

## Calendar of Events November 2006- January 2007

### Friday - Sunday, Nov. 3 - 5, 2006 Workshop events

Thursday, Dec. 7, 2006	Last Technique Class.
Monday, Dec. 11, 2006	Last Classes Fall Session.
Saturday, Jan. 6, 2007	Twelfth Night Social, Vanier School, 8:00 p.m. sharp!
Monday, Jan. 8, 2007	First Classes Winter session, Gower St. United, 7:45 p.m.

### Committee of Management 2006-2007

Chair:	Catherine Wright	754-1703	catherinepwright@hotmail.com
Past Chair:	Pat Rivers	579-4218	patrivers@nl.rogers.com
Secretary:	Kathy Simonsen	722-6339	kathryns@mun.ca
Treasurer:	Denise Sharpe	895-2992	
Members at Large:	Bridgette Hamilton	753-8768	bridgettehamilton@nl.rogers.com
	Ken Galbraith	722-5787	kgalb@nf.sympatico.ca
	Mary Bridson	895-2425	mbridson@mun.ca

Lucy Drown has resigned her position as Member at Large while she takes a break from dancing. We wish her well in her new job, and hope she will return soon. Mary has agreed to come on to the Committee temporarily until May, as she often goes to meetings anyway to glean information for the newsletter.

Webmaster: Margaret Connors                                 mconnors@mun.ca

Please note that our website has moved. Margaret is presently maintaining the old site as well, but it could be removed at any time.

New URL is: <http://www.xenomix.com/rscds-stjohns/>  
Check it out for all sorts of information about our group, locations, Scottish dancing, and links to other interesting sites. Past newsletters and photos are also stored there.

Newsletter Editor: Mary Bridson 895-2425             mbridson@mun.ca

Please send submissions for next newsletter by December 31, 2006. Recipes, poems, anecdotes, riddles, jokes, puzzles, articles, profiles, anything pertaining to Scottish dancing or dancers is welcome.

### Favourite dances

*Shiftin' Bobbins* holds a special place in my heart, as it was the first dance that I felt I really had learned, remembered, and was confident in performing. Do you have a special dance, with special memories? Let me know so I can share your moment with the group.



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

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### NEWSLETTER

November 2006

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### Dance

A wonderful way to move, express, socialize, exercise. . . become disciplined, challenged, joyful. . . appreciate music, rhythm. . . feel connected, strong, graceful. . . sometimes silly, forgetful, clumsy (but knowing you're not alone). . . engaged in the moment, here in this place and time, yet connected to past and lineage. . .

Fortunate we each are to have found something fulfilling in so many ways, and that we can share with others.

I write this on the eve of *A Reel Time* workshop with Catherine Shaw, in anticipation of a great weekend of dance!

To the instructors, organizers, musicians and fellow participants who make it happen – as always, a Big Thank You!

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



Catherine Shaw with Catherine Wright on the morning of the workshop at Vanier School, Saturday, November 4, 2006.

**Who We Were:  
A Short History of Scottish Country Dancing in Newfoundland**

by Noreen MacLennan

(abridged from an article originally published in  
All around the circle, Scottish Country Dances from Newfoundland, Vol.1.)

A large contingent of Scottish war brides arrived in St. John's in 1946 and soon formed a club to maintain friendships and share memories of Scotland. They enjoyed Scottish dances such as The Dashing White Sergeant, Eightsome Reel, Gay Gordons and others, which they shared with relatives and a widening circle of friends as they settled in their new home. As these became familiar and enjoyed by many, they were included on the programme of the annual St. Andrew's Ball.

When I arrived in the mid sixties, I joined the group which had formed, comprising war brides and spouses, professionals who had come to the province to work and teach, and friends of theirs who were interested in the social activity. We met at St. Andrew's Church (the Kirk), where Mrs. Stobie, the minister's wife, taught classes every week in the church hall. This class disbanded in 1967 for various reasons, and there is no record of classes being held in St. John's for the next few years.

In 1970, Cathy and Lloyd Leland arrived from Montreal, where Cathy had been a keen dancer. Finding that there was no active dance group at that time, Cathy took steps to form one. She approached the St. Andrew's Society and asked if members would be interested in attending a class in Scottish Country Dancing. This led to the formation of The St. Andrew's Dancers with initial classes being held in dancers' homes. As numbers increased, the St. Andrew's Society took on the financial responsibility of renting a venue for classes until the group became self-sufficient. Dr. Bruce Miller was a strong supporter, while fellow expatriate Scot, Jim McAndrew, taught the dances. In 1975 James Orr and Edward Moore shared the teaching. In 1976, Edward Moore attended candidate classes at St. Andrews Summer School and on his return to Newfoundland became the regular teacher for several years.

I rejoined the group in 1980, which at that time consisted of about two sets per evening. Classes were held in the Cafeteria of the Engineering Building of Memorial University. Edward Moore had continued as the teacher but as he had other commitments he asked me to take over the teaching of the class. Because I had a full certificate, we applied to Scotland in 1983 to become an affiliated group of the R.S.C.D.S.

Since the group was small in number, we embarked on a programme to increase our visibility and thereby increase membership. I activated a demonstration group, and we took part in multicultural functions, outdoor folk festivals, and the annual Burns Supper, benefiting from the media coverage of these events.

In 1985, we travelled to the west coast of Newfoundland with the City of St. John's Pipe Band to participate in a two day Scottish Festival in the Codroy Valley. This is an area of Newfoundland settled during the years 1840-1865 by large numbers of Scots from Cape Breton.

We were invited in 1986 to go to the French territory of St. Pierre et Miquelon off the south coast of Newfoundland to take part in their Bastille Day Celebrations. Led by two pipers from the City of St. John's Pipe Band, we paraded through the streets with the local dance group Orok Bat, making stops in several areas to give performances of dances.

In August 1987, we held our first weekend workshop. Our guest teachers were Sandra Binns Johnston and Jim MacLellan. The event would not have been possible without the help of the TAC Outreach Programme. In addition to our local members we welcomed many out of province guests from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

In the summer of 1988, three fully certificated teachers, Martin Mulligan, William and Susan Scott, took up residence in St. John's. At this time we expanded the class schedule to three levels – beginner, social and technique. As we now met the requirement for Branch status, formal application was made to Scotland. Martin Mulligan and Bruce Shawyer drafted a constitution and Branch status was granted in 1991.

In the late 1980's, two of our musically talented members, Bruce Shawyer (piano) and Stewart Gillies (violin), began playing for some demonstrations and social programmes. Over the next few years, the musical group expanded and developed into an ensemble of seven musicians now known as Corryvreckan. The band plays for our socials and many of our public performances.

Since becoming a Branch in 1991, we have continued to organize both one-day and weekend workshops with guest teachers from other parts of Canada and the United States. In 1997, we sponsored a small Preliminary Test class, one of whom, Penny Gillies, has since obtained her full certificate.

We have made a contribution to the community by providing entertainment for several years at various venues, including Hogmanay Blood Donor Clinics, Glenbrook Lodge and other seniors' homes, Macdonald Drive School, and the Commissariat House provincial historic site. With an eye to the future, we have also offered programmes and children's classes which provide encouragement for younger dancers. We hope to continue attracting new members through demonstrations, audience participation and continued advertising.

**Who We Are:  
The Branch Survey, October, 2006**

I had 29 respondents to the survey published in the September Newsletter, which represents about 70% of our current membership. There were some surprises in the results, many encouraging comments, and food for thought about ways to grow.

***Sex and Age***

It is no surprise that women outnumber men 5:1, nor that 87% of us are over the age of 45. It is a little worrying that more of us are over 65 than under 46, but the main group (41%) are in the comfortable 56-65 range, hopefully with many dancing years ahead.

***Experience***

Just over half the members have been dancing for more than 10 years, but the rest are relative newcomers, with 5 years or less experience. Three quarters had not done any Scottish dancing before joining our group, but the rest have typically danced with more than one group.

***Teaching***

All five of our qualified teachers responded, but we are losing two of them shortly, and another is really retired, though she graciously fills in when requested. Only two respondents, and one "maybe," expressed interest in pursuing teaching qualifications. If you are interested in finding out what it takes to qualify, please talk to one of the teachers or Kathy Simonsen, as there is a possibility of having a visiting examiner next year if numbers warrant it. We really need new teachers to maintain our status, and to increase our presence in the community, for instance with children's classes.

***Other Dancing***

One in six of the respondents did not do any other form of dance, now or in the past, but most of the rest have done or are doing more than one. English and Ballroom are popular (33% each), with Irish/Newfoundland and Ballet/Jazz/Tap each at about 24%. Ten other forms were mentioned, including Square, Highland, Jive, Tango, Salsa, Modern, Social, International Folk, Choreography, and even Belly (no names!) That is a rich array of experience to bring to the group, but it is great that we also attract "non-dancers".

***Scottish Connections***

This was a surprising part of the survey, to me at least. Over half the group have no connections to Scotland at all, apart from a few who have made a visit. Only 10% were born or raised in Scotland, and one other in a strongly Scottish community. One third have at least a Scottish parent or grandparent, 10% have a Scottish partner, and another 10% spoke of Scottish heritage or a love of the culture in their family. One respondent expressed a wish to visit Scotland, and would like more information about groups,

tours, "must sees" and reasonable accommodations etc. Maybe a branch group visit is something to consider, if anyone feels up to organizing it!

***Advertising***

Getting the word out about our group and the joys of dancing is an ongoing preoccupation. The survey would seem to suggest that diversity is important, as there were at least 12 different answers to "How did you hear of our group?"

By far the best method is word of mouth, as 40% of respondents had heard of us through a friend, colleague, or family member. 10% had found us through the R.S.C.D.S. list of branches, and another 10% through advertising at MUN. Other answers included ads in the local papers, TV cable 9, posters, seeing a demonstration, through the English dance group, and through their children learning SCD at school.

***Comments***

There were some nice compliments for the newsletter, and many people felt the survey was a good idea, particularly to find out how people heard of us. It was even suggested that we routinely ask new dancers that question and keep a record.

One respondent suggested that I should have asked whether people were from Newfoundland or not – a good point.

Finally, I would like to quote a few comments in full:

*"The dancing is interesting, vigorous, sometimes challenging, but most of all it is always fun."*

*"Our St. John's Branch is the friendliest social group I have ever belonged to."*

*"SCD seems to attract folks from many different backgrounds, different generations and socio-economic groups. . . It's a total entertainment/exercise package. . . fabulous music, aerobic exercise and is mentally challenging. What's not to like??!"*



Martin, Jo, Janet, Frank and Ingrid, with other members in the background, enjoying *Napier's Index* at "A Reel Time!" on Saturday, November 4, 2006.

## An Evening of Celtic Music and Dance

Q: If you were lost in the forest, who would you ask for directions: an in-tune bagpipe player, an out-of-tune bagpipe player, or Santa Claus?

A: The out-of-tune bagpipe player, of course. The other two are just hallucinations!  
(Courtesy [www.rampantscotland.com](http://www.rampantscotland.com) and Jim Connors.)

Just kidding! Several of us enjoyed a great evening at Cochrane Street United Church on Saturday, October 28, when the Dartmouth & District Pipe Band presented a tribute to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. The spine begins to tingle as the pipers fill the bags, the first swirl of sound fills the air, and the snare drums rattle out the beat. This is a young and highly acclaimed band, already North American champions at Grade 3 level, and in the top seven at Grade 2. The solo piper and solo drummer have also won top honours.

The band was joined by our own City of St. John's Pipe Band, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment Band, Cochrane Street Senior Church Choir, and the Shawn Silver Irish Dancers, to present a varied display of Celtic music and dance. A pity that we did not have a demonstration of our own Scottish dancing, but maybe another time.

And yes, there was a broad sword dance, with proper swords, for those of you who were wondering, after Catherine's email appeal for local weapons!

### Knees up!

We all send our best wishes to Bruce Shawyer for a speedy recovery after his knee surgery this October. Best wishes also to Karen Oakley's husband who just had a double hip replacement, and to all our other members who have been experiencing problems with various limbs, joints and ailments this session. Lang may your toes tap!



Bruce Shawyer presents Catherine Shaw with the music for the tune "Catherine" which he composed in her honour for the second set of *The White Cockade* which we danced at "A Reel Time!" on Saturday, November 4, 2006.



Corryvreckan warming up for "A Reel Time!" at Vanier School on Saturday, November 4, 2006.



Robert, Denise, Brenda, Marcia and Pat, with other members in the background, enjoying *Napier's Index* at "A Reel Time!" on Saturday, November 4, 2006.

### Mugs up!

We offer lemonade, tea and biscuits at our break on Monday evenings, for which we ask you to drop 30¢ in the box. As Pat has many times reminded us, if you bring your own mug it saves on the purchase of polystyrene, frees up more money for cookies, and contributes to a greener environment. So remember to pack a mug in your shoe bag!

### Halloween Haunting

On the night before Halloween, which was a regular Monday social class, we had a lot of fun dancing *Old Spedling Castle's Ghost's Dance*, a lively jig. The ghost appears behind first man or first woman as they start the reels, follows them through a few turns, and then disappears! (The man below or the woman above the three dancing couples has the shadowy role.) I hope this becomes a Halloween tradition. Thank you, Martin, for introducing us to the dance last year.