

# Grooving in Turakina

The highlight of my Turakina New Year was undoubtedly the dance at the community hall. A humdinger that went on into the pre-wee hours — wee being 1, 2, 3am etc; pre-wee being the biggest hour of all, which is 12.

I HAD arrived after the fashionable time, which was about 7.30, and most of the material involved in “ladies a plate” had become just that — plates. The informal rules are that if you want a bench beside the trestles then you’re there before 8pm — when you can also get the pikelets, the home-cooked ginger cake, the club sandwiches before they start to curl and the top half of the keg.

After 9 you get the semi-club sandwiches, created by people who haven’t been able to work out how many layers were involved, the half of the keg that’s left when the bubbles have left also, and those flat squares of dried industrial glue with raisins in them that you’ll also be able to get at 10, 11, 12.

And of course you dance. You dance foxtrots, quick-steps, waltzes — all done by spreading the fingers

**CURMUDGEON**  
PETER HAWES



of your right hand around the bowling ball of hip of your country partner and rocking side-ways while moving backwards round the hall. In fact you can dance polkas, tangos, sambas and rumbas in the same way. To do line dancing you probably just flip your partner open like a mussel shell until she is beside you, and rock on, babe.

You learn much in the intervals between dances; for instance you learn that there are 30 Massey Fergusons at Turakina Beach. In fact you re-learn this information because you learnt it here, on this very occasion last year. From, may I add, the very same person.

The most interesting person I met was Les. Les had lived for some years in my homeland of Buller and had worked in the mines of Denniston. We swapped tales of the bath house — four hundred naked men plotting the revolution at the monthly stop-work meeting — lighting the fire at 5.30 in the morning — with gelignite! (It burns like sugar, but don’t drop it!)

Then Les told me he could have been a contender. He’d been a boxer, and a mighty fair one at that. He’d fought three times with Eddie Morrison, a local hero who went to the Empire Games in Cardiff, 1958 and should have won. He wuz robbed, of course.

“We worked on the coalface together, and it was me who found the top of his finger when it got chopped off — cripes like trying to find a flea on a black dog. Anyway I did but they never got it back on; bit dirty I suppose.”

Anyway, Les fought Eddie three times — “two of them were exhibition matches, and it was really close. Then we had a real bout and he knocked me out — but not by much!”

Then, said Les, Eddie had gone on to knock out Australian champion Tony Madigan — who himself went on to go the full distance with Cassius Clay. “So if he could give Clay a good go and I could give Eddie a good go, who knows what I might have done in a title chance?”

It was a good night — so good, that we all felt we could have gone on. And we did, elsewhere.

My New Year’s resolution was to get fit. So, statistically, was yours. At least 90 percent of us, figures reveal, resolve each year to get fit. Well, I thought I could dedicate the odd

column to a “get fit with Peter Hawes” section — like Steve Gurney did recently. So, here goes:

Day one: Now, like me, you probably haven’t actually got out of a slow walk in the last twenty-five years. So, take it easy!

Day two: Having taken it easy all day you’re probably a bit hung over. So we’ll start tomorrow.

Day three: Find a nice level path which is soft underfoot — we don’t want RSI of the knee joints — and lean forward until you are in danger of falling on your face.

You will find that one leg or other will pop out in front of you to stop this happening. Still leaning dangerously forward will ensure that the other leg will now do the same, as you pivot over the initial leg. A series of such defensive reactions will now occur. This is known as running.

Run in this way for about 45 seconds, then allow your stomach to start to churn. Follow this by activating a swirling faintness in your head. After several more steps fall headlong to the ground. Gasp torturously. Look up and try and make the clouds spin sickeningly above you. Turn as green as possible and take out your cellphone. Using your remaining reserves, dial for help.

We’ll get on to day four another day.