



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

NEWSLETTER

March 2007

March Greetings!

Snow squalls today, along with sunshine and cold temperatures. Snow drifts abound, and winter isn't finished with us yet. We'll have to keep dancing to stay warm! Still, spring is just around the corner (we hope!). On a personal note, I will be blooming along with the flowers this year, with a baby on the way, due in late July. Len and I are excited. We're hoping the Scottish dance and music will have a positive influence and he or she will dance through life!

The past month has also been marked with sadness as we heard of the deaths of both Dermot O'Reilly and Dorothy Sharp. Many of our members remember Ann O'Reilly and Jim Sharp from their days dancing with the branch, and as friends. A card has been sent to each of them expressing our sympathy and thoughts at this difficult time.

With Spring comes our AGM, planned for Monday, April 23 at 6:30 pm. It will be a sociable event with a shared potluck, and dancing following the meeting. I hope you can all attend.

Our last social for the year is May 5. It will be a Ceilidh, so be sure to mark it on your calendars and spread the word to family and friends. We hope for a good turnout, and maybe we'll attract some newcomers for next September.

We are missing Penny, and wish her well in her recovery from a knee injury. Thanks to Martin and Kathy for helping out with the beginner's group in her absence. Also to Noreen for leading the dancing at Cambridge Estates on February 28. It was a successful evening and the seniors are looking forward to our return!

As this is the last newsletter for the year, I want to say a special thank you to Mary for all her work on producing the newsletters and also the Dance Social booklets. Your time is certainly appreciated by all of us.

Other words of thanks can wait until the AGM. In the meantime, health and happiness to all!

Catherine Wright, Chairperson,
RSCDS St. John's Branch

Summer Schools

TAC Summer School July 29 to August 5, 2007

The school is held at beautiful Shawnigan Lake School just north of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Open to ALL dancers, classes at different levels offered, including teacher preparation. However, response has been so great that the school is now full. They are accepting a limited number of applications for a waiting list in case of any cancellations. For more information about this and the Teachers Association of Canada, please visit their site: <http://www.tac-rscds.org/>

RSCDS Summer School July 22 to August 19, 2007

The Society's annual Summer School takes place in the historic Fife town of St. Andrews, Scotland. There are four week-long courses from Sunday to Sunday, and you may attend for 1 week or for a maximum of any 2 weeks. Unfortunately closing date for applications was February 1, but there could be cancellations. Think about it for 2008! They also offer a Winter School at Pitlochry, Perthshire, February 21 to 26, 2008. Applications will close on July 20. For more information please visit their site at: <http://www.rscds.org/dancing/events/rscds-schools/schools>

Pinewoods English and Scottish Dance Sessions, July 2-6, July 6-9, July 9-14, 2007

RSCDS Boston Branch run these dance and music camps at Pinewoods Camp in Myles Standish State Forest near Plymouth, Mass. USA. There is multiple choice of instruction and a friendly camp atmosphere in a great setting. For application forms (April 1 postmark for first consideration) and more information, check the site at:

<http://www.rscdsboston.org/>

Scholarships

Our St. John's Branch offers a scholarship of up to \$500 to assist members wishing to attend teacher training schools. Please consult a member of the executive about this. Scholarships are also available from some of the schools themselves – check the websites for more details.

“Auld Aviemore”

If you ever visited the old Aviemore Highland Resort Centre in Scotland in the 1960s- 1980s period, there is a new website that is collecting photos, letters, news cuttings or old brochures, tickets etc. from people around the world, celebrating memories of the place. Take a peek at:

<http://www.auldaviemore.co.uk/>

March Social

In spite of the uncertain weather, which kept us biting our nails all afternoon, our March Social on Saturday, March 3, went very well, with quite a respectable turn-out, and Corryvreckan was at full complement.

Some concerns have been raised about the extent of walking through that we do at socials. The programme is available ahead of time, the dances have been taught in class, and booklets distributed with directions. In future we will mark two or three of the simpler dances to be briefed without a walk through, and expect everyone to familiarize themselves with the steps beforehand. If you lack confidence, or suffer sudden memory loss when you get on to the floor (which we all do now and then!), be strategic. Ask an experienced dancer to be your partner, and take your place at the bottom of the set so that you can watch the couples ahead of you. We want everyone to enjoy the dancing, but we don't want the evenings to get too late (especially with all the delicious nibbles that follow!)

Out and About

Our demonstration dancers performed a lovely routine, blending several dances, at the Burns Night Supper on January 20 at the Legion.

A more informal entertainment was provided for the Cambridge Estates Seniors Home on February 28, with several of our beginners joining with more experienced dancers. Catherine and Len sang and played as well. We previously visited this new home in the summer, and they seem to appreciate our efforts.

Injury Update

Two of our group are recuperating after falls this year. Pat Rivers broke her arm at Christmas slipping on ice, and Penny Gillies chipped a bone in her knee on a skiing outing in February. We hear they are both making good progress, and we send them our best wishes. Hurry up and mend, we miss you!

Teacher Shortage

Penny's injury has resulted in some changes to the Monday night classes. Bill and Sue Scott are still very busy with their company and cannot commit to taking classes except on Thursdays when they are in town. (We have them on borrowed time anyway – they are supposed to be in Barrie by now!) Martin Mulligan has taken some combined social and beginners' classes, but now Kathy Simonsen has stepped in to the rescue. Kathy is hoping to qualify as a RSCDS instructor soon, and we can all help hone her teaching skills as she practises on the beginners on Mondays, and also on the Thursday crew. Thank you, Kathy!

A Short History of Country Dancing in Scotland - Part 2
[Part 1 of this article was printed in the January 2007 Newsletter]

[excerpt from Scottish Country Dancing, by Isobel E. Williams, c1991]

submitted by Margaret Dohan

In 1649 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had passed an Act prohibiting “promiscuous dancing”, resulting in dancing being severely curtailed. Though it was undoubtedly still enjoyed, dancing was a clandestine affair which the Church equated with sexual permissiveness. Happily, a visit by the Duke and Duchess of York, when they stayed in Holyrood Palace from 1680 to 1682, revived dancing once again, and introduced “new” dances, including the country dance. Scottish country dancing has never been danced by the upper classes of society alone, so it was not long before all levels of Edinburgh society were doing the new dances.

At the start of the eighteenth century, regular public dances were taking place in Edinburgh at the West Bow Assembly. Modelled on the Assemblies organized by Beau Nash in Bath, the profits from them went to various charities, including the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, helping to find favour for the dances even with the Kirk! Similar public dances followed in Leith, Glasgow, Haddington, Perth, Inverness and Aberdeen, with a Master of Ceremonies calling out the dances. If dances were well known, he only called out the title, but new or unfamiliar dances were talked through, much in the style of a “caller” at a dance today. In the 1760s a new type of slow reel, the strathspey, appeared on the dance programmes at the Assemblies and caught on very quickly.

Perhaps what helped to fix country dancing so firmly among other Scottish traditions was the visit of George IV organized by Sir Walter Scott in 1822. Filling Edinburgh with Highland chiefs, kilts, tartanalia and other manifestations of “fake”-lore, the visit was a round of banquets and balls in which Scottish dancing was performed with zeal. George IV threw himself wholeheartedly into the whole thing, going so far as to don the kilt. As one Edinburgh matron put it when seeing his fat figure swathed in tartan, “With his stay being so short, the more we see of him the better.”

The revived enthusiasm for Scottish dancing was such that when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first came to Scotland in 1842 they were treated to displays of reels wherever they went. Dances became a feature of royal life at Balmoral, rebuilt in 1855, and continued to be popular throughout the country until the end of the century. New influences continued to come in, notably in the form of Swedish dances, in which one couple face another couple and pass on at the end of each dance sequence to face a new couple. The Dashing White Sergeant is a good example of this. The Waltz Country Dance, combining the popular Viennese “Walzer” with the “Swedish” progression, had also appeared by the end of the nineteenth century, as had various other forms of progression like Poussette and Allemande.

By the beginning of this [20th] century, however, what had been a growing and developing tradition enjoyed by everyone in Scotland looked as if it was going to be overwhelmed by the influence of European ballroom dancing and American dances like the foxtrot and tango; it seemed destined to die out. Far from it. Scottish dances have been, and still are, danced and enjoyed . . . not just by Scots but by people of all ages and nationalities all over the world.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, formed as the Scottish Country Dance Society in Glasgow in 1923 to preserve what was thought to be a dying tradition, now has over 28000 members all over the world. As well as documenting dances and training teachers, the RSCDS organizes dances in Scotland and abroad.

Apart from these formal gatherings, informal dances and ceilidhs take place regularly wherever a few Scots meet, for dancing is the kind of sociable entertainment that can be enjoyed anywhere and at any time. No special equipment is necessary, for as long as someone can whistle or chant the music, that is all that is needed. Perhaps the best example that Scottish country dancing is adaptable to any situation is the dance the Reel of the 51st Division, composed and danced by the officers and men of the 51 st while serving as prisoners of war in Germany in 1940.



“A wedding celebration at

1836. The dance is a foursome reel.”

Elgin, about

[The British Museum, printed in T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, Fontana Press, 1989]

Babies galore!

Karen and Gerald Oakley welcomed a new grandson on May 9, 2006. Trevor Saker Oakley, 7lb 10oz, was born in New York, the first child for Colleen and Brett Oakley. Congratulations!

Mary and John Bridson are proud grandparents of two new grandsons this year: Elliot Gabriel Bridson was born June 3, 2006, 8lb 14oz, in Vancouver, to Robert and Rowena Bridson, a brother for Jonathan; Euan Forbes Andrews was born January 31, 2007, 11lb 5oz, in Ottawa, to Jessica and Craig Andrews. Both babies are a delight, and worth their considerable weight in gold!

Lorraine and Ian Gall are happy to announce the birth of a new grandchild, Jacob Francis Gall, born February 20, 2007, 4lb 1oz, in Ottawa. Congratulations to them and to the new parents, Andrew and Lisa Gall. Jacob is growing and doing well, and Lorraine is presently visiting the family in Ottawa.

Catherine Wright and Len Sperry announced after Christmas that they are expecting a new addition to their family this summer. We wish them all the best with the new baby, and hope to see them back in fine dancing shape in the fall.

Yellowknife Connection

B & B operator, Joan Hirons, from Yellowknife, attended our summer workshop in 2004. We now have another Yellowknife dancer in our group, Marjorie Sandercock, who introduces herself below.

Greetings to all of you!

I'm very excited to join the St. John's branch of the RSCD society!

Some of you may remember me from my visit to St. John's in the autumn of 2001. I was here temporarily while my husband was on sabbatical, and got to know some of you then. My husband now has a job here, so we have relocated to St. John's.

I have spent the last 16 years in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, where I danced for several years with the local club there. Yellowknife now has a population of 18,000 and sits at 62 degrees north – in practical terms, that is south of the Arctic Circle but still a 16 hour drive directly south to get to the next biggest city, Edmonton. (Please don't confuse us with the bigger city of Whitehorse, Yukon, which is a 27 hour drive south and west of Yellowknife).

The SCD club in Yellowknife is small, averaging only 6 dancers most nights but occasionally with 8. This may explain why I come to you already knowing Domino Five! When we did have 8 dancers, it was a great opportunity to do the club favourite, Postie's Jig! There is no instructor in Yellowknife, but a dedicated group, led by Dave and Cindy Taylor, who are the keepers of the CDs, CD player and the dance cards (instructions).

Although the Yellowknife group was very enjoyable, and I do miss my friends there, I am very happy to be learning lots of new things here and making new friends – which is not hard to do because you are such a warm and welcoming group! Thanks for making the transition easy, and I look forward to dancing with you all.

Marjorie Sandercock

Whitehorse Connection

Faiza Kaaderali and her family have been visiting Whitehorse, where her daughter, **Shaleeza** has been competing in the Canada Winter Games as a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Synchronized Swimming Team. Congratulations, and what a wonderful opportunity to see Canada's north.

Scottish Dancing Holidays

A friend of Bridgette's told her about a company operating in Britain (established in 1982 in Sevenoaks, Kent) that offers various tours accompanied by the owners, Richard and Dawn Furlong.

"We specialise in personally escorted holiday tours. These are researched in great detail. We personally visit our destinations to inspect and select suppliers, and to gain first hand experience. And then we, the proprietors, personally escort each and every holiday ourselves. This provides you with a very high level of care and attention, and leaves you to enjoy your holiday free of any day-to-day niggles. We've operated over 125 tours to date, and our 2007 programme includes Bruges, Granada, the Galapagos Islands & Ecuador, and **Newfoundland and Nova Scotia**, plus some special interest Scottish dance holidays."

The Scottish Dancing holidays are in Cheltenham, England, in Crieff, Perthshire, and in Denmark. I looked up the tour to Newfoundland – they are here in St. John's at the end of June, but unfortunately not on a Monday night when we have summer dancing.

If you would like to check them out, see: <http://www.furlongs.co.uk/>

Dancing in the Greek Isles anyone?

Browsing the *Montreal Scottish Dancer* today I came across a reference to trips organised by Ken McFarland, who lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. His history of trips undertaken sounds very exotic: from Hawaii to French Chateaux, The Upper Amazon to the Outer Hebrides, Down Under to Scottish Castles, and so on. His current offerings include Scottish, English and Contra Dancing Through the Greek Isles! If this sounds appealing, check out the website at: <http://www.reeljig.com/mcfarland>

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This is the last newsletter for this session, but send me items and ideas through the summer for next September's issue.

Nominating Committee 2007

Donna Butler, Lorraine Gall, and Ingrid Pardoe will be canvassing members for volunteers to serve on the Management Committee, once they have established which positions will need to be filled. This is not an arduous task, but essential for the smooth running of the group. Please consider giving your services for a year or two.

Events Elsewhere

Many branches have balls or socials in the spring that welcome visitors. If you are going to be travelling to Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Boston etc., check if there is a branch website with information about their events.