

Keryn Evely, Auchterarder

November 2021

March 8th, 2020, was the last time we danced in Three Kings' Hall. Francesca Stridgen took the session 'Honouring the Feminine' - it being International Women's Day.

Later that month it was the first lockdown due to Covid. My course at Leith had to transfer to us all working from home with contact via Zoom and the dancing ceased for what seemed like a very long time.



I attempted to maintain contact with the group by sending out dances they were familiar with – a video to remind them of the steps and link to the music. I sent these for special occasions such as the full and the new Moon, the equinoxes and solstices and also for the Celtic Festivals. When places started to open again it became apparent that the hall we had used since 1998 was no longer going to be available for external users.

We now dance in a much smaller hall in Auchterarder. As we are dancing hands free and with a certain amount of social distance this means we can only take those who were dancing with us pre – pandemic.

When people are comfortable to go back to holding hands, we can open the group to new people. I hope this time will come soon but respect the need to be cautious too.

December 2019

As of Autumn 2019, we no longer dance on a Friday evening as I attend a course in Edinburgh. Sunday afternoons continue as before and it has been lovely seeing two dancers return who we danced with back in the 2000's. The Sunday dancers may be few in number, but are dedicated, many travelling some distance to come and I appreciate that very much. I find with having fewer sessions (one per fortnight) it is more difficult to fit in all the dances I would normally do at certain times of the year or for particular occasions.

In 2016 I went to Findhorn to participate in their summer Festival of Sacred Dance, Music and Song for the first time. The guest teacher was Nanni Kloke and it also marked the 40th anniversary of when Bernard Wosien first 'sowed the seed' of sacred circle dance at Findhorn. That year and subsequent summers I enjoyed dancing with Susanne Anders Bartholomäi, Renata Ramos (dances from Brazil), Shakeh Major Tchilingirian (Armenian dances) and with Laura Shannon amongst others. It is extra special to be dancing to music provided by visiting musicians as well as those in the Festival orchestra and choir.

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December 2019, continued

I am grateful for this opportunity to learn from teachers from around the world, along with the visiting teachers that CSCD invite to teach in Scotland each year. All these opportunities enhance my own dance experience as well as introducing me to new dances to bring back to teach. Long may it continue....

March 2015

I was introduced to circle dance in summer 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 3-weekly class in Auchterarder and Caroline organised for Anna Barton to come 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 with my small, but growing, repertoire of dances. The following year Judy King's leaflet about her first Circle Dance Teachers' Training Course came with my copy of Grapevine. Just what I needed. I travelled to Oxfordshire for 4 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.