

JESSIE STEWART — HAGGARTY MBE

Former Vice President of the SOBHD

When Jessie was six years old, her Dad, who was Pipe Major in the Vale of Leven Pipe Band, wanted Jessie to have violin lessons. Her Mum preferred piano lessons. However, they compromised and sent her to dance lessons! Her teacher, Sam Gladsby lived and taught in Alexandria, Jessie's home town.

As she progressed with her dancing, she transferred to Alec Massey, a well known and respected teacher in Clydebank. Jessie was very successful in competitions due to her hard work and dedication.

Jessie started teaching at fourteen years of age, first with a neighbour's daughter and from there, a few more students, until the Stewart School of Dancing in Alexandria was formed. Her students have been very successful in Examinations and Competitions winning every major Championship in Highland Dancing throughout the U.K.

Jessie has also trained students in Canada, U.S.A., Australia, Tasmania and many other countries. The Scottish School of Arts in Banner Elk, North Carolina, was a teaching ground for twelve years and many of today's teachers were trained by Jessie at this annual event.

Jessie was one of the pioneers in the formation of the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing and was the last surviving member of the original Board. She gave her knowledge freely, to raise the standard of Highland Dancing, both at home and abroad. A truly dedicated teacher and lecturer, continually striving for perfection and helping other teachers and dancers gave her great pleasure.

There will be many of you reading this who will remember those "Backsteps" and "Pas de Basque" impromptu sessions from Judges' meetings.....

Mrs Haggarty (as she was to most of us) was the recipient of many accolades including an MBE, the Atholl Clasp and two Carl Alan Awards amongst many other tributes. She was also SOBHD Vice President and formerly an Adjudicator of the SOBHD and an Examiner of the British Association of Teachers of Dancing.

Mrs Jessie Stewart - Haggarty passed away peacefully at home in the afternoon of Sunday 28th August 2011 aged 98. A life dedicated to the preservation of Scottish culture and promotion of highland dancing, Mrs Haggarty touched many lives throughout the highland dancing world.