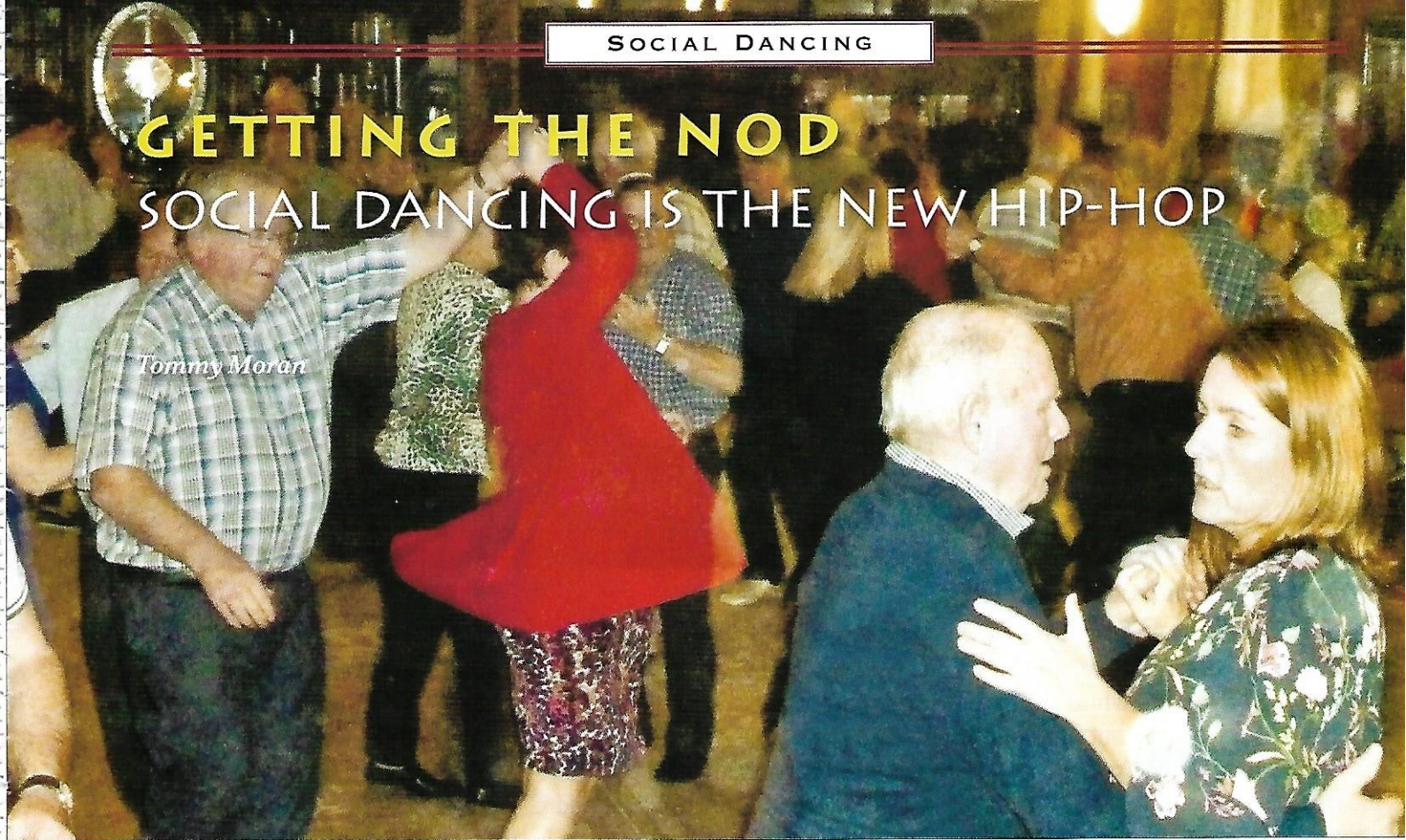


GETTING THE NOD

SOCIAL DANCING IS THE NEW HIP-HOP

Tommy Moran



A Single Yellow Rose, Galway Girl, Shoe the Donkey, Your Wedding Day, Home to Donegal, Hard Times, He'll Have to Go, Tears on a Bridal Bouquet, Four Roads to Glenamaddy, Do You Want Your Ould Lobby Washed Down?, The Galway Shawl and songs about crying Mammies and dying Grannies are again all the rage.

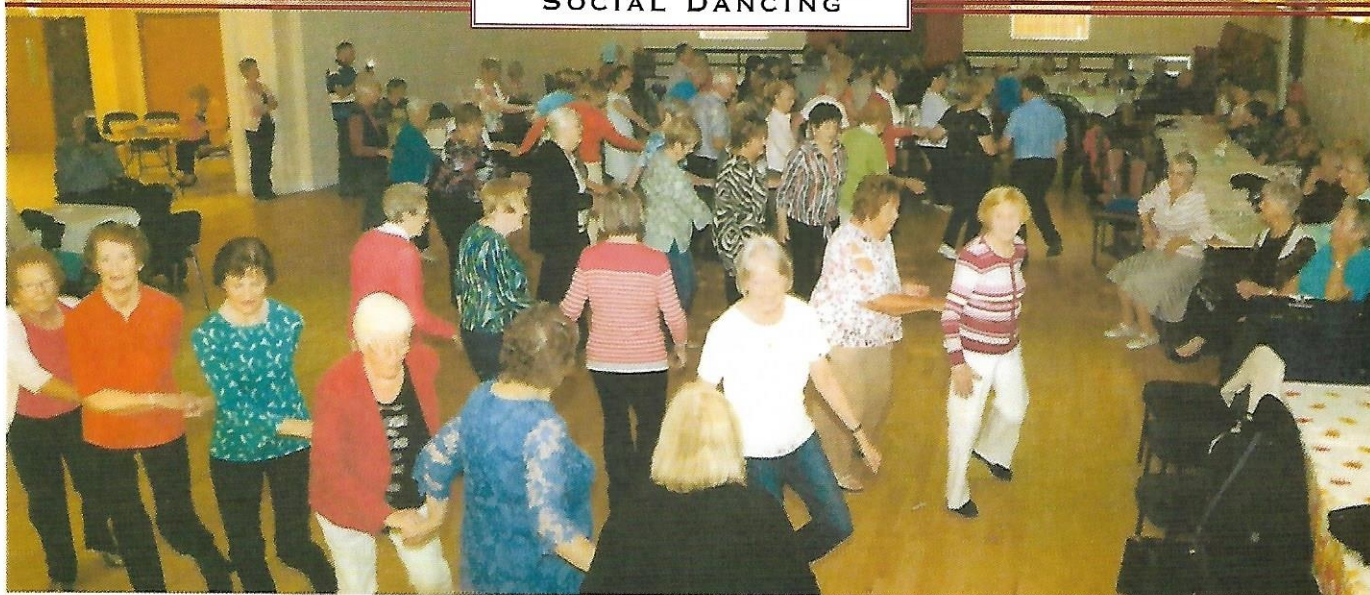
LEITRIM & IRELAND has unearthed a whole new generation of dancers and music lovers, the remnants of the ballroom days when the fluorescent bulbs highlighted the white shirts and the dandruffed shoulders and the revolving crystal ball enticed the men to make a charge across the floor, once some brave soul had made the first move. The women congregated at the cloakroom door didn't know whether to reverse or stand their ground, as they

Christy & Kitty Coyne, instrumental in bringing back social dancing to Leitrim at the Kilbrackan Arms, Carrigallen



scanned the advancing army, wondering which of these hunks would give them the nod. "Oh Holy Jesus, look who's heading this way" would flash through the female mind, but maybe she'd be saved by someone grabbing her arm and frog-marching her on to the maple boards. There would be three tunes to a set and if it was a Jim Reeves number she'd find his grip tightening and he'd be all on for cheek to cheek. And then the offer of a lemonade or a Cavan Cola. With Mariettas. If it was a Quickstep in the Mayflower, Eamonn McGowan could have his pick and boy, could he jive and do the Twist.

"Social Dancing" is the new phenomenon. There's probably less dandruff because there are more



■ Tea Dance at the Rainbow October 2017

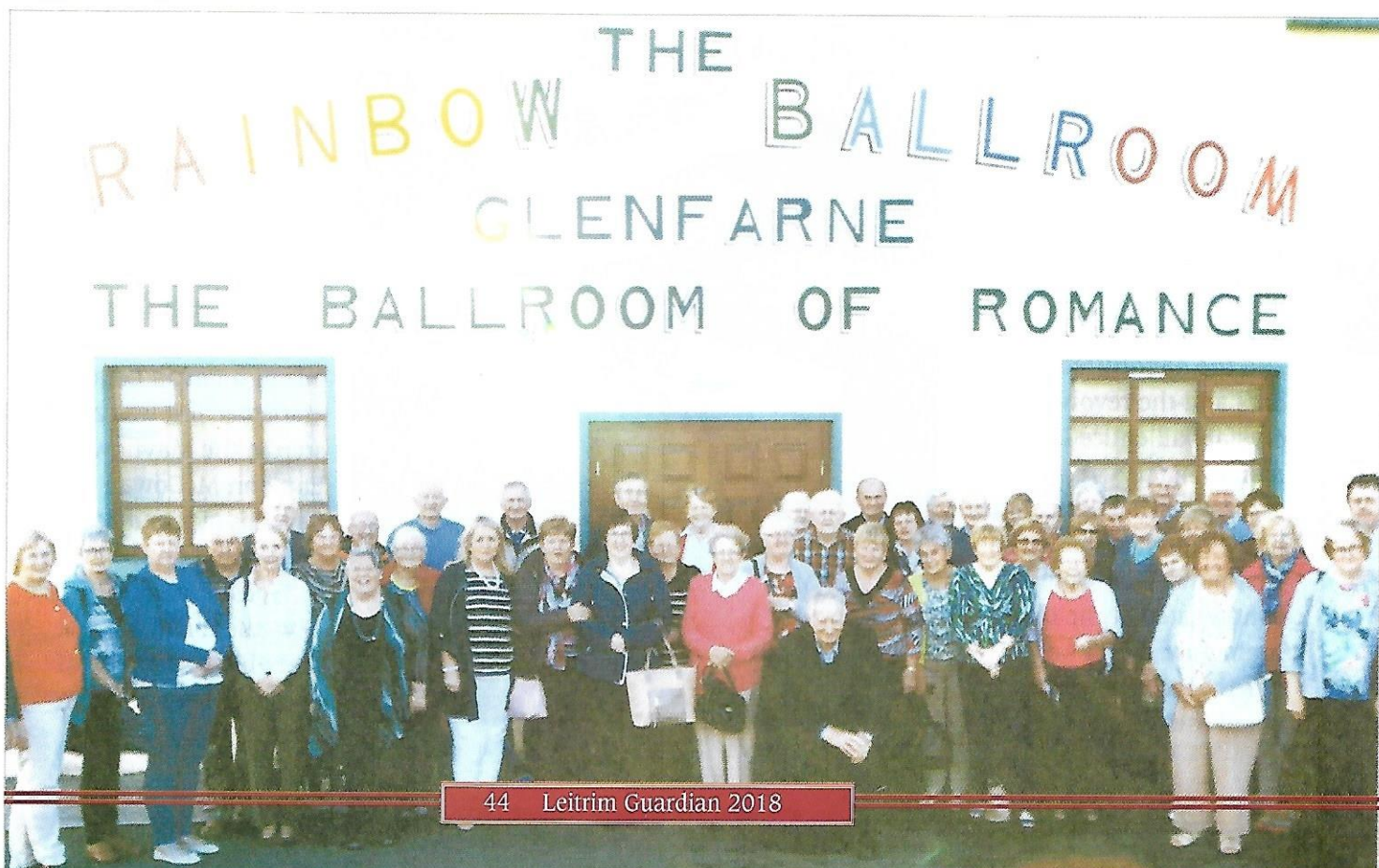
bald heads and anyway we now have showers and Head and Shoulders and the white shirts seem to have gone out of fashion, except for Donald Trump. The trousers are no longer drain-piped and you wouldn't find a Winklepicker for love or money. But alas, the skirts have gained a few inches or maybe a foot, as the veins and the cellulite would not look so hot in the minis of the sixties and seventies. Dress code could be described as casual-chic, with a copious amount of denim. Less

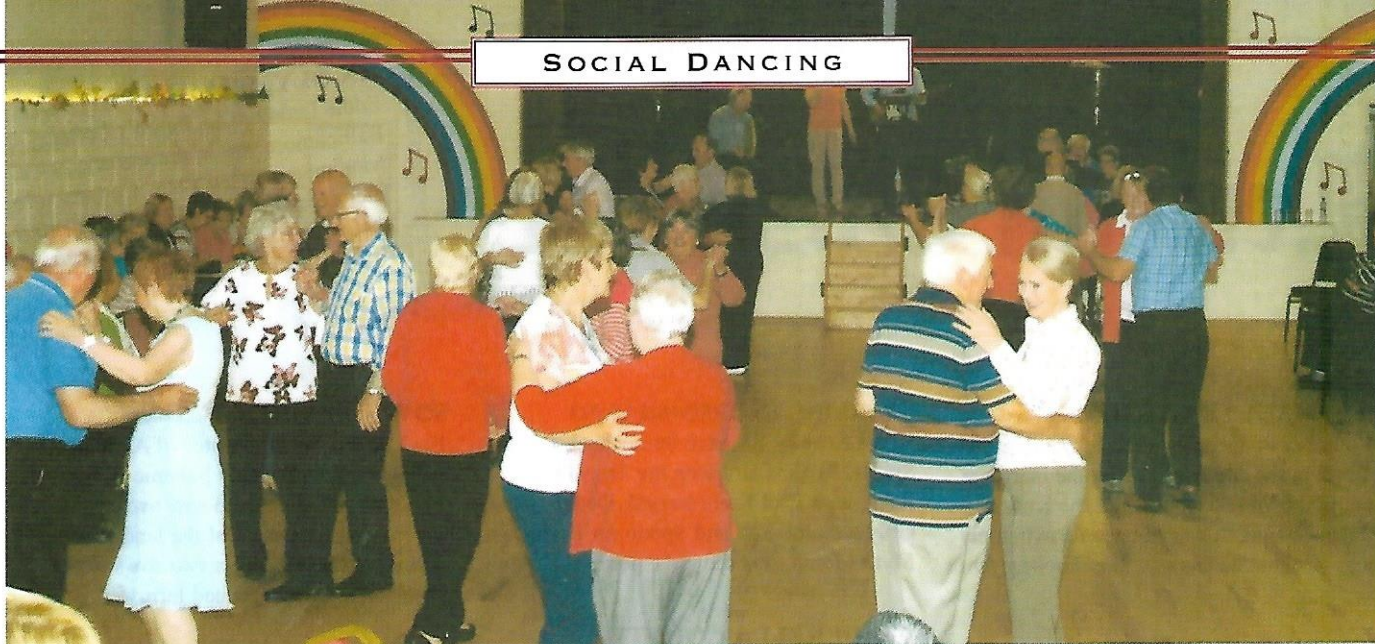
time is spent dressing up, nobody is hoping to impress anybody, everybody's here for the dancing.

And there are so many going, age is no barrier. Michael "Pop" Dolan danced in his nineties, had he lived he would still be driving to Glenfarne, Arney, Kiltyclogher, Ballyhugh, Carrigallen, Mohill, Killeshandra, Templeport, Kiltyclogher and Kinawley and God knows where else. And he always brought his dancing shoes like a footballer bringing his best boots to Croke Park. You could see

yourself in the shine in the leather. Pop wouldn't dance with just anyone, different women were earmarked for waltzes, foxtrots and especially for the two-hand dances. So it is with most of the men, with the high ratio of women they are spoiled for choice.

Refusing someone a dance is a no-no. "Sorry, I'm asked" might have worked in John McGivern's day in The Rainbow, but not now—if you are asked, up you get, even if your husband has his arm around you. Indeed, many hus-





bands never go to a dance, but the wife goes off with her friends and has a ball; he knows not to worry. The same goes with other couples, the husband enjoys the music, but the wife would rather be marking a Bingo book. Social dancing does what it says on the tin—a gregarious gathering of country music fans finding an outlet, a break from the norm, even if they are widowed or separated, forty or sixty, nobody cares.

The nights out won't break the bank either. In Carrigallen, Christy and Kitty Coyne who run the Tuesday dances in the Kilbrackan Arms Hotel, charge a fiver. A fiver. A fiver for two hours of dancing, with a break for complimentary tea/coffee and biscuits, with the very best of country music. No wonder they are coming from Ballina-

glera, Drumkeerin, Oldcastle and Belcoo. All the other venues do likewise, a minimal charge and a spread of sandwiches, buns, tarts and Kimberleys, with live music from one of the many C&W groups on the circuit. Nobody's going to become rich, or indeed poor, and if there is a Social Dance for some charitable cause, they come from all over in support.

If the hall opens at 9pm, the band is set up and the couples are on the boards at a quarter past. The sets now are two dances, three to a set might be bad for the heart. On it goes, non-stop till *Amhrán na bhFiann*. No bouncers, no rows, no chipper, no after-party. The halls are in darkness by midnight, but they will light up again next week and everybody there will be getting the nod.

GLENFARNE
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