

When did you start dancing with Johnsonville Scottish Country Dance Club?

I joined the Johnsonville Club in 2007. I loved it from the very first skip change step – everyone was so friendly and helpful, and the music so joyful. In the middle of my first year, I had a seven-week hiatus, when we were in Dunedin for John's radiation treatment. When I got back I felt I had so much to catch up on, that I joined another club (Tawa) so that I could dance twice a week. The following year, John joined the Johnsonville club too.

How did you get into Scottish country dancing?

I had my first encounter with Scottish dancing at a ceilidh when I was at university. I thought then "That was fun, I'd love to do more of that", but sadly nothing came of it. About 20 years ago or so, I saw Johnsonville SCD Club's advert, tried to go, but either went to the wrong place or at the wrong time, and nothing came of that either. I now kick myself for having given up so easily. I look with great envy at people who have been dancing for 30, 40, 50 years. All that time I wasted not dancing! But it's never too late! Once I did join, I became besotted with SCD, and I haven't looked back. I just hope my body will keep me going for a couple more decades ...

What do you most enjoy about SCD?

Everything! I love the music, the exercise – both physical and mental, the challenges, learning new dances, the people, being part of a wider SCD community. I have always enjoyed moving to music, but I've never been one for "wild abandon". I like the structure and discipline of SCD, the fact that you can be as precise a dancer as your body and personality will allow you to be – or not. I enjoy the fact that it is social dancing, or as Rod says, "a team sport". I revel in all the great learning opportunities that clubs, region and branch have to offer. Someone once said to me "Ah, but you go to everything!". And that is almost true. I have 30 years of dancing to catch up on! I have attended five Summer Schools, and wish I could go every year, but I am starting to find that my body can't stand the pace so well anymore. Still, with the application of plenty of Panadol and Voltaren Emulgel, I may have a couple more Summer Schools in me yet!

Tell us a bit about any Scottish connections you may have.

Being Dutch by birth (but a NZer by choice for the last 45 years), I don't have even the tiniest drop of Scottish blood. One tenuous connection is through John, whose forebears came from Shetland, Mull and Argyllshire. And without an English/New Zealand-based education, I knew very little about Scotland or the Scots until I started SCD. I find the names of the dances intriguing, so by researching those, I have learned much about the geography, history, language and people of Scotland.

What sorts of activities have you been involved with at the club over the years?

I was the club's secretary for four years (2009-2012), a job I loved doing. I was the club's representative on the Wellington Region committee during those years too. I am still serving on that committee, as editor of the region's quarterly journal, Harbour City Happenings (since 2014). In 2013, I took on the task of creating a database of all the SCD tracks the club owned on tapes, LPs and CDs. I hoped that it would help to make Rod's search for the right track a bit less chaotic at class. But the real improvement came when John transferred every track into a computer program so that Rod can use his laptop for class music, rather than having to lug stacks of CDs to every class.

What club activity stands out for you?

Every class is enjoyable, the Tartan Nights with live music and the Annual Dances are great too. The ceilidh we had at Rod and Kristin's place was definitely a highlight, and it is wonderful that we

have more social activities like that now. These social occasions allow members to get to know one another a bit better, as they offer more time to talk than between dances at class.

Tell us something about your life outside of Scottish country dancing.

We have three adult daughters who live in Auckland, Te Awamutu, and Sydney, and two grandchildren aged six and nearly four in Auckland. Since they're so far away, we don't get to see a whole lot of them, so these days, my life is pretty much dominated by SCD and biking, and writing about these. Cycling has become a big part of our lives in the last three years, and we're on a mission to see as much of NZ as we can from the bike path (but getting there by car in the first place!). I write a blog about our biking adventures, which takes up a lot of time, but provides us with much enjoyment as a visual diary, while also sharing it with others.

<http://dizzysfoldingbike.blogspot.co.nz/>