

District Weekend



6.00 pm and time to meet old friends and new at the Sherry Reception. That is how we started a fantastic weekend at Symonds Yat in Herefordshire, on the 2nd October 2009. This was followed by a delicious meal, sitting at large tables, where the conversation flowed freely. Feeling rather full, we gathered in the ballroom for the evening dance, where Ian Jones of Cumbrian Gap took us through an interesting, but not too challenging programme. He did mention that he was pleased that **he** didn't have to dance after that meal!

Ian combined calling and playing an instrument, mainly accordion, but also concertina. His wife, Margaret, played recorder, drum and concertina. David Jones played piano and dulcimer. The music was a pleasure to listen to, and dance to, throughout the weekend. Ian made a point of dropping the calling when he was confident we could cope without it. This enabled us to fully appreciate the music.

There were two workshops on Saturday morning. Before coffee we had Roodman's Ruminations – dances, mostly in historical English Style, by Gary Roodman. Ian told us that he likes to choose dances that are not too difficult, so that we can perfect the moves. We met "the fishhook" or "semi-approximate half hay" in 'Happy Return', which baffled us at first but, with practise, we mastered the move. Many of us liked 'Celts New Dance', which had similarities to 'Newcastle'. After coffee was time for Beyond the Pond – squares and contras. We thought 'Victorian Braces' was a strange name for a dance, but it turned out to be 'Du Quoin Races'!

Saturday afternoon was leisure time. Some people took the chance to walk along the beautiful River Wye. Others visited local places of interest, or relaxed in the hotel.

In the evening we were dancing again, and the programme included some of the dances from the morning workshops. One of the dances which perhaps should have been included in the workshops was 'Teacup Stroll'. This dance is particularly challenging for those of us who suffer from Orientation Dyslexia!!! Apologies from Doug and Maggie to those who made up our set, both on Saturday and in the request session on Sunday!



The Sunday workshop was entitled Three For All – 3 couple, triple time, 3 part dances, etc. Dances included 'Mr Beveridge's Maggot', 'Mr Foster's Frolic', and the ever popular 'Dutch Diamond'. After coffee we had a request session to complete the dancing for the weekend. We particularly enjoyed 'The Pugilist' and 'Johnson's City Circle'.

After a splendid buffet lunch we set off for home, invigorated by our stimulating weekend. Many thanks to John Pollard for organising this event. The good news is that the venue has been booked for a similar weekend in Autumn 2011.

Doug and Maggie Weston