

Keryn Evely

March 2015

Auchterarder group

I was introduced to circle dance in the summer of 1994. It was a beautiful day, we danced outside at least some of the time and I felt I had at last found a type of dance I was at ease with. The dances that day were taught by Caroline Cuthbert and Patrick MacManaway.



I continued to dance with both of them in Balfron and Strathmiglo respectively over the next few years. During that time Patrick started a three-weekly class in Auchterarder and Caroline organised for Anna Barton to come down from Findhorn, taking a small group of us deeper into the dance over several weekends.

In 1998 Patrick left for America and I 'inherited' the Auchterarder group along with my small, but growing, repertoire of dances. The following year Judy King's leaflet about her very first Circle Dance Teachers' Training Course came with my copy of Grapevine. Just what I needed. I travelled down to Oxfordshire for four long weekends, emerging with more awareness of the skills required and practicalities of teaching, as well as a broadening of my dancing experience.

Over the years since I have continued to dance and learn from Judy King and Mandy de Winter and through them Nanni Kloke. I also love to dance with Laura Shannon at least once a year - to be grounded in traditional women's dances from the Balkans and enriched by the accompanying stories and customs. I enjoy learning from different dance teachers and encountering many different types of circle dances ranging from the traditional through to choreographies to both classical and contemporary music.

In my teaching I like to mark and celebrate the seasonal turning points of the year and other special days and themes by putting together a programme of dances. These may be accompanied by a poem or quotation or a visual image and the dances will be drawn from those that I am especially attracted to at that time. At one time we used to have the occasional, separate, session of 'armie' dances - those, often to classical music, where the upper body and arms are more involved. Now these are usually integrated into the regular sessions.

Evening classes are held most Fridays and we also dance on alternate Sunday afternoons in a beautiful five-sided hall at Ochil Tower School in Auchterarder.

Elke Brytscha

July 2015

Auchterarder group



I started life in Germany but decided to make a new start and move to this country after redundancy and after my husband's suicide. I found a job as a Tour Guide at Blair Castle and in February 1999 was offered the flat in Auchterarder, where I still live.

I was introduced to circle dancing some months later, when a therapist mentioned it. She told me a bit about it and gave me Keryn's phone number. I liked the sound of this circle dancing and also that you didn't need to bring a partner.

As I've always loved music and dancing, I wondered if this might help me in my recovery. I had just been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue, struggling with the simplest things and had nearly lost all confidence in my body. When I went along for the first time I could hardly do more than walking steps, yet found it needed much less effort as the dancers on either side helped me along. I liked the friendliness and welcoming atmosphere of the group as well as their Motto: 'Don't worry about the steps. All variations welcome.' Well, I still do variations sometimes, but it's getting better all the time.

To begin with I just focused on enjoying the companionship, the music and did my best to move in the right direction at the right time. Gradually I noticed that certain steps came up in various dances, started to recognise step-patterns and figured out how to do a grapevine without tripping over my feet or anyone else's. Once I was able to dance more regularly and started to feel more confident in my body I joined an introduction course to teaching, led by Jenny Oswald, and started to teach the odd dance here and there.

As I was wondering what the next step could be, Maria asked had I seen the flyer for this new teacher training course that Judy King was planning with guest teachers for 2008. A two-week intensive course, instead of travelling up and down the country every other month or so. Intense it certainly was, but somehow, I muddled through and made it to graduation day. Since then I have mainly been co-teaching with Keryn in Auchterarder and occasionally in Sauchie and Cupar.

Once in a while, when listening to music at home, I find myself dancing. Sometimes a step pattern emerges, and a new dance is born. For me circle dancing has been a tremendous help in my recovery as well as keeping my spirits up and it's become a big part of my life. Over the years I learnt to adapt dances to my own needs. When having to rest between dances I sometimes go through the motions of a dance whilst sitting down and found it helps with learning a new dance. Slowly my balance, co-ordination, memory and stamina are improving.