

## Elke Brytscha



I started life in Germany, but decided to make a new start and move to this country after redundancy and after my husband's suicide. I found a job as a Tour Guide at Blair Castle and in February 1999 was offered the flat in Auchterarder, where I still live.

I was introduced to circle dancing some months later, when a therapist mentioned it. She told me a bit about it and gave me Keryn's phone number. I liked the sound of this circle dancing and also that you didn't need to bring a partner.

As I've always loved music and dancing I wondered if this might help me in my recovery. I had just been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue, struggling with the simplest things and had nearly lost all confidence in my body. When I went along for the first time I could hardly do more than walking steps, yet found it needed much less effort as the dancers on either side helped me along. I liked the friendliness and welcoming atmosphere of the group as well as their Motto: 'Don't worry about the steps. All variations welcome.' Well, I still do variations sometimes, but it's getting better all the time.

To begin with I just focused on enjoying the companionship, the music and did my best to move in the right direction at the right time. Gradually I noticed that certain steps came up in various dances, started to recognise step-patterns and figured out how to do a grapevine without tripping over my feet or anyone else's. Once I was able to dance more regularly and started to feel more confident in my body I joined an introduction course to teaching, led by Jenny Oswald, and started to teach the odd dance here and there.

As I was wondering what the next step could be, Maria asked had I seen the flyer for this new teacher training course that Judy King was planning with guest teachers for 2008. A two-week intensive course, instead of travelling up and down the country every other month or so. Intense it certainly was, but somehow I muddled through and made it to graduation day. Since then I have mainly been co-teaching with Keryn in Auchterarder and occasionally in Sauchie and Cupar.

Once in a while, when listening to music at home, I find myself dancing. Sometimes a step pattern emerges and a new dance is born. For me circle dancing has been a tremendous help in my recovery as well as keeping my spirits up and it's become a big part of my life. Over the years I learnt to adapt dances to my own needs. When having to rest between dances I sometimes go through the motions of a dance whilst sitting down and found it helps with learning a new dance. Slowly my balance, co-ordination, memory and stamina are improving.

**July 2015**