



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

NEWSLETTER

March 2008

I guess I tempted fate when, in the last newsletter, I said we were lucky not having had to cancel any classes. However, spring is officially here and mabe we can look forward to better weather!

Our early St. Patrick's Day social was lots of fun and dancers survived the hard floor of St. David's. A big thank you is due to Karen, Noreen, Denise, Ken and Kathy for their help in decorating and moving furniture. The decorations were lovely and I hope everyone appreciated the rainbow and the two pots of gold (thanks to Karen).

In speaking to the janitor at Vanier School, he tells me the floor should be ready for our May 3rd social. It is already laid and about to be sanded. He reckons it will be another couple of weeks. Let's hope he's correct this time.

Mary Bridson has been our newsletter editor for the past four years and has done a terrific job. However, she would now like someone else to take over and we're asking for a volunteer. She is willing to give advice and help if needed, so please consider it. We really need someone.

Brenda Burness
Chairperson

Editor's Note:

As Brenda says, our St. Patrick's theme March Social was a jolly affair, and most people wore something Irish or green for the night. The editor's personal pick for best dress efforts go to Noreen for her orange, green and white (Irish flag) outfit, and to Ken for his outsize flashing shamrock-green bow tie!

Toronto Needs Your Help! Dance at the Roger's Centre

Submitted by Ian Paterson, R.S.C.D.S. Toronto Branch

The Toronto Blue Jays Organization is promoting a series of Baseball Games which are referred to as "Heritage Games". These games involve a series of pre-game events, organized by local community groups to highlight the city's ethnic diversity.

The Toronto Association, together with members of the Highland Dancing community, and the St Andrews Society, have accepted an invitation from the Blue Jays to participate in one of these events at the Rogers Centre on Tuesday evening, July 8th 2008. Our event will feature the dances of Scotland, the singing of the National Anthem by a Scottish tenor and we will probably be joined by a Pipe Band, possibly the 48th Highlanders. We are still in the early stages of planning and consequently can only provide preliminary information for you at this time. However, we will likely be dancing two or three very simple "beginner" dances and will dance at two locations simultaneously: outside around the perimeter of the Roger's Centre

and inside on the Baseball field. It is not our intention to stun the audience with intricate movements and formations, but instead to try and generate an interest in Scottish Country Dancing.

Anyone who has visited the Roger's Centre knows that the field is enormous and will appreciate that one or two sets of Scottish Country Dancers in this cavernous structure is certainly not going to be a very impressive sight. Therefore, the Branch is putting out a call to all Scottish Country Dancers to join us at the Roger's Centre on July 8th.

We have been told that there will be TV, radio and newspaper coverage of this event which should prove to be a wonderful opportunity to present the pastime that we all enjoy to a large sector of the general public. A sign-up sheet has been sent to all Affiliate Group teachers and to other Branches outside of Toronto. Once we have completed our discussions with the Blue Jays Organization and firmed up all the details we will be in touch again.

Any of your members who may be vacationing in Toronto at this time should contact me, Ian Paterson, at ianpat@cogeco.ca if they are interested in participating. We encourage you to mark your calendar and add your name to a sign-up sheet as early as possible. Even at this stage in our planning it is important that we can get an idea of how many sets we can put together for the event.

AGM and Pot Luck Supper

On Monday, April 21, we will be holding our AGM at Gower Street United Church, prior to dancing that evening. We will also have a Pot Luck Supper, beginning at 6:30 pm., to put us in a good mood, and hope to start the meeting by 7:00 pm. We ask that you bring a dish for the Supper, as well as your own plate and cutlery. It would be a good idea to pair up with someone else to decide what to bring, so that we have a more even distribution of main courses and desserts this year! Tea and coffee will be available.

At the meeting we will be electing a new **Committee of Management**. Donna Butler and Lorraine Gall, the Nominating Committee, have the following slate of candidates to present, but further nominations are also welcome. Please contact them if you wish to add any names.

Chairperson: Ken Galbraith
Secretary: Louise Beaton
Treasurer: Eileen Collins
At Large: Kathy Simonsen
Denise Sharpe
Cheryl Perkins

Dancing will follow the meeting as usual, or for at least as long as our feet can carry the extra load! Please turn out to support our executive, and rest assured that the food will be delicious as always.

Spring Social

The programme for the Spring Social on May 3rd is available on our website, and the dance booklets in class. It includes many lovely dances, and is dedicated to the memory of Andrew Lindsay of Pictou, Nova Scotia, who died in February. He danced with us a few years ago when in St. John's, and also attended our last workshop with his wife Helen.

Corryvreckan will be playing, though without Bruce's fingers, as he will be away. Wear something flowery and spring-like for this one, and help chase the winter away!

Admission is \$10 and a little snack to share afterwards.

St. Andrew's Society

The Newfoundland branch of the St. Andrew's Society was founded in 1837, and is still pursuing its original goals, which include advancing the cause and welfare of Scots and their descendants; fostering the love of Scotland, its history, literature, music and national games; and promoting friendly and social relations among its members. They are responsible for the celebration of Burns' Night in January, at which we usually have a dance demonstration team. Noreen MacLennan is one of the committee members, and tells me they are looking for new members. If you are interested, please contact Noreen.

North Atlantic Fiddlers Convention

<http://www.mun.ca/nafoo2008>

An independent consortium of fiddlers, folklorists, and friends of traditional music are collaborating with Aberdeen University's Elphinstone Institute to bring the third biennial North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) to St. John's, August 3-8, 2008.

This international event will showcase traditional artists from countries around the North Atlantic rim, each representing distinct fiddle and dance traditions. Alasdair Fraser, well-known Scottish fiddler, will be one of the star attractions, and Scottish dancers such as Pat Ballantyne will also be attending.

Highlights will include concerts, solo recitals, workshops (fiddle and dance), demonstrations, free performances, and scheduled sessions in various locations throughout St. John's, and its environs.

The 2008 convention will provide an electric atmosphere for the cross-fertilization of a variety of music styles, among them Celtic fusion, Texas Swing, bluegrass, gypsy jazz, and trad-rock, along with the traditional fiddle music of Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Norway, the Appalachians, the Southern United States, the Métis, Cape Breton Scots, Prince Edward Island, francophone, and those from our own province.

The convention will also provide a forum for experiencing the links between fiddle, dance, song, mouth music, accordion, piping, and other complementary traditions.

Check the website above for more details as they are posted.

The Kilt

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

submitted by Margaret Dohan

The version of the kilt which we have today is a far cry from the original blanket, dyed with natural pigments, which the Highlanders wrapped around themselves a few centuries ago. Called in Gaelic a *féileadh*, this was the essential item of dress for the Scottish Highlanders before it was banned in 1746. It was, in effect, a sort of blanket – a plaid which was pinned over the chest with a piece of bone or wood and tied round the middle with a leather belt. Most of the part which hung down from the belt was pleated, but about a yard either side was left unpleated. When the wearers were on the move it was easy enough to unwrap the plaid at night and use it as a cover.

The material used for plaids was woven in various coloured checks and stripes, and the material was called plaiding. The dyes for the colours came from local plants, and people from different areas wore different

coloured plaids depending on the varieties of plants in their region. Nowadays the many checked patterns (setts) represent the tartans of various clans.

In 1746 an Act for the 'Abolition and Proscription of the Highland dress' was passed, and the Highlanders were forced into 'trews' (or trousers). The Act was repealed in 1782, though the kilt was still regarded as something only to be worn by the Highland peasants.

Today it is an item of dress more associated with Lowlanders. The visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, for which Sir Walter Scott set up a Highland pantomime with 'Geordie' himself as the kilted star, started off a trend among the upper classes for the garment. This fashion was continued during the Romantic period and reinforced by Queen Victoria and her husband Albert, who had a castle built at Balmoral where they could enjoy painting and walking. The kilt became an elegant item of dress, which nowadays can still be seen adorning royal posteriors.

The kilt should not go below the knee-cap and should not droop at the back. To test if the kilt is the proper length, kneel down and get someone to check that the kilt just brushes the ground. If it drags on the ground it is too long; if it is more than a centimetre above the ground it is too short. The stockings or hose should not be too long – 'choking the knees' – and should have a good turnover of about ten centimetres.

Caribou Lodge

Catherine and Len will be entertaining the folks at the Caribou Lodge in Pleasantville on Tuesday, April 8, at 7 pm. The Lodge would also like to see some Scottish country dancing, so if you are free that night, come along. We usually do just three or four easy dances, sometimes with participation from the audience.

Summer Dancing

For those of us who can't get enough of SCD, there is more informal dancing during the summer on Monday evenings at St. David's Church. It usually begins in late May or early June. An email notice will be sent round closer to the time, or check the website. Some experience is required, as there is no official teaching provided. We have danced outside in Bannerman Park and by Quidi Vidi in previous years, but that is very weather dependent, and subject to group approval.