

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 5 Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m. (with band)
May 7 AGM - Gower St., 7.30 p.m. with dancing to follow
May 14 Last day of classes
May 24 Grandparents' day at MacDonald Drive School
May 26 Workshop with Duncan Keppie
Aug. 3-5 Workshop with Mel Briscoe

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT - 2000-2001

Elected positions:		Tel.(H)	Tel.(O)
Past Chairman:	Kathy McKay <i>kmckay@morgan.ucs.mun.ca</i>	579-0721	777-6748
Chairman:	Sue Scott <i>sascott@geoscott.nf.ca</i>	738-3355	738-3355
Secretary:	Michael Heald	754-3948	772-5286
Treasurer:	Ingrid Pardoe <i>ipardoe@morgan.ucs.mun.ca</i>	364-9305	777-7214
Members at Large:	Donna Butler <i>donnab@morgan.ucs.mun.ca</i>	368-3368	
	Bridgette Hamilton <i>bridgettehamilton@roadrunner.nf.net</i>	753-8768	
	Phil Hanley <i>hanleypj@nf.sympatico.ca</i>	745-2526	



Royal Scottish Country Dance Society St. John's (Newfoundland) Branch

NEWSLETTER

April 2001

This is the last newsletter for the season and we want to remind members of the **AGM** on 7th May at Gower St. Church, starting at **7.30 p.m.** We encourage all members to attend, particularly since there are a number of important issues to be discussed and member input is needed. It is also important to cast a vote on these issues so please make a special effort to be there. Dancing will follow the meeting.

WORKSHOPS. A purple sheet (so it's very obvious) has been printed with details of the **Duncan Keppie** workshop to be held on **26th May**. Please pick up a copy and let Ingrid have a cheque before 5th May if you are attending.

Please pick up the flyer and registration form for the **Mel Briscoe** workshop **3-5 August**. If you register before 15th May you will save \$10 on the full workshop fee. We encourage everyone to do this so we have a good idea of numbers.

I recently came across an article written by Mel Briscoe and in view of the fact that he will be teaching us, I thought it useful to read. It is reprinted at the end of the newsletter.

Once again we have had a request from MacDonald Drive School to help them celebrate **Grandparents' Day**. This is a low profile event where we demonstrate a few dances and then help the children with suitable dances. The date is **24th May** at **1 p.m.** and Noreen is looking for volunteer dancers.

CHILDREN'S CLASS. Penny Gillies is holding a children's class at St. Andrew's School each Monday after school. Donna Butler is helping her and between them they have an enthusiastic group of dancers.

CURLING. As many of you know, Bridgette Hamilton's son, Brent, was a member of the junior curling team which won the world championship. Our whole group took immense pleasure in watching them win and our congratulations go to Brent and the other members of the team. Bridgette and her family were in Utah for two weeks to see the event and all our dancers were with them in spirit.

NOTICE BOARD. Details of the Chicago Branch SCD weekend are on the board. The teachers are Maggie & Duncan Keppie.

The Kingston Branch has sent details of a Celtic Cruise & Summer Social which sound delightful. Check the board.

Andrew Draskoy, under the auspices of Kittiwake Dance Theatre, will be offering classes in Renaissance Dance starting later this spring. Public performance/s may be part of the session. Plans are not fully made yet, but anyone interested should call Kittiwake at 722-6907 or e-mail Kittiwake@nfld.net

DANCE BOOKLETS are available for the social on May 5th. Please pick one up. We would like to thank Margaret Connors for preparing these for all our socials as well as the notices of dances posted on the walls of the gym. A lot of work goes into this and we all now have quite an extensive collection of dance instructions. Thank you, Margaret, from all of us.

NAME TAGS. Would members please wear name tags. Most people have got them, and if not, the cards and plastic are available to make them. It does help our new dancers.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING - Mel Briscoe, Alexandria, Virginia, U.S.A.

DEFINITIONS

Facts: As written in a form not likely to change, for example the instructions for a published dance. Rumours and hearsay are sometimes mistaken for facts.

Dogma: Considered rules from high authority, e.g. R.S.C.D.S. Headquarters. May vary in time and interpretation. Sometimes written in "The Manual of Scottish Country Dancing" or in "TACNOTES on R.S.C.D.S. Dances," sometimes promulgated verbally, with varying success.

Common Practice: Although not dogma, the way things are usually done. Local variations may exist, giving rise to arguments about what is "right." These are the Unwritten Rules.

Opinions: Sometimes in agreement with Common Practice or Facts or Dogma, but not necessarily. When Opinions are delivered by someone with "positional authority," they may even be mistaken for dogma. The line between Opinion and Common Practice is grey and demonstrably arguable.

COMMON PRACTICE

Setting in line: If three people, middle person's hands are up. If two people, there is no common practice. The man, or the first man/woman, often puts his/her hand up.

Two-couple sets dance individually, without trying to join all four people on the side. Local variation is as many people join hands as possible, even between sets, especially in three-and-three across in strathspey setting. One should not force other sets to join in.

Hands across: No rule on whose hands are on top. Some say first woman's hand is on top. Preference is hands to be taken as they are raised, so the hands on top are those who raised them first. (Hands are taken across, not piled in a clump in the middle. For three hands across, it is still preferred no hand on top, i.e. all hands joined "shake hands" grip).

Circle: Middle person in line of three has hands up. End people in lines join across with other line, often with men giving palms up to the women on the other side. Uncommon local variant: "thumbs right," meaning each person has left hand down, right hand palm up.

Final Circles: Any couples standing out are invited in to join a final circle. (This can produce larger-than-normal circles, so on a crowded floor some caution is advised). An unusual local variant is for all the sets in a line to join into one, very large, very oval circle at the end.

Casting off: On a crowded floor, casting off can mean collisions with the next set over. To help, the man lets the woman from the next set go in front.

Anticipation: S.C.D. is social dancing. If some careful anticipation of a movement will help a figure happen smoothly, it is O.K., but phrasing and covering should still be maintained as is possible.

Five couples: If an extra couple "shares a round" with the fourth couple, the fourth couple stays in second place after their first round of the dance (the seventh round of eight), and then the fifth couple starts at the top. In some localities, the fourth couple completes their round and goes to the bottom, while the fifth couple starts at the top; this is sometimes a bit messy.

For an encore, if the band cannot play five rounds, it is polite to let the fourth and fifth couples begin the encore so they get to dance at least their two rounds.

ETIQUETTE (Not always Common Practice)!

Sets are formed from the top, with additional couples stepping in at the bottom of the line. Rushing to be top couples is to be avoided.

Women asking men to dance is a local thing: in some areas it is common, in other areas it is avoided. My sense is that S.C.D. is evolving to be "anyone can ask anyone."

Booking ahead is also a local thing. In some areas it is quite common, in others it is acceptable but unusual, in others it is quite frowned upon. Often, couples arriving will agree to do the first (and/or last) dance together. In my opinion, booking ahead tends to exclude new dancers and visitors and makes it difficult to respond to the whims of the moment or the sociability of the dance that just ended.

When casting down the outside, in some areas it is common to take the hand of the opposite gender from the next set over. In my opinion, this tends to ignore your own partner, and can be viewed as rude.

Dance within your own set. That is, big swooping reels that interlock with folks from the next set over are to be avoided.

Twirls/"twiddles" in the middle during diagonal reels of four can be fun to do, but can also be disorienting and confusing to inexperienced dancers in the set. My best advice: avoid them unless the entire set is used to them.

Birls, or extra spins, during set-and-turn-corners in quick time, are written into "The Hamilton Rant," but otherwise are to be avoided. Also it is exceedingly rude to force someone into an unanticipated spin by a strong arm during the turn, and can be disorienting and even dangerous.

(Reprinted from Nova Scotia Branch Newsletter, August 1999).