

## Founding the OUBDC

*by Janice Jones*

I have a brother two years older than me. As a teenager, he was not very confident with girls, but the change in him when he came home at Christmas from his first term at Liverpool University was astounding – he was relaxed and confident and had a host of girlfriends. The magic formula? He had joined the Ballroom Dance Club and been an instant hit with the girls.

I was eagerly awaiting my turn go up to University and join the Ballroom Dance Club, so you can imagine my disappointment when I discovered that there was no Ballroom Dance Club at Oxford. The situation continued until one morning in my second year, when, at breakfast I was bemoaning the absence of a Club. One of the other girls (St.Hilda's was, of course, all-girl in those days) said "Why don't you start one?" None of us had any idea what was involved, but I operated on the basis that it would not be too difficult to find out.

Finding a venue and engaging teachers did not prove too difficult, once I had spoken persuasively to the man in charge of the Iffley Road Sports Stadium and contacted a local dance school. The Sports Stadium was a good venue in that there were two rooms, so we could have teaching going on in one room, with social dancing for those who had already had a lesson in the other.

The biggest challenge was finding the necessary Senior Member to sponsor us. I tried my own tutors and lecturers without success, even though I emphasized that the Senior Member would not necessarily have to get involved with the dancing -- we would not be too demanding of time or effort! How fortunate we were, then, that someone eventually pointed me in the direction of Dr. Morrin Acheson, a Chemistry Don. Not only was he prepared to be our Senior Member, he was happy to become thoroughly involved and as many people will know, the founders of the Club were not the only ones to benefit from his commitment; he remained a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of the Club for many years.

We formed a steering committee, wrote a constitution, set about raising some funds and we were in business. We were not allowed to put "University" into the name of the Club for quite some time (I forget exactly how long) until we had proved ourselves viable, so it was quite a milestone when that was achieved.

One of my proudest moments occurred a few years ago when I saw an article in "The Times" about the Club, stating that it had over a thousand members and was the biggest Club in the University – and that was before the increased popularity of Ballroom Dancing from TV exposure!

The Club has gone through much development in its 40 year history. I am glad to see that it is still thriving and am delighted that modern technology can allow ex-members to remain in touch. No doubt it will continue to prosper for at least the next 40 years.

