

**Caring & Sharing.** Congratulations go to Sue & Greg Locke on the birth of their daughter Erin, Skye. Sue has brought her in on a couple of occasions and we are delighted to interrupt our dancing to admire her. We hope Sue will be dancing again in the near future.



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

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Dec. 11	Last day of classes
Jan. 6 2001	Twelfth Night Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m. (with band)
Jan. 8	Start of classes
Feb. 17	Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m. (tapes)
Mar. 24	Basic (beginners') Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m. (with band)
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

### COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT - 2000-2001

Elected positions:		Tel.(H)	Tel.(O)
Past President:	Kathy McKay <i>kmckay@morgan.ucs.mun.ca</i>	579-0721	737-6748
President:	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	737-7214
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	

### NEWSLETTER

November 2000

The moving of our Monday night dance class to Gower Street United Church seems successful. We don't lose any evenings due to school closings, which is a big plus.

**Cable Atlantic** visited us one evening recently and filmed the Basic Class, to be televised in the new year. We will be informed of the exact date in due course. Maybe we will get some new dancers after the showing.

**St. Andrew's School** has asked us to give a demonstration on 30th November. Noreen is endeavouring to find dancers, since this will be during the day.

**Notice Board.** There are a number of workshops coming up and a couple of great-sounding trips organized by Ken McFarland, including one to the Galapagos Islands. Check the board for details.

**Sweatshirts.** At our last social we sold a few polo shirts and sweatshirts as well as dance booklets. We will have these available at future socials but if anyone needs one immediately, Ingrid has the shirts and Brenda has the books.

**The St. Andrew's Society** ceilidh has, unfortunately, had to be cancelled.

## The History of Scottish Country Dancing - by Claire Milne

Scottish Country Dancing is one of Scotland's oldest dance styles, and has its origins in the small villages of the highlands where local residents developed innovative solutions to strong social inclinations in the face of severe weather and fuel scarcity. Deprived in winter of the traditional weekly "scrum" or running wrestling match on the local common, this need manifested in the building of the village halls or "sets" - simple with earthen floors which could accommodate eight to ten people - most small settlements numbered only one or two families -. "Sets" were designed to provide shelter, but no heat, as the traditional running wrestling match was continued on a smaller scale in the shelter of its walls. The vigorous exercise which "scrums" provided warmed both the room and its occupants. However, the constraints of space and the tally of injuries resulted in sets abandoning the wrestling aspect of the scrum and focussing their attention on the running about.

Trial and error proved over the centuries that the most heat was generated in the least time if all the occupants of the "set" were able to run about together at the same time. As this was never easy to achieve in the small space provided, long hours were spent by local residents, drawing up plans for the best use of the space available, allowing the maximum amount of "running about" for each member of the set. Injuries continued, but in fewer numbers, and as injuries had always been endemic to the activity, little notice was taken.

As such pattern creating sessions were generally accompanied by liberal amounts of the local brew, trial "walk throughs" were often inaccurate, stumbling events, as the set members reeled their way through an approximation of their planned pattern. In this way, pattern dancing became affectionately known as "reeling." The unevenness of earthen floors required the reelers in the set to be light on their toes, the better to navigate unexpected rocks or clods of earth. Sets in settlements in particularly lumpy areas developed a particularly skilful skipping technique to deal with this, which was adroitly labelled "jigging." Reels and jigs evolved into notably different styles and rhythms as local sets proudly exaggerated the characteristics of their area.

Over the years, patterns emerged and were shared - the patterns which today form the basis of most Scottish Country Dances. Many of the formations still retain the name of the place where they were created: for example: Schiehallion Reels - a pattern originating from a settlement near this Scottish "mountain" where eight members of the local settlement got themselves notoriously lost, and on accidentally getting their bearings again, returned to their homes and attempted to explain to their friends where they had been.

As patterns were swapped and shared, they came to be rated on efficient use of space and heat generation. Patterns which rated high on this scale were repeated often. They spread quickly, and the pattern generators gained much local renown. While fashions changed in Scottish Country Dancing, dances based on the old criteria continue to be well-

loved, as shown by the popularity of the modern choreographer, John Bowie Dickson, a reviver of the old tradition.

The advent of central heating brought to prominence the Speyside dance tradition, the strathspey. This slower style originated from the Spey valley villages where boggy ground forced an easing of pace, and was generally adopted as word spread of the falling number of injuries per set in Speyside.

Strathspeys never took off in Highland settlements, where colder temperatures but better earthen floors made the traditional "reeling" preferable. But many villagers did adopt the "strathspey" as a pattern-learning method, allowing the set to get their bearings and familiarise themselves with the formations before "reeling," or repeating the pattern at speed. Attempts by the Spey Valley sets to popularise their local style by despatching "dancing masters" to explain it, were forcibly repelled by other Sets, but eventually the "walk-run" patterns became dances themselves, christened "medley" by those who remembered the attempted Speyside interventions.

Improvements in architecture, heating and light resulted in the construction of buildings which could accommodate many Sets worth of people, but the established patterns for eight to ten interweaving people remained strong. What changed was the movement style. The principles of speed, balance, light-footedness were kept as the steps themselves were refined, until Scottish Country Dancing became the complex, graceful and disciplined dance form we know today.  
(From the Montreal Scottish Dancer)

Many of us can relate to the following:

### A Case of Mistaken Identity

There comes a time in every class  
No matter what they're graded,  
When for a spell confusion reigns  
And confidence is faded!

A mass of tangled, formless folk  
Where once they moved as one,  
And in the midst, the cause of it  
Is staring at someone.

Just listen and you'll hear it  
Around the whole earth's span  
The question echoes through the halls,  
"Were you the lady or the man?"