face that it used to be. But people don't do that for themselves, we know we're the same face. No, we don't get older.

I: That's great... How has Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body?

J: I wouldn't have thought it had. I mean certainly my wife used to say "Put your shoulders back."... Perhaps it teaches one to stand up straight but I would think it's more what you've been doing all your life. As a university lecturer, I had to spend a fair amount of time on the platform. That must be better for the shape of your body than sitting hunched over a desk all day... Perhaps Scottish dancing helped, perhaps anything that you do on your feet is better for your body than anything you do not on your feet. So yes, perhaps it helps.

I: And the last question... Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance for you?

J: No, I don't think I've missed anything out. I think that's probably all I have to say.

I: Thank you.

## **Second Scottish Interview Five (2.S.5)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

H; Yes.

B: Yes, by all means.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

B: Ladies first.

H: ... Well I had, all through my childhood, I'd done ballet and tap and that kind of thing, and... when I left home, and until I was about 30, I hadn't done any dancing. And I got to a point in my life when sort of changes were afoot and I felt something was missing. And then I discovered a Scottish dancing group, where I was living then. So I joined that. That was it.

I: Any more about joining?

H: ... Well, then I, as I've moved, I mean I've lived in several different places, and I've just gone and joined the group locally, wherever I lived. And here, it's several groups for Scottish dancing and other groups for other dancing.

B: In my case, it was when I moved to live abroad. I... had always been fairly active... in sports. I played a lot of football, cricket, water polo... I swam a lot. Then when I moved abroad I found that I had a lot of spare time, and... I happened to see there was a Scottish dance group and I thought "Oh that should be interesting. I'll go along and see what they're like." So I

joined their beginners' class, and that was that. Enjoyed it and stayed with them. When I moved here I joined, well in fact I joined three of the groups here, but I only belong to two of them now.

I: So where were you abroad?

B: I was in the Netherlands, and there's a Scottish dancing club, very active, there.

I: Are you actually Scottish?

B: I am Scottish. Yes.

H: (Laughs)

B: I had done the occasional Scottish dance when I was very young but I had never learned it.

H: I'm from Yorkshire but my mother was brought up in Scotland, and all through my childhood she had her Scottish records which she played so I knew about Scottish music from quite a young age and it just stays with you (Laughs).

I: So have you been... you mentioned ballet. Have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

H: What, recently?

I: Over the years.

H: Oh well when I was young I did ballet, national, tap and character dancing. And... more recently, since we got married isn't it? We've done ballroom and about a year ago started Argentine Tango, which we still do both of those as well.

B: What is character dancing?

H: Well sort of national dancing, dances of different countries and then interpreting a character (laughs).

B: Never heard of it.

H: Oh modern as well, modern. Kind of stage dancing, it's what they call go-go dancing now but it was... this is a long time ago (laughs).

I: Do you have anything else to say about other things?

B: I hadn't danced, I haven't done any other dancing before I took up Scottish... but as H. says, more recently started ballroom dancing and Argentine tango.

I: How do you find that?

B: Fine. Argentine tango... I find Argentine tango is... possibly more, slightly more, connection is not the right word, but... affinity with Scottish dancing than ballroom has. I don't know if you find that?

H: Yes, because, I think part of it is Scottish dancing there's a very... discernible beat.

I: Mm.

H: The music is definitely telling you pretty well what you should be doing. Not in the finest detail. And the same is true of Argentine tango, you move on the beat, and it's very definite and when they, when they teach you, they spend a lot of time getting you to move properly, actually on the beat. And it's a bit like the heart beat.

I: Yes.

H: That's how I think of it anyway. Oh I think we should say that... though we're married, we didn't marry till about eleven and a half years ago, so when B. was in Holland, I wasn't. We didn't know each other then.

I: Right, right.

H: We actually met here, when B. came and started dancing at one of the Scottish dancing groups that I went to.

I: That's lovely.

H: (Laughs).

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances?

H: ... Well once you've got the basic, I mean the basic steps are quite... difficult for a lot of people to learn, but I think because of my ballet as a child, I didn't find it difficult.... But, and learning dances is easy, remembering dances is not easy (laughs). So... and it doesn't get any easier the more, I don't think it gets any easier, it does if you're dancing a lot and then you go to places where they're dancing the more popular dances, but there's no way you could recall all the dances you've ever done. It's not possible. There are too, well there are thousands of dances, and more made every week so, no chance. But once you've got the basic idea, if someone said to you "Oh you do so and so" then you do a Poussette, you can remember it in eight bar chunks, because that's how Scottish dancing works... What do you think B?

B: Yes, there are so many Scottish dances that you couldn't remember them all, you have to dance, dance one particular dance several times in a short period of time, before you remember it, or before you've got a chance of remembering it. Whereas if you dance once every two, every two or three years, there's not much chance of it sticking in your memory because it will have been overtaken by a more recent one that you've done. So... the short term, remembering it from, from being described at the start of the dance to finishing the dance, that's fine... that's fairly straightforward to remember as H. says, is in chunks, and you recognise movements but... from one week to the next, it's not so easy.

H: And if we go to a dance as opposed to a weekly class, at dances, they don't generally recap the dances for you. You just get up and dance them. So we do ourselves a crib, or B. does it for us, so that we can have a quick look at it as we stand up to dance and we've got a fair idea of what it is we're going to do ....

B: Whereas I know some, we find that alright, but I know that some people don't find it easy to remember, even through the dance what they're meant to be doing.

H: (Laughs) But it doesn't matter, because someone will be able to tell you. But the only thing, the one thing that causes real problems is when...not when someone tells you, that's alright, but when someone tries to pull you into place, that is really (laughs) and we've seen some fire-works happen when that

B: Mm

H: If someone's done that, because people don't like being pulled around (laughs).

I: Can you give examples of how you learn the different dances?

H: Just by dancing them really.

B: Repetition really.

H: Yes. We haven't got a method of, committing them to memory, other than by doing them. That's the only way for us, isn't it B?

B: Yes.

H: I mean you could study a crib for several days in advance of doing a few dances, but they'd be gone (laughs). You couldn't, when you stood up to dance, you wouldn't necessarily remember them, so a little crib is really quite good... with eight bar chunks. That's the best way, if you haven't got them in your memory.

B: Yeah. It's the same, same with ballroom, we're taught, taught a set of steps, a routine, and that's fine and then we can sort of manage it, but after a few days, it tends to have just gone from the memory and...

I: Yeah.

H: You're supposed to slot that little routine into just... normal dancing round the room. And then we do this little (laughs) clever little bit, and then we go on the normal stuff again, but we don't always remember it, do we?

B: No.

H: But when we do, we get a great sense of achievement, when we both realise that it's worked how it should (laughs).

I: I think you've answered my question, how important is memory?

H: (Laughs).

I: Do you have any more to say about learning to dance?

B: .... Well, in dancing classes... the quality of the teacher is important, that probably, probably goes without saying but... a good teacher makes a lot of difference to how well you can learn something...

H: And not only actually learning the steps, but performing dance. I mean sometimes, with Scottish dancing, the two, the row of women and the row of men, are meant to be absolutely straight and lined up, and all through the dance you're meant to make sure that when ever you're on the line it is all properly lined up, lined up with whoever's at the top of the dance. But people are very slack about it, and the dance just doesn't look as good when people are slack, doing that. But lots of people don't even realise it doesn't (laughs) look good (laughs). They're doing it just for the enjoyment of doing it, and it doesn't matter to them if it's all higgledy-piggledy. But it does matter to me, because when you dance, and know the dance, as well as enjoying doing it, you know it looked good if someone was there just to listen to the music and look at the dancing. It looks so much better and it increases your enjoyment, and you can see the patterns that you're, that the dance is making. Whereas if you're lines are higgledy-piggledy, the patterns are not so clear.

I: How much do you use non-verbal cues from the other dancers for the next moves?

H: .... When all of a sudden I can't remember what comes next, I look for a cue from someone. Mostly I don't look for a cue, but in that split second when you know you're dancing, and you don't know what you're meant to be doing, you do look for them. And they come, don't they?

B: Yeah.

H: Because people are genuinely looking, they're not looking down at their feet or round at the walls, they're looking at you doing the dancing, because they know you've got to do your bit, before they can do their bit. And if you don't do your bit (laughs) they can't do their bit and the whole dance falls apart. So everyone has an interest in making sure that everyone as far as possible, does their little bit that they're meant to be doing. So it is a collaborative effort

B: Yes, yes.

H: Most definitely (laughs).

B: A lot of verbal clues as well, given at times.

H: Oh yes. Sometimes I say "What's next, what's next?" But I think so does everyone.

I: You know these little cribs you said you produce when you're going to a dance?

H: Mm

I: What books do you use for finding those cribs?

B: Most of them come from someone else who has done the work and, and, and produced them. If we haven't got a crib that, in that sense, we'll try and find perhaps an original book where the dance was published.

H: There's a database on the internet which is a shared resource, and you can get the dances from there. We've got several little published books of dances at home, and we'll try and find it there. And if that fails, well we'll just have to go to the dance and see what happens.

B: Hm.

H: (Laughs).

B: The dances themselves were often published, a set of cribs for them, for the particular programme. Sometimes that, sometimes we get that in advance when we buy the tickets, other times it's just, there on the, door as we go in.

H: Have you seen the two different forms of cribs? One is a written, a narrative crib, and one is diagrams.

I: Yes, yes,

H: Well when you... get a crib with your tickets, it's never, we've never had diagrams, have we B?

B: No.

H: That's the Piling, diagrams. It's always a narrative, and that's usually what we produce, isn't it? That makes more sense to me. I know the diagrams are very clever, but I'm not familiar enough with them for them to be clever enough to tell me what it is they're saying.

B: Mm. I can follow the diagrams but I think I prefer the... the verbal instructions.

H: And the other thing about the Piling diagrams is they're written from first man's perspective, not from first woman's perspective (laughs). Because Piling was a man (laughs).

I: So that makes it difficult for women?

H: It makes it different, yes. Yes, the woman has to have a bit of mental agility, because the, where the top of the set is, is indicated and it's... it's from that man's, first man's position and not from them. It does make a difference.

I: I notice the Scottish group here, they do little, they do verbal instructions, don't they, for the dances that they're doing each week?

H: Yeah.

B: Yeah.

I: Do you try and learn those before a session then?

B: We don't know what the dances are going to be before we get there. Well there are two, there are two repertoire dances which people are meant to know.

H: Yeah. We've done them so often that we all ought to know them.

B : ... We do sometimes have a look at the cribs for these before we go... the other, the other dances we don't know what's on the programme.

H: Oh dance of the month, we know the dance of the month.

B: Well only if we've been there before in that month. Or perhaps it's published, I don't know.

H: I don't know if it's published. But the others are chosen by whoever's doing the, standing up and ... recapping them for us that week.

B: As I'm going to be doing in four weeks' time.

I: I was going to say, I notice that, that you all seem to take it in turns to lead the dances.

H: Yes, yes. I think that's because people get... well there are at least two sides to it. If you're the person ...going through the dances, telling everyone how to do them, to do that every week is a, quite a commitment and you don't get, the quality of your dancing is probably not as good, because you're not able to concentrate just on your dancing, because you're having to do something else, and the people on the floor's point of view... they get fed up with the same person telling them every week, it's just nice to have a variety. It works better because... if you don't ... change it every week, one person's just taking on too much of a commitment and no-one wants to do it.

I: Yeah.

B: And also when you're doing the programme, you can put one or two of your own favourites in... in a sense, you probably wouldn't get to dance them that easily.

H: (Laughs).

I: But you have to walk them through...

B: Usually, yes.

H: Yes, especially if it's one that no-one else has ever done before. They wouldn't really, well with some groups, you would be able just to stand up the front, tell them what they were going to do, rather than get them to walk it but with the Thursday night group that's not generally possible. With the younger university ones, after they've got a bit of idea about Scottish dancing, you would be able to. Well their... instant recall is better than the older ones. It's just, you notice it if you go to any activity where it's the young university students. I went to a yoga class which was university students, and the teacher goes so quickly, because the students have such a thirst, they don't want to keep doing the same stuff, they want to progress and progress and progress... It's just ever onwards, isn't it?

B: Mm.

H: (Laughs). Which is very nice if you can progress and progress, but we realise that we can't (laughs). If we ever could, we can't now (laughs).

I: So... that leads nicely onto my next question, which is ... How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself?

H: Can you explain that a bit more as to what you mean by that?

I: Well how does Scottish dancing make you see yourself?

H: Oh right.

I: What does it mean for you?

H: ... Well I certainly realise I'm not as young as I was (laughs). I can't dance as well as I used to, but I still always try and dance as well as I can... and I don't have the energy that I used to have, the stamina. I've never been strong on stamina but I used to have more than I have now. Go on, you say a bit B.

B: Well, I don't really know how I can answer this one...

I: Do you have the Scottish clothes? Scottish dress?

B: Oh yes, I do. I like that.

I: Can you describe it?

B: Scottish dancing gives me an excuse to wear it.

I: Can you describe?

B: The main part is... is the kilt, which in my case is one of my own tartan's, one of the clan's tartans, which is predominantly red but also with green-white... and blue in it... and ... various types of jacket, whether it's a day jacket or an evening dress one or one that will do for both, is what I wear a lot of the time now.

H: Some people who've got, or who've had a lot of money, a very nice velvet one with all the lace, ruffles and what have you. But you don't see those very often.

B: ... the stockings... which can be white for evenings or any time for some of us... or self-coloured or perhaps even knitted in the same, the same pattern as the kilt.

H: Or diced, which is a kind of diagonal pattern.

I: Mm

H: And the garter flashes.

B: Garter flashes, yes.

H: Which usually pick up the main colour of the kilt, but they can be the same fabric as the kilt.

B: There are, there are special kilt, kilt shirts that can be worn, for day wear, but I don't have one of those, I just wear an ordinary shirt...

H: They're a bit sort of peasantry, robin hoody... with quite full sleeves and an open neck but laced up.

B: Laced.

H: They're a bit peculiar really aren't they?

B: I don't think so.

H: Sometimes they look nice, but I generally think they look a bit weird.

I: And you have the black shoes?

B: Black shoes, yes the shoes... they don't have any tongues

H: Is this the brogues, the gillie-brogues?

B: And they're laced, part way up, to part way up, the leg.

I: Yeah.

H: With tassels on the ends of the laces.

B: Tassels on the ends of the laces, except where you've lost a tassel.

H: (Laughs) You have to go in search of a new one... And then your other shoes, are dress shoes.

B: Dress shoes have got... silver buckles on.

H: They're buckled shoes.

B: They're slip-ons with a buckle as decoration

H: Do you know Mary-Jane's shoes? They're what they are.

I: Yes.

H: Well they're a bit like that with a silver buckle across the toe, in black and sometimes in patent, aren't they? Can't remember whether yours are patent or not.

B: No.

I: Do you have special Scottish clothes?

H: Well really, the only special item I wear is a silk sash in the same, in the Chisham tartan, generally, if I'm wearing the silk sash it'll be a white dress, a plain white dress, and a silk sash, with a Scottish brooch. Definitely there, preferably with a Cairngorm stone but I haven't got one with a Cairngorm stone. And then little brooches to hold the sash at other points. And that's it really for women, most generally speaking.

B: Mm. But I don't know how, how traditionally Scottish that is or whether it's from the first Scottish group.

H: Could be an invention from the first Scottish group or it might be a Victorian invention.

I: And shoes?

H: ... Not other than dancing shoes, no. No it's the men who are the peacocks in the Scottish dance, well in the Scottish world altogether.

B: Yes, I missed out the Sgiandhu.

I: Alright, tell me.

B: Should I spell that for you?

I: Yes.

H: (laughs)

B: I think "S-G-I-A-N"

I: Yes.

B "D-H-U" ... It means 'black knife'

I: Right.

B: Which is worn, worn in the stocking, or carried in the stocking. And as the name suggests, it's got a black carved handle and

H: Usually carved in a plait, isn't it?

B: Mm. And there's, there's usually a Cairngorm or some other stone on the top of the hilt.

I: Yeah.

B: And

H: Your wee baggie, B.

B: Oh the Sporrans yeah.

H: (laughs)

B: That... that is in place of pockets because there are no pockets in a kilt. And there are various styles of that. Plain... plain leather one... or going up, more and more fancy... not really approved nowadays, are real seal skin ones...

H: Or a badger's head.

B: Or a badger's head, or a fox's head.

H: They're a bit more regimental aren't they, the animal heads?

B: Sort of anything that you... that can be functional or decorative.

I: And what do you keep in it?

B: Handkerchief... Money

H: Bobbies...

B: Bobbies

H: Bobbies

B: Yeah

H: Your crib

B: Yes, your crib. Just things that you keep in your pocket... or a lady would keep in her hand-bag, possibly.

H: You don't have a bonnet, do you, B?

B: I don't have a bonnet. No, there are different types of Scottish hat... There's a tam o'shanta which is a round sort of berry like

H: With a pom-pom on top.

B: And there's...

H: Oh the pom-pom's a "turvy"

B: It's got a wee "turvy" on it.

H: (Laughs)

B: The other hat is the... "Glengarry" which is...

H: It's a bit military like

B: A bit military like ... sort of

H: You know the air force hats?

I: Yes.

H: That kind of shape.

B: Yes

H: Not the flat cap ones, the little ones that they put

B: A side cap with a ribbon hanging down the back. I've actually got one of these but it isn't... I didn't get it for Scottish dancing, I got it for another reason...

I: So your shoes, do you have laces like B.'s?



H: No, no... the men's dancing shoes are called "Gillies", they're the laced ones. And women can wear them if they choose but I find them very ugly, on a woman's foot. So I prefer the little, ballet shoe, looking type of things. But you were asking about what dress. Well neither of us... any more, does... Highland dancing. Where of course the women do do Highland dancing, nowadays. It's mostly women and they do have special, costumes, but it's the kilt and a waistcoat. So it's like the men's Scottish but womanised a bit, feminised a bit.

I: Did you used to do Highland?

H: ...Only as a sideline, not seriously. You have to start from a child to be any, really any good at Highland.

I: Why is that?

H: ... It's a very tough discipline really, it's quite hard on the body. It's a bit like a ballet training... having done ballet, knowing what Highland is and what the youngsters go through, it's that kind of discipline. And it's very much right up, not actually on the points of your toes, but right up, not on the balls of your feet, sort of... onto the underside of your toes almost so ... it's hard and it's not an older person's thing, because you need a lot of spring in your legs and of course that's one of the things that goes as you get older.

I: Have you ever done Highland?

B: Only half an hour.

H: (Laughs).

B: And decided that it wasn't for me.

H: And there's another form...

B: Ladies' Step

H: There's Ladies' Step dancing which is very, very balletic in a quiet way.

I: I've done some.

H: You've done it? It's very, very difficult and very tiring and doesn't look a great deal but it takes a lot out of you. And I have done that but I don't do that any more because I find it just takes too much out of you. It's the spring in the legs again.

I: Thank you.... Anything else about how Scottish dancing influences you?

H: ... We're definitely part of a group, aren't we? There's a group mentality

B: Yes, yes

H: To it and that influences you. You always know that if you go on a Thursday night you'll be welcomed and people are pleased to see you, which is very nice indeed. You don't get that from all sorts of other activities that you think you're doing in a group. But certainly Scottish dancing you do, don't you?

B: You don't feel... an outsider.

H: No

B: We've gone to Scottish dancing groups... in America and Canada, and we've been thoroughly welcomed.

H: They fall over themselves to make you welcome in fact.

B: Yeah, yeah.

H: You know it's good. You can go anywhere in the world pretty well, and find a Scottish country dancing group and they'll welcome you.

I: That's great.

H: It is (laughs)

I: So how would you say Scottish dancing influences experiences of your health?

H: Mm....

I: You can take a minute to think.

H: (Laughs)

B: Certainly it keeps, keeps the fitness levels up.... Certainly good for, good for the leg... and body muscles too, because you have to move your top half as well as the bottom half...

H: And breathing as well, if you haven't been Scottish dancing, for a while, say a few weeks or a couple of months, and then you start again, you blow quite hard because you're out of breath, till your body accustoms itself, which will take a few weeks... So I notice that.

B: And just the general feeling of happiness... a feeling of well being, that things are good.

H: When I have been injured, not through Scottish country dancing, I had a frozen, a very bad frozen shoulder and I couldn't do anything... my arm was kind of pinned to my side. And just going along to listen to the music and watch other people dance and... be in like-minded company, makes you feel a lot better about things.

I: Mm.

B: There's a negative aspect too of course.

H: (Laughs)

B: Your torn muscle and... one of our friends developed plantar-fasciitis, which is a very painful foot condition.... which certainly limited the amount of Highland dancing that she was doing. Very often you find yourself dancing on very hard floors and that's not good for joints.

H: Or tendons... definitely. And one of our friends in Holland... last year, fell over during a Scottish country dance and broke her hips (laughs) and that wasn't very good. And another guy had a heart attack and died on the dance-floor, didn't he?

B: Yeah

H: And he wasn't ancient. He was only 50, around 50 wasn't he? He was very overweight but he was a very enthusiastic dancer and I'm afraid... well he died happy, didn't he B?

B: I guess so, yeah.

I: That's the way to go.

H: (Laughs) Yes. A bit traumatic for everyone else, but for him, very good.

B: But I think generally it is a very positive benefit on health and I think the exercise, just in itself, is good. And I think it's...

H: Exercising to music isn't it? Which is... of benefit.

B: There's more exercise in the Scottish dancing than in the two others that we do

H: Oh Definitely.

B: But... there's also the mental exercise, you think "What's coming next?" And you've really got to work your brain to, to keep going so, so generally I think Scottish gives a good work-out for the whole person. Body and mind and memory.

H: But as you said, for what it means to you, it gives you a chance to wear your Scottish outfit, when really other opportunities are very limited indeed. To weddings mostly. Not a lot else.

B: No.

I: So have either of you been injured Scottish dancing?

B: Well I've torn a muscle that's all, that's about all.

H: I don't think I've ever been injured, as such, except... when I went to St Andrews a few years ago, for the summer school. So we were doing lessons in the morning, optional lessons in the afternoon and dances in the evening. So effectively you're dancing all day long... because of overuse of my knees and ankles, I ended up with elastic bandages on both knees and both ankles. But of course being there for a summer school, you don't want to miss anything. You just wrap yourself up and carry on and let your body recover later.

I: So you're doing it all day, everyday?

H: Yes. And mostly it's too much for people's bodies, even if they don't admit it (laughs). It's alright for the younger ones... the 20 year olds, 30 year olds. When you get to 40... you're starting to feel overuse of your tendons and joints is a bit tough.

B: We haven't tried the veteran's class, have we?

H: Especially because some of the floors are hard and are not suitable for that kind of dancing. And that's one of the, one of the major causes of injury I think, and injuries starting from a young age and becoming apparent later, is that we don't have sprung floors, for dancing and we should have sprung floors for that kind of dancing. Especially because we don't wear sort of technologically advanced shoes, there's nothing in your shoe to help you, it's just your feet and what you get back from the floor, and if it's a solid floor you get nothing back.

I: You mentioned about the class for veterans?

B: Yes. That's at summer school, there's a class for veterans. We haven't been to that one.

H: They made a class for veterans because a lot of the, we're talking about octogenarians here... they tended, if they came to one of the other classes, they tended to slow things down a bit... Some of them would have been very, very good dancers, and even some of them would have been teachers but their, being able to move quickly and well was not as good as it had been in the past but they didn't want to admit it. So the powers that be made this other class where there was still dancing but also more talking about the finer points of technique, which gives people a chance for their bodies to recover a wee bit, and do a bit more dancing and a bit more talking, rather than all dancing which is what most of the lessons are at summer school (laughs)... So that's really good, isn't it? People can still be involved, and there always have been a lot of pretty elderly people who have been the powers that be in the organisation and that's a way of life to them, and it would be cruel to try and get rid of them really cruel, because that's their life. And so they're accommodated, aren't they? It's better now, it used to be that you couldn't get rid of them when they should have gone... passed on to something like the veterans' class. But still being part of the whole, I don't mean hived off into a separate bunch altogether. But for their classes, they could do something else which didn't tax them physically quite as much but they would still be involved in the general dancing and all the rest of it in the evening. So each to their own ability, even if they didn't want to recognise what their current ability is.

I: I've noticed some of the older dancers just walk through the dances.

H: Yes.

I: But they know them.

H: Oh yes.

B: They know them and they get to the right place at the right time.

H: Yes. They don't ... they take up, they're very good. I think that's right that they should keep coming because it's good for them and it's good for us, really. Some... you have... to make quite a lot of accommodation for them really, because they are stepping and not dancing, the amount they move is quite small sometimes, and so you have to dance round them a bit, without making a big show of it, to accommodate that they're not going to cover as much floor, as maybe you would like them to. But apart from that... no problem, is there B?

B: No.

I: Right. So how do you think Scottish dancing has changed your experience of your body? Or your relationship with your body?

B: I don't know that it has. I was always, well certainly before my late change in adult life, I was always playing a lot of sport, so I was quite well aware of what my body would do.

H: (Laughs)

B: Of what my body wanted to do. And that might be different from what I wanted it to do. So I don't know that the dance has changed my perception of it that much. So I don't know that the dance has changed my perception of it that much.

I: How does it compare with the other sports you've done?

B: ... Reactions don't need to be so fast... that's probably the main

H: You're not stopping and starting so violently in dancing, are you?

B: No, that is true, yeah.

H: Even in cricket you're stopping and starting quite violently, in terms of what your body has to do.

B: Yes, yes, yeah. In football, you can always be thumped by someone (laughs)

H: (Laughs) That doesn't generally happen on the dance floor (laughs).

B: No, no. I kept on (inaudible) in football, which hasn't happened on the dance floor.

H: (Laughs) I don't think it's changed my experience of my, body. I've always been aware of my, body. I've never allowed myself to get overweight or anything like that, so the only time I was unhappy with my body really was when I had that frozen shoulder and I couldn't do any exercise. Well I could walk. I couldn't do any of the exercise that I like to do, which is generally something to music. But we do go walking, don't we B. ?

B: Yes.

H: But that's usually once a month now, with a group. So I don't really think it's changed my experience of my body in any way.

I: Do you think that's because you've done ballet as a child?

H: No, I don't think so. I think I've always been determined not to be overweight, I don't want to be thin but I don't want to be overweight because I, just don't want to be like that. And I've seen how difficult it is for people to lose weight. Once they've put ...just a little bit on. So I'd rather not have that bother (laughs). And I suppose dancing... you wouldn't want to put on too much weight if you're dancing, because presumably it makes it more difficult for your body, so....

H: I certainly know that I'm less supple and slower now than I was, but I don't know that I would say that dancing has made me aware of that. So it's just the fact that I'm aware of that.

H: And dancing reinforces it really, doesn't it?

B: Yes.

H: Because I said earlier... I can't dance as well as I used to, and part of that is because, not because I'm not putting the effort in, but because my body can't do, those things as well as they used to.

I: So... onto the last one... is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

H: Well I'd be a very sad and diminished person if I couldn't do any dance, really. It's a major source of enjoyment to me. The fact that it has health benefits is a by-product really, it's the enjoyment, with other people.

B: Yeah... a social activity that's good for you, so... Yes, I think I'd say the same as H., that it is an important part of my life. I'd be very sorry not to have it... if that were the case.

I: Anything else?

H: No I don't think so, no. I mean it would close down, if we didn't dance anymore, it would close down a huge part of our social life, because there's not only the classes, there's going to a dance on a Saturday, not just Scottish, that might be ballroom or Argentine tango. And ... I think most of our social life probably is based on dancing, isn't it B?

B: Yes

H: Not all of it, but most of it.

B: What you haven't asked us is why we think that Scottish dancing is popular everywhere across the world.

I: Can you tell me why?

B: Well we could say the social aspect, all the things we like about it but that doesn't fit everything. Why, why are there groups in Japan, who are all Japanese people?

H: Who are very, very good at Scottish dancing. Brilliant.

B: So there's something about the Scottish dancing that does appeal to people generally and... I don't know what that particular something is. I think you find these sort of folk dancing groups, in other countries, when they're away from home in countries, it tends to be mostly I think in a way, ex-patriot nationals that form these groups. But that's not the case with Scottish dancing. The group in Holland that I started with, the large majority were native Dutch people and the founder was a Dutch, Dutch lady who had a full teaching certificate for...

H: For Scottish Country dancing.

B: For Scottish Country dancing, yeah. I don't know if you have any answer to that question.

H: No I don't. I don't know what it is that touches people. No idea.

I: Do you think it's something to do with this feeling of community?

B: I'm sure that's part of it. But you get that with any group of dancers, wouldn't you?

H: I don't know if to some...I mean there's quite a lot of technique in Scottish country dancing. You wouldn't always think so but there is a lot of technique in the footwork.

B: And it's challenging.

H: It is challenging... I think some nationalities, that appeals to them, I think the dress, the costume not the dress, the costume appeals to other nationalities. But other than that, I don't know. Maybe they've had some early influence, that's just sent them along that way. I've no idea. You'd have to ask them (laughs).

B: It sort of appeals to mathematicians, doesn't it?

H: You could go global on this (laughs).

B: Can't you get your university to fund a visit to Tokyo and or Los Angeles? To speak to people there.

I: (Laughs). Great.

## Second Scottish Group Interview Six (2.S.6)

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

D: Yeah, that's fine.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish and Circle dancing?

D: Well I've always enjoyed dancing, I enjoy music. I used to be a singer. An amateur singer. And then I thought I wanted some exercise and I found a class. I joined ballroom to start with. Disaster. Because although I went to see the lady who taught it, she never said a word and when I got there, she said "Oh my ladies don't like their men dancing with other ladies." So I sat at the side. I wasted my money. And I thought "Oh Lord." And then I got to Scottish dancing, so you dance either way round, everybody dances everything, you don't have a set partner. Much better. It's much more social.

I: So how many years have you been Scottish dancing?

D: Not all that long actually, no.... Well, twenty perhaps. But I mean some people have been dancing all their lives... since they were little, if they were born in Scotland, they probably learnt at school. But I never did.

I: So how did you hear about it?

D: I saw an advert. I think for evening classes. And I went out to a village nearby, the beginners class there with B. And I did two years with her in the beginners' class, I'd have never moved up except the class all moved up. So I had to move up with her. And we did just step practice. And it was just in a ... changing room, nothing with a proper dance floor or anything. So we were going up and down the changing room with all the pegs on the side of the walls. And we just did, literally, Strathspey or the jig, or whatever it was, and a few moves, Reel or... but no dances, I don't remember doing any dances at all, maybe we did but I don't remember. And then when the whole class moved up, and she closed her class, I had to go up with them. Otherwise I'd still be in beginners I think. (laughs)

I: So where did you go when you moved up?

D: I think it was J.'s class. It moved from various places. One time we were up at the M., and then we were over... all over town, wherever we could find a good floor. ... it's settled down now, as you know, at the N., but it wasn't always there.

I: So this was the first group?

D: Yeah, yeah. Just how I saw it advertised, in evening classes, it must have been evening classes. Like you found A., there was B. doing Scottish dancing and I love Scotland, I thought "I'll give that a try." I think I knew Gay Gordons and... Dashing White Sergeant and that was about it. I enjoyed them, so I thought "Right, I'll have a go at that." And I love the music... I love the people, they were very friendly, very nice. And everybody danced everything, you never had to sit at the side. If I go to dance, then I go to dance, I don't want to sit at the side and sit and watch other people. I'm hopeless at watching other people. So I very rarely sit at the side, unless... there isn't a set. Mostly there is. They're very good at including everybody always, always. And gradually one joined other things, you find it snowballs. I went along to the second group too early actually, and I couldn't cope, I was obviously... just standing in the way. And I thought "Go away from that, I'm not ready yet." So it was a long time before I joined it. Till I really knew the moves.

I: So how many years have you been with them?

D: Ten perhaps. It was a long time before I went there. And then now there's a little group, of three or four, who are inclined to go at weekends to dances elsewhere. But then of course you never get to practice them. You just arrive and do them. And they're not dances we do locally. Each area has... it's own favourite dances. So if you go somewhere else, it's a dance you've never seen before in your life. If you don't know what's being called, then heaven help you. You get a crib these days. I think practically every dance now has a crib. But they never used to... You were supposed to know the dances. They weren't called, nothing. It was announced and you got up and did it. I mean heaven help you if you didn't know it, because you were in the way. It's very different now. Every group calls the dances. Quite possibly walks it, if it's a difficult dance. One that's... fairly new, or a very complicated dance, they'll actually walk through it. But a lot of the dances, they're just... you're get given a crib and you get up and do it. Most people don't read the crib the night before. But it goes in one ear

and out the other. I can't sit there and read, dance after dance, they're all confused. So... how do you find it on a Thursday. More or less cope?

I: Yes... if someone prompts me. If I'm struggling as to what's the next move, if someone says, if I'm struggling as to what's the next move, if someone says "It's Half Reel of Four."

D: Then you know what that is.

I: I know what the moves are.

D; That's good.

I: But it's sometimes remembering them in the right order.

D: It's a very good mental exercise as well as physical exercise.

I: Yes.

D: To remember them. And that's half the battle. And usually by the time you've walked to the end of the dance, can you remember what the first move was? Because it was so long ago that you've forgotten, is it Set and Cross or Cross and ... you've forgotten the first move. Because some of them are quite complicated... that's half the challenge. I think that's why men enjoy doing it as much as women. Because it is a challenge. It really is. And the really difficult man's Highland is very difficult, it really is a challenge. Have you seen the men do Highland dancing?

I: No. Can you tell me a little?

D: It's very energetic. It's a lot of jumping up and down on one leg. And then it's got arms as well. I mean ladies don't dance with arms, they wear skirts or whatever and they really don't have to worry about arms. But men do. And it's a lot of very high... with the leg. Ladies always keep their feet quite low... you don't pull your leg up anywhere. It's not discrete. But the men do. Oh yeah. And I couldn't do it. I've never been able to. There's a lot of kind of flicks and... backwards and forwards round one leg. I can't do it. You're seeing, you're interviewing R. aren't you?

I: Well I've got quite a few people.

D: Because he does quite a lot of Highland dancing... he can tell you more about men's Highland.

I: Because one of my questions is... How important is memory?

D: Very... I can see when older people, I mean someone like G. or D., although they know the dances, they can't remember them... A dance is called and D. can reel it off, halfway through the dance he's forgotten where he's got to. His memory, he doesn't remember it now in the same way that he did. He can stand in the middle and he's forgotten which way he's going. It's just pure age, I'm sure it is. And the young people in the Reel club, they just remember these things. They don't see there's a problem, they're told what the dance is, they just get up and do it. And it goes later on. The older people can usually remember the original dances that they learnt, but the new ones they simply can't. Anything new they find it difficult. And they are always producing new moves as well.... the Taj and various strange things... They just don't know what it is, they can't begin to understand it.

I: Can you explain the Taj?

D: It's two couples... the men turn three quarters in the middle and the partner goes round a quarter then you turn your partner completely, put the men back in the middle, they go round another three quarters and the lady goes round a quarter and you turn your partner again. But it's quick. Very quick. And if you diddle... you've lost it because you haven't got round to your partner. And he who hesitates is completely lost. If you're trying to work it out half way round, it's happened, it's finished, it's all done in about four bars. It's a fairly new move, not like Set and Cross which is fairly basic. Some of the moves... are more difficult.

I: So how do you learn the different dances?

D: By class, just repetition, remembering the dance. Partially by the music. A lot of dances have their own special music. I mean the Sailor, we always dance to the same music.... You hear that music and you know what to do because you've been doing it, that's always what we dance to that piece of music. So away you go, and it's obvious. But sometimes people don't have the right music. They come and say "Well I haven't got the right music for this dance." So you've got no help there but you've got the speed, the number of bars and that kind of thing, but it's not the tune that you've practiced to. The dance is usually done to the same piece of music ..... You know what the music is for the Eighth-some, I expect, don't you? Well you hear the Eighth-some and you more or less get up and do it.... because you just know what comes next, you can hear it in the music, you can hear the refrain coming back again so you learn it, partially through the music. Or your partner says "It's this way" ... or "It's that way" or... Everyone's dancing as a group. They put out a hand, you know you've got to go that way.

I: I find those non-verbal cues invaluable.

D: Some people don't like them. We had one... girl who was learning and somebody put out a hand and helped her this way and she absolutely flew off the handle... (growls) "I can cope, I don't need that, I don't need the other... Leave me alone." We were only trying to help. But it was a big mistake for her. Other people like it. We're all different. You just have to get to know people... she was new and unsure and fair- enough. She became quite a good dancer but... hated any form of help, particularly when she was first starting.

I: It's different strategies for learning... People learn in different ways.

D: Oh yeah do anything, whatever you're learning. Some people can do it, cookery or whatever it is, other people can read a book on music and understand it, and other people have to keep practicing. Each, we're all different.

I: You say you came to dancing through music and singing. Can you say a little bit more about how you were involved in music and singing?

D: Well I suppose I joined an operatic group as soon as I left school. I was at boarding school so I hadn't met anyone and most of my family had been singing in the local operatic at home, G... I think I have, my father sang one and an aunt on either side sang, so I've got all the scores so... what should you do? Someone who doesn't know anybody? Just straight out of school. "Oh we'll shove you into the local operatic... and you'll be alright there." My father sung to me, some of the choruses as a child... and my mother played the piano but she didn't play Scottish, she played Chopin or something classical... So I did that for years... don't know, I suppose I had a free evening. What shall I do on Tuesdays? I looked out for evening classes and I saw

dancing and I thought "Oh well, give it a whirl." I'd done some ballroom dancing at school. "I'll join ballroom dancing" but... unless you've actually got a partner... maybe I was just unlucky with the group I joined, I guess. They were dancing American Square dancing, and that seemed a bit stuffy. You weren't allowed out on the floor until you'd done a certain number of tests. And then you worked out for the first hour and then you had to go because the people who knew what they were doing then stayed and did all the kind of fancy dances later on. Well, I could actually see perfectly well what they were doing, I could have done it. And they all had to wear kind of special gear, with sort of tassles on and.... the full skirts, lots of petticoats, kind of thing. I mean with Scottish they ask you to wear a full skirt, but even that's more or less gone. I dance in trousers, and special shoes, but they're not very expensive, are they? I mean £20. When you think of ski equipment, climbing or bicycling, it's terribly expensive. Swimming ... you pay £300 a month for the class on the evening. Couple of pounds. The first group want you to join but you don't have to. You can still go to the class and just pay by the class. The second group, what is it? £2.50 a night? Very reasonable, isn't it? What's the cinema now? Four? Five? I don't know.

I: Yes.

D: All you need really is a pair of shoes... Surely most people can afford that?

I: How do you find the floors?

D: Hard... We're having trouble with the second group's floor, they won't let us put down slip-stop and frankly I think it's dangerous. Because that floor is very slippery now, we always used to put down slip-stop... powder. And they won't let us put down the powder. For the older people, if there's an accident, heaven help us... And I don't know why they've suddenly changed, because they've danced there for forty years or so, I mean we haven't changed. They've changed. So they've got a new care-taker or something, I don't know. But I'm sure we'd be happy to sweep the floor. We'd sweep the floor on a Thursday when we finished. I'm sure ...that would solve things... sweep the floor there. Have you ever danced at ... it's a sprung floor?

I: No. I haven't.

D: It's on the first floor, you're not dancing on solid concrete, it's lovely... and there's a floor I think, it's in L. somewhere, which is literally built as a sprung floor, you can wind it up and down at the sides... and it's got tremendous give and you can stand there, you can feel it bouncing, if everyone's dancing in time, you're waiting for your turn, you can feel that floor bouncing, it's wonderful. You finish the evening and you're as light as a feather. Some floors... you're dancing on solid concrete. Doesn't do peoples' feet much good.

I: Like at N., the Ladies' Step?

D: It's fairly, fairly hard... But I always dance with insoles in my shoes. I would never dream of dancing without insoles.

I: Do you find it gives you some protection?

D: Much, much better. I think I've got at least two pairs in each shoe now... you get endless knee problems and... all sorts of things if there's nothing between you and the floor. And you're jumping. It's like jogging. And they have special shoes now, don't they?

I: Have you injured yourself Scottish dancing?

D: No, I've been very lucky but I've seen other people... people have awful trouble with their knees. I'm lucky, well I suppose I'm reasonably fit, but I've always worn in-soles. Once you wear them, you realise how much more comfortable it is. Do you put in-soles in your shoes?

I: I haven't but I think I will from now on.

D: It would be a jolly good idea actually, I think it should be recommended. I mean I just go to an ordinary shoe-shop and buy... the rubber, not the fleecy ones obviously and not the cork ones. You can get rubber, any shoe-shop will sell them to you, any shoe repairs... a couple of pounds. Get the right size... It makes all the difference... Wow.

I: It's also this thing that there aren't enough suitable floors are there really?

D: There was a lovely floor out at C.... it was a big car park, with places to do refreshments, and lovely big floor. And they made it into a garden centre. And I know there's a lovely floor under that. It will never come back now... Such a shame. People could get out there. We had several dances out there. It was a lovely place. Any dancer would appreciate that floor. But... it's under pots of, rhododendrons now or something. God knows what they've got in there. It'll never come back. But it's always a problem to find... a place. Most people now want a car park, which the group hasn't got. But I never have a problem parking there. I've always managed. Drive round a little bit perhaps. It's worse in the summer when they're playing bowls. And then ... the people who are wanting the bowls, are also parking there. So ... it's double the number of people are trying to park round there... Sometimes people... we're not late, we never dance beyond ten I don't think, very rarely, unless there's an actual dance. It's not very late for a caretaker for an evening activity, you'd think they'd let us use their halls a bit more. Schools have got good halls. We used to dance at... C. school over at ... and they've got a... artificial floor, it's carpet. Makes it very hot. And it's one of these kind of gym floors. It's quite good to dance on. It is strange, to dance on kind of hair cord. I don't know what it is. A kind of wiry thing. But they won't let us, I don't know what happened there, but the local group weren't allowed to use it any more. Whether they've changed the use of their hall, I don't know what happened. It was a nice place to dance... great big school car park... the dinning hall, and it was all very nice...

I: Because you think about the government emphasising the importance of exercise...

D: Sport.

I: I mean there's not adequate facilities for people to dance.

D: We don't want much... We want a plug to ... put in the loudspeaker ... the, whatever it is, player... Not much else really but a party and a reasonable size floor. We don't ask very much. I don't why some of the schools, perhaps they've all got too much going these days. There's a lot of dance goes on locally you see... a lot of folk groups. Perhaps they're all using the halls. Scouts. Choirs. It is a shame. But it is difficult to find a hall. I: Could you tell me a bit about how you got involved in Circle dancing?

D: Well that's a new thing just this year because I've just retired... and I looked through the brochure. What shall I do on a Monday afternoon? There's not an awful lot of people, lot of things to do on a Monday afternoon. I don't want to study a language... I don't want to do... that seemed to be the thing to do on a Monday afternoon. I thought I'd give it a try. And I'd met the teacher before.

I: Right.

D: And I do international dancing. Some of the dances are the same. But I've only been doing that since October.

I: So how do you find Circle dancing?

D: Well it's got some nice music... it's all come from the correct, music from the different countries. It's very nice music.... And the lady is very nice and she's very helpful and... it's a nice group. But they're hardly energetic. Perhaps it's a restful... after a challenge... But it's better than sitting around watching television, isn't it? I think I'll probably carry on but the first year, I'm just sort of seeing what's available... And that was what was available on a Monday afternoon. I do a class in town on Monday morning... so I walk back, it's on my way back.... We do one slightly energetic dance and everyone's panting and sitting at the side and gasping. And I think "Oh dear." But then I dance again in the evening so... And I usually walk back from town... all kitted up on the way, and then carry on.

I: I was just interested in how you see it as comparing with Scottish dancing?

D: Hardly compares at all. They're very simple. Mostly. The music I enjoy. And it's got this slightly kind of... not religious, but... kind of sending the spirits out into the world and... they're kind of invoking environmental green trees or something... we're all hugging a tree or whatever it is....well OK, I'm not averse to that. It's hardly challenging, is it?... They're a nice lot of people....

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the Circle dances?

D: I've done quite a few of them before in any case so...

I: That was through international folk?

D: Yeah.

I: How long have you been doing that?

D: Oh I did that longer than the Scottish. Almost as soon as I came here I think I started.

I: So how many years?

D: Oh gosh, I came in '68.

I: Right... do some maths there.

D: About 40 years I think... that comes and goes a bit, depending on who's running it. Different people have different ideas. We used to have a lot of language schools. One school used to send in about 100 people on a Monday. What shall we do with them on a Monday? ... Send them Circle/ international. Because they meet other international students. It was really for international people here. Get them to do something. But really they don't come from the language schools at all now. And then at one point we used to take the Circle dancing out to the school.... About once a month. And get them to do it there. Because they were too precious to come into town. Do you know the school?

I: Yes.

D: They do have huge fees. Poor little dears...it wasn't suitable. So... we took it out to them... and then they brought their kind of ... hosts with them sometimes... Have a sort of social evening... In the summer, out on the terrace, they'd have a bit of food or something or... And then we danced on the grass... It was extremely nice but they just simply don't want it now. They've got different management, the new people aren't interested... Goodness... They stand at the side and drink and smoke, and that's about it...you can't get them to move. They simply will not dance. You get the odd one who comes in and joins us, on a Monday, they've got leaflets up there, but they simply don't come. They're into the discos or the, I don't know what they're doing, break dancing. What do they do these days, in the dark, by themselves? They kind of jump up and down by themselves, don't they? There's no skill in it as far as I can see. Absolutely none. But I've never really done it. It used to be very nice. You'd get huge circles of 100 people dancing on the grass on a summer evening. It was lovely. People really enjoyed it. But they simply don't do it now. The other language schools, they've never done it. At one point the international club used to do coach trips as well and that got more people interested. It was a club for anything. Just for international people to meet other international people... when they're here on language courses... The chap who ran the coaches has died now but he used to take them up to York or he'd take them to the Tower of London or he'd take them... wherever at the weekends and then there's something for them all to do. He'd get two or three coach loads going off, weekends away sometimes but... the chap has died... it's all different.



I: So how big is international folk now?

D: It's quite small now. But I mean there's international folk dancing going on all round the world... The University has got a group obviously, not far off the Round. Have you been to the Round?

I: No I haven't. But I've heard about it.

D: I think it's vaguely similar but I haven't been to the Round. I mean there are groups, it's very strong in London, Cecil Sharpe house, you've heard of? I've been to dances there, no, well one. I mean well people do go, and there's a dance there every month and classes and all sorts of things and people come from far and wide to go there and most towns have international dance groups. On holiday in the summer, we do international folk dancing, it's from all round the world. New Zealand, there's something from Russia, something from China... It's quite different, and they don't have the steps that Scottish dancing has. It's more or less sort of walking round, and making patterns... Well simple steps, but nothing like the Scottish steps... very precise. It's lovely music and it's what people were dancing. Dance is for, it's forever is dance, people have always danced... I mean Scottish dancing, well probably Scotland has.

I: How do you find the Ladies' Step?

D: Hard. Because I haven't really got a ballet background. And it's very much based on ballet, I think. You didn't go to the day school...

I: Yes, I did.

D: Oh yeah. Well, how did you find the second dance?

I: Hard.

D: Well K found it hard too and she's been doing step-dancing... all her life. And she couldn't cope either. She said she found it hard. Highland is more difficult. A challenge.

I: Have you done any Highland?

D: Well I've seen it, and it's not for me. It's really not. C. likes doing Highland. A lot of ladies do do men's Highland and quite a lot of men do do Ladies' Step. I mean there is no reason why you shouldn't, no reason at all. Highland dancing is more sort of... you do it in the middle of an Eighthsome, a solo activity. And they do it at games in Scotland.

I: You've been in productions like the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera.

D: Yeah.

I: Do you dance in these productions?

D: ... I have but on the whole they have young dancers come in, the K. school used to come in and do it, one or two groups will come in on the whole ... the group that I belong to doesn't really think that they're dancers, they think that they're singers.... We once spent an entire evening doing a Grand Chain, two steps to a hand, and we still finished up with all the men one side and all the ladies the other side. I mean you would think that a singer could work out two bars to a hand... they know what music is, they still got it wrong. They're not dancers. We did a Cockney, sort of knees up for My Fair Lady, but on the whole, no they're not. We can manage a waltz, if pushed to it. But they're not really dancers.... They're what you'd call singers more and kind of moving, chorus moving around...

I: So do you sing quite a lot?

D: I used to, but I don't so much now because I enjoy dancing more... Singing is very competitive. It can be. If you want to be a soloist... they're all trying for the solo roles... having auditions and all the rest of it. Well you simply don't get that with Scottish dancing. There's really very little... competition. On the whole... people who can dance are inclined to look round and take out somebody who can't.

I: Yes. So how many times a week do you dance?

D: Depends where we are in the year. In the summer, in August, there's hardly any dancing at all... R. does six weeks of garden dancing in his garden in July... Most dances finish in June and start again in September. But then in university term, there are classes like the Reel club.

I: So how many times would you be...

D: Well the university dance term... Mondays there's Reel club, Tuesdays intermediate, Wednesdays there's advanced, Thursdays is the second group, Fridays might be... contra, I try the American contra dancing up here, it's new... Saturday there's usually a dance and Sunday it might be Ladies' Step or Fosse and Drewry.

I: So you dance every day?

D: Well, in term time but then if it's kind of, first week in January, then there's really very little. The second group keeps going all the way, it doesn't dance in August... It really depends where you are in the term, in the year. Very much... French dancing. I do international dancing on a Monday out of university term... It really all depends where we are...

I: Would you have liked to be a professional dancer?

D: No, I couldn't. I'm certainly not... neat footed... A ballet dancer, you have to learn from about three or four, and really work at it, and have the right physique as well.

I: But I was noticing how in the Circle dancing, you're ahead of the teacher.

D: But she doesn't always fit it to the music, as you've probably discovered. It goes across quite often when she's forgotten where she is. I mean she's not a professional teacher, she's doing an extremely good job as a volunteer. And she's very enthusiastic and she's got a wonderful repertoire of dances, but she doesn't always work them out. And she doesn't always make it fit the music. She hasn't... OK. So what? It's what her group is. So she's got a keen following, she's doing a jolly good job.

I: It's just I've noticed you always...

D: There's a couple of people try to make it fit the music but she doesn't. She just simply doesn't hear it. And some of these... Greek dances, just sort of wander about... I mean Scottish music is eight, phrases of eight... and Greek just sort of wanders about, you could pick it up anywhere... there's no shape to it at all, you just start off when you're ready. And you can change it at any point... D. teaches a dance on a Monday, at international, and once we've got a certain move, he changes it. And we all have to copy it the next time round. But he just changes it when we're ready. He doesn't have a set pattern at all. There are various variations... whether you stamp your heels or pat your shoulders or turn round or whatever. He just introduces another feature, once we've all got the first feature. There is no set pattern... And that is difficult, you just have to, I mean it is not a dance you learn, it's a dance you follow... and a lot of international dances, they're just you follow. It's not a set... pattern. Or else you get a pattern and you copy it again and again and again.... It's very different. And Scottish have actual set dances... it's a 48 bar... you do it from here, the first place, second place and then it moves down again another 48 and another 48. And then the Greek, just you're in a circle and you wander round and copy what the leader's doing. Very, very different. And it's more kind of... walking backwards and forwards and then you might kind of slap your heel at one point, and then the next time round you tap at one point, and the next time round you're turning one point, but I mean there's no pattern, no pattern at all, it's just that's the leader. It's just like a party game, Grandmother's Footsteps, he keeps changing it and tries to catch you out.

I: Yes.

D: It's a different concept.

I: I mean the Scottish dancing is very structured, isn't it?

D: Oh yes, it's all set down. Very. It depends. It's different. It is what suits.

I: Do you think that's why Scottish appeals to more men?

D: Probably.

I: Because it kind of like requires that kind of like pattern or...

D: It's just a challenge mentally. It really is. They have it easier than the women. Because the women dance as men. And you suddenly realise "Oh heavens, I'm a man, I'm a man! I should have gone... left hand not right hand!" And the men are always men. Actually, they're not. In the Reel club, quite often there are too many men. Quite often they dance as ladies in order to make up the sets. No... good for them, why not? Women do it. I think the Reel of the 51st was written in a prison camp and it was all men... there were no women around so they learnt this dance, they made it up. And it was a very fine dance, but it was always all done by men. No reason why it shouldn't be.

I: Have you ever composed any dances?

D: Oh no. Some people can. I mean... N. is very good at writing dances, she writes quite a lot. She's got a computer mind, she can sort of see it. And K.'s quite good at writing dances... D. obviously writes dances.... M. writes dances. Quite a lot of people do. For the second group centenary, I forget when it was, we actually produced a book of dances. People all wrote dances and we had them published. So I mean it's not... I don't have that kind of brain at all. People play with egg cups... and move them around. J.'s writing... have you met J.?: Yes, well he writes dances and he's writing one for the Highland Ball in a couple of weeks' time.

I: Are you going?

D: Yes... But they're also doing the Div-div, you know the Div-div?

I: Yes.

D: Well, they're doing a dem. At both places. A dem. At both places. When is it Div-div? Not this weekend, next weekend? They're doing the same dem. For both. And very fine, very fine. A lot of people... it's not beyond the wit of man to write a dance at all... You've got the moves, it's just a matter of how you string them together. Well if you can invent a new move, good luck to you. But... you know John Drewry, he writes marvellous dances and he can sort of see new moves, what you can do with eight people.

I: Yes, because I went to the Foss and Drewry society once... I don't know if you remember.

D: That is a challenge. Because those dances aren't usually, you can see why they are not normally done, because they are more difficult. You know who they were, Foss and Drewry?

I: Were they mathematicians?

D: At Bletchley Park in the war. So they had sort of computer minds. And it used to be a kind of challenge to them to write these dances and then they would demonstrate them... use them. Have you been to Bletchley Park?

I: No, I haven't.

D: Oh there's a big lawn in the front, they used to dance there I think.

I: Yes.

D: We've actually done Foss and Drewry dances at Bletchley Park which is quite jolly. But I mean they're dances really were quite complicated and...

I: How do you learn those?

D: With difficulty. They are never danced anywhere else, so you needn't worry.

I: Right.

D: They're not the kind of dances you'd ever see on the dance floor. They're far too difficult. I mean they're taught as exercises really. You might see them danced, but not many. I mean R.'s been teaching one now, I forget what it's called, we've been at it for weeks, we still haven't really got it. Rotating Reels are really quite tricky so, and the timing and everything... It is, it's a difficult thing, you would never get ordinary dance people to do it. But it's a challenge, and it's fun... if you try work it out, read the instructions, think "What the blazes do they mean?"

I: How do you try learn the Foss and Drewry dances?

D: Well R. knows most of them, and he's got the instructions... He must have rooms full of dances, and his wife... was one of the leading lights of the first group and ...he's on all the national committees and things. He's seen them... she's died. He's got the music and he's getting it going. And good luck. He's the moving spirit. And he was a teacher, in the university, a lecturer. So he knows how to describe it and keep you interested. And he's encouraging. He's a natural teacher.

I: No I find he taught me that one time I went. He was very good... about showing me. D: It's really not, not for beginners.

I: Because I wanted to go for my research obviously.

D: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

I: To see it.

D: It's really not something for... you do need to know what the moves are as he calls it, and be able to get there and not...

I: Yes.

D: We're getting quite a good following. Two sets going. He does it once a month. Step dancing is going once a month. So it's very good, very good. And it's a challenge for the university... they quite like going along too, some of the younger people who do it like the challenge of it.

I: Yes.

D: It's how to get new people involved ... although they do want the challenge. Just an ordinary drifting around in a simple dance, it's boring for them.

I: Well it's important isn't it so that Scottish dancing continues...

D: Yeah, yeah... They come to the Advanced on a Wednesday because they like the challenge. But not really been taught the steps unfortunately, which they should be. They get in the moves and they're enjoying the dances but they haven't really quite got the steps. They're not given step-practice in quite the same way, which is a shame. At the moment, I mean, every three years obviously you have a total change of people so may be some do come along.

I: So... do you have anything more to say about question one or question two?

D: Well, we don't really wear whites.

I: Sorry, I've made a typo, that should be number three... How does Scottish and Circle dancing influence experiences of yourself?

D: Well I enjoy it, it makes me smile (laughs). ... It's good fun, a nice bunch of people, you're supposed to be social... look at people as they go past. Smile at them and... the other thing with singing of course, you just go into your choir and you sit down and sing your bit then you get up and go. It's not social in the same way. When you do a production, it's more social because then you're all working together on the floor. But the choir, you just sort of arrive at five to eight, sit down, give you a sheet of music... sort the sopranos out, tenors, bases, sing your thing and... then you go at the end. You don't really get to know people in the same way... So if there's a concert, quite often it's a concert away, then you go with people. Keeps you agile, mentally and physically.

I: And what do you wear for Scottish dancing?

D: Well, you should wear a full skirt... but people nowadays, more and more are wearing trousers... And I do it myself now, I shouldn't do, it looks much nicer and R. always wears a kilt, and I think it looks nice. I mean heaven knows, the Reel club on a Monday turn up in Lord knows what. Quite a lot of them don't have proper shoes, I don't know how they dance in trainers, I really don't. When they first come, quite often they dance in walking boots. It's horrendous. You've only got to... jump on somebody else's foot, and they've done real damage... We let them get away with it for the first week or two till they've found out if they really want to... Most people have trainers, even that's better than walking boots. Or leather heeled shoes is agony if they jump on you. You can do really serious damage. It's not just for them, it's for everybody else. If they don't know where they're putting their feet and they step back right on the arch of your foot, you can do, or jump on your Achilles heel (Ah). You can do serious damage, as well as doing damage to themselves.

I: The correct footwear is really important for the Scottish.

D: I think it is. And of course it's much easier to dance in a proper soft shoe... Much easier. If they buy their own shoes... either Gillies or pumps or whatever it is... they suddenly realise how they can really dance... It is very difficult in sort of stiff shoes. I think they should be firmer in the Reel club, and make them wear proper... I mean £20, I look at what they spend at the pub... it really isn't that much now for a student. And there are places you can buy them. It's not impossible to get them here... If they wanted to do rock climbing or something, they'd go out and buy the equipment, I'm quite sure they would. I think they should... be asked to do it as a safety thing really, for themselves and everybody else. Not for the first week or two, fair enough, till you find out if you're really going to like it... I mean when we went to a ball, it was always a long dress and a sash... and people very rarely see that now.

I: Do you have that? Do you have a long dress?

D: I do actually. Well I have a white dress actually, it comes down to about there, ballerina length they call it. But I mean I haven't worn it for years... People don't. Sometimes for a demonstration they do if you go. But even that you don't. I think, if you were going to do say a Burns Night demonstration at the hotel... it's a swish event and a swish clientele, then you probably would ask people to be nicely dressed... you could find a white dress, people would lend them to you... If it's the beginners' dance, people turn up in anything, don't they?

I: Did you go to the Burns night at the second group?

D: Yes.

I: How was that?

D: Oh it was great fun because people go who don't necessarily dance... Couples can go, and they enjoy the dinner, the speeches, and then there's about an hour of dancing at the end. So... if you've got a husband who doesn't dance, they can retire to the bar or whatever... if they want and drink their whiskey. And we can all have a dance. And it means that they can actually go out as a pair.

I: So about how many people?

D: Not so many this year, unfortunately, because we're all getting older. One or two have died... partners have died. So you just get the one come now, rather than the pair.

I: It's sad.

D: It is... but we're getting older. We need new younger people to come in. How do you get them? There are other appealing things which happen on the same night. Molly dancing takes the university away. The Round takes them away. French dancing takes them away... that's what the young are doing. They're dancing... but it's not necessarily with Scottish dancing. They know how to Scottish dance, a lot of them. But... and then sometimes, like A., or S., he's married with two young children so I mean he's not dancing much because he's needed at home for baby-sitting.

I: Because I've heard people in the first group talk about the issue that Scottish dancing seems not to be so popular at the moment that they're talking about "Do Scottish" at Ceilidhs. Try to popularise Scottish dancing in that way.

D: Yeah... yeah. There's usually one or two Scottish dances at Ceilidhs... fairly simple dances. Ceilidhs are a mixture of course, they're not necessarily Scottish at all, they could be anything. Perhaps could be anything. It could be reciting a poem or playing a fiddle... it's not really Scottish dancing necessarily. It can be, but on the whole, it's kind of the Eighthsome.

I: Does it seem very much that different styles of dancing suit different personalities?

D: Some people don't want the challenge, they've just gone out for a pleasant evening and they don't really want to be doing... difficult dances... People are overweight these days... the Circle dance... they've had enough after an hour and a half. A lot of them are kind of... well OK they're older but... (interruption on tape)

I: So how would you say Scottish or Circle dancing influences experiences of your health?

D: Well I should think Scottish dancing influences my health, I don't think Circle dancing does. Well mentally I suppose it's relaxing. That's about it to be quite honest. I don't find it a challenge. It's quite pleasant. It's a nice way to pass Monday afternoon.

I: Right.

D: I do find it a little frustrating sometimes...

I: How do you think Scottish helps your health?

D: Well mentally it keeps you on your toes... Yeah, I always look forward to it and enjoy it... Doesn't matter how tired you are, you get there and you hear the music and you're off. Some music really just makes you want to get up and do it.

I: Yes.

D: Unless it's slow, which I rather dread but we don't often have that. Mostly... you feel you want to get up and do it, it's good foot-tapping stuff isn't it? ... You feel kind of lifted up, want to go for it. You can see people at the side clapping ... you can hear the beat. It's not like sitting and hearing a, Beethoven concerto or something, when you're relaxing and just sort of sitting and listening to it. It's quite different. As you get into the circles, you realise there's more... meetings on other nights. I used to sing practically every night. It's the same idea. You join one group and then you hear of another group, it breaks away and you hear of another group and... I only sing with the operatic in the autumn now. Because you really can't do the two things together... if you are called for a rehearsal, the producer works through the whole show... and if your scene is called and it

happens to be a Thursday, well tough, you have to go. If you don't turn up, then you're out... You don't get that in Scottish at all. "We're sorry you weren't there last week."... "Are you alright?" If you're not there at a chorus rehearsal... you have to find out where you should be from somebody else, you've got to learn it and... if you don't learn it, you're out. It's very different.

I: It's more flexible to dance...

D: Of course it is, yeah. But I can't go next Thursday. "Well sorry, I can't go next Thursday." "Oh well, enjoy your evening, see you at the dance on Saturday or whatever it is." No-one says "Oh, you should be there."

I: You mentioned something about noticing people get out of breath in the Circle whereas you don't...

D: Well because I dance a lot more than some of them move, I should think. Mind you, they are a pretty fit lot. I look at some... I followed somebody into town this afternoon and oh dear, she could barely move. God knows what weight she was. Really we are obese. And really I don't think there's anyone in the Circle who's obese, are there? I mean they're fairly energetic, aren't they, for their age? But they're much older. And it's probably all the exercise they do in the week I expect. There's one lady I know who does ... dancing I suppose you would call it, another night of the week, but I don't know anybody else who dances... I don't think they do but... I think one or two go swimming perhaps.

I: Because you said earlier, dancing seems such fun.

D: Yeah.

I: And it's exercise too.

D: But then I suppose... if you're older and don't want to go out in the evening... you've got a family at home. Scottish dancing doesn't really happen during the day, you've got to go out in the evening except for the weekends. So... if you've done a full day's work or whatever... but I think in Circle, they're retired people aren't they? And they're probably doing their things during the day then they're there watching television or reading in the evening. I don't know what they're doing. They're probably not going out. There's quite a lot of walking groups I think... aren't there? Whether any of those in the Circle dance walk, I don't know, I've absolutely no idea... I'll find that out.

I: So anything else about how the dancing influences your health?

D: My parents were both slight as well... I just feel better for it. Mentally and physically and long may it continue. Long may it continue ... One hopes one... who is it? L., she's broken both wrists and her jaw, she fell over the kerb-stone ... she's not dancing for a bit, you never know what's going to happen, do you?

I: No.

D: M's not very well at the moment... she wasn't dancing much, with any luck... she'll be back into it again. But go for it while you can, it won't be forever that one can, definitely.

I: So... any psychological benefits of Scottish and Circle?

D: Keeps you on your toes mentally. Lot of people play scrabble, I don't play scrabble, I'd rather go Scottish dancing. I'm afraid... not it is... No doubt this Monday she'll probably produce some quite difficult dances and I won't manage it. But there was one dance she produced and it was one step forward and three backward, one step forward and three back, well it's not exactly very challenging is it? But... they're mixed and she's got an enormous repertoire. Very rarely seen the same dance again. She's got all the right music... it's lovely music, some of it. It really is.

I: So you said you've no injuries from Scottish, have you had any injuries from the Circle?

D: No.

I: We're getting to the end... Anything more about how Scottish/Circle dance influences your experience of growing older, since you've recently retired?

D: Well I'm glad to have a bit more heath and strength now I am not working.

I: Bit more time for dancing?

D: Yes I mean I dance in the evenings, it hasn't really made any difference. The only extra dancing I've done is the Circle dancing. Because now I've got the Monday afternoon but... there's no Scottish goes on during the day. So that hasn't made any difference for Scottish dancing.

I: Right... any other thoughts on that one?

D: ... I think there's tap-dancing, isn't there? In the university. I haven't tried that, I might try that another year. I'm not sure I can cope but I'll give it a whirl perhaps. I don't know which day they do it... When the brochure comes out I'll see, another year. I don't know. No, it's just the first year. I'll give it a whirl and see how it goes.

I: Have you ever thought about teaching dancing?

D: Oh I couldn't explain it, can't explain things, I'm not a teacher at all. I could demonstrate it, but the teaching certificate in Scottish dancing is really very skilled. Very difficult. I couldn't do it. All this great manual... has to be learnt and demonstrated and written papers and things. It's not me. I'm quite happy to dem., but not teach. I've always known I couldn't teach. Anything. I'm not a teacher. I'm quite happy to demonstrate. If there's a group wanted to demonstrate for the Phab club or whatever... I'm happy to make-up the team and go and dance. That's fun, I enjoy doing that.

I: So when do you demonstrate?

D: If someone asks us to go and do it but really they hardly ask these days. We used to do a lot of dems, but no-body seems to want it these days.... We don't do very much now... the groups aren't asked.... I don't know what they're doing, but they don't want entertainment. We used to go and sing for people, they don't ask for that nowadays... What people are doing in these groups? They don't seem to want people to help run an evening for them. And they always used to. There used to be a great demand... Everybody was out... practically every month, doing a dem of some sort. We do one a year now perhaps.

I: Do you think it's that other styles are becoming more popular, like Salsa?

D: I don't think they dem. I think the Mollies do, because they're so strange, they are colourful, I think they do go, village fetes and things, bit like Morris dancing. They've got a dem for ... but then that's all dance and all the different groups will be deming in any case. That's just part of the fun of the weekend. You're not going to demonstrate for... physically disabled or whatever... I don't know what they're doing...playing scrabble... I don't know what they're doing, but they're not asking groups to go in. Run an evening for them. Anybody. Of any sort, as far as I can make out. So... I don't think we've done, it seems to be something that's not required. Not asked for. It's a shame because that's how we got new people in... They'd see it being demonstrated and say "Oh that looks fun... Where can I come and join?"... And they'd have a leaflet to hand out to people "And classes are here, there and everywhere and do come along." Get new people. But if you don't do it then people don't know. It's a shame...

I: Well, hopefully, if I get a good publication....

D: Yeah

I: As you said, it will draw more people in. Because Michael Argyle, who was a famous social psychology professor at Oxford, always said someone should do a PHD on Scottish dancing.

D: Oh right. There you are... Well, we'll go down and demonstrate in Oxford then. (laughs)

I: We're nearly at the end... so how has dancing, how has Scottish dancing or Circle dancing changed your experience of your body?

D: Oh I don't know.

I: Sort of like in terms of posture or whatever...

Because you've always been a dancer...

D: Well no... only for the last sort of...

I: 40 years... folk dancing

D: Yeah. I haven't sort of thought about it really. My parents were always fairly kind of... energetic, I wouldn't say they were athletic. They used to walk, but not huge distances. They were out gardening, outdoors, they were not sitting watching television, they were always busy with this, that or the other.

I: Did your parents dance?

D: No. My father used to sing. Got married and then when family came along he gave that up...

I: You said something about you loved Scotland?

D: I had a friend who lived in Scotland, I used to go up and stay in the summer holidays... And my mother was at university in Scotland so she always had a love of Scotland. And I think grandparents or something lived in Scotland for a while. I don't think we're really Scottish. Yes, it's a pity. A remote connection I think. It's a lovely place... it's nice and empty and lots of walks and friendly people and... I had some lovely holidays up there. I did go up to a wedding, well my friend's daughter got married up there and ... I thought "Oh we'll get some lovely Scottish dance." They couldn't dance. It was a bit of a disappointment. We should have some really good Scottish dancing but it wasn't, it was very ordinary. OK they weren't dancers. I mean there is a lot of Scottish dancing going on in Scotland. And I think it is taught in schools as well as a part of the curriculum, well it used to be taught as part of the curriculum. Are you seeing M.?

I: I can't remember.

D: Because she learnt in school. And I think E. learnt in school in Scotland... From the age of five or whatever it is, like we do gym, they do Scottish dancing... Because we never did. D. probably danced in school. I think people who are Scottish probably learnt at school. Whether they liked it or not, that's a different matter though. The ones who carried on obviously liked it. I did a bit of ballroom dancing in school. Enough to know that I enjoyed music and movement... Expensive course too (in ballroom). I paid for the whole term and I only went once I was so furious. She kindly trundled me round the floor once and then put me back on the side and nobody else would look at me... I did actually know vaguely how to do it. I'm not a complete idiot. I could have got round quite well if I'd been led...

I: This is the last question... is there anything more you'd like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

D: I like watching ballet. I love going to the ballet and watching them do it. But it has to be seen from a distance. I don't want to see them pouring with sweat and counting desperately. I like seeing ballet from a distance. Don't really have anywhere here with suitable floors, one big jump and Rudolf Nureyev is off the stage... hopeless. They can do contemporary dance there but not much else which is not terribly good. The companies do come but I don't like the theatre here. Upstairs... that bar is always just across the stage wherever you sit, they've placed that bar exactly between your sight line and the stage. Absolutely across the middle of the stage which is very sickening. If you're on the flat, you may as, well you can see their heads bobbing up

and down, it's hopeless, isn't it? Hopeless for watching ballet. It's alright for big orchestras or something, even then the sound's not very good... So we've not really got much ballet here. There have been one or two very good children's ballet schools, N. ran a very good school. There's thing like kind of modern dance, B. is it? I think they supply the dancers for a lot of local shows. Really we don't need to dance, we get in four, six dancers who actually do the dances. Because anything very specific, then we ask the local ballet school to come in and do it. My singing group is not a dancing group.

I: That's the operatic group you belong to?

D: Yeah. Yeah. I used to belong to the Festival Players, I don't any longer. I think they consider themselves as kind of... dancers, American square dancing kind of, all sort of... not very precise, it's more kind of fun and the group having... They do a very good job, but we're not that kind of group at all. We're more of a singing group. We're willing to have a go... "Who knows how to waltz?" Well about two hands go up... out of 50. The university's got quite a lot of ballet classes, the university's amazing what it's got in it. A lot of hidden groups there. I don't know much about them. The organisation for retired people want a ballet teacher. Did you see that?

I: No

D: They're asking if they can have a ballet teacher next year.

I: OK. I'll say thank you.

## **Second Scottish Interview Seven (2.S.7)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

L: Yes, that's perfectly alright.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

L: It was at school, and I was in the third form, which would be aged about 13. We had just finished a gym class and the gym teacher wanted some volunteers. My friend next door to me grabbed my hand and put it up. We had no idea what we were volunteering for until we had done that, and then apparently it was to go and join the after-school Scottish dancing class.

I: Can you tell me any more about that?

L: ... It was run by one of the girls from the sixth form so she would be about 16, and in fact, she still comes to the second Scottish group occasionally, although goes to the Round now... And it was for about half an hour or so after class, we did some basic things in the...gym. I think it was one night a week. And I can remember being taught to pas de basque, which I could not do and I have this lasting memory of being taken behind the piano in the gym by the gym teacher, trying to hammer it into me for about three solid weeks. And eventually, I got it... We went on, carried on through the school life and then eventually when I was in the sixth form, I think I was supposed to run it because it was part in those days of your... training to develop a personality if you were either going on to teacher training college or university, as I was at a grammar school and that was really where most of the people went to... Unfortunately, it seemed that the gym mistress was rather intent on sort of running it herself, so I didn't do very much... I had somebody lower down the school in the class, she had actually been dancing for years but never let on. We became good friends, her parents actually were very involved in the second Scottish group for many years... So that's where it went. And then after school, as I didn't get a place at university, and had to get a job quickly... I still kept in touch with this friend... who was below me and seemed... to keep in touch with what was going on at school and then I sort of just migrated and she said "Why don't you come along to the dancing on a Thursday night?" And so I did, and it's sort of carried on from there really... I met another friend, a couple, who had just come back from the continent and they've become life-long friends... and they were involved with the dancing, the husband did most of the dancing, the wife had young children and she became secretary, so she didn't do quite so much... and sort of gradually, as I wanted to learn more, I started going off to day schools and... that meant travelling, so it was sort of two or three people maybe would club together in a car. You would go off to a day school, you would go to the evening dance and then you would come back. So you would have the social aspect there. You also got to know members of the club more thoroughly because one person would be driving, the rest would be sitting in the car chatting. Once I got to a certain level of competence, I started going to evening dances, locally, and then started going to them away. Same sort of thing in those days applied. There was a couple who had a big camper van. And they would take about half a dozen of us, and we'd all sit in the back, and we'd be chatting going, chatting coming back, stop for coffee if it was a long drive, so there was very much a social aspect. And you did get to know the people. Then things... sort of evolved, always wanting new young blood on committees, I ended up going onto a committee... did my turn on things and so on... and there was also the Summer school in Scotland. And again it was suggested why not go up to there. I think that was one of the people who ran the advanced class here, so I was going to the university Reel club on Monday night, and then I was good enough that I was invited to the advanced class on Wednesday. That was by invitation, purely because of limited space... and then there was the Thursday second Scottish group... Again, the social aspect was, in those days, I was in with a crowd of my own age, university students, but also, older people, so you were learning... to integrate across a whole spectrum of age-groups and cultural backgrounds.... We then decided, I didn't but the husband of this couple who were my friends decided that he wasn't quite happy, there wasn't enough room to dance, he wanted more room. He was very keen on it. And he wanted to start a branch for the first Scottish group. And I became quite involved with that because

he would take me to a Saturday night dance. She was busy with the children and it was fine, I could go to a dance with him, sometimes if they got a baby-sitter she would come and we would go as a three, sometimes they would go out and I would baby-sit. So the whole thing was very much inter-mixed on a social scale.... We set up an additional dancing club, that was the system, it had to run for two years and then it became the local branch eventually. So I was very much involved then on the organizational side. Committees, liaising with the headquarters in Scotland. We ran day-schools, so there was quite a lot of organizational skill there, not only have you got the physical dancing side but you've also, if you choose that path, can learn organizational skills. Now some people become treasurer because they're happy to do it, they have the ability, others will just help on the day, but you still need people to see the whole thing. So there is a certain other aspect, other than purely the dancing... And again... I'm just looking at your list... that sort of, so that's really sort of a progression. Following on from that, somebody suggested that I might like to become involved with the teaching, and so from there, another group of us, about I think it was four of us, we went up, and we did what was then the first Scottish group's preliminary teaching certificate. So you had to do a specific course. And there were regulations on that. You had to be, quite a competent dancer, and you also were learning teaching skills. So again that's another item that people perhaps don't realize. If you go along that particular teaching route, you are taught to teach. And then I did the final full certificate so that meant that I now hold the first Scottish group's full teaching certificate and that in Scotland, is something that you need to have if you wish to teach Scottish Country dancing in schools. You could be a very good teacher, but if you haven't got that qualification in Scotland, you cannot teach. In England, it's different, there are different rules. And I specialized eventually in teaching children, because that was the only class available. But again, somebody has to... provide up and coming dances, to keep the tradition alive, which it is alive... So I think that's sort of the broad idea of my progression through. I've now come back to, I'm back on committees and so on and so forth... But it also, one of the things we did, we went out to, another branch organized a day of dance and that introduced you to other forms of dance. So what would happen is, your group would put on a short display in the morning, and then in the afternoon, there were maybe half hour workshops. You would have seen the other displays and you would say "Oh I fancy having a go at that." So you would go around and try various other sorts of dancing... The same sort of thing, I've done some workshops at... one or two of the south coast folk festivals and there is there the opportunity, when you aren't running your own workshop, to go out, and you've seen some of the other forms of dancing you can have a go at. And if you are interested in dancing, I think on the whole it's not just your one particular sort, although you might specialize in it, you're more interested in going out and having a go at other types... So yes I've done English, English Country, I've done English Playford, I've done a little bit of international dancing of sorts... I think that's it because mostly I've been involved in running the workshops, so there hasn't been that much time... And again, another progression that... I don't think is quite covered in here is that Scottish dancing can get you to places you'd never have believed. I've been to dance festivals over on the Continent, we did a big one in Switzerland... I've been over to Bulgaria and taken part in a dance festival doing Ladies' Step-dancing, admittedly on tarmac so it wasn't very easy and it was certainly hard... And also being around England, there used to be big country fairs that were organized for ... country pursuits, but part of the theme that was in there, was the connection with somebody that taught the advanced class, we set up, we were invited to do a really big impressive dance display two or three times during the weekend, and that involved maybe 16 or 32 people. And it was all choreographed. And that's something again, that is a totally different thing. I wouldn't have gone to these particular events if I hadn't been dancing but it showed you another side of life... Item 2?

I: Well I wondered how your music, sort of your interest in music... how does that....

L: Ah well...

I: Influence the dancing.

L: That came because I had a rather serious accident and couldn't dance for some time and there was the thought that maybe if things didn't mend as they should have done, I might not be able to dance again, or only for a limited amount of time. And so consequently, I decided one way of keeping in touch, was to get involved with the music and start to learn to play an instrument... And I decided I think that the accordion was easier than the fiddle (laughs). But I have to admit, now I'm finding the fiddle might have been better because it's not so heavy and big to carry around! But again, the music has got me into lots and lots of places... into all of the local colleges, doing... playing in a group, that would do things for May Balls or May events, special parties. I've been abroad a few times with the Scottish Country dance band in the winter, on the Scottish Country dance holidays on the Mediterranean. And a band will go out for a whole week. So what happens is that during the day, whatever people want to do they do, come back, their evening entertainment is Scottish Country dance. With security arrangements at hotels, that is not so prevalent now but it still happens. I've been to Spain, Majorca that is still Spain, and Cyprus, as a musician, but I've also been as a dancer to... again Spain, but Tunisia. And there are dance holidays. People can go to these events. I've got friends of mine who've been to Japan, Hawaii. If you're on the circuit and you have the time, and the finance, you can go along to these... dance schools. Again they have them. New Zealand has one in the winter at Christmas, just after Christmas for a week. If you really want to push the boat out, you can go to all of these things. You know the people, maybe you've met them at summer school in Scotland. If you haven't met them, it doesn't matter, because you all have this one thing in common. And you get together, and when you dance, you're dancing in a group, so you soon get to



know the others. It's not like going on a singles' holiday where you don't know anybody and you perhaps haven't got anything in common. But here you have. So you've got that event. So I mean have you got any other items? Right, there are also various other off-sets of Scottish dancing, not only the Scottish country dancing as... organized by the first Scottish group and the Caledonian societies, which are still linked in with the first Scottish group style. You've also got Ceilidh dancing and what we call Reelers. Now Ceilidh dancing is not as regimented as the first Scottish group, it's much more freer style, usually done by the younger people but that doesn't mean to say it's exclusively youngsters... you're as young as you feel basically, and you're as young as your legs will let you dance... But they do their dancing with a lot more energy, it's often a lot faster than the traditional Scottish country dancing but they, their repertoire also includes a lot of what I would call, dances from the old time style. So you get "Two Steps' Military," "Eva" and various things like that, things like "The Palais Glide," "Mississippi Dip".... But they do also include some of the traditional Scottish Country dances such as "The Cumberland Reel" and various other ones like that... Style is, let's say, shall we say, individual, and it's probably done in outdoor shoes, not the typical soft pumps that country dancing is done in. And I think it's basically everybody goes out, nice loud fast music and have a jolly good time. And, don't worry about the actual phrasing or... correct hand- holds and everything. It's a much more easy going style... And everybody seems to have a darn good time. I personally sort of equate it more towards the English Barn dance type of thing where people that don't know much about dancing can just come in, there's a caller there... they can walk it through if they want and then get on and do it. That's in the English Barn dance and I forgot to say that I've actually been involved in that scene for a long time as a musician... whereas I think the Ceilidh dancing, they probably know their dances a little bit more, but not necessarily. Reelers, very specific. It's mostly done in the... forces' regiments, and also in the public schools. And they have a very limited repertoire of dances. They don't do Strathspeys at all, unless they do something like a "Four-some Reel" or "The Glasgow Highlanders." That's the only time they'll do a Strathspey and I can't think that I've ever actually encountered that.... They do it all in outdoor shoes, and they have a very specific style, their hand holds are very different and it's much more I suppose a social event. It's part of the debutante scene in London, or has been, I'm out of date with it now, when you had all the debutante balls, there would be a Caledonian ball. And this was for Reelers. You would have your set say for something like "The Eighth-some Reel," the sets would be pre-arranged, in the fact that everybody would have their place set up for them so that it was in the social circuit that ... there would be one which would perhaps be sort of Royalty. And then there would be other groups, Dukes or whatever. And it was all organized and no-body else was allowed to do that "Eighth-some Reel." If your name wasn't on the dance plan, you watched. It was lovely to watch from above. Then you had the other general dances. "Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup>" which I could tell you a bit about, but that's a bit on how that originated... "Marie's Wedding," "Duke of Perth," "Hamilton House," "Gay Gordons," "Dashing White Sergeant" and as I've said "The Eighth-some Reel" and that's probably most of them. That is... oh "The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh." That's their repertoire. And that is it. They only learn those ones. They don't do any others... And again, at the social events, you could see them, and they would do it in regimented lines. So you would have a line, perhaps with one regiment, all the men will be in their regimental... mess formal dress, which isn't necessarily a kilt, it's probably trews and a jacket. And you will see them and you can identify the regiments from these lines... The thing about "The Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup>", that was originally devised in a prisoner of war camp, and this was general knowledge, it was done by eight men. And it was taken up by the first Scottish group and done into a mixed set. But it is still done in a men only set in the forces... it was quite a few years ago when the Royal Highland Fusiliers were billeted out at the barracks nearby.... we were involved, we were invited to go and play for their incoming seasons' ball one year, which was the big social event, and we had to go along, and they had practice nights in the mess. And it was interesting to see that in the regiment, not only do they do "The Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division" in a men's set, they also do "The Eighth-some Reel" in a men's set. Now two subsequent years we were invited out while it was still billeted there, they didn't have anyone to run the practice night. So yours truly, was given the job. And it's surprising, although I knew it in my mind and I'd seen it, about teaching or re-capping "The Eighth-some Reel" when you have an all men set in the room as well as a mixed set. What do you do, when you want the ladies' side to do something but it's all men? And... the mental aspect of that was quite mind-blowing. What do you say? But then when you see it done, in full, in full uniform and everything, it's quite... I can't think of the word for a minute, it's a really impressive sight. The other thing that we did do was, we... they did "The Reel of the 51<sup>st</sup>" which would normally be done, in this situation, to pipes, but it wasn't a single piper, it was a pipe-band with about half a dozen, and in a marquee outside in December, and at the end of that, just couldn't hear anything... But to see it done the way they do it. Well that's a totally different culture. And it's still in existence. But it's not changing. The first Scottish group culture is changing. People are interested. They are devising dances, they're getting complicated, and now they're going back again and people are writing dances the whole time and writing new tunes. But in the Reelers' culture, that doesn't seem to be happening... Again, that's sort of given you a basic idea. I mean we could go on and say well there's Shetland dance culture, that's different... But I don't think that's quite Scottish Country dancing because, or Scottish dancing, because Shetland are part of Scotland now, but originally they were part of Scandinavia, and there's a lot of influence from there. So their dancing is really quite different. The person you want to speak about that if you're interested is ... he is an expert on that... So...

I: Shall we go onto the second one then? How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

L: Yes... I think we could go onto the second part of that "How important is memory?" ... Well, it's linked. When you're young, like everything, children absorb things, like a sponge. And yes, you learn the dances, and you learn them easily and you can recall them. Some people can't easily recall them... Some can remember the dance and they can remember the names but they can't link the two together. It comes with practice. But peoples'... ways of interpreting that are different. As I've got older, I'm finding it not quite so easy to learn new dances but also, and this obviously will have a bearing on it, when I first started... dancing and learning dances, there were nowhere near as many, and they were actually much simpler. We didn't have the mirror formations, and everybody doing everything the whole time and... five, six, seven couple sets, in those days. So therefore the actual dances themselves weren't as complicated. Now we have all these massive variations, and mathematicians have got into devising dances and that's where many of the very complicated ones come. So you've got mirror images either up at the top and bottom of the set, across the set... and they keep linking, they change from longways sets to square sets. So you're mind is being kept active... it might take you longer to learn the dance, but eventually it will go in ... and people are different. Some people do not have the ability to recall things easily. They have to work very hard at it or they want a walk through every time as a reminder. Other people can just say "Oh it's so and so." And reel off the whole thing. I could do that, for certain dances. Other ones, I might need to look at my crib and say "Oh how does it start?" I need perhaps just the first two bars and I can remember the rest. And then another night I can remember the beginning and I have a mental blip, and I can't remember what comes in. I think that's normal. But my technique is "Watch what the others are dancing and just be fractionally behind them." And it looks as if I know it... One of the things, in my younger days, when there was a new dance, the person who I was dancing with, always wanted to be first couple. Because if you were lucky and had a walk through, you would walk it through. If not, my attitude was "Well it's the first couple who are allowed to make the mistake, the others remember it." ... So if I didn't get it right, it didn't matter. But it made me very quick at picking up signals, body language, things like that. But one of the things which I haven't said was that the person I was dancing with was actually deaf.

I: Right.

L: They could only hear very very high frequency, all the normal frequency was just a rumble. And they could pick up, the way they danced was to pick up the vibration through the floor and watch other people dance... And perhaps that's influenced the way that I dance that I am actually very aware of peoples' body language. More so perhaps than normal. I don't know. And again, that would probably help me, and it would help my memory. I get these little sub-conscious...prompts, from body language, which just gives the memory time to kick in. Some of the dances, you have very long ones, those are a memory feat... when they're what we call set dances and you just work all the way through a series of formations. And they're in a set order. And you only do it once, and that's it. Those are quite difficult... The one thing I cannot remember is Ladies' Step dance. I think I, I think it's because I work by pattern, my mind deals with pattern rather than words. When I look at cribs, I prefer to see a diagrammatic form than a whole written page. With a written page, I tend to miss bits out. When I see a pattern, and I say "It's that followed by that followed by that" and my experience allows me to link the formations together. Ladies' Step dance, which is all work with the feet... linking different steps, that I find very difficult to memorise. Probably because I work on a pattern basis. And I haven't developed a way of converting the steps into a pattern. And it's just a pure slog. But I'm afraid age has caught up with me, I've given up Ladies' Step.... So I mean... do you think that sort of covers item two? Or have you got any other?

I: I think it does... I hadn't quite realized you'd been a teacher as well.

L: Oh right.

I: Because I've got a slightly different questionnaire for teachers. So I just wondered if you could talk about any of the strategies. How do you teach Scottish dances?

L: Well I have to remind you that I only teach children, that's my forte. But I do teach older ones. And the teaching of children is very different from teaching of adults... One of the things that you have to think about is, if you're trying to get a formation over, to some people that don't know it at all, and you find that they're having trouble, one of the things that we do do is to change the words that you use because what to you makes sense when you're explaining it to them, if they are not, if they're beginners, they don't understand what you're trying to say, is to completely change your words round, use a completely different set of words or maybe approach it from a different angle... I think that's perhaps a little bit where what we call "calling"... comes into force, where say if you go out, somebody says "We want to have a... I don't know... an eighteenth birthday party, a fiftieth birthday party, we want to do some Scottish Country dancing as well." You've got to remember that there they don't know all the terminology. One of the things is that you've got to say, one of the things is where you cast off, "You come up and you go behind your own line." If you, to me, I'd automatically say, if I was talking to dancers, I'd say "Cast off." They know what I mean and I would know that they know that. , But to beginners, they don't. So what have I got to say? It's what I say with the children "You've got to go behind your own line one place." It's an awful lot more words, but it tells them exactly where to go. And then if you're in a class, you get that with the younger children, you get them doing that and then you get them to do it properly... Again, with teaching, demonstration. This was what was always hammered into us. "Show them, it's worth a thousand words." And again, they will see exactly what they are meant to do. Whether they can then copy you... It doesn't always work, especially when there's lots of other things going on. And they

forget occasionally and you've just got to... work on it. You don't get annoyed with them. You've just got to have gallons of patience. And again, the other thing with teaching, and especially with children, is praise... Because with my group, I have a very good relationship, I'm training them to do their medal tests, and the ones I'm teaching at the moment are coming up to Grade Four, the one, that's the one below the top grade. And they are working really hard... and again, they know that when I say "That's good," it's alright, and if I say "That's really good," and you're using your emphasis in your voice, then they know that they've really done well and it gives them the impetus. And that comes really through-out whatever you're teaching. People respond well to praise. But the thing that you mustn't do is say "Yes, that was good but..." The downer. You should not do that... because, especially that often comes out, so what I say is "Now yes, that was really, really good. Now next time, let's just push, let's move it up a bit more." I didn't use the but, I was positive. And especially with children. And I think it still does apply to adults. Everybody wants to be praised... when you're teaching, even if you think "Oh my God, that was absolutely appalling." Don't tell them that.... sometimes with the children, when they're messing around, I will say "That was terrible." But I have, I've been teaching these children for a good few years, I know them, they know me. I wouldn't do that with a strange class, say at a festival... because again, you need, you're not actually teaching them on a regular basis, you just want to give them an idea of what's happening. So it's, that's a slightly different thing. You just really plough through the dances, you don't have the praise aspect which is what you would do with a regular class... And again on a social night, you don't have that particular thing, you are perhaps acting as MC, walk-throughs... sometimes you can say "Oh that was absolutely terrible!" But again, you've got to react with them, you have to have them on your side. You can make comments, but providing it's including you and them, say if you made a mistake in the... instructions you gave them, admit it. They will be with you then. And you're not there up on a pedestal. You are... you are as fallible as they are. So it's all about human interaction, and getting on with the next person. So...

I: That's wonderful... So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself?

L: Well ... it depends on what you're doing. If you're dancing, you're part of a team... if you're doing a display, you have to be very much part of a team, you have to adjust your particular style of dancing to fit in with everybody else. So therefore, it's a co-operative effort. You should not be standing out amongst a team. Now this is for a display, or a competition. If you're dancing, say on a Saturday night, at a social to enjoy yourself, you do what you feel like on the night, if you are feeling a bit tired, you don't dance with quite so much energy. If it's a stonking good band, lots of excitement, you just go through the roof and you dance in a very extravagant style. You respond to what the situation is or what you know you should be doing. The same thing also that is if you go to a dance away from people, not in the same area, I am of the opinion "See how the others dance." If it's something like the very strict first Scottish group who follow their style very closely, you should not impose your improvisation or whatever it, twiddles, on them. Because you're their guest, and you should respect what they want to do... So you are always thinking, well at least I am, I'm thinking "Can I do this here? Would it upset my hosts if I were to do an outside dance?" ... If I'm just out to enjoy myself, that's fine, I can do that. That comes because I consider that I am a very competent dancer, and I have a very thorough knowledge of formations, I forget some of the odd ones that we don't do very often and I know that my footwork is good. Because some people have told me so. So consequently, I'm confident, about that. And if I'm teaching, you have to be confident to teach. Because the people you are teaching are looking to you for the information. So therefore, you must be confident and as I said previously, if you make a mistake, you must admit it straight away.... And so I think basically what the dancing has done, it has given me a lot of confidence... in liaising with people, taking... a lead in teaching, and so on. It's a similar thing with the music... I'm not so confident in that because I took the instrument up late but I still lead. So consequently, I do have this confidence that I can do these things. And it comes over... When I'm teaching, part of my style of teaching can be slightly bossy... but if we are in a class situation and I know the people, and if they want to suggest, if they're not sure how to do a formation or a link, I am quite willing to discuss it with them and say well "Ok, fine. You try your way. This is the way I think it should be done, but I'm open to suggestions. You try both ways, and we'll see which is best." ... So again, it's all about compromise. But in the end, if you're the teacher, you could be, as I said, bossy and say "We are doing it this way." But I'm not that firm, unless it has been prescribed in the manual, the book, and it says "This is the way you should do it." Then I will be bossy and put my foot down. But if there's a grey area, then I'm open to other interpretations. So again, it's all about interaction with people.... I think that's probably most of what that is...

I: What do you wear?

L: Oh I was just going to say one of the things is that, although I'm a teacher and everything, if I go to a workshop or that, I've got to forget I'm a teacher, I'm a student.

I: MM.

L: But I can still ask questions, I can ask awkward questions provided they are appropriate....But you must remember, if you go and there is somebody else teaching, you forget you're a teacher, because it causes a lot of problems... What do I wear?... Well, it depends what I'm doing... if you're doing a demonstration, the dress was prescribed, up until a few years ago, which was a white dress for the ladies with a sash., worn over the shoulder, ordinary tights and again, the thing is, is the shoes. And the men obviously wear kilts, normally. If I had to dance as a man, I would have a kilt, and I would wear a white blouse and a kilt. That was the accepted dress code for a demonstration but now it's changing, and they've got a lot more flexibility.... But

they will still keep the tartan at some point. Men will still wear the kilt but the ladies, because of the fashion style, it was considered white dresses and that were terribly 1950s, and that was an awful long time ago and they wanted to up-date it. But again, it's a living tradition. So why not? They should be allowed to, provided if it's a display, the ladies are all the same or there is some degree of continuity between them... Shoes are the important thing... Because of the style of dancing where there's a lot of ankle work, footwork, you need the soft shoes, which are a ballet pump style but... they have a very soft sole, a chromic leather sole, or in these days of slippery floors, a non-slip rubber sole. Those.... You can't do it, Scottish Country dancing properly, you cannot do it in anything other than the prescribed shoes... because you need the flexibility in the feet... As for social dancing, I tend to wear something, either a dress or a blouse and a skirt because with the exercise... unless it's a freezing cold hall, you get quite warm so you need to have relatively light clothing... I find, just occasionally, I might dance in slacks but usually, I find you sort of get too hot... and so it's really a fairly... relaxed code for that. And men, they tend to mostly dance in trousers for social dances and the club night and if it's a Saturday night dance, if they've got a kilt, then... they'll wear that. There's also the traditional... Prince Charlie jacket or an ordinary day jacket... Most of the Saturday night dances, the majority of the men will be in kilts... really, it's sort of to dress according to tradition... for the men more, than the ladies, who do tend to just wear a nice dress, or... a nice outfit, that you are comfortable in. It's no good having a pencil thin skirt, because you can't dance... you just use a bit of common sense, what you're comfortable in. So I think that probably, is about all on that one.

I: OK, so thank you. Number four is "How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?"

L: Right. Well Scottish dancing is... very good exercise, both mentally and physically. The mental side of things, you've got to remember the dances. If you're on a Saturday night... you don't normally have any walk-throughs. So cribs are provided, you are going through twenty maybe twenty-two different dances, in one night. It's a lot of mental exercise there. Also, what sometimes happens, is that people, through no fault of their own, go wrong, they have a little mental blip, they go wrong, they think they're doing a different dance whatever, so your mind is always working... because if somebody goes wrong, or misses a place or forgets when to start, you have got to adjust. You've got to know your dance, and then you've got to work out how to put it right... you might be very busy listening to the band and you forget to do the first three bars of the dance or something and somebody yells at you "Oi! You're supposed to start." And you've got to work out "Where should I be?" in sort of one bar's time, which is basically just over a second because 32 bars is done in about 35 seconds. So... you've got to be very quick and mentally agile... to get yourself to where you're going, if you're going to, yeah, go down there. So consequently, your mind is working all evening, and I have heard a lot of people these days say, "Oh that's a nice programme, there aren't too many of these sort of brain- scrambling dances", which means a lot of these modern dances are very complicated. And the brain is working really hard. So you've got that, so that's the mental aspect. And also, each time you get up to a dance, you're probably dancing with a totally different group, you're one person, you're dancing with seven totally different people than you were the last dance. So you've then got to think... recognize who you're dancing with and where they are in the set... and often, in the halls, it's a long line, there's not really much gap between. You're doing an awful lot of mental work. You're memorizing your formations, your patterns, you're memorizing who you're dancing with and it's different each time, the same as the patterns are... you're listening to the music as well, and keeping in time with that, and then if anything goes wrong, you're doing a quick "Put it right" mental exercise. So there's a tremendous amount of brainwork. And then we go onto the physical side of things... you're using most parts of your body, the only thing that you don't really do is bend down... You're using your legs obviously, a massive amount, your ankles... you are turning, to some extent, you're turning your body a bit, in different ways, your turning your shoulders a lot when you are doing various things. You are moving your head... there are certain, I mean there are certain areas that you don't do because of that, but basically you are getting a very good aerobic work-out and if you think that each dance lasts, well quick ones last on average about four and a half minutes, a slow one will last eight minutes, sometimes they're longer than that if the dance is more than thirty-two bars... and often, it's what we would call ... interval exercise, that you're working hard, and then you get to the bottom and you have a rest. And then you're working, but perhaps not as hard, and you get a bit of work, a bit of rest, a bit of work and a bit of rest. And those are one of the things, I think when you are doing circuit training, that's one of the things that really makes you fit, so the level of fitness of people, I think really if they're dancing... rather than just walking through... is actually quite high. Stamina is another thing, you think about that, your twenty-two dances will be done in a period from, or twenty dances will be done in a period from 7.30 to 11.30, or 11 o'clock. And then you have an interval for refreshments which normally lasts about three quarters of an hour, so you are actually working pretty hard but you do have the recuperation rest periods, a little bit between the dance but most times, at some point during the dance, there is some, some rest. Not in all of them though... The other thing that you have there, from the physical point of view, is like what some of the, what you might call exercise freaks, that can't do without having their exercise, that is due to an endorphin release in the brain, which is the feel good factor. Now you get that feel good factor, and you can get it in a variety of ways.

The music will contribute towards it a lot, but the music will drive the way you dance. And if the music's boring, you don't dance very well, so therefore you don't get the same degree of exercise. If the music is very good, you are spurred on to dance and to dance... a lot more enthusiastically, and abundantly, whatever. Just go over the top. And that's where you get an

endorphin release. And often people after a good night will say “I got home last night, having driven for an hour, I got home last night, I still couldn’t go to sleep!” And that’s the endorphin release you see. And the other thing is, if you have problems, you go to a dance, because of the way that it’s done quite quickly, and there’s not much gap between it, and you’ve got all this mental work going on in your brain, about remembering the dances, working with other people, if you have problems at home, or in your work, you go out to a dance and after a good night, you get the endorphin release, the feel good factor, but also you forget about your problems, they take a back stand. So consequently from that point of view, the psychological point of view, it’s very good... I remember a German group that we were involved in on a twin-town exchange... one of the girls, she went to university and moved away from the group, she was really in quite a state, and I can remember the group leader saying “Oh so and so... she’s in a bad way. She’s just not doing enough dancing!” And I think that was it. The stress of work, pressure, whatever. So it’s a really good stress buster... Some people got out for a six mile run. OK, well go and do a six mile run. Some, I don’t know who, but some people put pedometers on them and measured how far they did on the night. It would be interesting to find out what that was. The same thing about the sports’ mile, I remember one person did skip change of step for a mile, up and down the hall. We measured the hall and worked out how many times she had to go up and down the hall to do her mile. And that was for, sort of a charity thing. She’d go a mile. You can do all sorts of things like that, but as I say, the main thing is, you get a very good physical work out but you also get a mental work out and you get a stress buster effect. So I think... oh injuries, yeah, yes there are injuries, there’s a lot of discussion about that. One of the main things is, and I’ve suffered from it, too much dancing on really hard floors, when I used to dance four, five nights a week and go to day-schools. I ended up with shin splints because of the continual pounding on a hard floor... But again, you just have to be sensible. You can’t help it if somebody is, gets you off balance and you pull a muscle (sighs.) That’s just one of the things that happens... Floors, we are always moaning about these days... they are hard, there are very few good floors with a bit of give in them, dance studio type floors with a sprung floor. If you know of a dance where they have a hall, it’s got a wooden floor, and if it’s sprung and the spring is released, which I know of one or two, you just go for it because it is such a pleasure to dance. The floor gives, and actually gives you bounce, and you don’t get so tired, you can enjoy yourself. With floors that are slippery, if they’ve been sealed, and they’re slippery, or they get a layer of dust on them, people soon pick that up and they become tense because they’re worried about slipping... so you get rid, so they’ve become tense, you’ve lost your stress release mechanism in dancing. But also when people become tense they become more prone to actually having an injury, slipping, because they’re tense... but I think the main problem these days is either tile or wooden... to be careful these days about injuries, is looking at the slipperiness of the floor. We’re all very aware of insurance and litigation processes, and I think what you have to do, you have to say to people “This floor is slippery, be careful.” As a teacher, if you’ve done that, you’ve covered yourselves, you have told them, and then... it is up to them to be careful. One of the things is with injuries, people on a good night, they can be a bit wild and they might grab you, swing you around, whatever, and one of the key things is when you do an arm link, what they do is they don’t keep their thumbs together, and the number of people that have ended up with bruises on the inside of their elbow by people pressing their arm there, is legion. And it’s one of the prescribed things in teaching dancing is to teach them not to put their arm in there... Also people can be a little bit inconsiderate, they might want to spin you, and some people don’t want to be spun for one reason or another... and again, there are ways of stopping them doing that... and you just have to be careful. I mean you don’t, on the whole people don’t fall over, the thing, the type of injury you get is more likely to be a pulled or a strained muscle... perhaps the floor is uneven in it’s slipperiness or stickiness... perhaps something’s been spilt on it and you just find a sticky patch on a normally smooth floor, your foot gets caught, and that’s the sort of thing that can end up with a pulled muscle... I don’t .... That tend to be the most thing. There is a lot of discussion, advice, about whether people should do a warm-up as you would do in aerobics.... And then people say “Well, we could spend twenty minutes of our one hour class warming up and not doing any dancing.... It’s a good idea that you don’t sort of just get out of a car and take two steps into the hall and then dance. It’s if individuals are sensible when they start dancing, they won’t dance at their optimum, their highest level, they will build it up gradually. That way they will be using and warming up the correct muscles, because a lot of the prescribed exercises do not actually warm-up the muscle groups that you’re really going to be using, unless you do the exercise... if you’re sort of stretching your legs out that’s fine because you’ll do that when you do a skip change of step but that won’t necessarily quite help you if you do a setting step, because the muscles you use are slightly different. So consequently it’s better to start off with what we call a liting step, not putting all the hops in, and then as you’re working on that, then you gradually build it up. If people have all got out of a car, get them to walk through the first dance. This is the teacher side of me talking again... a lot of people do not like doing warm-ups, so it’s quite an idea to actually have them walking through a dance or doing something like a Gay Gordons, or... perhaps a Two-step, something like that. A barn dance, a Canadian barn dance. That way they’re walking and as they get warmed up, they can start putting more hop in and then they’re using the right muscles and then they’re ready to do the class. And they don’t feel they’ve wasted their time... I think... OK, you might get the odd thing where sort of in injuries, people sort of stick their arm out, I’ve had that and I’ve sort of been sort of jabbed in the ribs because someone put their arm out and in a hall, if there’s a lot of people there, your fairly close. But again, they should take note of the other people that they’re dancing with. And it’s not always done... again, you can get a bit carried away. So I think I that’s probably the injuries.

I: I've got one more question. Because I've been reading the literature on dance anthropology, what I've become very interested in is this idea of the "Death Dance." And the reason I say this, is because a couple of people have told me stories about Scottish dancers literally dancing themselves to death.

L: I've one occasion like that.

I: I mean it's horrible for every one else, but it's quite nice for the person concerned. I wondered if you'd heard of that?

L: I know, I was there on one occasion, I know of two people that have done that... There was a person that I know that was, I don't think, it may just have been coincidence, but they actually had a heart attack while they were putting their shoes on, at least I think it was when they were putting their shoes on, I don't think it was when they were taking their shoes off... and that was one instance. But again, that may just have been happening any time. But certainly, I was actually at a dance in L., one year, when somebody had a heart attack actually on the dance floor in the middle of a dance, and there were two people there who had just done a... resuscitation course two days before... but I mean they had immediate, that person had immediate attention, but they couldn't do anything. And I mean, yes, it's a good way, if you really are a keen dancer. It's a shock for everybody else.... But I have been there and I have seen that happen and then it's a question of "What do you do?" after that... "Do you stop the dance? Do you send everybody home?" or "Do you carry on?" And I think probably the general opinion would be that that person danced, liked their dancing so much that they wouldn't want their tragedy to upset the others. They would probably want them to carry on dancing in their honour ... in respect of them. And I think that's what we did actually do, after quite a long gap ... because obviously the treatment of the person came first. So I have actually seen that ... I don't know, from our point of view... because of the health benefits of dancing... it probably, actually... increases the length of life. But... I don't, I think those are the only two instances that ... I know of... I mean sort of I was there on the one, and I had heard... obviously because I'm in contact with people, I know of that.

I: It was quite an interesting aspect... have you seen the film "Ten Canoes" about Australian Aborigines? And one of the Aborigines was going to die and knew, and he got up and did a death dance, and this has been documented in the anthropology literature. And you almost wonder if the person concerned knows.

L: I think the Aborigines are much more in touch with themselves and their culture, rather than the Westernised people. And I think that perhaps might be a bit different... But no, I couldn't really say on that... Though I have to admit, I was seriously ill some years ago, and I did actually go to a dance, although I didn't do any... days before I was taken into hospital as an ambulance case. I still went along, but I wasn't feeling well so I didn't dance. And the same sort of thing, I've not been well recently but I'm still trying to dance... again, because it's something that's ... my character, and ... you do get so much ... enjoyment from it... all the other things. I've not really said anything actually about pure enjoyment. But it is, it's great, and the enjoyment is working with other people, and simple things like ... just keeping in time with other people. And getting to the right place at, I'm a logical person, getting to the right place at the right time but I also have a degree of, I can't think of the word now, independence, shall I say? That I can also improvise additional small movements, but still be at the right place at the right time. And it's that sort of thing, and also linking all this in with the music... is a whole big sort of melting pot... And just simple things... we sort of do other odd things like sort of do twiddles and try and clap hands as we go past each other in the middle. And if it doesn't work, we just have a good laugh. And if it works, great, we've done it... So it's on a win-win situation like that... The only time is, that when it's on a lose situation, if it doesn't work, and you collide with somebody or else you go off in totally the wrong direction, but you soon put it right, nobody minds. But again, that's on the social side.

I: You've sort of answered number 5, but I wondered if you had any more to say on how Scottish dancing influences your experiences of growing older?

L: ... Yes I do actually. Knowing people in our club and in other places, there are people that are dancing well into their eighties. They need a little bit of help or a little bit of consideration, maybe their memory's not so good. We've got one person in the club... we help them out, we point to where to go or we tell them in passing "Oh you're going to do set and cast off" or "It's going through there and there." After they've done it once, they usually remember it. And they are still getting their exercise, which they probably wouldn't at eighty plus, and quite good exercise too. There are quite, well there's nobody currently at the club, there are quite a few people dancing who have had either one or two hip replacements. Now hip replacement is a major thing but you look at them and you say "OK, it can't be that frightening. Because they can come back and they can dance again. So therefore, I know the operation's improved a lot more... and various other things like that. So it takes away some of the fear of what might happen and if that does happen to you, would you still be able to do these hobbies of yours. The answer is "Yes." Providing you follow the hospital's instructions and everything... And... you look at other people ... older people that perhaps have got problems with their knees and their ankles, they are still able to dance, albeit not in the prescribed first Scottish group's method, but they can still dance, and they can still do the things like get to the right place in the right time, and enjoy themselves. They don't get the level of exercise that a more agile person would but they are still getting the exercise and they're getting the social contact and the enjoyment. They're still getting all those factors. The one that perhaps they're not getting quite so much, is the actual physical exercise. But they are getting some, perhaps more than they would do elsewhere. So to that extent... it's reassuring that as people age, and they do suffer from illnesses or disabilities, there is still the opportunity to either dance or to teach, because you can teach, even if you can't dance... and you

can get people to demonstrate things for you. You pick out the person who does it as near as you want to show them, but you could perhaps manage to demonstrate it but you couldn't do the whole dance. So you could still be involved in it. The one thing, I mean I've told you, that I haven't, I used to dance regularly with a person who was deaf, and they still dance and they teach, they have the teaching qualification, we did it together. And that hasn't held them back and their comment was "Getting their teaching certificate meant more to them than getting their university degree because with a university degree, you could do it by writing and reading, here you were having to liaise with people on a vocal side of things ... and pick all those things up. So in that respect, that meant much much more than getting a degree... There are blind dance groups... one of the things we had to do when we were doing our, the first half of our teaching certificate it was, we actually had to try and dance a Reel of Three with our eyes closed. And it is possible... And you, you... it develops your spatial awareness, that perhaps goes back to some of the experiences, influences on your self, that it does develop your spatial awareness... Handicapped people can dance in wheelchairs, they select them and they have helpers with them to either push them around or help them around... So, yeah, when you look at it from that, that's not just growing older. But it does influence you. The fact that OK... Oh that's another story, when I had an accident, when I told you about, when I started the music, I had this accident, and I had my leg in plaster for three weeks, and then they took it off and put one of these horrible sticky plasters on. We had our big annual dance. And I'd only just been out of the plaster cast for about three or four days and I went to the dance really as a spectator. And one of the people there who was a very well known dance teacher from up north, this man, and he said "Oh, will you do a dance with me?" And I said "Oh I've only just come out of plaster!" He said "Well you can do one!" So we did a Strathspey so it was me hobbling around with this one footed thing trying to do a Strathspey on one foot. And I'd been out of plaster three days and I'd got a plaster cast on. And again, the same thing, I went up to the Summer school, and at the end of... I went up and I couldn't hop on this injured foot, but by the end of the first, that one week I was up there, because of the continued exercise, the physio, I checked it with the hospital and they said "Yes, it was alright," I actually could get, I could hop on that foot, not very far, but I could get it off the floor. And it just shows you that, what you're doing, you've got the physiotherapy aspect there, all of these things combined together says that "OK, as you get older, your body gets worn out in various parts, providing your brain is still in gear, you've got ways of getting round those disabilities. You can still dance, and then you move that into your other life. OK. I can't do this now as I used to do. OK. I'll find a way round it. " So consequently, it probably does help you adapt to reduced mobility, if you suffer from it, as you get older. But if you can still do it, you've still got all the other things, the psychological, the mental, the relational aspects, you can still do dance. So yes, and ... it perhaps takes away a little bit of the fear of "What if I can't?" when you get older.

I: Great. OK. So number six then "How has Scottish dance changed your experience of your body?"

L: Well, what I just said in the previous one was, it makes you more spatially aware, knowing where your feet are, where your hands, where your arms are ... your body. But also, as I have said much earlier on, you are using body language probably more with dancing, than you perhaps would be in another situation. So therefore you're keeping that... evolutionary thing running... I mean as somebody once said to me "Oh your feet are so good, they look like .. Did you learn ballet? You must have done!" I said "No." And again, that's a body thing. Because I'd done so much dancing, you have to point your toes, get a good straight line there, it indicated that I had done quite a lot of ballet. But I hadn't... (sighs) You do notice the aches and pains and the stiff muscles, but then there are ways of getting round that... and if you do it sufficiently... you just keep it so you don't get the stiffness. If you have a long break, then yes you notice that... but basically I think you develop a more acute sense of, especially with your legs and your feet, where they are, because you have to have the exactitude of the footwork. And that way... you probably have a much more detailed sense of what your legs and your feet are doing... from that point of view. But as I say... I think really, basically it comes down to the growth in spatial awareness. So I think that's probably that one.

I: We're onto the last question!

L: I hope you've got enough tape! (laughs)

I: ... So it's just "Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?"

L: It takes up an awful lot of my life, believe it or not... I mean I specialize in Scottish, I do a little bit of other things, I do have an interest, I'm probably more inclined for group dancing rather than couple dancing such as ballroom and all the various tango, salsa, that

sort of thing. I'm much more into a more social aspect of it... that seems to be what appeals to me more.... I have to admit, I would find life rather boring and dull without it. And that's perhaps why, because of the social aspect... But I do enjoy, as I've said, the physical side of it, having a good work-out but also having a thoroughly enjoyable time... and again, what often we say amongst our own groups is "We wish there was a little bit more time between the dances on a Saturday night social to talk to people" ... but again, that's just one of the things that... So I think very much it is a social thing... and it is a living tradition because people are devising dances, and I've said about the big complicated dances earlier on, and the reason why it is reflecting the state of society I think, this is my personal opinion, that to-day society is very complicated and I think the devising of complicated dances reflects society, as a whole, and everything is fast and furious. People want to do the Reels and the Jigs, they're not so keen on the Strathspeys, and that's reflecting the pace of life to-day. It's so, so much faster. They don't want to do the slower stuff. Or if they do, only three times through, not eight... and I think that it is a window on the current

situation in society. If you go back into the history of the dance... back into seventeenth and eighteenth century dances, there you had chaperones, dancing was the only time when an unattached lady could meet up with prospective suitors, without the chaperone being close by. So those dances were very flirtatious, because that reflected the society at the time... So there's an awful lot of sort of going forwards and back and turning away from your partner, sort of flirty look of it, and various other things. And that's perhaps a lot more noticeable in the Playford dances, where they are extremely flirtatious, but the same social ... situation occurred in England and in Scotland because there, most of the dancing was done in the country in the big houses, and the dancing masters travelled not only in England but they also went up to Scotland. So there was an influence or a cross-over between ...English dancing and Scottish dancing and English dancing has two or three dances that are almost identical to Scottish dances, and they just have different names. And that is the influence of the dancing masters moving round, teaching them. And again, I think that these days the complexity and the speed of the dancing, dances, that are preferred, reflects society. But it means it's evolving and in another hundred years' time, if we're all still going and doing the stuff, they can look back and say " Oh look at these 70s', 80s' and 90s' dances. Weren't they complicated?" But then they can link them in to the very fast evolving IT which is complicated and so on. Whereas I'm looking back, further back you see.

I: Could you explain what the Playford dances are?

L: Right well Playford, they are an English style of dancing... from sort of like sixteen hundred, seventeen hundred, and they're called Playford because there was a dancing master called Playford and he was a very well-renowned person and he went around all of the big, high-status country houses and it was, it was a social attribute to be able to dance. You've seen it in *Pride and Prejudice* on the television, that's the sort of thing. And so consequently all the young ladies and young men, they were expected to be able to dance, it was part of the social scene. And so what they did, they had what they called dancing masters, they would go round to the various big country houses and they would hold classes, and they would teach the dances to these people. And Playford is the style of that period and it's quite mixed. There's slow dances, fast dances... and they are very, very graceful, because again, look at the costume of the period, these things... the dances have to be done in the costume so therefore if the fashion changed, it might be that some of the dances were just totally unsuitable, they couldn't do them if they had big, lots of skirts and everything, they couldn't do dances that involved stepping, moving your feet round so therefore... dances might go out of fashion and they'd devise some new ones. And this is the same, so this is the sort of thing that happens. And in Scotland, there were also dancing masters that went round teaching the traditional Scottish dances, but they would also incorporate some of these new dances as well, especially in Edinburgh, Glasgow where you had big assembly halls... And... so that was the sort of thing, so it's, I suppose the Playford dancing is sort of equivalent to the older Scottish dancing but it was English, although there were French influences, Continental influences.... And they again reflected, the time that they were done in... I mean there were other things, books came out at this time, *Magpie* and all sorts of collections on the English side of things... and the same sort of thing there's Allen's guide to ballroom and Scottish, where they published these dances. And the other thing people could find that they do have is, they will find little ladies' pocket books which were the cribs of the day, and they found quite a lot of dances in there. The problem there is actually, because it was in crib form, actually interpreting what the dance was really like. So... there's all sorts of historical things where the dances might not necessarily be quite as they were done in their time because they've had to try and work it out from a crib. And as you know in these days, people sometimes make a mistake when they write a crib down and if this lady had done it from memory, she might not have got something quite right. But that's, that's tradition and obviously in different areas, they might, that might have happened in one area and in another area it was quite right, and it might eventually have evolved into two different dances. This is what happens.

I: OK. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

L: Oh dear, I don't think so.

I: OK. Well I'll just say thank you.

## **Second Scottish Interview Eight (2.S.8)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

F: Yes, I give my consent.

I: How did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

F: ... I think we, that's my husband and I, got involved in about 1966, when we were living in the North of England and we joined a... we wanted to have an international dance group, and there was a Scottish dance group, and neither had enough people. So we combined together to do both so I did some Scottish dancing then.... But then we didn't take it up again till we were in Kenya, because you know there are Scottish dances all over the world, we were living in Nairobi, we joined a Scottish group in Nairobi. And then when we came back, we joined the second Scottish group here.

I: Can you tell me a bit more about the Scottish group in Nairobi?

F: ... It was...Very typically in Nairobi there was a Caledonian society, there were a lot of Scots living in Nairobi, Caledonian Society, and this Scottish dance group, it was just a group of ex-patriots plus others... We had a very interesting display group and in that group, we had... a Ugandan, who was actually married to a Scottish lady, and he was a really wonderful Scottish



dancer, really good, and looked very smart in his kilt. And we also had a... Sikh medical student as well who did Scottish dancing, dressed with a, I think he wore, a turban as well... But we did by to-day's standards, actually I realize now we were doing very simple dances, we had a very small... repertoire. But anyhow, that was enough, when we came back we decided to carry on with .... Scottish dancing. So I've never really formally been to any classes to learn it. Because we just picked it up as we went along.

I: So were you performing with the display team?

F: ...We did have a display team, yes... we once, there's a thing called the "Bomers of Kenya" which is a thing, it's basically for tourists and they go along and see various types of ethnic dancing. But they had a session, which was for all types of dancing so the Scottish group did something on that occasion, and other groups. Then, at the end, everyone who was dancing had a try at other peoples' dances, which was rather funny so you saw these people dressed like, they could have been Massai or something, doing Scottish dancing very well. That was all quite fun.

I: Would they wear kilts?

F: ... They weren't wearing kilts at that point but the display team did wear, we were properly dressed. It's mainly because in Kenya... there had been the Scottish, the Scottish regiments had been out in Kenya because the British army is in Kenya. So in fact there was ... quite correct jackets and so on were there in the store. Plus all the silver cups and the shields that the soldiers used to compete for. So there was quite a Scottish tradition, in ... in Nairobi.

I: This international aspect of Scottish dancing is really interesting.

F: Yes ... it was just chance that we were taking place, taking part in that. It was a fun thing.

I: So have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

F: ... Yeah, from much earlier on. My husband and I, we do international dancing because... we belong to the international club here. That's where I met my husband, and it is a group that his mother and others have formed in the 1930s as, for some years they did ballroom dancing then they had some people who had been research students in the States, and they brought international folk dance records back with them and then started an international group in about 1958 or something. And that group still, still dances, and the club continues, at a very reduced number, but we've been doing that all the time. So I've done that longer than Scottish dancing.

I: So can you tell me what the difference is between international folk and Scottish?

F:... International is more mixed, because we might do English, we might do Scottish... German, Dutch, Greek, Israeli, Rumanian, Bulgarian etc etc. Very wide repertoire. Different music. And different types of step. And some dances are done in circles, the circle dances, and some dances are done in couples. And very few are done in sets, as you do in the Scottish dancing... So it's more varied than the Scottish dancing. In a way it's easier, because you don't have all the formations you have in Scottish dancing. It's not so dependent on eight people doing the correct thing at the right, at the right time... But on the other hand, the footwork can be more complicated. So occasionally, say at the St. Andrew's Night Ceilidh, for the Second Scottish Group, the leader will do some of the international dances, and you'll find that some of the Scottish dancers have great trouble with the intricacies of the footwork. They'll have a go but they prefer their Scottish dancing.

I: Yes, I've noticed that, that the Circle dance seems, the footwork seems more complex.

F: It can be more complex, syncopated and so on. The music sometimes is less definite in telling you where you should, should be. So it's a slightly different skill.

I: So what do you particularly enjoy about folk?

F:... Well it's quite fun because it's varied. I actually prefer Scottish dancing but we've always done this... international dancing because of the international club so it's part, it's one social event, it used to be a club where people from overseas who were coming to study here or to work here or to be au pair here, it gave them a group to join, where they could meet English people. And that goes right back to the days when... there were very few overseas say African or Indian students here, perhaps a bit lost within the university, and it gave them a very good... place in which to meet other people. That need in a way has gone, because language schools have their own social activities, colleges have their own social activities, people are much more worldly these days, and they think nothing about going and living somewhere else... So the club over the years has declined, but quite naturally, because people have got other places. But we still do get... occasional people who come along from overseas who are looking for international dancing like at the moment, we have a lady from New Zealand, who's here for six months with her husband, a very good international dancer...so it gives her somewhere to go and dance... There's a French lady as well who also comes on Thursday night, who's also a good dancer, she's also here for a ...short period of time and she'll dance with us... so it gives her somewhere to go. And we have an American girl. So whereas now I can identify three or four people as individuals, previously we would have had 20 or 30. So we operate, but on very low numbers. So it's mainly sort of dancing but there's also the international friendship side of it as well. But that's different.

I: So how long have you been involved with the second Scottish group?

F: ... I think we joined in 1979 (laughs). Nearly 40 years now.

I: How did that happen?

F: ... We were looking for Scottish dancing when we came back. At that time there was not the first Scottish group, that started later, and my husband had a second cousin, who was a member. My husband's got Scottish blood because his mother was a Campbell... he had a second cousin who lived here who was in the second Scottish group. So naturally, that's where we went to.

I: Because looking on your website, it says for the promotion of Scottish traditions, so does that include other things?

F:... Yes, the origins of the Second Scottish group go back to 19 ... I think it's 1936... well if you look at the history of it, in a place like here, there were number of groups which were associated, there was a Welsh society, there was a Yorkshire society, there was a Scottish society, there was a Sussex society. So each of those groups that had come here each then had their own... their own society, and a much stronger identity I think, than nowadays. And the first, the first was a man called ... , there is a hall named after him, he was a Scot who was very much into local community politics, and he was here. And they started up a local Scottish group, they had the first ball, they started Burns' Night and St. Andrew's Night, but they also... supported, they had the idea of supporting Scottish people who were here and who were in need of, in need of money, and charity, so, the society still now collects for charities. I mean at that stage, early on, it was because, it was limited to Scottish people. In the Second World War, I think they supported Scottish soldiers who were billeted here... Then the aim, to become a member of the group at that stage, you had to prove your Scots' ancestry (laughs). Nowadays, we've re-worded, the constitution has been re-worded several times, so now you just have to say that you are interested in Scottish activities. So that widens it out to... people like myself who have no Scotch ancestry at all. But you will find that most people have got some link somewhere with Scotland.

I: So do you look at other traditions from Scotland besides the dancing?

F: Yes, what we run... there is the dancing every, every Thursday night, and then there's the ball, there's the beginners' dance, the summer dance, the autumn dance, the garden dance... then we have the St. Andrew's Night Celidh, which does involve dancing as well, but there will be activities there for people who don't dance, because there is a membership, that you will probably never have seen, who don't dance, or don't dance any more. Then there's the Burns' Night, and there... you might know the lady who runs the weekends, every eighteen months or so, they will go away to a holiday fellowship house and go walking and they have dancing in the evening, and that's a social, a social event as well. This second Scottish group is wider than just what we do on Thursday nights. But there are some people who dance, and don't do anything else, there are some people who do other things but don't dance, and some people who do, both.

I: So how long have you been on the committee?

F: ... Well I suppose about ten years, something like that, on and off, I've had a year off somewhere (laughs).

I: What is your role there?

F: ... I'm the joint, the joint honorary secretary. That's another lady and myself, we share the secretary's work.

I: Because I get e-mails from the other lady.

F: She does the e-mails, that's right, yes, yeah. So she does the e-mails and keeping in contact with people and I do the... booking of the hall, and the... dealing with the .... and so on and the caterers, all sorts, bits and pieces, behind the scenes there are in fact an awful lot of people, a lot of things to support the events.

I: So anything more about getting involved... we're still on question one.

F: (Laughs)... At some stages in my life, the only thing... I used to go to Thursday night and when I was working then I didn't go for many years, and then when I retired, I picked it up again. So I picked it up I suppose the last twelve or thirteen years or something. So involvement has been, sometimes it's been virtually nothing, and then it's been, quite a lot.

I: So how easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

F: (laughs) That depends on how difficult the dance is, because as you appreciate, some are very are very simple, some are very complex and they need more practice. And it also depends on ...how tired you are. It's easier to learn at the beginning of the evening that at the end of the evening... Can you give examples? Were you there last Thursday?

I: No

F: Because somebody was there last Thursday who taught some dances that we didn't know well, and that's always quite, quite difficult... because the Thursday nights, they often depend on having a rump of people there who know vaguely, more than vaguely, what they're doing. You appreciate that some people, you say "Oh we'll do x" and they'll just get up and they'll do it, automatically. Other people like me need a , need a reminder, so one walk through is usually, with a dance that I have done before, is usually fine, I can manage. I don't say I don't make mistakes, but I can manage. But a more complex dance with moves that we haven't done before, or haven't done frequently, they need more of a, more of a practice. But usually with just a walk through, I can manage.

I: Were you there the week we were doing "Iona Cross?"

F: Yes, yes.

I: How did you find that one?

F: Well that's alright... it's because that's the dance of the month and what we do, each month, there is one slightly more complex dance every Thursday night for the whole month. So the first week it might (laughs) go wrong. By the second or

third week in theory, it should be going better. So we've virtually cracked "Iona Cross" now. We did it... last Thursday, we'll do it this Thursday, in a way, that's preparation for the ball, because the ball comes up on a Saturday in May, and it's one of the dances on the ball programme. So the whole thing is set up so that, the dances of the month, are the complex ones which are going to come up at the ball, so at least you've had some practice at it. And you will find that the person, I don't know who it is, who does the programme this Thursday and next Thursday, will deliberately select one or two of the dances from the ball, so they are fresh in peoples' minds, at the point when we go to the ball. Because at the ball, we don't have any walk through. You just get up. You have a ticket with a crib on it so you can revise just beforehand, but then you just get up and do it. And the only ones that are walked through at our ball, are the ones where, the dances come from other groups, and we're not very familiar with it. For example, there was one dance that was written in memory of somebody who died, it's called "Return to Shieldig" and that's something that we do, that other groups don't do. So that just has one quick walk through and then, then it's danced. But the purpose of the ball is mainly for dancing, and so you dance all the time, you do twenty dances straight off.

I: Do you have any particular strategies for learning the dances?

F: After time, some of them become automatic, or almost automatic.... But for the ball, I'm doing my revision now, and if you're really stuck about reading the instructions, you need to read the instructions and try and revise them... I have a series of pennies, and they're labeled "Man One, Man Two, Man Three, Man Four" and then you can work out the moves... with pennies... that helps. But I'll certainly read them. My husband though, he'll pick up the ball programme at about four o'clock in the afternoon and he says "Oh I must have a look at the programme" and he has a quick look through and somehow he manages it... with help. But I do a bit more revision than that. But we do revise for the ball. It's really nice because everyone just gets up and dances, and there's some wonderful dances. If you get a whole group, if you get 90 people all going together... that's a wonderful occasion. It's quite different from the Thursday nights, a different atmosphere.

I: A real sense of togetherness.

F: Oh yes, very much so. Yes, yes, yes. If it's going reasonably well.

I: So do you use... you say you use the cribs to learn, do you use the Piling as well?

F: ... I'm not very good on Piling... Piling you have to be able to read it... some people do it. You'll see K. pick up Piling, and she'll just, if you read it correctly... it's fine. It doesn't give you all the details. Sometimes it doesn't tell you whether to turn right or to use the right hand or the left hand or both hands or something. If you haven't got the written down instructions, and you want to know something, I would go for Piling and try learn it that way but I'm not a great user of Piling. I have got a copy.

I: I'm always amazed by how some of the older dancers just know the dances... They may not dance through them, just walk .

F: Yes, yes.

I: But they know exactly where they're going.

F: That's not uncommon, it's mainly because they're people who've danced for years, so they actually know where they should be. They might be a bit slow getting there, but in the main they are, in the past they would have been very competent dancers, and confident as well. So... they do alright, they're not doing the steps, but that doesn't matter, they're doing the right (laughs) just about, in the right place.

I: So how important would you say is memory when you're...

F: ... It is important... but sometimes it's... it's memory of movement and patterns. Kinaesthetic memory or something like that (laughs). I think... It's very simple. Just knowing the commands... some say "Cross and cast." Dances either start "Cross and cast" or "Cast and cross" or "Turn and Cast" or some variation. That's difficult sometimes to remember. But if you just have the crib there, you can just quickly look it up. This one's "Cross and cast" that helps you. So you do need a good memory, but quite a lot of it, as you can see from those older people, it does get quite embedded, in your memory so, they don't have to consciously, consciously bring it up, they do it automatically. Sometimes, when you get into a dance with... something comes back to you "Oh yes I have done this before." This is an automatic, because sometimes you've got certain music on, you think "Ah well I think I should be doing this now." It comes (laughs) a bit, quite intuitive, and I think actually it's very good, for retaining memory.

I: Do you find you use non-verbal cues from other dancers?

F: Oh certainly, yes, yes. When somebody (laughs) grabs your hand or, well they will use verbal cues, won't they? Like "You're going the wrong way" or "Why haven't you moved?" (laughs) Or something like that... and if you're technically dancing, you don't do these things where you help somebody by putting your hand out to say "I'm going to come up to you." If you're turning somebody, you might put your hand out to say "I'm going to turn you by the right hand" or "I'm going to turn you by the... left hand." Technically, when you dance, you should both come together and put the right hand there, but we don't actually do it like that, unless it's a demonstration team who really know what they're doing. You see the really, really good dancers... will not give non-verbal cues to somebody- else, they will just expect the other person to do the right thing. But we do use a lot of non-verbal cues to help people through.

I: Help the beginners.

F: Oh I think it's essential because that's the only way you can learn by doing it... and then people get more confident and they don't need the ... non-verbal cues so... But we do, as you know, we use verbal cues as well (laughs). I think we're quite... we take it, not as a joke, but everybody takes it all in good heart. And it's for enjoyment... not for going... not going for fantastic professional series...

I: Is there anything more on learning?

F: I think we do, we do actually like doing new dances, so it's nice to learn a new dance. And that's the benefit of having those people, who on a Saturday night, go around to other groups. And along the line, they'll say "Oh we did a nice dance in another town" and we'll do it. And that's how we bring in new dances... And we've also got a big repertoire ... so that you can add variety. And the variety comes from "Oh we haven't done this for a year or so." It's all recorded, what we have done... We go back and think "Oh let's do this again" or "Here's one that's disappeared off the repertoire, let's bring it back."

I: Do you compose dances?

F: I've never, no, no. But some people do. Because we have our own... I think it's the Jubilee "book, we have one whole book which is from our local group, and it's those ones are not known to people outside the local group... so N. has got, I can't remember "The Jubilee Jig" or the "Jubilee Reel" I think it's "The Jubilee Reel" which is her dance, which if that is done with other people, we often just do it that once, because it's not very well, not very well known. I don't make them up, no.

I: I remember "Hobson's Conduit" that's one of the rejects.

F: (laughs) Yes, that does happen, that people make up dances and they just get... they're danced once a year or something, and then they get dropped out of the repertoire.

I: I think that one wasn't put in the Jubilee book.

F: Oh right, yes, yes... he didn't get this.

I: Right... How does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself? How did it make you see yourself?

F: It's... I certainly enjoy Thursday nights... it's just fun and it's not terribly serious. It's a bit of exercise and it's fun. A group thing... a nice friendly thing. That's the main experience.

I: What do you wear?

F: Oh... because I cycle, I wear trousers... that's quite unusual. Most women Scottish dancers will wear skirts, but I don't... except when we go to a ball, then I'd wear a, wear a proper dress.

I: What do you wear for a ball?

F: We don't wear, the men wear the kilts, my husband puts his kilt on. Traditionally, women would have worn the white dress with the sash. And I have had that. But I don't like wearing that, nobody does so we just wear... you wear what you want basically. But I put on a cotton dress, something, something that you can wash at the end.

I: And do you perform publicly now?

F: Not very much. Only the occasional, we get asked to do the occasional demonstration. But the shortage, of course, for men, so they want four, they're scrabbling around to get four men to do it, but there are any number of women. So I don't, I have done it, but not much.

I: When did you do it?

F:... Well we did something at a local community centre, about four or five years ago. I danced at... somewhere for a village fete.

I: And would you wear the white dress for those?

F: The one at the local community centre, we didn't, I don't think. I have worn a white dress... I haven't got one now so... but people do tend to try, the ladies' in white, it just gives a bit of uniformity, because the men, they would put their kilts on and their kilts are the same. Just sort of a uniform really.

I: And shoes?

F: Shoes... I wear, some people wear ballet shoes, some people wear the, gillies with the lace-up... I wear a shoe with a slightly, just a slight heel... that's because my, I've got one knee that isn't terribly good, so I prefer a little bit, bit more than just a very small soft shoe.

I: More supported?

F: Yes, yes. Just a tiny, tiny heel. So it has a slightly larger sole... it feels a bit, so it gives a bit more. That works, anyhow.

I: Ok. So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

F: (laughs) Well I think it makes you feel better. I'm sure it makes you feel psychologically better... And also physically, you can... the best dancers who are really dancing, will get a lot of exercise out of it. But... people who are just walking round actually are getting less exercise, but nevertheless are getting some exercise so, it is exercise as well... And it's mental exercise and physical exercise. So I think it's a terribly good one... Assisting health.

I: Anything else on that?

F: Where are we? .... Four.

I: Yes.

F: I haven't had any injuries from Scottish dancing

I: Right

F: Which is good. You do get the occasional person whose slipped or something... which is why some groups take a lot of emphasis on warming-up before you start... We don't do that on a Thursday night, that's because not everybody comes at the same, the same time... Care is taken with say the first dance, one that doesn't involve too much twisting and turning, to get people warmed up a bit, gets the legs going, before something a bit more complex. So that's given some

I: Do you think it's your shoes that helps prevent problems?

F: You need that type of shoe... you know we have problems at the moment at the hall that we would normally put down a tiny amount of that slip-stop, which they're stopping us doing. And that's a great pity because that just gives you a tiny amount of grip from the floor, which we haven't got. So that is actually impeding people's dancing at the moment, from that floor... But we dance at another hall, they've got a different surface in the hall, they asked us not to put slip-stop down and we didn't, but it was perfectly alright there. So somehow there, the surface of the floor, is alright. So how well you get on depends on the surface, and also the, the hardness. If you dance on the, you know these tiled floors with concrete underneath? You'll feel it very quickly. A wooden floor is better. But if you go dance at this other hall that has got a sprung floor, you can dance much longer and you feel much fresher...

I: Yeah

F: So ....If you're looking for somewhere to dance, get somebody to try the floor out, because they might look alright, but when it comes to it, they're not that good... So... I mean injuries in Scottish dancing, I've seen somebody injured by, it's somebody who dropped an earring, and then somebody slid on it. So you are conscious of things that are actually on the floor and how slippery the floor is... So you have to be a bit careful. But we are insured (laughs) Yes we are (laughs) Quite seriously... Just in case somebody did hurt themselves... So we do take cover.

I: So anything more on the psychological benefits?

F: Oh no... I think it does promote well-being, it does.

I: Ok. So how does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

F: (laughs)... I think it's by seeing those dancers who are older than ourselves, and seeing how people cope well, even though they are in their seventies, eighties, even nineties, we have people dancing, to see how most of them, providing they've got some mobility and can actually keep up and keep going. And I think that's a really good, a good thing... And I can see that's something which Scottish dancing, providing one can stand up and move, as something you can keep doing for as long as you possibly can. You can see there are some people who have had perforce unfortunately to drop out... or will do one dance, or half a dance, and that's it, that's a pity. And I think people usually regret when they have to give up.... But there are some people we've got who are quite elderly, like the little 85 year old lady, who didn't dance for some years because her husband was ill, and then at a tremendous age, suddenly came back dancing again which I think is wonderful.

I: It's a very positive image.

F: It is, yes.

I: Anything else?

F: No, I don't think so.

I: Ok. So number six. How has Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body?

F: Oh gosh (laughs).... I think it does help you, it obviously helps your mobility, and to retain mobility... Like most people you get some joint goes wrong at some stage... I've got a knee, from time to time, I just can't... I can't dance, and then it corrects itself... So unfortunately, sometimes, I just can't do it... but then once that gets better, that's absolutely fine so. I don't think it's really changed the experience of my body as well (laughs).

I: You've been doing it so long?

F: So long. Yes, yes. It's not something I've picked up later on or so.

I: Mm, mm....I think for me it's sort of highlighted posture.

F: Yes, yes... Well you can do Scottish dancing to different degrees. The really good people, you see them standing, really good posture, they'll stand still... they'll move their arms in a certain way, their feet, you see them point their toes, absolutely wonderful. And you see even quite large people who are able to do that to be extremely grateful... graceful not grateful... So those who started very young, and say point their toes, they are the best dancers. You look at them and you think "Oh it would be nice!" But no, I can't be bothered to do that any more, or... I'm a bit stiff, this side, or I can't leap on this leg or something. So you, you do it in a slightly modified way. So you adjust to what your capabilities are I think.. And look with envy on the good people (laughs).

I: The balletic?

F: The balletic...Yes, yes, yes

I: OK... So is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

F: I don't think it has any great meaning, but I just enjoy doing it. I don't think I ... you have a week or two when you don't do it, then you miss it. But I do quite enjoy, in the summer we take a break from Scottish dancing, we don't, we don't dance in

July and August, we start in September. It's quite nice to have a break and then pick it up again and... perform again. You do different things in the summer....

I: Anything else?

F: No, I don't think so.

I: Alright, thank you.

## **Second Scottish Interview Nine (2.S.9)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

D: Yes, that's fine.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

D: Well that was at school. We were in Scotland, I went to Scotland when I was nine until I was 19, and... we did Scottish Country dancing in the gym lessons occasionally. And I also did it when I was in the Girl Guides, so that was how I first got involved.

I: And how did you continue with it?

D: Well I didn't do any, we came back to England... my dad just moved there for a job, and we came back, and I didn't do any more Scottish Country dancing and then, in due course, I went to work in Switzerland in Basle, and there was a Scottish Country dancing club there so I joined that. And that was between 1964 and 1966. I came back to England and didn't do any more, and then when I finally ended up in a nearby village in 1977, I settled in and then I decided that I really must look for something to do in the evenings this year, an evening class or something. And in the library, I noticed there was a Scottish Country dancing group and I thought "Wey hey! I'll go back to Scottish Country dancing." I started in 1978, and I've been dancing ever since, with one group or another (laughs).

I: Right... So how many times do you go a week?

D: Well, in the, that was once, when I had a young family, because I had to get a baby-sitter and everything and my parents moved down in 1983, and they baby sat so I could come to the second Scottish group. Since the children have grown up, I used to go to one village group on a Tuesday, but now I go to another village group on a Monday, and the second Scottish group on Thursday. Often to a Saturday dance, of course it's our ball this Saturday, next Saturday is another dance in a nearby village, I'm going there and then I'm going away for a holiday, so I'll miss another local ball which I used to go to. But there's usually two out of four Saturdays I should say there's a dance, if not three out of four that I go to. So that's two or three times a week that I go dancing.

I: So there's an extra social night attached to the classes?

D: That's mainly my social life, being on your own, the benefits of dancing Scottish style, you don't need a partner and everyone fits in. Ladies dance as gentlemen... you can be on your own (laughs).

I: Anything else about getting involved?

D:... Well I was in, I was selected in the Guides to be a company representative... for an area competition, and it was a sixteenth some reel and we finally won the championship (laughs)

I: So was that in Scotland?

D: In the Guides... I've done a few dances publicly, I've done, in the past I've been in the demonstration team of the second Scottish group, but not recently.

I: So where did you perform?

D:... I can't really remember... one or two, oh at a local village, the village fete... or at an old peoples' home, something like that. Once or twice my mother was in a nursing home, they asked us to... if we could dance for the old people, so we got a team together there and did a few dances for them (laughs).

I: So what did you wear when you performed publicly?

D: Well, the second Scottish group would be the white dress with a plaid... with the local village it was not so formal, and we just wore kilts and blouses without the plaids, because there were a lot of ladies dancing as men. So we decided that it would just be easier if we all wore tartan kilts or skirts and white blouses...

I: So what sort of dances would you do for those performances?

D: Oh, well a mixture of Reels, Jigs and Strathspeys so what Scottish Country dancing entailed, sort of thing.

I: So have you been involved in any other forms of dance?

D: Well, when I was a girl, I did Highland dancing... Highland dancing, the Highland fling and the sword dance. I tried to do step dancing at a day school... session in the past (laughs) but found my feet and brain would not quite co-ordinate (laughs) so I have not done that since. And I had ballet lessons when I was a little girl... I've liked, I've always liked dancing.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about the Highland?

D: Well, not really, except that now I think that ladies are not supposed to do Highland, are they? Men do Highland dancing and ladies should do step dancing. But when I was a girl, girls did Highland dancing as well.

I: Can you remember what it was like dancing in Scotland as a child?

D: Oh we danced in a hall.... And there was somebody who played the piano and the teacher was very strict and made us do it properly and it was just enjoyable, I always liked it.... I can't think of anything else (laughs).

I: Ok... How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

D: Well, it took me a long time, when I started again in 1978, it took me really quite a while to get back. I still remembered the steps, but I'd forgotten, well I mean I could remember reels and "figures of eight" and "rights and lefts", but I'd forgotten about "corners".... And it took me a little while to get back into it. But... the straightforward dances are easy enough to learn. But the more complicated ones, the longer dances, then I find it's not so easy and I have to do them two or three times to really get them into my head. And then I can usually pick them up if I do them often enough. If you only do it once, then you don't do it for a long time, you get back to square one (laughs). It's good mental exercise (laughs).

I: Can you give me examples of how you actually learn a particular dance?

D:... I suppose I just try to remember the first eight bars and then the next eight bars or phrase or try and just remember the patterns, what comes after the next... muddle my way through somehow... (laughs).

I: So how important would you say is memory?

D: Oh I should think it is very important because.. if you don't remember, you go wrong constantly... sometimes it's difficult to remember, some dances flow, and one movement leads you into another say, and it's much easier to remember, whereas with one or two dances, that say have awkward turns in them and you've got to remember to sort of like go back on yourself say, and that's not always so easy, because it doesn't come naturally...you have to make more of an effort to remember that.

I: Do you use any other strategies to learn?

D: I don't go into it that theoretically. I just seem to do it (laughs).

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of yourself? How does it make you see yourself?

D: I've never even thought of that. I... (laughs).

I: So what do you usually wear?

D: Oh light clothing, a blouse and skirt or a dress. To be comfortable.... I don't like dancing in trousers much because it's warm dancing, it gets very warm dancing. and I like to... well be feminine I suppose... hold your skirt out sort of (laughs). Well if you're dancing publicly then you need to have the correct clothes on to make it look nice...

I: How do you find dancing on grass? Or do you dance on tarmac?

D: It's hard... it gets even harder as you get older I think because, you get worn a bit, so you need a nice sprung wooden floor to dance comfortably... And it's hard work dancing on grass. But we still do it. We have garden dances in the summer, and dance on grass. It's not very easy(laughs).

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

D: Well, this can be two-fold, I'm sure. It... is an absolute, inestimable benefit, mentally, it takes your mind off your troubles, so it gives you a boost there, and it's aerobic so it's very good for the cardio-vascular system I would think. But I have torn, a ligament in my right knee (laughs) and I'm not sorry I've pulled a muscle in my left calf (laughs) dancing, so... it's got "fors" and "against" (laughs).

I: Risk of injury?

D: A little bit, yes. But when I tore my... ligament, that was because ... the floor was not, it was very sticky, and I sort of put my foot out to "petronella" turn, so I committed myself into the turn, but my toe did not fly round but I did, so this ligament tore. (laughs). And if it's too slippery, like I think at the hall we're using presently, I... feel that's very uncomfortable.... I can't concentrate on dancing properly because you're concerned that you might slip... they will have to do something about that, it's coming up at the AGM...

I: Yeah, yeah... it's one of the issues that's come up in the research, that the floors are very difficult.

D: Yes... We used to put slip-stop down but they objected to it, asked us not to use it, so it looks as if we've got to find another venue really, which is difficult, because we've tried this before, because of the parking issue... It's difficult to park... but we couldn't find anywhere better that suited everybody... So we're back to square one now, so we have to make more of an effort, and just bite the bullet and move out of town... But then of course if you go out of town, then you go to one side, it's going to make it very awkward for people from the opposite side (laughs)... People who cycle might not be able to cycle out to one of the villages that has a village hall. But then of course there are many people who say they are not coming because it's too slippery, and they would come, if we went to another venue. So it really is swings and roundabouts but I think we are going to lose more (laughs)... deviating from the subject, aren't we?

I: No, it's all part of it, because you're thinking of the environment, how the environment influences health.

D: Yeah. So that's definitely... well I feel very strongly we should find another hall. It's sad because we've been with the present hall for a long, long time, and it's a very handy venue, except it's got the disadvantages of not being able to park, especially in the summer, and now this slippery floor. And that slippery floor is lethal for dancing. You feel as if you might really injure yourself... and you're so tense with that, it's not conducive to trying to remember the dances or dance properly... So it's very, very important (laughs).

I: Can you tell me a little bit more, you mentioned that the dancing is good for your mental health. Can you say any more on that?

D: I think, living on my own I've had various problems, I've always managed to get someone to baby-sit so I could come out, I think it's important when you're more or less house-bound, or through lack of cash, you can't do an awful lot, but to be able to get out once a week, and Scottish Country dancing, is my absolute saviour... because it, as I said, it takes your mind off your troubles, it's a good laugh and a fun evening, and the music is so up-lifting that... it helps with depression, because I did suffer with depression a little bit... So... and also it's good exercise, I mean you need to exercise your brain as well as your body, especially as you get older I think, and remembering the patterns and the movements, is all mental exercise as well, which has got to be a good thing.

I: So... any other injuries?

D: Mainly...well I had, I got hip trouble at work, moving a heavy leaded door, that was eventually motorized, at the cost £8,000, but I think that has been the cause of my hips, getting into trouble. And...so my legs are always going when I'm dancing... one muscle on the bone or the ankle or knee or something, they suddenly give way, and I stumble and go "Ow!" And then two or three steps later, I'm ok again... but I suppose dancing is my (laughs)... it's not the greatest thing to do if you have got trouble. On the other hand they say "Use it or lose it" so... I've got osteoarthritis a bit and the doctor says "Well it is best to keep moving just ignore the pain or... just get on with it" so that's what I try to do.

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

D: Well I think it's, the nice thing about Scottish dancing is that you can do it, as you get older... you can put as much or as little into it, in a way, but you don't have to, dance like, sort of, put so much spring in your step for example, you can almost walk round if you, if you can't actually dance properly. But I shall try to dance properly as long as I can and I'm hoping that will help with ageing... don't get old before your time, as it were (laughs)... I can see us getting quite old!

I: We're all aging... How has Scottish dancing changed your experience of your body?

D: Well as I say it's given me one or two torn ligaments and muscles but... I'm sure it benefits. I mean I had my blood pressure taken yesterday and it was 120, 124 over 65, which must be a good one, and my pulse rate is 58. Mind you, I go rambling as well. I should imagine that the cardiovascular input of Scottish Country dancing is a very good thing for keeping your blood pressure in good nick.... What else can you say about these things? (laughs)

I: I'll tell you afterwards... Is there anything more you can tell me about what dance means to you in your life?

D: Well... it means an awful lot because until fairly recently it was my main social life. When the children were young, my mum and dad sat for me so I could go, I used to go to the second Scottish group's dances... then of course when the children didn't need a baby-sitter, I started going to other dances... as I say, being a lone female, you don't have to have a partner, so you can go, and people will ask you to dance, you can even ask people to dance, which I tend only to do if I know the dance, I feel a bit sort of reticent asking people to dance, especially about asking men to dance, probably because I've been brought up in a very traditional manner. I find it difficult to ask men to dance (laughs) but... occasionally I have done. Like I said, it's to dance really (laughs) except as I say I'll ask one of the ladies to dance... I don't feel so silly. Quite difficult to put really it's... Not intimidated, I don't know, I don't want to be thought forward or anything.... You know what I mean?

I: It's part of the etiquette?

D: Yeah. But these days, it's quite acceptable and in fact, you see I've been brought up in Scottish Country dancing traditions for a long time, and you didn't go about booking people. Now if you go to a dance, people rush round and say "Will you do such and such a dance and such and such a dance. You book up, and... I was always taught that you mix in with Scottish, I mean this is also dancing with other people, not... the person you came with always, but... somehow we didn't book in advance, but it was sort of a spontaneous thing before each dance. You'd say "Would you like to do this dance?"... So there's that aspect... but... I still like, that's my main social life and of course I've joined the ramblers and go rambling once a morning walk a week, then a Sunday walk, which is all day, and you meet people there and I've made one or two friends and we've done other things, theatre...so rambling will be the second social event, dancing, Scottish dancing's definitely been my main social life and therefore very important because of getting me out. Also it's a very low cost activity, which is what I had to bear in mind in the past, you only need a pair of shoes really and the subscriptions are not high and the dances are very reasonable compared to other dances. So it's a really enjoyable, low-cost activity. Keeps you healthy (laughs). What more can you ask for? (laughs) I don't know why everyone doesn't do it....

I: You mentioned earlier something about the music... enjoying the music?

D: Yes, I just think you hear Scottish music and it just makes you want to dance. And it's uplifting. I hear it... and my spirits lift immediately... you can sort of sing along to it, the tunes are nice to sing along to (laughs). Which you feel, I'm inhibited about doing at Celidhahs going "La-la-la-la." (laughs) So you have a good laugh too.

I: Which part of Scotland do you come from?

D: Well I come from England but... when I was nine, my father worked for a company in Lancashire and they were going to build some new laboratories, and it's supposed to take two years, so they moved to a sister company in Motherwell in



Lanarkshire, and we lived in Bothwell. And it took ten years to build these labs, we were there for ten years, then we came back again to where we used to live in Lancashire, where I was born.

I: So... anything else?

D: I can't think of anything.

I: OK

## **Second Scottish Group Interview Ten (2.S.10)**

I: Can I ask for your consent and record it on tape?

R: Yeah, yeah, you can.

I: So how did you first get involved in Scottish dancing?

R: As I say I used to live in N., and I used to have one of my friends living in the same street where I was. And one day she said "I go to Scottish dance. Would you like to come?" I said "Yeah that would be nice." Because I'm always interested in the dance. As you know, I come from India, I did my Indian dance all my life. So I thought "This will be another way to keep my art going." And that was my interest to start Scottish dance.

I: So how many years have you been...

R: Well Scottish dancing I do, I think it must be just about three years now. So... but I enjoy it... I like the formations and the, the music, especially when it is with a live band, it's really nice, I like it.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about your Indian dancing?

R: Right... in India, usually they make sure all the girls learn something that is dancing, the music, because these are our more creative arts. And as you know, for centuries there is a good story about the girl doing the performance of the dance, is there not? And my parents were very keen that I should learn some, and even I used to be quite interested so I started learning Indian dance maybe perhaps ever since maybe ten or something like that. And until I got married, I used to do performances, take part in competitions and thinks like that so I was very keen to learn. In India there are about four different forms of classical dances. But I learned ... those are the South Indian dances, because I come from the South. The costumes, the dance, everything is very, very... it's all body language I think, it gives you good expression and... So that's how I think I started doing, various types of dances, obviously, after coming here. The first two times I got to do the Scottish dance... I hardly believe I am doing it.

I: Can you remember what it was like, the first time you went?

R: Yeah... when I went the first time, I saw quite a lot of men as well, now in N., even for the regular evening classes, they used to come in the kilt, obviously seen on the television, we saw the kilt in the dance, Scottish with the bag-pipes and other things. It used to really amuse me but then the formations I quite appreciated because they have all got quite a systematic, with the music, quite rhythmic... I thought as they are repeated it will be a big challenge for me to pick it up, you see as long as I watch a couple of times, it wasn't a difficult thing for me. So I think... I did really enjoy it and since then, whenever I can, I used to go and I think it's on a Wednesday night I used to go.

I: So how does Scottish dancing compare with Indian dancing?

R: Well it's quite different I would say because Indian dancing, I used to do solo, the dances are solo so everything you've got to do, character timing and expression, we have quite a lot of hand signals, everything has got a meaning. So you've got to be, any classical for that matter, you've got to put a lot of effort and time to do. And... is one of the difficult ones I would say. I think we have quite a lot of body language in English dances, we show lots of expression with your eyes and your eyebrows and in the movement and then the steps, they've got to be done and the costume is completely different, as you realise but Scottish dance, I think the timings and things are good, but obviously you can just give a nice smiling face and there is reciprocation when somebody asks you to do the dance and things like that. But apart from that I don't think you have many hand gestures or facial expression, except you can show you are enjoying and you are co-operating with the movements too. It's quite a difference I would say and we always have music and... songs to go with theatre, which explain what you are doing. Whereas in the, Scottish dance it's just, band music, which you have many times. That's how I think it's quite different...

I: Anymore... about getting involved?

R: Ah well I think I would like to keep it going as long as I can. But obviously, one needs, I've got to make sure, and I keep trying to do so many things, I must make sure I've got enough time to attend the groups, and they do the dancing. Whenever there is a special occasion, it's even more interesting, then you have a chance to meet other groups in the area and ... I would like to continue, so I know I have an opportunity to do now. But one thing that sometimes concerns me because I wear, always a saree, do the people object to sarees? But every time I go to any function I ask them they said "Oh no you're welcome." You see, so sometimes I find I'm the one and only doing the Scottish dance in the saree. But still I enjoy, and people enjoy watching me. They say "Oh you've got a lovely saree... the sarees are, lovely dress, isn't it? Lovely colours." So as long, as it's not objectionable, I think I would like to continue and I'll enjoy doing that.

I: Can you describe any of the special occasions you've been to?

R: Yeah, I think there was a... St. Andrew's. I didn't manage to go for the, what's the one you do in February again?

I: Burns Night.

R: Burns Night. Only reason being I'm a vegetarian you see and... it complicates a little bit with the food. Other times when we have special occasions like St Andrew's night and the Ceilidh, I think when they did once I think I myself, coached some of our group into doing an Indian dance actually... I took the music and I took the costumes for them, dressed them all up and everybody really appreciated that.... (laughs). So I think.... When it is just special occasion, we tend to, take food and share so I have a choice, I don't have to eat anything that I don't want, that will not be the meat, then I can mix with my own groups, it's quite an event. Once again, on Saturdays I think it'll be quite busy doing my teaching in the day-time so if there is enough time, then I try to go to them.

I: Anything else about getting involved?

R: Well... I think I would like to but as you know I think it is early, comparatively early, for some people who've been doing half of their life, with 20 or 30 years. So I'm not completely sure of each dance. Once I know the dance, I'm quite happy... otherwise I feel a little bit, in case I make a mistake, it's always on my mind. So you've got to concentrate, yeah? But perhaps in the next couple of years, if I can continue continuously I will get the hang of the dances then I feel more comfortable. Then maybe one evening I would be able to really be able to take charge of the group if possible. That's my....

I: We're sort of getting onto the second question. How easy do you find it to learn the different dances in Scottish dancing?

R: I find it quite easy as I said, because I am already trained as an Indian dancer, which is much much more difficult and a much harder form. So Scottish I think as long as you know the formation and can think about how the movements are moving, then I find it's quite easy.... So I think people coming to that, you are a very quick learner, because obviously they will know my background, because I did much harder dances than that. So that way I think I find them more... confident too, having more and do it more. That's how I find it, yeah.

I: Any strategies you use for learning?

R: I think so because there are few terminology, isn't there? Use those, to get the full meaning of the word, once I know exactly how the dance goes, I try to remember that way. Say for example... like... what do you say? ... You keep moving your position, how we can move so to take over and come round that partner, how you have to do and then crossing your hands things like that. And the Strathspey. Basically I know the basic steps, the different steps, how they do. So after that, I think once I know exactly how it goes, I can form the picture in my mind, so I can follow it, usually, yeah.

I: Can you give examples of learning a particular dance?

R: .... I haven't been for a couple of weeks now, so as I said, it's still quite early in learning in a way so... But some dances I'm quite... happy to do because I know exactly how they go, how you cross your hands and then change your positions and then.... Move round and things like that. Once I know them. But still I'm not 100% ... (laughs) so it's slowly getting better I would say.

I: So how important is memory?

R: I think in Scottish dance it's very important, very important to know exactly you see because if everybody know where they are going to be, the dancing, character timing, and correct positions as well, all you need is a group, say about four, if three of them don't know, you can guarantee after the first formation, it will go hay-wire (laughs). You need to know I think, or the partner should know exactly, or you can just guide your partner, then I think it will work because I think it's very important you've got to be in the correct place, depending on the music, otherwise if you are not in your place, that means you are disturbing somebody else to come into your place and you are occupying somebody's place so.... Whole thing will be disrupted and... you just come to a standstill. The dance stops (laughs).

I: It seems to be you can cope with one or two learners in a set, but no more...

R: No more, that's right. If they're working as a fourth set, probably I think if two of them don't know, you can still manage. But if a good four of them don't know, the first round they can manage but from second round onwards I think things go completely out of order so the dancing just stops. Sometimes I think you can't be slow. It's ok like a Strathspey, where you can do a bit slow steps, but some of them are faster dances. If you think, in a faster dance especially, everybody has got to be careful to use their turn and be in their place and in time, that makes a difference to the dance.

I: Anything else about learning?

R: Well like what they say, any artist never stops, you keep learning more and more. Every time I come I find I think well I think "I must do that." But obviously you need to have a good practice as well, any art needs good practice at it. As I don't do more than once a week, it's not quite right but... I try to see. Again I find with the Scottish dance major differences. In Indian dance, as I did the solo dances, I could just take the music and practice myself, but with the Scottish dance, you can't practice on your own because it involves a whole group. Even if you do a few steps, still the steps and the... progression of the movement, everything depends on the rest of them. So I find... in a way I can just practice my steps at home, but I can't really do the whole dance on my own. That's where I find it's really difficult... you need to have a whole set all the time, to get the good progress of the (laughs) art.

I: So how much do you practice at home?

R: Only the steps I think. It so happened when I moved to this area there was one class which was going, very close to my house so I went for two sessions. And I was quite pleased, the tutor there who was doing that, who said "You are not a beginner." I said "Oh well that's a very good compliment." Coming from a teacher, in a way. So I think that gave me good encouragement in a way. So when I used to come home I used to practice the steps, which I was supposed to be doing. But unfortunately that group has folded because they didn't have enough students to keep running. Then I had to go, then there was a long gap of six weeks or something, and then I started coming to another group and that is also under threat now, because I think it is quite a long way to go and there are not enough of them so they closed it down as well. But the second group when I went, it was like a teaching group, so they used to do the first lot of steps again, but even though the teacher knew I knew all the steps, because of my long dress... my saree, they couldn't see my footwork. "Oh you get away with doing nothing, isn't it?" I said "But that's not true. I'm used to doing the proper steps otherwise you wouldn't be in time." (Laughs) But obviously I can't change now, change into Scottish outfit or the trousers, because I wear only a saree you see so, I enjoy it. but at this stage I think I just want to do what is right for me and what I enjoy, obviously (laughs).

I: That's lovely... So do you want to go onto the next one?

R: Yeah.

I: So how does Scottish dancing make you see yourself?

R: ... I think, you see, it's only I enjoy it because it's a good dance with a good ... exercise in a way when we do the faster dances or even the Strathspey, quite a few people say it goes on and on. But I quite like it because I know I can do the Strathspey, because it's a slow movement, I won't make a mistake, because I'll have enough time to do, watch it and think about it and do. Whereas with the faster dances, I keep looking, I think I should be able to do but when it comes to watching something, it's completely different when you're doing yourself I find, because... The positions and dialogue, you've got to make sure you're in right time. So that way I find it is a little bit but... I like it, and people who watch me, obviously they say "Oh you look very elegant you know." But that sort of gives me encouragement. But obviously I don't know what other things. Some obviously, wherever you go, you can't please everybody, some might feel, whether it is right or wrong, but it doesn't matter. I enjoy so (laughs). It's very sociable anyway. Good amount of people always talking to make me more comfortable. They're really welcoming... But sometimes I think, a couple of them, they don't even ask you to do the dance, perhaps they may not be seeing you eye to eye but you can't please everybody, so I think that's fine for me. Until somebody say "Well you're not allowed to come to the dance" I'll go (laughs). Somebody says "We don't really want you." Then probably I have to stop it (laughs).

I: I think it's the British reserve!

R: That's right, yeah.

I: Shy?

R: Very shy and ... it's them. You can't change them, can you?

I: I think you've answered the next question. What do you wear?

R: (Laughs).

I: Do you perform publicly?

R: Publicly, yes. I went to some special occasions when they were doing... Do you call the evening-do's as public?

I: Yes, yes.

R: Oh yes. Many times. I went into H... once, I went, to quite a few centres I went. I went up to, even in that year I started I went up to B, I went up to M., in K. we used to go in the car... different areas. But here I think I only went a couple of times, because often my other pressures in a way, not having enough time. But I quite enjoy because the social occasions are even better I find, people from different quarters will come so they do things completely different. I don't know how they feel about you, when they see you... they get attracted to my outfit first because of the saree. Then they try to talk to me... So it's always a challenge I find, before going I don't know how they are going to take, but obviously I feel quite comfortable. If I would have felt threatened, perhaps I would have stopped a long time ago but now I've passed that threshold I feel (laughs). You keep going (laughs).

I: How did you find it trying to teach some of the Scottish dancers Indian dance for...?

R: Oh right for that Ceilidh night, isn't it, yeah? I just asked them, I tell you one of the ladies is E. I think, she's organising, and S. is the one who said "We could do a different dance." They asked me to do the dance. But obviously, not having the proper music for the solo dancing, I hadn't practiced that for a long time, that wouldn't be right. So I said "How about if I coach you all, we can do one of the folk dances with the sticks... the sticks are rhythmic and I've got the music and I can dress you all up in the saree." And they really enjoyed it obviously. But they find... it's a little bit different in a way, because... the timings and everything is meticulous, you've got to be, because in the, some of them, postures, with the Scottish dance you can get away just standing and doing most of the dance. Whereas in Indian dance, you've got to be, coming down to the earth... sitting postures and bending your head to touch the ground, which they couldn't do, so I'd got to do some alterations in the dance... So it's not completely Indian folk, I like to make it convenient for everybody to enjoy. But they enjoyed it...

and they liked to be dressed up in a saree, and I put some flowers in their hair, put them a little bit of ... on their forehead and gave them bracelets... it's all the paraphernalia.

I: (laughs).

R: I made them quite happy there. It's like children you see. When I dress up the children, they get really happy. So I got the same expressions and return from the grown-ups as well. So I think... I think perhaps it will be the art I think, once you're all in art really, it doesn't make any difference, I think, they all enjoy, that's important.

I: So how many Scottish dancers did you dress up?

R: It was about eight of them... I did as well, so seven, apart from me, seven of them, I dressed them up in the saree and got all the little paraphernalia. And everybody... they took so many photos, they gave me some photos as well ...so (laughs)... they gave some for me to keep in an album.

I: That's lovely. Do you want to go onto the next one?

R: Mm.

I: So how does Scottish dancing influence experiences of your health?

R: As I said, health-wise, touch wood, I don't have any problems. But... I take it as good exercise for me. And I feel, sometimes it's quite exhausting, especially in a small room when so many of you are confined and you are doing the fast movement dances and all, it's really, really hot, isn't it? (laughs). That's it I think I find. But... often I heard with the people saying, doing for years and years, "It's all giving the strain on my knees." That's what they say, but... up to now, I don't have any problem. So I think... it is quite healthy exercise, and it's a pleasurable exercise, unlike going to the... gyms, and trying to work with machines, it's more or less you are communicating with the people, and doing the dance, isn't it? Which is quite fun I find. But as I can't... go to the gym and do any exercise, you see, but to dance, I'm walking and various exercises.... So I keep it up (laughs).

I: How does it compare with the Indian in terms of...

R: ...With the Indian, as I said, with the Indian one needs to be much more strenuous in a way, because you've got all the body language, with your expression with your face, with your eyes, your neck movements and your hand signals, your hand gestures, whereas with the Scottish dance, all you do is either hold the hand of somebody or just... I find... it's good exercise, but not as intensive as... training classically... in dance.

I: How about psychological benefits of Scottish?

R: Psychologically I think when people ask me to do the dance and all, I feel quite thrilled in a way, because... it's nicer when people ask me and they're... the same face, like how they are doing. But sometimes you are just sitting and no-body will ask you to dance. That's the time I find "Am I doing something wrong?" But it can't be that way obviously but... you come across different type of people, as we were discussing, they being English, they feel reserved, I don't know what they think in their mind, but traditionally Scottish dance, a man should ask a lady to dance isn't it? So that is where you get stuck sometimes I think in that way. But loads of ladies will come and ask me, and I feel quite comfortable to come and dance with the ladies, no problem for me. But sometimes you wonder, maybe there is any kind of objection or problem, but maybe, it's my own thinking, I would say, I can't blame anybody! (Laughs).

I: You said a little bit about enjoying Scottish, just for fun.

R: That's right, yeah. I think it's fun in a way I think when you go and you dance with the faster dances and all the formations, which I quite like in a way. And I think, when we do the variety of different ones, in the square form or in the two lines... and then, three couple dances... then the, what do you call it? When you hold hands and go, what do you call that one? Do you know? I think...

I: Poussette?

R: Poussette! I think poussette, of doing the diamond shape, forming... they are quite nice I think, ... how you can come back to your own position, doing totally different formations. Things like that appeal to me really. Quite nice, yeah. It's social in a way, when you are trying to dance with others it makes it much more interesting.

I: OK.... Have you had any injuries from Scottish?

R: No, no, thankfully I think... As you know, I keep quite, very fit because I do play badminton, I play table-tennis, I go out in each of those groups to the U3A... University of the Third Age. And I teach yoga, because I practice yoga everyday. So... and I do my own gardening and I walk with the Ramblers. And... I think I'm quite fit, compared to quite a few people obviously in a way and I'm very sensible, I'm a pure vegetarian but I try to keep a good balanced diet and I don't have too many sweets, I eat a lot of fruits and vegetables so I maintain my health, and as I live on my own it's very important. For me, I mustn't get ill (laughs) even though the whole family are doctors, still they're too busy for anything. And we believe that health is wealth, you see so it's very important I think. Keeping the dancing is much more fitness in a way. On top of everything, I keep fairly good health, I think actually.

I: So the dancing's just one activity among many?

R: That's right, that's it (laughs) And more I think, more interesting than many I think in many times, I think. Quite interesting.

I: OK. Do you want to go onto the next one? You've sort of answered that but you might have something more to say. How does Scottish dancing influence your experiences of growing older?

R: ... I think as an exercise it's keeping you quite fit because it's not an intensive exercise, exercise but doing different movements. Keeping the music rhythm, and using the footwork and everything, you are using all parts of your body, which is beneficial for keeping you quite fit, and... I don't know, I think when I go to India as you know, I came from India and stayed here for the last 40 years, when I go back to India, you'll be surprised because quite a few people who are the new acquaintances of our family in India, some of them didn't even know that I had existed because I have been here for too long. I go back, and often people get mixed up, me for my nieces and... so they say, they don't even believe it when I say I am what I am (laughs). So, in a way, they all say it's quite a good compliment because I jumped to a younger generation in a way you see, but obviously, keeping all these activities, perhaps it keeps me quite, active I think, and to be honest, I don't find anything different since the day I came over to this country. Now I'm a grandmother, I've passed on quite a bit, but still I kept my daily routines, what I did, years ago and the tradition of Scottish on top of it, so that way I think ... it keeps me quite healthy and ... I feel quite happy about what I am. So I don't think ... probably it will help you growing older, may be, I don't know, but I think at the moment, I don't feel I'm old (laughs).

I: Your dancing is part of an active life-style?

R: It is, it is, it keeps me active. But saying that, you see elderly people come to Scottish dancing. When I used to go in a nearby city, the majority of them were over 60. So some of them, they barely walk, let alone walking properly, they used to just drag their feet, and they really enjoy joining in the dance, because it was part of their culture, I would think. So they continue it. So I think even they feel, it doesn't make any difference how old you are, as long as you appreciate it, art as art, and enjoy yourself. So that is stopping you growing old in many ways, isn't it? (laughs).

I: You can modify it, can't you, a little bit?

R: Oh yes, that's right I think. But obviously some fast dances, at least I think ...it won't because the others will be struggling around you, isn't it? If you don't move enough, enough of the time(laughs). But then if somebody's enjoying, you can't really stop them because the group I attend is only a social dance, if it's a proper class, obviously there is a tutor who will tell you what to do, what not to do. But here, I think everyone is conducted to do what they want. It's all quite fun (laughs).

I: Lovely.... So what about number six? You're already a dancer so I don't know if you've anything more to say on this one. How has Scottish dancing changed your relationship with your body?

R: I think to some extent it keeps me more fit and more and more creative, you see, because you've got to move faster and do the things properly, isn't it? So I think it will ... probably... it will help me to keep my body in better condition, to do all the movements in a way. Obviously if I start putting on too much weight, I don't look right for me, I will stop doing the dancing (laughs). At the moment, I feel I think... it's like a vicious circle, if I want to dance, I've got to keep up my figure. My figure will help me to dance in a way and the dance is helping me to keep the figure... It's mutual I would think.

I: Sort of interactional?

R: Interactional, that's right. It's moderation, and interest and everything. Does it make sense?

I: Yeah, yeah.... So onto the last question. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about the meaning of dance in your life?

R: Yeah I think in my life, dance is always important for me because as I said, as a child I started dancing. Then I went through a phase, after my marriage because... Indian ways, you can't dance, my husband wouldn't let me... But luckily then I started teaching dance, because I got my teaching course and I used to coach the children. So still I think in one way or the other, I kept the dance all my life, with the differences whether public performances or... do what I want to do. But I think ... this will be, all the time I view dance as important in my life all the time, whether I perform or not, psychologically, it gives me... "I used to dance," that's enough for me to feel happy in life. But then if I can join the groups and do the dance, like in the social evening with Scottish dances or doing the Ceilidh or doing... in fact I'm going to do a workshop to the tutors, of the multicultural... there's a family couple group, soon they asked me if I would like to come and... coach, some of the teachers to do some Indian dance...which I will be doing on the second of June (laughs). So... I think there's always one way or the other, I find some excuse to keep the dance in my life I think, nothing more... But then I would like to do some of it with my grandchildren as well but... whether it will materialise because of the timing, for the little time I see, it's not easy... But... it will be nice to keep it going in the family(laughs).

I: It's nice to keep the tradition alive?

R: Tradition, that's right, yes. Any art is... more fun I think... and as I said already, there's always more to learn, you never say "I'm perfect" and that's it, the end of my last chapter, it can't be, because when I see some other different movements, again I think "Probably that will be nice when I do some of these dances..." So... in some ways, progression and there's much more to learn. Keep on learning, you can never stop I think, it's one of those...It's like a thing of art in many ways, and... it will give you a lot of pleasure at the same time, with the dance I think, it's quite intensive...it helps you keep fit and keep thinking... Whatever you are enjoying, through your face is a very reflection of it in a way, it makes you happy and things will be much nicer... Yeah, I'd like to keep it going anyway and see what I can do next (laughs)... Very good. That's it I think.

I: Thank you.

## Interview Diaries

### First Scottish Interview One

This 71 year old man found the interview which took place in his own home relatively comfortable, although he found questions about himself difficult. In the debrief he talked more about memory and how he visualises the patterns of steps for the dances, whereas his wife learnt the steps of the dances by actually walking through them. His wife would actually need to teach the dances in order to see the patterns. During the actual interview, he showed me various books on dances. Some books such as those on Scottish Country dances consisted of both diagrams of the direction of the dances as well as instructions in words. Other books consisted purely of complex diagrams of the direction of the dance. He gave me the introduction to the book on Step Dances he is writing. He is prepared to be interviewed again if I needed further information later on in my research.

### First Scottish Interview Two

One of the older ladies from my Ladies' Step dance class, passed the ethics information sheets about my research to this 63 year old lady in a neighbouring town who had done an MSC dissertation on Celtic and Scottish Country dancing as important for stress reduction, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This lady came from Canada where she had taught both Celtic and Scottish Country dance, although she did not have the formal teaching qualification recognised by the first Scottish Country dance group. We met at the bus station and as it was a lovely day, we sat on a park-bench by the river to record an interview (hence the quacking of ducks on the tape!) We went to a tea-house for the de-brief. She had found the interview comfortable but in the de-brief, she told me the sad story of having witnessed an older man dance himself to death at a Scottish Country dance ball in Canada. There were tears in her eyes as she told me this story, and she especially emphasised how sad and difficult this had been for his wife. As she composed herself, she acknowledged that this was a "good death" for the person concerned, even though it had been distressing for everyone else. She has not published her MSC dissertation but I suggested that she might like to do so.

### First Scottish Interview Three

This 56 year old lady, a fellow member of my beginners' Scottish Country dance class, found the interview, which took place in a coffee-house, comfortable. She smiled and laughed a lot in the de-brief, emphasising how Scottish Country dance was just really pleasurable. She did not go into lengthy narratives but her stories showed the importance of exposure to dance as a child for encouraging her to pick up dancing later in life.

### First Scottish Interview Four

As a fellow member of my beginners' Scottish Country dance class, this 43 year old lady found the interview, which took place in a coffee-house, great fun. She spoke in a very lively and animated manner, gesticulating with her hands. Her sheer enjoyment of dance was obvious. In the de-brief, she speculated whether Scottish Country dancing was accessible to late entrants, such as people in their 60s. As a former professional ballroom dancer, she was acutely aware that some forms of dance were just not accessible to older people who wanted to start dancing late in life.

### First Scottish Interview Five

These two Scottish Country dance teachers, aged 59 and 60 years, found the interview very comfortable, which was conducted in a coffee bar. They spoke very fast and fluently and it was wonderful to see how when one of them told a story about Scottish Country dancing, it sparked a story off in the other. This was an excellent example of the shared nature of narratives as they had danced together since being young adults so Scottish Country dancing had become a central part of their life-histories as a couple. It took about an hour and a half to do the interview and there was a feeling that they could have carried on talking for a lot longer only we ran out of time. Their fluency with the technical details of Scottish Country dancing and their expert status as dance teachers gave them the ability to talk about dance easily.

### First Scottish Interview Six

This 36 year old lady and her 57 year old male partner from my Scottish Country dance beginners'/improvers' class, found the interview comfortable. It took place over a sandwich lunch and coffee in the lady's office. They both said they would not have thought so much about the dancing if I had not been doing the research. They had noticed that I was always asking about the names of dances in the Scottish dance lessons. Both of them seemed to enjoy the interview and smiled and laughed a lot, gesticulating with their hands. They were very relaxed, and the shared nature of narrative was illustrated as they added details to each others' stories.

### First Scottish Interview Seven (Extract from Ethnographic Diary)

These 67 and 69 year old ladies were happy for me to write about the day in my diary as it was only possible to record a short interview in the cafe. I went out on the bus and met H. at the bus station. She had also come by bus. D., her friend, picked us up in her car and took us for coffee at a nearby garden centre. On the journey, they chatted about their involvement with English folk dancing as well as Scottish dancing. They dance around the Maypole in a nearby village at 6.30am on May

1st. Both of them found the interview comfortable and after the interview, as we drank coffee, they told me lots more about dance “to put in my diary.” D., with a laugh, told me about the importance of having a good Scottish dance teacher.

“When I first started, my dance teacher had me up at the front of the class doing the steps. She pointed out to the rest of the class how I was an example of “how not to do it.” She was awful. It’s really important to have a good teacher when you’re learning.”

H. told me about the performances and displays she has been involved with through Scottish dancing.

“We both do about eight displays a year at fetes and other local events. Often we’re dancing outside on hard tarmac, which is really bad for your feet. I’ve got a metatarsal injury, damage to the nerves between your toes, from dancing on hard surfaces in soft shoes. The first question the doctor asked was “Do you wear high heel shoes?” I said “No.” Apparently you can get the same injury from wearing high heels but I had injured myself Scottish dancing.... By the way, we do have white dresses with sashes that we wear for performances and sometimes we cover the white dress with a tartan wrap-over, just to give a bit more of a Scottish flavour.” H. then told me about going up to Scotland to visit her grandchildren. “It’s so nice because both my grand-daughters are learning Scottish dancing. It must be in the blood. Their teacher lets me come along to their class when I am visiting them. She always includes a dance I can join in. The older one who is ten, is rather good.... It’s rather nice when I go up to Scotland because so often you drive through a little village or town and think “Ah, I know a Scottish dance with that name.” It must happen about half a dozen times.”

Both H. and D. interviewed me about learning Scottish dance and how I experienced it. I told them how I find the dance mentally challenging although not physically hard as I do a lot of swimming. Both D. and H. said they swim too. Dance is obviously part of an active lifestyle for them. Both of them stressed the need to attract more young people to Scottish dancing so the tradition would continue. I told them about my Improvers’ Scottish class and how I also went to a more advanced Scottish club. D. and H. said it was nice to get the opportunity to talk to me as there was never any time to talk at the Ladies’ Step classes.

## **In Process Memo**

Working ethnographically is so nice as it is naturalistic, breaking the power relationships of formal interviews and providing true ecological validity to the research process. Both ladies are keen to see me at Ladies’ Step class again. I must be careful about not creating emotional dependence and I have told them both I should withdraw from the group on completion of the research for ethical reasons. It is nice to know that I have been welcomed into the group.

This interview and informal get together has nicely confirmed many of my findings. The importance of dance as a sense of belonging for older people, the sense of community provided by dance, the physical and mental health benefits of dance despite the problems of injury, and dance as a means of emotional expression. My interviews are deliberately reflective, asking people to reflect on and evaluate the meaning of dance in their lives. I seem to have a rich tapestry of themes which weave in and out of each other.

## **First Scottish Interview Eight**

This 49 year old lady, who was new to Scottish dancing, only having done it for two terms, found the interview comfortable. It was conducted in her own home as she was a single mother with a seven year old child. In the de-brief, she told me the sad story of having had a baby who died and several miscarriages. Her husband had a breakdown when her one surviving daughter was three years old. She feels she is now coming out of these bereavements, which is why she found she wanted to dance and so started the beginners’ Scottish Country dance class which I also attended.

## **Second Scottish Interview One**

This 63 year old lady told me she was interested in my research because her daughter is doing a post-graduate course at City University London in Speech and Language Therapy. She found the interview, which took place in a coffee lounge, comfortable. In the de-brief, she talked a lot about the difference between beginner and expert status in Scottish Country dancing. She believed it could be alright with one beginner in a set of eight dancers but any more could pull the standard of dancing down. At the second Scottish Country dance group, you are expected to have learnt the dances beforehand. She used the internet to locate mini-cribs for Scottish Country dances. She explained how notation can either be written instructions or diagrams of the direction of movements. She spends Saturday afternoons learning from these crib sheets if she is going to a Scottish Country dance in the evening. She described how the first Scottish Country dance group focuses on footwork practice whereas the second Scottish Country dance group just expects you to know the dances and get on with them. She suggested that I should talk to one of the 80 year olds who comes to the second Scottish Country dance group and also the children’s Scottish Country dance group. Personally she prefers dances in sets where every couple is active, rather than dances where just the leading couple are doing everything, with the second and third couple just standing there looking pretty. She likes the exercise and the mental stimulation of the dances. She reckons she knows 50 dances from memory.



## **Second Scottish Interview Two**

This 70 year old lady found the interview comfortable but thought I should have used more probes on psychological benefits. The interview was short but in the de-brief she discussed the emotional benefits which she then allowed me to record. Before the interview, she told me how she used to teach business studies in further education and how in her last year of teaching she had had treatment for breast cancer and so had not enjoyed teaching. She told me how she felt energised by Scottish Country dance.

## **Second Scottish Interview Three**

This 77 year old lady invited me over to her house for the interview as she wanted to show me her Scottish dance music and photographs, as well as record an interview. She found the tape-recorded interview comfortable but became even more relaxed and jovial as she showed me all of her cultural artifacts associated with Scottish Country dance. She showed me a copy of the book of poems she had written about all her Scottish Country dancing friends and offered to send me a copy which she did in due course, as well as giving me written permission to quote from one of her poems in my PHD thesis. She gave me a demonstration of how she made all the cards for special Scottish Country dance events on her computer, and told me how she spent a long time typing in the mini-cribs for the annual ball which the second Scottish Country dance group had held the previous weekend. She really seemed to have expert status as a dancer and the organiser of publicity for the second Scottish Country dance group. Her computer skills also suggested a very logical mind which found the patterns of Scottish Country dance appealing. She played some of her Scottish Country dance music on the CD player for me and showed me photographs of her various birthday Ceilidhs.

## **Second Scottish Interview Four**

This interview with a 76 year old man took place in a coffee-house. He seemed very relaxed and jovial when talking about his involvement in Scottish Country dancing and English Folk dancing. He became very sad when talking about the loss of his wife but said he had resolved to carry on and dance rather than go into mourning like the Victorians did. He had been heavily involved on the organisation committee of the second Scottish Country dance group, and so seemed to have expert status as a dancer although he was not a dance teacher. He told a humorous story about injuring himself when Scottish Country dancing and wryly concluded that Scottish Country dancing is bad for your health.

## **Second Scottish Interview Five**

This interview was conducted with a 58 year old lady and a 71 year old man, who were a married couple. They both found the interview comfortable and fun, which took place in a coffee-house. The lady gesticulated enthusiastically with her hands whilst talking and there was a lovely rapport between the two as they developed ideas between them. This interview took on the form of a more informal and ethnographic interview, as neither went into lengthy narratives but instead enjoyed bouncing ideas off each other.

## **Second Scottish Interview Six**

This 65 year old lady found the interview very comfortable. She is someone I feel I have got to know fairly well as she attends three of the same dance groups as I do :- Scottish Ladies' Step dance, the second Scottish Country dance group and the second Circle dance group. She invited me to interview her in her own home, a retirement flat. She was very concerned about the future of Scottish dance as not many younger people are getting involved. She showed me her special black ballet shoes with the additional insoles which she said protected her feet from the hard floors. She came across as a very fit and slim lady who danced nearly every day of the week and especially loved Scottish Country dancing for the mental and physical challenge.

## **Second Scottish Interview Seven**

This 58 year old lady who was a dance teacher found the interview in her own home comfortable. She worked full time as a scientist and she was only able to give me an interview as she was off work and at home due to dizzy spells. She talked a lot in the de-brief about the international nature of Scottish dance. She seemed to thoroughly enjoy the interview as she gave very lengthy stories. She gesticulated with her hands a lot and her face was very animated. She was obviously passionate about Scottish Country dancing, as a lady with expert status as a dancer and someone who was very involved on various of the dance committees.

## **Second Scottish Interview Eight**

This 63 year old lady was relaxed and a real enthusiast for Scottish Country dance. The interview took place in a coffee house. She answered the questions easily and seemed to enjoy particularly telling me the story about doing Scottish Country dancing in Kenya. She was a lady who had done folk-dancing with her husband so they had both moved over to Scottish Country dancing. Although not a Scottish dance teacher, she held expert status in the second Scottish group as she was joint honorary secretary on the organising committee.

## **Second Scottish Interview Nine**

This 66 year old lady found the interview comfortable and smiled throughout, her face lighting up in an animated manner when she told me how she first got involved in Scottish dancing. She found several of the questions difficult and had

no comment on them. As a retired veterinary assistant, she said she was enjoying retirement as it had been hard work bending over microscopes. Her daughter had done Scottish Country dancing when younger as a teenager for several years but gave up due to homework. Her son had come Scottish Country dancing for a short while too. One of the problems of the second Scottish group was a lack of young members and the slippery floor meant a lot of the current members were not attending. There was a need to find a better hall for dancing.

## **Second Scottish Interview Ten**

This 64 year old Indian lady found the interview comfortable and felt I had allowed her to talk about herself freely. She said how she enjoyed the freedom to dance and have her own life in English culture after the death of her husband six years ago. If she had returned to South India as a widow, her life would be over. She spoke of how she had had to give up Indian dancing when she married, as expected by Indian culture, but she had been able to keep in touch with dance through teaching. She spent a long time talking about her children and grandchildren who live nearby in England. She does not want to leave her children and return to South India, even though the rest of her family are there. She was wearing a beautiful orange saree and smiled and laughed throughout the interview which took place in her own home. She gesticulated enthusiastically with her hands as she spoke.

## **First Circle Interview One**

This 68 year old lady found the interview, which took place in a coffee-house, very comfortable and she expressed surprise when I told her it was my first interview of a Circle dancer in the de-brief. She was very keen to tell me about the “Five Rhythms”, a piece of choreographic work which considers how the different styles of dance correspond to different styles of emotional expression in dance. For example, Scottish dancing can be classified as being about fun and laughter whereas Circle dancing encompasses expression of a range of emotions. She later gave me some printed information which she had found about the “Five Rhythms” on the internet. This lady was beautifully calm, dressed in bright flowing summer clothes with her grey hair in a bun and she laughed and gesticulated a lot as she spoke about her love of dance. The whole interview seemed really pleasurable.

## **First Circle Interview Two**

This 70 year old lady found the interview, which took place in a coffee-house, comfortable. She talked in a very animated way and seemed to verbalise easily about dance. She suggested I could use more prompts such as “Any more?” to encourage more stories. She believes the research question is very worthwhile and offered to be interviewed again if I had any further questions.

## **First Circle Interview Three**

This 71 year old lady felt comfortable with this interview which took place in her own home. She seemed to have no difficulty in verbalising about dance as she told very lengthy stories. In the de-brief, she talked about the choreographic notation and showed me a booklet with the details of the steps for the dances from one of the workshops the teacher organised at a stately home. She joked about her five year old grand-son being able to read the choreographic notation more easily than she can. She actually demonstrated some of the footwork to me. She also talked about her career in occupational health nursing, counselling and NHS Direct.

## **First Circle Interview Four**

This 65 year old lady and her 67 year old husband were the two acquaintances from my Church who introduced me to Circle dancing. They were very keen to give me an interview because they really loved Circle dancing, although they had moved from the first Circle dance group to another group organised by the same teacher in a nearby village because they preferred a better hall and felt tired of the people in the first Circle dance group. It was obvious that this married couple were very committed to Circle dancing and they went easily into lengthy narratives, delivered both with enthusiasm and a reflective style. They found the interview, which was conducted in their own home, very comfortable and we could have talked for much longer but we ran out of time. This married couple have been invaluable in setting up my research, as they told the Circle dance teacher of the first group all about my research before taking me for the first session.

## **First Circle Interview Five**

This 73 year old retired professional ballet dancer found the interview, which took place at her own home, comfortable. The married couple from First Circle Interview Four had introduced her to the first Circle dance group but she had only attended for a few weeks as she was not enjoying it. She spent a lot of time during the interview gesticulating with her hands to demonstrate the various ballet movements as she was talking about them. In the de-brief, she told me the only time she had been injured was when she “fell over her feet in the wings before playing Queen of the Willis”. She pointed to the swollen arch of her right foot. She told me “I was sent to see the physiotherapist for Manchester United who said that I had the worst feet he’d ever seen. Otherwise I was pretty lucky, I didn’t have any injuries.” She talked a lot about ballet being 95% very hard work and 5% pleasure. She showed me three of her photo albums with photos of her dancing when on tour with her company in China, Canada, France and Scotland. She played character roles as she said she was technically alright but her drama skills were good. Her roles included Queen of the Willis in Giselle, a swan in the corps de ballet for Swan Lake

and various lead roles in short modern ballets. She said it was a lovely career to look back on and she still meets up with some of her friends who were dancers. She smiled a lot during the interview, obviously enjoying her reminiscences.

### **First Circle Interview Six**

This 72 year old lady found the interview comfortable, which was conducted in a coffee-house. She laughed a lot during the interview but also became quite sad when she talked about her daughter with cancer. Her eyes watered but she said her daughter was better now. She was a small slim lady with grey hair cut in a neat bob and a slightly wrinkled face.

### **First Circle interview Seven**

This 77 year old lady, who was a retired professional dancer, interpreted the interview situation in an informal, ethnographic manner and did not go into the lengthy stories she told me when we were travelling on the bus together to the first Circle dance group. The interview took place in a coffee-house and she had brought her photograph album of her professional dancing career to show me. So the interview took on more of a spontaneous style, with her explaining about the photographs and myself as interviewer asking further questions. Towards the end of the interview, I managed to ask her the few "how" questions on my interview schedule to try elicit some short stories. This lady was a little nervous and I concluded that I had gained more information from working with her ethnographically and keeping an ethnographic diary than I did from a formal tape-recorded interview.

### **First Circle Interview Eight**

These three ladies, aged 71, 68 and 74 years, set up this interview for me in one of their own homes. This was more of an informal, ethnographic interview, with spontaneous sharing of ideas about Circle dance, rather than any individual telling long stories about the meaning of the dance in their lives. The lady who was deaf kept telling me to look straight at her if I asked a question as she was lip-reading. These ladies were very interested in my research study and asked me a lot of questions, so I explained that I was trying to evaluate the meaning of specific dance groups in older peoples' lives with the associated health benefits.

### **First Circle Interview Nine**

This 79 year old lady found the interview comfortable, which took place in a coffee-house. She commented that she thought the questions were nice and open. She has an MSC in Sociology and has conducted a small-scale ethnographic interview study with a few members of the Circle dance group as part of an assignment on methods. At the beginning of the interview, she burst into tears when talking about how the Circle dance had helped her through a time of bereavement. I switched the tape off but she soon wanted to continue the interview as she said the material was important for my research. She spoke easily, even though at times there were tears in her eyes. When I thanked her at the end of the interview, she gave me a great big hug.

### **First Circle Interview Ten**

The dance teacher of the first Circle group was very animated during this interview which took place in a coffee-house. However at times she spoke thoughtfully and slowly. Her eyes lit up as she talked about Circle dancing and she gesticulated with her hands. She seemed relaxed and enjoyed the interview and struck me as a very charismatic personality, passionate about her dancing.

### **Second Circle Interview One**

This 62 year old lady found the interview, which took place in a tea-room, comfortable. She has only lived in this town for six months so thought the circle dance would be a good way to meet people. She told me all about her son who has a PHD in History.

### **Second Circle Interview Two**

This 65 year old lady found the interview comfortable, which took place in a tea-room. I had not spoken with this lady much before and she feared that she did not have much to tell me as she had only started Circle dancing in October. However the interview transcript shows she had plenty of interesting things to say. Her husband did not like dancing so Circle dancing was good as you did not need a partner. I noticed that she was dressed casually in trousers and a top, and reflected how this group does not seem to dress as flamboyantly as the first Circle dance group.

### **Second Circle Interview Three**

This 68 year old lady found the interview in a tea-room very comfortable. She smiled and laughed a lot as she spoke, gesticulating with her hands in an animated manner. It seemed obvious that she loved dance and dance was an important part of her life.

### **Second Circle Interview Four**

This 68 year old lady said she found the interview comfortable but she seemed a little nervous with me and only spoke briefly. She herself acknowledged the difficulties of verbalising about dance, even though she was well-educated to degree level. She was very enthusiastic about dance and complained about the lack of opportunities for dancing in retirement. For example, she would like to attend ballet classes.

## **Second Circle Interview Five**

This 63 year old lady found the interview comfortable, which took place in a tea-room. She smiled and laughed throughout and seemed very animated. In the de-brief, she told me how her 80 year old husband could cycle faster than she can so they tend to meet up in town rather than cycle together. He is keen on outdoor activities so does not like to go to the gym with her.

## **Second Circle Interview Six**

This 69 year old lady found the interview comfortable, which took place in a tea-room. She had warned me that she did not have much to say and I had explained how it is important for my research to collect a range of different experiences. She had tried Ti Chi in the past, but the teacher was no good, although she positioned Tai Chi as good for older people as it was gentle. She felt embarrassed as she was not as active as other members of the Circle dance group who had done sports such as tennis all their lives. She said the fact that I had asked her for an interview was good as it had made her think about Circle dance and health.

## **Second Circle Interview Seven**

This 67 year old lady found the interview, which took place in a tea-room, very amusing from start to finish. She told me how she used to work as a school cleaner in the de-brief. She also used to go to several fitness classes with a retired friend in her village and used to giggle during those. The fitness class teacher had not objected to her giggling, but the Circle dance teacher had sometimes told her off for giggling too much. This 67 year old lady found the Circle dance was a good activity for making herself concentrate. She said she wished she had concentrated more when she was younger in school. She laughed so much that the interview was a great pleasure.

## **Second Circle Interview Eight**

This 79 year old lady always seemed a lively member of the Circle dance class. The interview took place in a tea-room and she seemed relaxed. She told me how she came from Argentina and spoke Spanish fluently. She found the interview comfortable but was a little sad afterwards in the de-brief when she told me that she would not be having an 80th birthday party as her husband had died. She cried a little and I took her hand to comfort her. At least she had really loved him, she said. She knew other older women who were glad when their husbands had died and they could have their freedom. She seemed more cheerful when I said good-bye and thanked her.

## **Second Circle Interview Nine**

This interview with the second Circle dance teacher, who was 61 years old, was conducted in her mother's house. Her mother had died several weeks previously after a long and serious illness and the Circle dance teacher said it was important for her to keep doing things, like teaching Circle dance and talking to people. She was in the process of selling her mother's house and seemed to enjoy showing me round this large airy house dating from the 1930s with a beautiful garden full of cherry trees. She was obviously sad to part with the house but she laughed a lot during the interview. She told me in the de-brief how she had been nervous of the interview but said it had been actually fine. She commented that she thought the more middle class and educated women had been volunteering for interviews, and I explained that the research was not being conducted as a social survey, but rather as an exploratory study exploring the variety of meanings of dance in older peoples' lives. I explained that I recognised it was difficult to verbalise about dance and so the more working-class women were perhaps not coming forward for interviews. The second Circle interview seven is a notable exception, as this lady used to be a school cleaner.