



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

NEWSLETTER

October 2009

President's Message

Greetings Dancers,

It is so good to be back dancing, in a Scottish fashion, with so many friends. We have had a good summer and the summer dancers at St. David's Church had a lot of fun on Monday nights. Once again we had a social night at the O'Connor residence in Manuels with good tunes, interesting dances, refreshments and a bit of live music. Thank you, Frank and Claudia. A demonstration team was cobbled together and travelled to Bell Island to help celebrate Canada Day at Wabana; learned something about dancing in the grass and put on a really good show. Thank you, Kathy for keeping us on our toes.

I expect we will have a great fall session of dancing with some interesting new dances and some old favourites too. The programme is ready for our Fall Social on November 7 and we have started practicing. Mary Bridson has the programmes printed up already so you can pick up a copy and start doing your homework. Congratulations to Kathy Simonsen on a successful visit to Scotland and passing the instructor tests. Kathy will be looking after the beginner group this year. Penny Gillies is taking on the techniques class on Thursday nights; do come along and learn about timing, straight lines, covering, some different setting steps and all kinds of interesting dances and techniques.

Happy dancing and keep smiling,
Ken. Galbraith,
Chairman, RSCDS, St. John's

PS: Bring a friend on Monday, someone who would enjoy Scottish Dancing. A few more beginners would be nice to have.

News from the Scotts

After many adventures, Sue and Bill Scott are now settled in their new home in Barrie.



Bill wrote: With this is a photo that confirms that we are really moved into our retirement house in Barrie. Some with long memories may actually recall the presentation to us of the number plaque, featured in the photo, at the last social of the year in 2006. We certainly remember that evening with pleasure. We are quite tickled that 'Adieu, Terre Neuve' is being submitted to the RSCS for consideration for publication. Although we are enjoying the challenges of getting established in a new place, we really miss the wonderful people we knew in Newfoundland. The weather is another matter, however. Sue and I plan to start dancing here in September. We shall welcome any visitors from Newfoundland any time.

Canada Day – 2009

Our demonstration team travelled to Wabana to celebrate Canada Day. Thank to Ken Galbraith for the photographs.



Left to Right:

Kathy Simonsen, Robert MacIsaac, Bridgette Hamilton, Phil Hanley, Pat Galbraith,
Frank O'Connor, Ingrid Pardoe, Ken Galbraith

Special thanks to Kathy for devising the program.



And here is the demonstration team in action. Can anyone identify the dance?

Dancing Styles

There has never been a time when humans haven't danced - dance is an essential part of being human. Even when we try fight against it; try to eliminate some dance or even dancing itself from our society on the grounds that it's immoral, dance always bounces back in. So where does Scottish Country Dance fit into the story of this ancient and varied art?

One way to classify dance is to distinguish between religious and social dance; that is, ones with a ritual purpose (and not performed in a place or manner which might lead to undesirable behaviour, of course!) and others mainly for fun and entertainment. As time went on and dances went into and out of fashion, picking up influences along the way, some dances became associated with professional entertainers, who had the skill and time to perfect the increasingly elaborate steps. Others remained the province of amateurs, who danced to socialize, to celebrate and out of pure enjoyment.

Peasants borrowed dance moves from the aristocrats; urban dancers borrowed rural folk dances, dancers from one nation picked up new ideas from others, and all dancers modified and combined and re-combined their borrowings as they wished.

Out of this rich soil came Scottish country dancing, as we all know, derived from the court, country and folk dances of England, France and Scotland. Those centuries of cross-pollination, borrowing, adapting and addition also produced many other forms of dance, which are more or less close cousins of our Scottish country dancing. We are perhaps most familiar with English country dancing, Newfoundland dancing and ceilidh dancing, but some of us tried Irish set dancing at Manuels the summer before last. Another cousin is contra dance. According to Sean Flinn in the *Globe and Mail*, "The moves draw from English country dance, court dance in France and colonial variations". He goes on to describe groups in Nova Scotia, Montreal and Toronto in which younger people have discovered and enjoyed contra dancing. Flinn says the young people like the relaxed dress code, the lack of snobbery from the experienced dancer to the newbie and the excitement of a momentary encounter with a stranger when you get to dance with all these people you don't even really know.

The continuing enjoyment of Scottish country dancing and its relatives like contra dancing show that in spite of its long history, social dancing has not lost its appeal.