

A View from the Circle

Joy Henry-Davies (Cupar Circle Dance Group)

'The circle is open but unbroken, may we go in peace (or is it pieces?) until we meet again'. It has been another great morning of dancing with Rose. The CD intrepid travellers will meet again - next week in Kelvingrove, Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games cultural celebrations. Rose has booked some executive travel. It's exciting.

Notes to Diary Lots to do. Set two alarms for 7am on big day. Take plenty of paper hankies. Wash hands if nose runs incase no one will hold hands with me in the circle. Possible energy dips mid-afternoon - dehydration - water to drink? Thirteen men have been caste-away, by Bear Grylls, on a desert island. It's harrowing viewing. They have no shelter, food or water. Rose wouldn't do that to us...better safe than sorry, take two bottles. Require a tasty packed lunch. Definitely include '5-a-day' fruit and veg or did they say 7-a-day, whoever THEY are? Answers on a postcard. Oily fish is a must to protect the joints while dancing but a bit smelly on the bus. There's a restaurant in Kelvingrove and the possibility of encountering 200 dancing women in a queue. It reminds me of something... the ladies toilets. Decisions, decisions...maybe I'll consult Rose. Clothes for the day... this is a tricky one. 'To wear or not to wear', colour, trousers, skirt... our emails have slowed down the speed of the internet. I was born in Glasgow, not Edinburgh. I can see no further than a raincoat (but pink or purple?).

Circle Dancing for All Slept through the alarms. I can't find that raincoat. What to wear. ...my demented inner teenager is let loose. I must stop buying from charity shops...choices, choices, choices. I have to get back to the house tonight before Chris. It's ridiculous; I'm going to miss the bus worrying about him. This is my day but will he safely navigate the bedroom floor alone? It's best to travel light... microscopic umbrella and a multi vitamin for lunch should see me right. Where's the bum bag?

A sugar high invades the bus. Here comes breakfast. A stock of sweets to rival any Thornton's selection is passed back and forward, like the conversations, right over our heads...'I remember when there were no students in St Andrews', quips Sylvia. 'They've been there for six hundred years,' says Liz. (Sylvia looks well considering). Maggie empties her lunch bag and inspects the contents. 'It's unlike me to be leaking'. She eyes me suspiciously while feeling the seat, 'Have you forgotten the Tena?' I am informed that the water under my seat must be seeping upwards

because we are sitting above the wheels. This is a dangerous place. I can see a paper hankie on the floor but no alligators. Hankie puddle mopping with no hands, just feet, is a good distraction and prevents deep vein thrombosis while travelling. Faces are now looking a tad pink, 'I'm sweating' says Maggie, abandoning her cardigan and shoes. Enquiries abound regarding the driver and his climatic controls, 'Has he got that heating on?' The sub tropical conditions are unsettling the natives. 'Press that button!' I reach up above my head and press every button including the one that says 'STOP'. A silence descends. Fiona1 has endured enough and treks down the aisle in search of a cool air vent. Laura, concerns herself with her fine dining experience, enough '7-a-day' for all twenty four of us on the bus, silver service and napkins. Thought - if Fiona 1 doesn't come back I could eat her bit of melon.

A bag of pretty roses travels the silk route over our heads. I choose a black one. It goes with my dress. Fiona 2 casts a look of dark disapproval. 'It wiz nae me', I tell her. Rose's daughter, Jenny, suggested them...I wonder if she thinks we can't remember each other? Fiona 1 is now wearing three roses on her t-shirt and says they grow on you.

We arrive at Kelvingrove. How time flies when you are enjoying yourself and what a fabulous building. Maria has been appointed 'pop-up' guide and navigates our CD group off the bus and passed the men working by the roadside. She tells me they asked if we were a hen party. There's a John McEnroe echo in my head, 'You cannot be serious!' I feel a buzz of energy as we go through the entrance. First things first, the ladies toilets - it's most unfortunate they are located directly under the 'Creatures of the Past' sign. I think I will protest about ageism and throw in a bit of sexism. Sylvia says it's above the gents too - I'll withdraw the sexism. We stand transfixed in the welcoming central hall, sun lit and spacious. Faces gaze down from the first floor balconies. This will be a fabulous space for making the DVD.

Thirteen circle dance groups from Findhorn to Kendal, are coming together with the public; dancing patterns of people in motion. Four home countries and five continents (most of the Commonwealth) will be represented in the ten circle dances this afternoon. Well done Jenny Oswald our CD Project Manager. What a community friendly atmosphere. My world feels much bigger already. Linda looks apprehensively at the fully occupied seating area. 'Is that our audience...there's still an hour and a half to

go.' I can't possibly comment. Now what to do with pesky coats and bags? Rose's Jenny has a bright idea. We don't need a centre piece, just dance round the bags. It takes me back to the good old days in the disco. Someone official looking comes along. Good.... now we are cooking. Go downstairs and queue at the public cloakroom. It costs £1. Fine...No, go back upstairs and collect a 'Circle Dancing for All' badge. The use of the cloakroom will be free. Marvellous...great badge. No, there are too many circle dancers in the public queue at the cloakroom. A woman in the queue looks at me accusingly and says she has no badge.

Whatever...exhaustion is now setting in; go back upstairs. We now have an allocated room for coats and bags which will be locked and secure. I am looking at Rose and repeating verbatim everything she says. I am not sure if we are coming or going. One thing is clear... I am getting out of that room in case we get locked in. I glance at my pedometer - steps, distance and calories. I'm well on my way to 10,000 healthy steps today and I haven't even started dancing yet. CD is so good for you. I spot a gathering of roses at the café table in the central hall. They smile. I'll get a seat with them. A Scot's meat pie and a cup of tea from the café seems in order - I'll catch up on the '7-a-day' later, if I can find Laura or maybe Maggie, (she was at dough school for three years). I return from the queue, with my culinary delight. 'Is it something I said?' Escorted out of the café for eating packed lunches, the roses have scattered to the four corners. One group have gone outside and been chased back in by pigeons. Some sit upstairs, hidden by the stairwell, munching cordon bleu sandwiches (you know who you are), and innocently looking down at a sign reading, 'Packed Lunch Area'. Others retire to the public seating area, balancing apples and plastic boxes on knees.

I sit in the café waving contentedly as they search on the floor for lost items of food. In my splendid isolation the years fall away and I can see a four year old self wandering through the gallery with my Dad on a wet Sunday afternoon...L. S. Lowry, Salvador Dali, a Spitfire, a Giant Pike's head,..... Sylvia my cousin, she's appeared over my shoulder. She lives down the road from Kelvingrove and has decided to try circle dancing. We wander. I find a rose on the floor and, as if in an airport arrivals lounge, hold it in the air for all to see. The owner remains a mystery, and clutching it like a £50 note, we head off to hand it in at the main reception desk. It's the right thing to do. As the band tunes up for the afternoon circle dancing a song pops into my head, 'Father has a business strictly second hand; Everything from

toothpicks to a baby grand; Stuff in our apartment came from father's store; Even things I'm wearing someone wore before; It's no wonder that I feel abused; I never get a thing that ain't been used; I'm wearing second hand hats; Second hand clothes; That's why they call me; "Second hand Rose", from Second Avenue'. Sylvia and I head back to reception to reclaim the rose to wear while dancing. It's the right thing to do. (There is always a silver lining to a sad story - Linda tells me that she and Fiona had retraced their steps, over and over hunting for that rose, and couldn't understand where it had gone. 'Now you know!').

Concentric Circles Jenny Oswald and Anne-Lise Kryger lead us from the centre - the seasons of the year, the cycles of life. There are no mistakes, only variations. Our circles widen, form and re-form. We are in the flow. Music and mood, movement and rhythm; associations transport and uplift, connecting us as one circle of humanity on common ground. Thanks to everyone for making it happen and sharing those moments in time. It's all in the Games!

Notes to Diary 'Carry on Circle Dancing'. It's good for you.