

Charles Upton and Minicrib

Dave Hayes of the new Minicrib team tells us about the man to whom we owe this invaluable service.

Charles Upton is a name well known to many Scottish Country Dancers around the world. Try putting the search terms 'Charles Upton Scottish Dance' into an internet search engine and see the many pages of references to his Minicrib recap database! Dance groups and individuals on every continent use his software, based around Microsoft Word, to produce cribs for dances and classes. So, who is Charles and what was the inspiration behind Minicrib?

Charles has lived all his life in Wirral, UK, the peninsula bounded to the west by the River Dee, to the east by the River Mersey and to the north by the Irish Sea. His working life began in 1944 when, at the age of 17, he worked for an engineering company making ship propellers. Eventually he became Managing Director of a company manufacturing clamps to lift sheet steel, Charles being the designer of these ingenious products.

Charles joined the Birkenhead St Andrews Society and found the music, the energetic dancing and the intricate and ever-changing patterns of the dances fascinating. He married Joyce in the early 50s – they have recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. After a break from dancing while their children were young, they joined a group run by a well-known local dancer, Ken Keegan.

Ken was also a member of Deeside Caledonian Society and so in 1975, when Deeside had moved to a local hall, Charles and Joyce were invited along. Thus began the long association with Deeside that continues to the present. Of course, Charles attended dances and meetings of other local dance groups, particularly Wallasey Caledonian Society.

Beyond SCD, Charles has been involved with the Scout Movement for many years, joining the St Catherine's Scout Group in Birkenhead as a boy and later forming a Scout group closer to home at the Greasby Methodist Church in 1954. For more years than he cares to remember, Charles was involved in the Scout Post, a fund-raising scheme involving the collection, sorting and delivery of Christmas cards.

On his retirement in 1992, Charles decided to invest in a computer and learn as much as he could. He had been typing little 'crib cards' to remind himself of the figures of the dances at Deeside Caledonian Society meetings where there was no recapping or

walkthroughs of dances. The computer allowed him to store these cribs and produce sheets with recaps for all the dances on a dance programme. This soon attracted the attention of others so it was not long before he was printing and circulating copies to friends in advance of dances. These recaps sheets grew rapidly in popularity and the task of producing them became unmanageable, so Charles decided to put all his cribs (numbering some hundreds) onto floppy discs. I remember Charles handing out these discs discreetly at social functions and accepting only a nominal sum to cover the cost of purchasing discs.

In early 2000 Charles took the bold step of uploading his Minicrib database program, based on the AutoText feature of Microsoft Word, onto the Deeside Caledonian Society webpage. The rest, as the saying goes, is history. The number of dances in the database now tops 4,500 and Charles has worked hard to answer all the emails he has received which point out errors or ambiguities and suggest dances to add to

the database. He has also provided help to Minicrib users with technical issues. Producing the nine or ten updates of Minicrib each year is quite an undertaking.

In an article in the London *Reel* magazine in 2007 Charles expressed his concern that he was 'well past his sell-by date' and was looking for someone to take over the running of Minicrib. A few volunteers came forward but unfortunately, for various reasons, the take-over never happened and Charles had to battle on.

In December 2013 Charles eventually was able to pass the responsibility for Minicrib to the newly-formed MiniCrib Team – three local dancers from RSCDS Wirral Branch and Deeside Caledonian Society who are hoping to continue producing MiniCrib for as long as dancers around the world find it useful. The MiniCrib Team have a new website – www.minicrib.org.uk – and are already implementing new features and versions of MiniCrib. All we can really say is 'Thank you Charles for everything you have done to make our dancing so much more enjoyable.'

CHARLES UPTON'S OBSESSION (R6x32) 6C set I & A Jamieson Glen Orrin Coll 2

- 1 - 8 1s+2s **also** 3s+4s **also** 5s+6s dance Set & Rotate to end 2 1 4 3 6 5 :-
Set, rotate singly & dance on 1 place clockwise, change places RH on sides & dance on 1 place to own sides (1s in 2nd pl)
- 9 - 16 Centre sets of 2 couples (1s+4s & 3s+6s) dance 1/2 LH across, end couples (2s+4s & 3s+5s) dance 1/2 RH across into 1/2 RSh reels of 3 on the sides - 4s+2s+1s & 6s+5s+3s, ending (1)(2)4 3(5)(6)
- 17 - 24 4L followed by partner casts up Ladies' side & crosses to 1st place opposite sides **while** 3M followed by partner casts down Men's side & crosses to 6th place opposite sides (all now on opp sides), centre 4 couples chase clockwise 1/2 way **while** end dancers turn RH 1.1/2 times. 4 6 5 2 1 3
- 25 - 32 All circle 12H round & back. 4 6 5 2 1 3

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