

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

Easter Monday 1991, at a joint Johnsonville-Linden dance night at Linden club.

How did you get into Scottish country dancing?

I had too many injuries from my other sports, and decided to give it a go as Kristin had started dancing at Johnsonville earlier in the year. Kristin and I had previously done ballroom dancing when we were very young (around 20), so dance was not completely new to me. Then, as usual, I became obsessed and within a couple of years started training as a tutor. I was lucky (being that rare creature – a young male wanting to dance) to be invited to Ian Simmonds' advanced group in my second year of dancing, and also join his "demonstration" group dancing at old people's homes. My first beginners' class was with Ian Simmonds, and first intermediate class the next year was with Damon Collin. On seeing a potential tutor replacement at Johnsonville Club, incumbent tutor Marjorie Crawford enthusiastically mentored me through the process of becoming a qualified RSCDS tutor. The Wellington Region (and Kristin with our young children) were very supportive during this training process, and Noelene O'Connor taught me a great deal. I got my full certificate in 1996, and pretty much immediately took over from Marjorie as full time club tutor at Johnsonville.

What do you most enjoy about SCD?

- The wonderful music, the rare instances where you are completely in sync with the music as a dancer, and the flow of formations of a really well constructed dance, together with the technical challenge of making less well constructed dances work.
- Teaching and seeing people happy and improving in their dancing.
- Seeing the club develop into a supportive and caring environment with the necessary sense of humour.

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

Apparently I have Wellington Guthries in my past (even though I'm Australian), Downey is also a Scottish name, and Kristin's maiden name was Macdonald, so that is why I wear the Macdonald tartan.

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

Part-time tutor for 2 years, full-time tutor for 20 years, and keeper of the club dancing books, tapes, CDs and vinyl records for too long. Our garage is very full.

What club activity stands out for you?

The growth of the club over the last few years, and the great attitude all our dancers have which has made that possible.

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

I surf and play tennis, and in my work life I'm a mathematician at Victoria University of Wellington.