

## Bradford SDC

Way back in 1949, Stan Sinfield gathered some information from the English Folk Song and Dance Society, and with a few friends from work (one of whom later became his wife), members of his own family and a few others, he formed a group where he started to teach and call. This group later became the Bradford Square and Social Club, and joined the BAASDC in 1954.

In its early days, the club struggled, and despite many beginners' courses, they seemed unable to increase their membership. In those days of course, there were no motorways, and with the majority of clubs situated in the Midlands and the South, it was not easy for other clubs to lend their support. Stan kept Bradford in the public eye, teaching square dancing at evening classes, and among other activities, the club also included cycling and rambling. On Midsummer's day 1954, a coach trip was made to the nearby village of Eshalt. Over 30 members made the trip, and joined in midsummer night revels in aid of a local church. Square dancing was held under floodlights on the green, and dancers danced to the music of Rex Squires and his square dance band. Stan Sinfield was in good calling voice, ably assisted by a young caller, Alan Tipper. Despite the fact that it was midsummer's night, the dance was held in heavy drizzle. Nothing, however, could dampen the enthusiasm of the dancers, and with a barbeque provided by members of the U.S.A.A.F. a thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all.

In 1954, music at the club was provided by a record player. On July 6th, a section of the Bradford Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra paid the club a visit. One of the highlights of a very interesting evening was the very fine medley of tunes played to accompany the Virginia Reel. Following the success of the evening, efforts were made to arrange live music as often as possible. In August, Stan paid a visit to the London clubs including the opening night of the Whirlaways, and stated that he was impressed with the friendly reception that he received. With membership increasing rapidly, there were fears that their current hall would not be large enough to cope when the new season started, but in the event the hall proved adequate. The club then received a massive boost when well-known American caller and editor of American Squares Magazine, Ricky Holden, accepted the residency of the club. With the club having new blood on its committee and the winter programme well mapped out, the immediate future looked very promising.

Throughout the fifties, Bradford SDC quickly established itself as one of the north's most prominent clubs. The election to the residency of the well known American caller and editor of American Squares Magazine, Ricky Holden, had been a tremendous boost. As the club entered the sixties the future did indeed look bright. In addition to square dancing the club also had a very active social side. There were trips to Blackpool to see the lights. These trips were enormously popular and always very well supported. The rambling section of the club organised a trip to Bolton Abbey and rounded off a very pleasant day by dancing squares by the riverside. As there was no actual music, dancers danced to vocal music.

The club had a demonstration team which travelled widely, presenting squares to the public and advertising their own club. Together with Newton 8 SDC, Bradford claimed that their club was truly representative of Northern clubs. Club caller, Stan Sinfield, made every effort to ensure that the dancers were not presented with dances above their heads. He insisted that beginners must always be catered for.

Both caller and committee always tried to have the club represented at major events. One idea put forward by the club at one time was the forming of a callers' club in the Bradford area. It was felt that active callers could help newer callers in the area to become more proficient. The club itself had its own callers' class every Friday night at 8pm and I understand that this was very successful in encouraging people to take up the art of calling.

I believe other clubs have used similar systems. One club I know for sure, was Woodberry Down. Jimmy Morris ran callers' classes, which produced a number of successful callers. Perhaps this system is still used today? Stan Sinfield himself was a self taught caller, and a very successful one. In 1954 he became involved with the Bob Oliver Organisation, which he believes would have been a great benefit to square dancing in this country, but we shall never know.

Bradford SDC has long since closed its doors. During its lifetime there is no doubt that it was one of the most successful of northern clubs. Stan, now in his eighties, lives in retirement in Bradford. No doubt, in moments of reflection, he recalls the heady days when the club hall rang with music and laughter, and Bradford SDC was in its heyday.

Tony Pears (April/May 2008)