

## Seniors Meeting Thursday 14 April 2014

The Heyday of Scotland's Ballrooms and Ceilidh Venues

Guest Speaker Dr Lorn Macintyre



At our April meeting, we warmly welcomed Dr. Lorn Macintyre and his wife Mary, from St. Andrews, and Lorn then spoke to us on “*The heyday of Scotland's ballrooms and ceilidh venues*”. An experienced Scottish writer and broadcaster, Lorn outlined the fascinating history of ballroom dance. Combining humour and detail, Lorn's talk included reminiscences from the late Jimmy McMahon, a dedicated ballroom dancer and medallist. We learned that in the 18th and 19th centuries, assemblies were glittering occasions attended only by the very wealthy, who danced minuets and country dances. However, by the 20th century, as Schools of Dancing like Warren's and McEwan's were established for a wider clientele, quadrille assemblies and dances were held. These were respectable events, costing for example, “Gentlemen 1/- , Ladies by invitation”.

The public in general began to show a wider interest in new dances like the *foxtrot*, the *one-step* and the *tango*, which was first introduced at the McLellan Galleries. Many well conducted ballrooms were opened, where dancing and acceptable behaviour were of a high order. We were reminded of the *Albert* and *Locarno* Ballrooms, F and F's *Palais de Danse*, and many others – some associated with sophistication and glamour, others less so. *Barrowland Ballroom*, which could hold 3,000, was famous for its high standard of dancing, many going straight from work, and dancing into the small hours. The *twist* at one time was all the rage. By the 1970's, however, interest in ballroom dancing was waning. Over the years, highlanders settling in Glasgow had brought their ceilidh dances with them, and these were enjoyed in other venues like the *Highlanders' Institute* and *Partick Burgh Halls*, while the music of Ian Powrie and Jimmy Shand was very popular. Out of this situation came the outstanding teachers and the many enthusiasts of the RSCDS.

*Eleanor McArthur, Seniors' Group Member*