

THE RANT



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Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

Hunter Valley Branch (Inc.)

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Please send reports, articles, photographs, flyers etc. for inclusion in the November 2020 Rant to hvrant@gmail.com no later than 17 October 2020.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

While this Calendar of Events is as up to date as possible at the end of June, some further events may unfortunately have to be cancelled. Please check on the HV ([Link](#)) and Sydney ([Link](#)) Coming Events pages for changing information. For online classes or events requiring Zoom, please download Zoom here ([Link](#)). Our normal classes and dance events will be resumed as soon as possible.

2020

July	18	Sydney	Winter Social via Zoom. See attached flyer and YouTube playlist (check for further additions) Link
July	25	HV	Winter Social Cancelled
September	12	HV	Hunter Valley Annual Ball, Coffs Harbour Cancelled
October	31	Epping	A double celebration: 1) Epping Annual Spring Social celebrating 50 years of dance 2) Chris and Catherine celebrating 30 consecutive years playing for this Social Link
November	6-8	HV	Riverwood Downs Weekend
November	28	HV	St Andrews Social

RSCDS Headquarters has a new website “Dance Scottish At Home” ([Link](#)) including many interesting articles, puzzles, live classes via Zoom on Wednesday evenings (19:00 UK time) and recordings of the online classes which can be viewed at any time.

WINTER SCHOOLS: Perth have had to cancel their 2020 Winter School because of Covid-19. The order of Winter Schools is now: Canberra 2021, Perth 2022, Sydney 2023, Brisbane 2024.



BRANCH NEWS

Secretary's Report

What a difference Covid-19 has made to the world as we know it and especially to dancing. Unfortunately, even though the government is increasing the number of people who can congregate, social distancing is still enforced which precludes dancing.

Branch Committee met recently and reluctantly cancelled the Winter Social and the Ball for 2020. Our hope is that for 2021 this year's programme of dances for the Socials and the Ball can be applied. This includes holding the Ball in Coffs Harbour as was planned for this year.

As members, you should be receiving “Dance Scottish at Home” from Headquarters as well as their online Zoom class. Sue Mackenzie has forwarded to you the “Corona Chronicles” from Brian Hacker in Queensland, which makes interesting reading. Sydney Branch has of course cancelled all Socials except for the Ball which was held online with live music. If you are interested in participating in other online dances that they may run, then check out their website for details.

Branch Annual General Meeting needs to be held later in the year. While our usual format – meeting, lunch and dancing – is unlikely to be possible, the Committee will decide on an alternative arrangement nearer the time so that you can participate.

The March issue of the Rant included the membership application form. Obviously with no dancing there have been no reminders about joining, so please consider renewing your subscription. A revised membership form is being emailed out with this issue which allows you to type in your details, save, and then send back to me at hvrscds@gmail.com. This means you have a copy of your membership application to keep as a reminder that you have paid (without printing anything). The fillable membership form will also be added to the Branch Web page.

Allyn Douglass



Membership Renewals

As you will be very aware the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic has caused a significant problem to all charities. The RSCDS finances have been hit with the cancellation of Summer School. We have also incurred additional expense and devoted significant effort into the weekly podcasts and Zoom classes with Dance Scottish at Home. These have been very well received worldwide. We have budgeted and re-budgeted the 2020/21 Year and we are facing a significant deficit of £140,000 and some very difficult decisions.

It is absolutely vital that Branch Treasurers start to ask existing members for their subscriptions at the same time as they do every year. In the Northern Hemisphere this is usually in August and September. We would then expect these funds to be remitted to 12 Coates Crescent in October and November. This year will be no different from previous years.

Bill Cant (Treasurer)

Branch fees

The Board's recommendation at last year's Society AGM that Branches should increase their local fee to balance the reduction in subscriptions is causing difficulty for some Branches because their AGM has been postponed as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. All Branches are different and should seek a solution that best suits their circumstances. These are unprecedented times. We are sure that each Branch Committee will make a decision regarding their local fee that suits the Branch, helps to develop Scottish country dancing locally and aids recruitment.

From RSCDS Headquarters



ARTICLES

For this edition, we have asked our readers if they would like to provide articles on any aspect of Scottish Country Dancing, including how they first started dancing, or their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to all of you who have provided these for our interest and enjoyment!

Julia Smith



2020 Gosford Opening Social - by Sue Mackenzie

We never would have thought on 22nd February, as we all gathered for a wonderful night of music and dancing, that this social would be one of the last Scottish Country Dance functions for several months.



It seems a long time ago now but it was a great night. The excellent program was put together by Fran Bucello and recapped by Fran, Jan McCudden and Simone Fox. Dancers from all over the state danced to the wonderful music of Iain McKenzie. Dances included The Silver Tassie, Ladies Fancy, Miller of Sessnie, The Inimitable Derek, The Complete Gardener, C'est Ci Bon and Mairi's Wedding.



The hall decorations were put up by Gosford class members. Sandra Hanson and Hermie Eckhart prepared nibbles for guests to enjoy with a glass of sherry or juice as they arrived and one of our ex dancers, Mary Muir, together with Janice Toussard organised the excellent supper which Gosford members supplied. As you can see from the smiles in the photos, everyone had a great time and with a bit of luck we will be able to welcome you all again in 2021.



Dancing to Order - by Elsa Cant

We joined SCD because we were ordered to. In the 1970s I worked at the University of Newcastle where Heinz Duewell was Associate Professor of Chemistry. When he heard my accent, in typical Heinz fashion, he didn't give an invitation, but issued a command: You MUST come to Scottish Country Dancing. Barry and I are forever grateful for that command.

We were fortunate to have Shirley and Bob Scott as friends and neighbours and Shirley was very keen to take up SCD. We put our four children together with their four children to look after each other (the elders were teenagers) and the four of us ventured to Colleges class at Tighes Hill. At that time there was no beginners' class so we were thrown in at the deep end and managed most of the time to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In true SCD tradition the experienced dancers helped with patience and good humour and so we were hooked!

Over the years, for various family reasons, we gave it up for long periods of time but were always lured back by the music and the camaraderie. We are now in our late 80s and footwork not so good (terrible) and aim just to be in the right place at the right time. As always, we're encouraged by the patience and good humour of our fellow dancers. Older people are advised to have physical exercise, mental exercise, and social interaction. SCD ticks all the boxes.

Of course, SCD wouldn't exist without the dedication and expertise of our teachers and they deserve all accolades. Ros McKie has ensured SCD will live on in the Hunter Valley with the time and effort she has put in to training and mentoring many new teachers so we can confidently say:
LONG LIVE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING



Robert Findley's Story

I started dancing in Gosford in 1967 until I transferred my work to Sydney and started dancing at Carlingford with Gordon and Joy Stott. Their two boys were some of the best dancers in Sydney with their parents. When I was at Castle Hill I broke my tendon and had to leave it for about three years, coming home in the late 1970s started dancing with the teacher Jane Roberts, a nursing sister at Gosford Hospital. Moved to work again after a period of five years to Melbourne, Brisbane and Newcastle with my company. Seeing I was missing it I came back to dancing in Gosford and was so grateful to Jan McCudden and Fran Bucello. Loving dancing again under their tuition. Everybody who loves to dance and those of us who are of Scottish ancestry must feel some sort of connection to the home country.



My Reflections on SCD - by John Milnes

I started SCD in 1993 in Darwin. Some of you may have met my teacher Angus Henry. He ran a 12 week beginners' course twice a year for many years. As a teacher he was excellent at getting his message across, it took me ages to understand reels, to the extent that Angus drew a chalk path for me to follow. I finally got the message! I don't know how many eyes he had but nothing seemed to escape him.

The first dance I ever danced was “Cumberland Reel”. I am not the best with names but remember “Polharrow Burn” as one of the early dances after the 12 week beginners’ course.

After completing the beginners’ class my wife and I joined the regular Wednesday class with dancers of all skill levels. It was challenging but all were encouraged to participate in all the dances.

After about 8 months of dancing I had to go to Adelaide for 2 weeks, Angus arranged for me to meet Jean Lumsden a Teacher in Adelaide. I danced 3 nights a week for the 2 weeks, after the first night Jean told me my Pas-de-basque was terrible and that we would practice it and impress Angus on my return to Darwin. We did practice it and Angus was impressed. I had to do as I was told because Jean was driving me to and from dancing and I had no idea how to get back to my lodgings on my own.

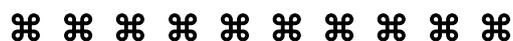
I continued dancing in Darwin until I retired and left Darwin in 2004, my wife had to give up dancing a few years before I retired, travelled to Canberra with Caravan, stayed in Canberra for a few months but never got round to dancing in Canberra at that time, Silly Me.

I eventually settled in Cootamundra in 2005 and about 2015 my wife saw a faded notice in a shop window in Young promoting SCD. I rang, I started dancing again, (improved my fitness levels). There was only one teacher, later another lady, Moira, joined the group she had danced nearly all her life, SCD was a large part of her dance repertoire. She started teaching a few dances, then took a few classes. Our original teacher’s health took a turn for the worse and he was no longer able to teach dancing being reliant on a walking stick to get around. Moira said she would try to keep the class going if I would help. I said yes. That was December 2018.

After starting dancing in Young for a time I also started dancing with Black Mountain Reelers (BMR) in Canberra as well. We combined this with a family visit on Tuesdays, a round trip of just under 400 Km, some just shake their heads. While my wife does not dance, she watches and critiques my dancing without fear or favour.

Early in 2019 Moira called a meeting to announced she would not be able to continue dance classes due to a recurrence of her cancer, she asked me if I would take over, I replied that I was about to start radiation treatment! The decision was made to go into recess until further notice. Late in 2019 I returned to dancing with BMR and also attended a weekend workshop for those wanting to know more about teaching SCD.

Early this year I worked with the remaining dancers in Young to re-start dance classes, flyers were printed and distributed round Young, I wrote a piece on a local Facebook page. On the 13th March this year we had our first get together in just over a year. About a dozen people turned up, about half being new dancers, a good time was had by all and then COVID-19 restrictions came into force. WE WILL TRY AGAIN IN THE FUTURE.



Travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic - introduction by Ros McKie

Several of our dancers (Margaret & Allyn Douglass, Tracey Lovat, Cathy & Brian Regan, Simone & Richard Fox) headed off overseas in the early days of COVID-19 when, along with most of us, it seemed a problem only affecting China. It's fascinating to read how the seriousness of the situation gradually dawned on them and their experiences in returning to Australia and the requirement to self-isolate at home.

The best laid plans gang aft agley! - by Margaret Douglass

Even in India, Australia's panic-stricken buying of toilet rolls made the television news! As Allyn and I completed the first weeks of our long planned Indian trip from Bangalore in the south, along the west coast to Goa and Mumbai, we saw the news of the increasing numbers of coronavirus cases in China, Europe and even Australia. Life seemed pretty much as usual in India, few cases had been reported and there was little panic. We were cautious but felt safe, safer actually than in Australia.

As we continued north into Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, the number of tourists declined as entry to the country was closed to foreigners. We became oddities. Our photos were taken over and over with locals. We were invited in to weddings and were interviewed for TV – our views, as some of the last remaining tourists, were of interest. Our temperatures were taken at monuments, in airports and in hotels. Traders begged us to buy at giveaway prices knowing that they were facing a bleak future. We revelled in the opportunity to see the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort without the usual crowds. We looked with some suspicion at the groups of European tourists. Eventually, as case numbers grew and India announced that lockdown was coming, we became the foreigners looked at with suspicion.

When all monuments were closed, we peered through fences at temples or visited another wildlife park – apparently animals were exempt from coronavirus concerns! With the announcement that flights out of the country would soon be suspended, our travel agent made hasty arrangements to bring forward our flights and to cancel the week we had intended to spend in Nepal. Our final days were spent on almost empty flights between destinations or confined to hotel rooms, brightened by walks to the local mall or markets, room service meals and sightseeing from the bus.

At Delhi airport the queues were enormous, desperate people were trying to get home before the following day's shutdown of international flights and a clerical error made it likely that half our group would not be allowed to board the flight. Eventually all was resolved and we flew to Singapore where a sixteen-hour layover meant that we got to know every corner of that magnificent but almost empty airport really well! Arriving in Sydney to be greeted by our son and driven home to start isolation was wonderful.

Fourteen days of self-isolation! Despite the strangeness of thinking of the exotic places we had expected to be in during most of that isolation period, we found plenty to occupy us. What an opportunity to delve into the freezer and use up those cuts of meat and frozen meals and soups that had slipped to the bottom of the cabinet, to work out ways of turning odd jars of sauce into tasty meals and to feast on shortbread and fruit cake bought in the after-Christmas sales. Even working out how to order groceries online was a novelty. The number of people who offered to bring us supplies was overwhelming and truly amazing.

For me, the very best thing about that two-week period of enforced isolation was the opportunity to catch up on all the things that had piled up over the previous month without having to launch straight

back into all the usual activities. To be able to sleep in for the first few days, to do the washing, to have time to wade through all the emails, to catch up on phone calls and paperwork for the family companies I run, to get the garden under control, to talk with family and neighbours (from a distance) and to make a start on organising the thousands of photos of the trip.

While life is now returning more and more to normal, at least the new normal, I look forward to one day resuming activities (like dancing!) but also look back on those first weeks with gratitude for the time to recuperate, for the kindness and care we received, for new skills like navigating zoom meetings and Coles Online and for returning safely to a country which has been spared the worst of Covid-19 and where medical help is readily available should it be needed.

'Once upon a time when the world was Covid free' - by Tracey Lovat

Hang on...when was that?

Towards the end of last year, Terry and I planned a trip to the Scottish Highlands. It was to be mainly work related with a little bit of sightseeing - and dancing - thrown in. We were looking forward to re-connecting with familiar faces and places. This included catching up with a lovely Scottish Dancing teacher from the village, Conon Bridge, not far from Inverness. I was hoping to do some classes again while there.

Unfortunately, not so long after we arrived in early March, the UK was hit badly with Coronavirus and hundreds were being diagnosed with it daily. Initially, the Highlands seemed somewhat removed from the worry. We were still eating in cafes and even the toilet paper aisles at Tesco were full!

Within a week though, things began to change. On the second visit to Tesco, the aisles were not so full. People began to keep their distance and hand sanitizer was disappearing from shelves but reappearing at the doors of the gift shops and cafes. There was talk of closing local schools, including dance schools. As it turned out, I missed out on the dance classes and Terry's Glasgow meeting ended up happening by Skype ("I could have done that from home!" he said).

Nonetheless, through all this, we still felt surprisingly safe where we were staying. The Highlands, at the time, was at the lower end of UK concerns. We continued to enjoy lovely walks, long, scenic drives through snowy mountains, past babbling rivers and clear, blue lochs. At one point, we even considered staying and seeing it through over there for what we naively thought could be over sooner rather than later.

The next we knew, UK news reports were getting more serious by the day and our PM was calling all Aussies home. We decided to cut the trip short. Finding seats on a flight which, by that stage, were becoming less and less available, was quite nerve wracking. We ended up on the last Qantas flight from London to transit in Singapore. The next night, these flights were stopping over in Darwin.

Before we left, we knew we would need to self-isolate for fourteen days at home but fortunately we missed the mandatory hotel stay by the skin of our teeth. Phew! Our children were able to get necessary food and provisions over to re-stock our very bare pantry and fridge which we had deliberately emptied before we left. They even managed to find us some toilet paper!

Overall, I was feeling fine about the idea of self-isolation. It would give me a chance to go through drawers and cupboards and read the ever-growing stack of books teetering on my bedside table –

so I thought! Unfortunately, these things didn't happen as I found myself very restless and unable to settle into anything substantial. Every tickle in the throat, every sneeze put me on tenterhooks. I wore a track around our house as I walked for exercise. Chocolate became a very good friend!

Our self-isolation morphed into lockdown which was the same for everyone by that stage, and I have finally settled into a routine of exercise (finally out of the back yard!), zoom meetings and a sense of peace and calm. Major birthdays have come and gone and the slower pace is now a reality for the time being. As it turned out, the enforced isolation was a blessing as that was when things weren't looking too good here anyway. It has also brought family and friends closer than ever in my case.

On a final note, I am extremely happy to be living in Australia, surrounded by oceans, where we appear to have moved through the worst. I do feel for all my friends back in the UK who are still living in frightening and uncertain times though. Having seen firsthand the UK rapidly spiralling downwards - and continuing to do so - I am not in any hurry to move out into the wider world or indeed the wider aisles of Woolies (home delivery is fine, thank you)!

'And we all lived 'warily' ever after!'

Self-isolation is becoming a habit - by Cathy and Brian Regan

We landed back very early Monday morning on March 16th and discovered that the government had brought in a new rule while we were mid-flight, and we had to "self-isolate" for two weeks after landing – luckily not yet the internment in a Sydney hotel so we picked up our rent-a-car and drove home.

I think we were "eased into" the whole isolation idea, influenced by the timing of our trip. We were flying over to help out with the three grandkids, as many of you know, and the dates (which got moved) depended on when our daughter-in-law had her surgery booked. We ended up flying out the day after the UK introduced self-isolation for anyone "with symptoms" who had come from somewhere risky like Singapore. We transited through Singapore and had no symptoms but rather than risk exposing the Inverness family to any virus we "semi-isolated" in London. The decision was helped by our ongoing flight having been cancelled due to a storm. So, we met up with Heidi, our daughter (who lives in London) and went to a couple of her gigs but gradually did less and less in social spaces, given the risks in London. On a much happier note, on our last night in London, Heidi and Kat announced their engagement.

We then went on to Inverness for four weeks of helping out which was fine but the stress levels about Corona virus were escalating. Because our son, Luke, works in Emergency we were all aware of the terrible stories coming out of Italy and the UK government wasn't doing much. It seemed there had to be a lot of cases in the community and friends of ours were sick with "the worst virus we've ever had" but never got tested. In fact, in our last week there, the advice was, if you get sick, just stay home for a week, don't ring the advice line unless you're having trouble breathing and after a week go back to work even if you are still coughing. That didn't seem encouraging. The amazing thing was how quickly things were changing. Kat (Heidi's partner) is a GP in London and wasn't feeling too anxious about it around week 2 of our visit but a week later health workers started to realise they didn't have enough protective equipment and patient numbers were increasing. Our kids suddenly became anxious about us (risky age group in a risky environment) and we ended up bringing our return flights forward ten days. We had pretty much stopped going out except for transporting the kids to all their activities and, in our last week over there, these started to be cancelled. On the last day Luke took the kids out of school (ahead of the government ruling).

Meanwhile Brian had had a cough for a week (caught from the kids as usual) but not febrile or unwell so not warranting a test and presumably not Covid). Our new flights entailed an anxious 8 hours transiting through Heathrow (overhearing people saying things like “yeah, the plan is I’ll get a test when I get back”) and then Singapore where we wore masks. My hands were sore from constant wet wipes! The weekend we left there had been ten deaths in the UK and a month later it was around 10,000. It’s now 40,000 plus.

We arrived back to an almost completely empty pantry and fridge because we had deliberately run it all down before we left as we weren’t sure how long we would have to stay in Scotland. Who would have guessed? We saw the videos of empty shelves for toilet rolls while in Scotland. Anyway, our neighbour got us some basics and then Ros dropped in a welcome loaf of bread – after that it was home delivery.

Our self-isolation merged into the lockdown and now it’s going to be hard to break the habit. I think having been in the UK and following the progress, we take the virus very seriously and are unlikely to interpret “relaxed rules” to mean we are all safe. It just means there is space in ICU if needed. Meanwhile we have certainly got used to Zoom for bookclubs and even “walking” groups, listened to lots of interesting podcasts and webinars and watched concerts on youtube. I’ve been lucky to still have my two day a week job creating online content for the Uni. After having all her gigs and part-time job cancelled, Heidi will be doing a live show in an online festival on June 21st (timed for 6am Australian time!). So, we are taking it all slowly, being cautiously optimistic and hoping we can fly to the UK next year. We are walking regularly and eating more healthily but certainly missing Scottish Country Dancing. Apparently singing and anything involving laughing and breathing heavily are probably riskier than sitting quietly in a movie theatre!

NZ Croc Adventure - by Simone Fox

Our NZ adventure started with the dance weekend in Katoomba. It almost did not happen for us, as our animal sitter, my uncle, rolled his car on route to our place, resulting in a hospital stay for a painful dislocated shoulder (It has taken a number of months, but he almost has full movement of his shoulder now, thankfully). Fortunately for us, Richard’s middle sister and her partner, were able to step into the breach.

We really enjoyed the dancing and camaraderie in Katoomba – it turns out that this was our last non-virtual, dancing to date. I was a little concerned about spending the weekend with a lot of people in close quarters and then heading off to NZ, which had yet to register its first COVID case.

On the evening before our flight to Wellington (9 March), Richard spilt marinated chicken juice on his new leather-top dancing Crocs, at his eldest sister’s place. Although we did our best to clean it up, Richard and the NZ customs beagle narrowly avoided an altercation, when I restrained Richard and the dog handler restrained the beagle – we then made a bee-line for the exit.

We had a lovely two days in Wellington (not long enough) during which time we went to the wonderful Te Papa museum, walked up in the hills and spent time around the foreshore. We went looking for the cable car to go up to the Botanic Gardens but discovered that it was very touristy and busy, with lots of American tourists from the cruise ship we could see docked in the harbour. It turns out, that it was a good decision not to bother with it.

We headed off to start our three day walking trip, two hours from Wellington, on the east coast – the Tora Coastal Walk. There were 11 of us – we were the only non-Kiwis, and Richard was the only bloke. The majority were 40 year old mums, who all went to school together and were treating themselves to the walk for their 40th birthdays. The walk was catered, however, on the first night, someone had to stand out in the cold and cook the chicken on the BBQ – Richard gallantly offered! The walk was mostly over private sheep and cattle farms and whilst the views were great, the gradient of some sections challenged our knees. I developed a nasty blister after the first day of wearing new walking boots but some forward planning meant we had various podiatric items which helped enormously, as did subsequently walking in my Crocs. Once the others found out that Richard was a podiatrist, he was called on to assist a number of the other walkers and luckily we had enough supplies to go around. One of the mums had a nasty cough, and although we tried to stay away from her, we could not entirely.

We finished the walk at lunch-time on the fourth day and then drove 5 hours up through the centre to the Tongariro National Park, NZ's oldest National Park. Our next goal was to walk one of NZ's most challenging one day walks, the Tongariro Alpine Crossing – 20 km one way (shuttle back), up and then across an amazing volcanic landscape – consisting of three volcanoes; Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. I had been closely watching the volcanic alert level for Ruapehu, due to increased seismic activity in the preceding weeks. We ideally wanted at least a one day break between the two walks, but after we checked the weather forecast, we decided to walk the next day. There were lots and lots of walkers on the track, from many different countries. NZ only had two COVID cases at this stage (people returned from overseas) but we decided not to hand our phones over to anyone to take a photo for us, and not to handle theirs. A young American man asked Richard to take his photo with “Mount Doom” (Ngauruhoe) in the background – Richard rather sheepishly looked at me and took the photo, later saying “he had a ‘Lord of the Rings’ T-shirt on, what could I do?” 😊.

The recommended list of items to carry was thorough and I diligently packed them all, resulting in rather a heavy day pack. We both decided to start walking in our Crocs but knew that we had to take our walking boots and show them to the Park Rangers at the start, or we would not be allowed to continue. Richard stayed in his Crocs for the entire walk, and I only put my boots on for one steep scree slope. Needless to say, we were the only people not walking in sturdy footwear. We received numerous comments, such as, “legend”, “you should send Crocs a photo and ask for sponsorship” and “I wish I'd worn my Birkies” (Birkenstocks).

I found the gas vents and sulphur at the top, quite disconcerting, resulting in only a 10 minute lunch break during the whole seven hours that we walked. At the top, Richard's nose started to run, so we decided to try to make the earliest shuttle back to our accommodation.

We awoke the next day, to the news that we would have to self-isolate for two weeks when we returned. This was going to be tricky for Richard, who is usually booked up eight weeks in advance. On top of this, his runny nose had deteriorated into a full head cold, but this did not curb his resolve to mountain bike the Red Beech Forest in Rotorua. Whilst debating the relative merits of this idea, I had my own altercation with a stationary object, whilst reversing our rental car (I'm still trying to finalise the travel insurance claim). Richard managed the bike riding, and we also did a wonderful tree top walk in the same forest.

From this point on, we basically self-isolated as much as possible due to Richard's cold. We extended our stay at Hahei in the Bay of Plenty which was very beautiful – beach walks, walk to Cathedral Cove but decided against kayaking. It should have been very relaxing but the media was ramping up the talk of lockdowns and our Government was telling travellers to return. The only problem was that

the airlines were telling us not to contact them until 48 hours before our scheduled flight. Our flight was cancelled but we were rescheduled later on the same day (22 March). Auckland International airport was chaotic. Inside, there were long queues of people trying to find flights home. There were even longer queues outside the terminal, and we had to show our tickets and passports just to get inside. We really felt for all those people who seemed stranded. At the Sydney end, there was a lot less fuss than we were expecting; no temperature checks, just had to fill in a form agreeing to self-isolate.

Two days later we both had the COVID test, which thankfully was negative. I had bought a few extra supplies before we left (much to someone's scoffing, no names!) and family and friends were wonderful in supplying us with toilet paper, fresh veg and milk for the all-important coffee (yes, the toilet paper fiasco was talked about in NZ – a week later they had their own issues with hoarding and supplies).

We actually enjoyed our two week holiday extension, being the self-isolation, especially after I stopped focussing on the media. We are so fortunate to be on a large property with lots of outdoor activities. I am still so very relieved that we did not have to isolate in a hotel room (that came in four days after we returned). The thought of it, makes me never want to leave the country again. Whilst we are definitely missing the dancing and social contact, we are appreciating not driving around as much.



Richard carrying his boots with Ngauruhoe and South Crater in the background

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2020 and Covid-19 - by Vonnie Lollback

It's the year we'd best forget - unless we can learn from it. And remember lockdown.
 2020 was that year we'll all think of with fear AND lockdown.
 Its start was really bad. Drought, smoke, fires we'd had. Before even lockdown.
 Then floods and huge hail. Some people really did quail. Well before lockdown.
 Then came Covid-19, which few had foreseen. We hear the word lockdown.
 From China it came, a flu but not the same. There's talk of a lockdown.
 It went to Italy first but they weren't the last. They soon had lockdown.
 And so it spread. Every country's in dread. They all got lockdown.
 It's a virus we're told. Our lives are on hold. Now we're in lockdown.
 Millions are sick. It really is quick. We need lockdown.
 Official figures say millions but it could be trillions. Even with lockdown.

Social distancing's the norm. To this we'll conform. As well as lockdown.
 No eating out. No going about. Stay in lockdown.
 No picnics or parks. No gyms, pubs or larks. Stay in lockdown.
 No dancing in halls. Only your walls. Stay in lockdown.
 Churches all shut and so are the clubs but ..we must have lockdown.
 No meetings are fine. It's all now on-line. While we're in lockdown.
 We had loo paper wars. Shops closed their doors. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Wash your hands they now say. Do it all day. As well as lockdown.
 So we rub and we scrub. Go soak in a tub while we're in lockdown.
 The gardens look good, no weed, stick or wood. 'Cause we're in lockdown.
 We google and cook and read a long book while we're in lockdown.
 The house is so clean. The windows, they gleam ... oops gleam.....
 while we're in lockdown.

The USA's gone mad but their leader's a cad. They won't stay in lockdown.
 Their numbers have upped. Ours almost stopped. Stay in lockdown.
 Our leaders are strong. We'll do no wrong. We're in lockdown.
 But it's hard on the young. For our youth it's no fun while we're in lockdown.
 Kids are home-schooled. The internet's the rule while we're in lockdown.
 When the old get sick, they die pretty quick. Even with lockdown.
 They die all alone. Their loved ones at home. 'Cause of lockdown.
 In slums, camps and prisons the cases might be millions when they have lockdown.
 The financial market has slumped. This is no mere bump. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Many jobs are now gone. They must feel so alone. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Mental health will go down, people wearing a frown. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Violence in the street. Innocent Chinese are beat. 'Cause of lockdown.
 No room for blame nor hate, it's a shame. Stay in lockdown.
 But caring has grown. To those on their own. Even in lockdown.
 We all help each other. All sisters and brother[s]. Even in lockdown.

For the medics it's hell to get people well. The rest stay in lockdown.
 They're out in the front. They carry the brunt. As we stay in lockdown.
 Oil use has dropped. Production 'most stopped. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Poor countries will suffer. They have no buffer. But we need lockdown.
 Refugees have it rough. Life's even more tough. 'Cause of lockdown.
 Tourism's done a dive. How will they survive while we're in lockdown?
 Millions may starve. Our population may halve while earth's in lockdown.
 Is this good? Is it bad? All I know it's so sad. 'Cause of lockdown.

Climate change is ignored. That's just getting bored. It's all about lockdown.
 Lucky our youth won't let go. It's their future they know. Even with lockdown.
 Secret deals made with coal, to dig another big hole. While we're in lockdown.
 Green energy's the go. We must keep it so. Even in lockdown.
 Support Greenpeace and GetUp. Don't let our government f-up under the cover of lockdown.
 Will this make us wake up? We must come from love. Even in lockdown.
 Don't put fear in your head. Put love there instead and stay in lockdown.
 Reach out in love to everyone above while we're in lockdown.
 Ring all you know. Let your love flow while we're in lockdown.

While people stay home, the animals can roam. 'Cause of lockdown.
 With streets empty of cars, children can see stars. 'Cause of lockdown.
 The earth's begun to heal. But will it stay for real? Even after lockdown?
 Let's make that our goal and keep the earth whole. Even after lockdown.



The Pandemic Reel - introduction by Ros McKie

The 'dance' below was written by a dancer called Susan Davidson who lives in Spott which is near Dunbar in Scotland. It was written in the early days of the pandemic so it was a foretaste of the humour that was to come as we all tried to adjust to the 'new normal'.

It was sent to Maurice and Kate Hallam while they were out here visiting their daughter Karen Ross. They live in Newcastle in the UK and dance in that north east corner of England but they also have a cottage over the border in Scotland so they dance there too. Whilst they were here they attended Colleges' Class a couple of times and they also attended the Katoomba Weekend. With the shut down of international travel they were lucky not to be delayed in their return flight. However, when they reached Heathrow, they found their luck had run out as the connecting flight had been cancelled and they had to hire a car and drive home – a long drive after big international flights.

As they were staying in Australia when they were sent this 'dance' they thought that we might appreciate it too.

A 32-bar reel for any number of dancers in their own living rooms

- 1-8 Dancers cast off behind own couch, dance around the end & back to place.
- 9-16 Do-Si-Do around coffee table, then slip step away from the coffee table & back.
- 17-24 Dance down the hallway, into the kitchen, grab a beverage* & dance back to place.
- 25-32 Set while placing the beverage on the coffee table, turn on the spot twice
 (using Pas de Basque), then retire to the couch, sit, and enjoy.

**Wine, beer, whisky, or other beverage of choice*



Online Winter Social

Music by Iain Mckenzie

Saturday 18th July, 7pm, to join [Click Here](#)
Zoom Meeting: 7305614648

Programme

Black Donald	J4x32	Carnforth
Rutland Reel	R4x40	Bk 48
Miss Stevenson's Fancy	S4x32	Haynes
Roaring Jelly	J4x32	Foss
The Braes of Breadalbane	S4x32	Bk 21
Scott Meikle	R4x32	Bk 46
Compleat Gardener	J4x32	Graded 3
The Scallywag	J4x40	Bk 52
Minister on the Loch	S3x32	G & S
Catch the Wind	R4x32	Bk 45
Arthur or Martha	S4x32	P Charlton
De'il Amang the Tailors	R4x32	Bk 14

Donations accepted <https://rscds-sydney-branch.square.site>

Hope you can join us for a night of frolicking fun. We invite you to dance together at a friend's house, as safely as possible, and stress, that it is at your own risk.

