

# HOW SQUARE DANCING BEGAN IN

## NORTH QUEENSLAND IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

1971 Graham Rigby came on regular visits to Ayr sponsored by the then national fitness club in the Burdekin.

Late in 1971 after a year of successful regular visits with good attendances, Graham suggested we form our own square dance club. A meeting was held at the NFC hall in Wickham st Ayr and the Burdekin Square Dance Club was formed.

1st president - Bill Davies

1st secretary - Judy Peterson

1st treasurer - Fred Marshall

Publicity Officer & teacher -- Shirley Gauvin

Bill Davies was only able to be president for a short time due to a sudden deterioration in his health and Jim Gauvin became the 1st long serving president - remaining in that position unopposed until 1975.

1972 After a year of regular dancing and promotion our club decided to adopt a name more relevant to square dancing. A competition was held among members and after many great suggestions were entered by both senior and junior members the name "Ayr Allemanders Square Dance Club" was chosen and formally adopted at the Annual General Meeting in March 1972. The Ayr Allemanders also applied for and gained affiliation with the Queensland Square Dance Society at this time. All officers and any members who cared to register for same began receiving the Society's newspaper "South Pacific Square Dance Review" on a regular basis. The Club also received copies of the Minutes of all the State Society's meetings. Ayr Allemanders appointed Mr. Graham Rigby and Eric Wendell as it proxies at these meetings in Brisbane.

Our club at this time was learning from records made by Graham Rigby and Ron Jones with the steps being taught by Shirley Gauvin.

Regular visits by Graham Rigby and Eric Wendell were very welcome to give us experience in dancing to live calling.

1973 In January Shirley Gauvin and her son Don from the teenage group went to the annual Tallebudgerra Summer Holiday Camp to learn more about the dancing and to get more teaching material as well as promoting our Club's existence. After this we began to get visits from more high profile callers including Sid & Betty Leighton and Nev & Bev McLaughlin, Eric and Graham also continued their regular visits. In September - Shirley Gauvin went to Brisbane for a week of dancing and teaching experience and was invited to dance in the combined clubs display at the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers. During the year Judy Peterson and Shirley Gauvin had been teaching Square Dancing in the Primary Schools throughout the Burdekin.

Judy Peterson formed a display of juniors to dance in the Ayr Water Festival during its Annual Mardi gras on the last weekend of September. The Adults and Teenage sets also performed on the night. These two groups had also danced at various other functions throughout the year to promote our art.

1974 Shirley and Don Gauvin again attended the annual January Tallebudgera Square Dance Camp.

This year saw the growth locally in our Club. We formed. Demonstration sets in all age groups with the juniors now dancing at various school functions as well as at the Ayr Water Festival and Home Hill Harvest Festival with the Adults and Teens. Our Teenage groups were very busy demonstrating with us at various functions, travelling with us to visit Cairns and Mackay Clubs and joining us in participating regularly in. Townsville's "Entertainment in the Parks" programme,

They also received the distinction of being asked. To perform at the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Display in Townsville. Their performance was such that the Duke of Edinburgh himself stopped to watch them dance and. then. Spoke to each of the 10 dancers taking part and their teacher, Shirley Gauvin. They also received a special. Letter of Recognition from

the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Committee.

They also joined the Adult group in taking part for the first time in the Townsville Pacific Festival, The adult group also demonstrated at Wine & Cheese evenings, Social dances for local Bowls Clubs and various other functions.

During the visit to Tallebudgera we were asked if Ayr would host a Square Dance Convention. As the Queensland Society had not been able to host one for a number of years due to heavy club schedules and commitments in that region, on our return to Ayr the motion was put to the Club at its Annual meeting and it was decided that Ayr would host the Inaugural North Queensland Square Dance Convention in May 1970 (May day Weekend). We requested that a Callers Lab be run in conjunction with the Convention as a number of northern members were beginning to show interest in calling and they could then receive basic training to help their budding talents. We then began a very busy 15 months of planning, organizing and promotion. A Special Convention Organizing Committee was formed to control all of this as separate from club activities. This committee subsequently also became the demonstration set for the Convention.

In November we danced with Graham Rigby, on one of his many visits to Home Hill at the Home Hill Race Club to promote Square Dancing in the Burdekin as a special promotion during the Home Hill Harvest Festival weekend. This was in addition to the Mardi gras night display.

1975 We again attended Tallebudgera. This year as well as Shirley and Don Gauvin, several others members including the Peterson and Simpson families attended. This was the start of a very big year for us and gave us the ideal opportunity to promote our May Convention a great deal of interest was shown and a number of Callers nominated to call on the weekend, Graham Rigby and. Eric Wendell also agreed to conduct a Caller Lab at the Convention.

In April we were very fortunate to receive an offer from Queensland's elder statesman of calling, Dr Ivor Burge (75 yrs old) to call for us as a special visit while he was in the north on holiday. We readily agreed and had a very successful day with him and Mrs. Burge.

Dr. Burge insists on couples in his various clubs in Brisbane but he gave Shirley Gauvin a special dispensation to attend any of his clubs while in Brisbane to attend Winter Wonderland. An offer readily accepted by Shirley who had a fantastic time both

at Winter Wonderland and dancing with Dr. Surge, Don Proellocks, Sid Leighton and other clubs.

Approximately 100 - 120 dancers registered to attend our Convention and it proved to be a resounding success with much support from local businesses including a. Courtesy Car from one of the local dealers for transporting the callers. Mackay club successfully nominated to host the 1976 Convention, With the Convention successfully established and a Caller Lab in place Shirley Gauvin resigned as teacher to encourage the budding local callers to

Take over the calling and teaching. Stan Simpson and George Gibson began calling after the Convention and at this time certificates for completing the basic steps course were introduced to the club. Previously record cards of each dancer's progress had only been kept as there was no recognized local caller to certify that a course had been done. At this time Jim Gauvin (who was 62 yrs old) also resigned as President to make way for the younger members to take over. We again took part in Townsville's Entertainment in

Parks Programme as well as dancing in their Pacific Festival and the Ayr Water Festival and Home Hill Harvest Festival. The schools were once again very keen throughout the year and also participated in both local Festivals.

1976 Tallebudgera again started a year with quite a contingent from Ayr attending and also some of the Mackay Club for the first time Stan and George also called at this camp for the first time, displaying their skills and the benefit they gained from the caller Lab at our 1975 Convention. Our regular club activities continued and the schools proved very receptive still. In May we travelled to Mackay for another very successful North

Queensland Convention where Cairns successfully nominated to host the 1977 Convention. We also attended the Mackay Club's birthday party and some members joined Mackay to help them demonstrate at the Mackay Country Music Club 1st Birthday Night. In June 1976 Shirley Gauvin moved to Townsville for employment reasons and while participating in the 1976 Townsville Pacific Festival Parade with Ayr Allemanders distributed Flyers announcing a night at the Long Tan Hall Heatley on 15th June, 1976 to form a local club.

After several fortnightly get togethers at this hall enough members were recruited to form a club. Negotiations were made with the Townsville City Council for permanent use of the hall on a fortnightly basis and our first club meeting was held in September, 1976 where "Sun City Swingers" was born. We started with one set and the support, of Ayr Allemanders, dancing to records on practice nights and, when possible, the Ayr Callers on dance nights which were Friday nights (alternate to Ayr who also had fortnightly Friday. dances) The Townsville Club grew from this teaching by Shirley Gauvin to having within two months a caller who had been learning in the South, Glen Dreier who had been transferred in his job. Ayr Allemanders continued. To take part in Entertainment in Parks and now invited Sun City Swingers to join them. This was a very good method of promotion for our new Club. Shirley and Don Gauvin also continued to travel to Ayr to dance with Ayr Allemanders,

During this year Stan and his Committee held an open club meeting at which members voted to change the club name to 'Inner Circle- Square and Round Dance Club'.

1977 Tallebudgera again started the year. This year Shirley and Don Gauvin represented Townsville and the Simpson, Gibson. And Peterson: families represented Ayr. Townsville's Entertainment in Parks was again the main regular demonstration

venue for both Ayr and Townsville Clubs, Both clubs also travelled to Cairns for the 3rd North Queensland Convention. Townsville was represented. By I set each of Adult and Teenage dancers, all dancers enjoyed. Their first major event as a club and also nominated to host in Townsville the 4th North Queensland Convention. As all northern clubs were now affiliated with the Queensland Society it was decided at the Convention Meeting in Cairns to change the name from North Queensland to Queensland Square Dance Convention due to the large amount of support from southern dancers and callers and so Townsville became the 6th Queensland Square Dance Convention (as there had been 2 State Conventions before the 1st North Queensland Convention in Ayr in 1975), Townsville began to develop a number of budding callers at this time, including Bill Matheson and Harry Penny, who subsequently went on to form their own groups in the 1980's. The year was really hectic organizing. The 1978 State Convention as well as visits from Peter Johnson in March, and Graham Rigby in June. Graham came to Townsville specifically to call for our demonstrations in the Townsville Pacific Festival, this was the first time a southern caller had come up for this event, apart from the Convention in Cairns in April and the Pacific Festival in June Sun City Swingers also demonstrated at the Railway Estate State School and a Charity night at the Stuart Drive-In Theatre. We also joined Ayr- Inner Circle. For a week-end Camp on Magnetic Island early in July and to return their hospitality held a combined Party Night at the end of July. This year also saw Shirley Gauvin travelling to Sydney in June for the 18th National Square Dance Convention. What an exhilarating experience! Talk about Line dancing today, you should have seen our Mountain Clogging (the forerunner in Line Dancing) back then!

Graham Rigby also came back north in July to call for the Ayr Club at Home Hill and some of our members joined them for the occasion. In mid-September for International Square Dance Week Sun City Swingers hosted a special dance night for the occasion with special guest groups from America and New Zealand attending the night. These people had been on tour of Australia since the National Convention in Sydney and were only too happy to demonstrate the VERY lively clogging. Although both clubs had been Round dancing since their inception this was their first introduction to Clogging, (This form of Line Dancing was a popular social dance in the mountain states of southern U.S.A.) It was at the time also very popular in N.S. W. and other southern Australian states but not very well known in Queensland before the National 23rd - 25th of September a fantastic weekend of round dancing with Pat & Mark Burke in Ayr. On the 30th September, 1977 Sun City Swingers Hosted a gala inter-Club Square Dance night to celebrate its first Anniversary.

As a registered Club (Its inception date was 15th June when Founder, Shirley Gauvin was at the National.

We were now well into the organizing promotion. And final arrangements for the 6th State Square Dance Convention to be held in Townsville over the Queen's Birthday weekend in June,

Sun. City was also still taking part in. our regular demonstrations and interacting with Ayr's Inner Circle Club. Approximately 130 - 150 dancers attended the Convention and a number of southern. Callers nominated to call over the weekend- A Caller Lab was also conducted once.

After a very successful 1978 State Convention and a very good year for Sun City Swingers, club secretary and publicity officer, Shirley Gain resigned as she was

returning to Ayr for family reasons. This proved to be the end of regular square dancing for her as in 1979 she was invited by the Townsville College of TAFE to teach Old: Time Social Dancing in Ayr. Square Dancing continued. In the north in Townsville under Bill Matheson and Harry Penny with their individual clubs as well as the original Sun City Swingers and in Ayr by Stan Simpson.

It was voted at the 6th State Convention in Townsville that the 7th. Be held in Rockhampton under joint organization from both the north and south regions as there was no official club in Rockhampton.

Due to the writer's departure from square dancing no information on the success of this function is known.

Square Dancing in Ayr continued under Stan and each year from 1979 until 1995 hosted the Sugar.

Unfortunately the numbers dropped off dramatically in 1995 and Stan decided to close the Club. Square dancing however still continues in Townsville and the Far North.