INTRODUCTION TO THE FREQUENT DANCE LISTS

(as at 31 December 2018)

My name is Campbell Tyler, I have been a member of the International Branch for some eight years. I decided to start capturing dance programmes into an MS-Access database in 2008 and now have 2 500 programmes contained therein. I have only been able to do this through the support of all those people around the world who have provided the programmes that make up this database. I have received programmes from 496 (up from 489 last time) clubs and branches world-wide.

It has been suggested that I just access club and branch websites and take programmes from there but this involves such a lot of dead ends and wasted web-surfing that it is really not viable. However, the innovation of being able to compile lists on the Strathspey Server provides a convenient way to inform me of programmes in your area. Just give me the number of the list and a few extra items (the club organizing it, its location, the date of the dance and if possible the approximate number attending).   There are some digests that give the programmes for a particular area and these too are useful. Special mention must be made of Canada, which has a particularly dedicated group of people sending me programmes. Thank you!

Of the 2500 programmes on the database 482 are from Scotland itself, 603 from the rest of the UK, 437 from the USA, 219 from Europe, 239 from Australia, 256 from Canada, 158 from New Zealand, 91 from South Africa, and 15 from Japan.

The programmes are classified by country, province (or state, county or whatever is appropriate to the country) and town. The date of the event, which club or branch organised it and the approximate number of dancers is also recorded. For each event the dances that were featured on the programme are recorded, as well as which one was First, which one was Last, which was Before a break (if a break is indicated), which was After a break and finally which were down as Extras.

2722 (up from 2523) dances have featured in these 2500 programmes, of which 1119 appear only once (41.3%). The most frequent dances (Montgomeries' Rant, Pelorus Jack, Mairis Wedding, Reel of the Royal Scots and Deil Amang the Tailors) each appear on almost every sixth programme.

NB: This compilation includes a new list 16, showing dances from beginner friendly programmes only.

Please feel free to write to me to suggest additions, to ask questions, to point out errors, to provide programmes, or just to say hello. My email address is campbell@tyler.co.za and I live in Cape Town, South Africa.

NB – Apart from List 1, alphabetical order is used to split tied entries

The lists you will find on the site currently are:

1. **The 500 most frequent dances in all the programmes recorded** (note that where the dances have the same frequency, then they are listed alphabetically, apart from the first 100 where, if there is an equal number of frequencies then the dance that reached that frequency first is listed first). Montgomeries Rant has regained its top position from Pelorus Jack, whilst Reel of the 51st Division has re-entered the top 10, at the expense of Joie de Vivre. Scott Meikle, Best Set in the Hall, Capital Jig and City of Belfast continue their climb in the top 100. This is a slowly changing list because of the sheer number of programmes, which favours the longer-established dances. See List 15 for an alternative way of calculating the order.
2. The 200 most frequent dances in all programmes from Scotland
3. The 250 most frequent dances in all programmes from Great Britain excluding Scotland.
4. The 175 most frequent dances in all programmes from the USA
5. The 100 most frequent dances in all programmes from Australia
6. The 100 most frequent dances in all programmes from Europe (excluding Great Britain)
7. The 100 most frequent dances in all programmes from Canada
8. The 75 most frequent dances in all programmes from New Zealand
9. The 40 most frequent dances in all programmes from South Africa
10. **The regional variation of the dances that appear in the top 10 of at least one region**. This shows how specific dances are ignored or super-popular in one region compared to the other regions.
11. The 200 most frequent reels in all programmes
12. The 200 most frequent jigs in all programmes
13. The 200 most frequent strathpeys in all programmes
14. **Dances that appear most often in the specific positions on the programme.** This was created so that programme compilers could look for appropriate dances for key positions in the programme. The one position that has come up with the most interesting result is the last dance on the programme. Astonishingly, THREE dances between them occupy this position on 30% of the programmes I have received. So more than every fourth programme has one of Mairi's Wedding (top with 256 occurrences), Deil AmangTheTailors (233) and Reel of the Royal Scots (230) as the last dance of the evening. Add Reel of the 51st and Montgomeries Rant to that and we are up to 40%. Hooper's Jig with 118 occurrences stands out at the top of the list of dances chosen to start off programmes, although EH3 7AF is narrowing the gap. The "before the break" dance of choice is Montgomeries Rant and "after the break" it is Pelorus Jack, while Shiftin Bobbins is the most frequent "extra".
15. **Most frequent dances by weighting**. This is an alternative to List 1 and tries to counteract the sheer bulk of programmes in List 1 dating from early

on which tends to work against dances that have only been published recently. List 15 is compiled taking into account the date of the programme and the number of dancers attending.   Dances appearing on a recent programme with many dancers attending score higher than dances appearing on an old programme with fewer dancers. In this list programmes from 2008 to 2013 are excluded and those from 2014 have only 20% of the weighting of those from 2018.

There are a number of columns in List 15 that need explanation:
- First is the weighted score of each dance.
- Then comes the dance's rank in the previous list of May 2018.
- Then there is a percentage showing how much it has moved, with a positive percentage being a move up, and a negative percentage a move down.
- I have also added columns showing the rank of the dance in the Top 500 (List 1) and the % difference between its List 15 and List 1 rankings.

Taking all these columns together one can get a fairly good idea of whether dances are gaining or losing popularity, and which have stabilised.

So for instance Scott Meikle at 9 in this list is 25% higher up than its position in the Top 500 (12) which shows that it is a fairly recent addition. But its previous rank in this List 15 was 6 and so it is likely to settle in List 1 at somewhere between 9 and 12.

Another example is The Kissing Bridge (44), having been 76 last time, and currently being only 188 in the Top 500. Clearly a new dance proving very popular quickly. (The Compleat Gardener, Miss Eleanor and Orpington Caledonians are similar.)

At the other end of the scale the bottom 12 have exited the top 100 and seem to be slowly losing popularity, although Robertson Rant is still 49 on the Top 500. Remember the Top 500 list treats each programme equally and doesn't exclude programmes from 2008 to 2013. Of course some of the differences are not nearly so easy to explain, but I put that down to "statistical noise" and hope you wont ask!

I am pleased to see Anna Holden's Strathspey has made progress since I publishes the last set of lists and is up from 94 to 83, also being 94 on the Top 500.   It is one of my favourite dances and a solid performer over time.

16. **The 100 most frequent dances from Beginner Events**

This is the second appearance of List 16 and shows which dances appear on programmes of events that seem to be geared towards new dancers. I have 65 events which I have concluded are beginner friendly (mainly due to "Nice and Easy" or similar words in the event name). It is still in its infancy, as can be seen by the big leaps in order from its previous publication, but hopefully this will encourage people to contribute programmes from such events. Some of the dances that appear in this list are not what one would classify as easy, but beginner dances often include dances that will attract more experienced dancers to make up the numbers. These are also likely to drop out over time.