

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov. 28th 1998	St. Andrew's Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m.
Dec. 14th 1998	Last day of classes
Jan. 4th 1999	Start of classes
Jan. 9th 1999	Twelfth Night Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m.
May 10th 1999	Last day of classes - Mon.

Dates have not yet been finalized for other socials and the AGM. Details will be in later newsletters.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT - 1998-99

Elected positions:

Chairman	Sheila Virgo	726-0314
Secretary	Don Macintosh	726-4389
Treasurer	Derek deLouche	739-7292
Members at Large:	Denise Sharp	895-2992
	Dale Jarvis	576-2087
	Anne Gillis	726-6874

Non-elected positions:

Social convenor	Ingrid Pardoe	364-9305
Publicity	Margaret Connors	726-0441
Music Director	Blair Lister	738-1852
Wardrobe	Karen Oakley	722-7695
Newsletter	Brenda Burness	895-2712
Demonstration organizer	Robert MacIsaac	726-6874
Basic Class Rep.	TBA	



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

NEWSLETTER

September 1998

September comes around quickly, and with it, our group gets under way. Many members continued social dancing through the summer at St. David's. Thank you Karen for providing most of the goodies enjoyed at the break and thanks go to those who talked through the dances.

We welcomed many new people to our first night of classes at Macpherson and we hope they enjoyed it enough to continue.

At our AGM in May, changes to our branch Constitution were proposed and passed. Copies of the proposed changes were sent to all our members but, if any new member would like a copy, please see our Secretary, Don MacIntosh.

During the summer a few of our dancers went to the Lavrock camp at Salmonier Line to demonstrate Scottish country dancing to a group of city children spending a week there. Margaret Connors taught the children a couple of dances and our own people, plus the counsellors were included. Lots of hilarity.

The ladies Demonstration Team danced at the beginning and end of the summer in St. Phillip's. The library Summer Reading Club for children had concentrated on books from around the world and we were asked to show the children and explain various dances from Scotland. Penny Gillies did a great job of explaining the origin of the dances.

The Demonstration Team danced to a large audience at Commissariat House. The weather co-operated and they were able to dance outdoors.

Martin and Noreen will be teaching the Demo. Team this year. Details of rehearsals will be announced later. Anyone interested in joining the team should speak to either Martin or Noreen.

The English country dancing is now under way. The schedule is two weeks on, one week off. The next class is Wed. 30th Sept., starting at 7.30 p.m. Martin and Noreen are the teachers.

For those who may not have seen it, enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of an article on Bob Blackie, published in the Globe and Mail in July. Bob Blackie was known to many of our group and had taught at our workshop in November 1994. It was a great loss to Scottish country dancing when he died and we are grateful that we were able to enjoy his company and instruction for that weekend.

The following is the speech made by Linda Gaul, Vice Chairman R.S.C.D.S. Edinburgh when she presented Bob Blackie's Scroll of Honour to his mother at a memorial service in Manor Church, Pebbles, Scotland on June 27, 1998 (used with permission).

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour for me to be here today to make this presentation to Mrs. Blackie on behalf of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

Rob, or Bob as most of the dancers knew him, was one of Scotland's best ambassadors. Nobody who came into contact with him, either on or off the dance floor was ever in any doubt of his love for Scotland and its traditional dancing and his exuberant personality made everything so much fun.

The Toronto Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, in recommending Bob for a Scroll of Honour, have highlighted his achievements in Canada and his unstinting work to bring the joy of the dance to so many.

Bob taught dancing in nearly every province in Canada and in numerous states in the USA. He also travelled widely, both as a teacher and as leader of the various "flings" to Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Scandinavia. A great accolade was being invited, by Miss Jean Milligan, to be the first North American teacher at the Royal Scottish Dance Society Summer School in St. Andrews. Regrettably, prior commitments prevented Bob from accepting. Bob served the Teachers Association of Canada well, being a committee member for eight years and Chairman for three years. He was instrumental in setting up the first Summer School in Canada. This is now a well established event and country dancers from all over the world are eager to attend.

However, it was not just the excellent classes, in both country and highland dancing, that made Bob such a popular teacher. There were also the many impromptu ceilidhs and parties at which he was a generous and gracious host and hilarious cabaret star!

My personal memories of Bob are from weekends at Niagra Falls and in the Toronto area. He was wonderful fun to have in a class, either as a teacher or as a student and was a most courteous partner on the dance floor.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society has lost an enthusiastic and valuable member and all of us who knew him will treasure our memories of his classes, dances, parties and excursions. I am so glad that Bob knew he was to receive this Scroll of Honour and very sorry that he did not receive it personally. So, Mrs. Blackie, I ask you to accept this Scroll, with our thanks for Bob's outstanding contribution to the work of our Society.

The following comes from Blair Lister who spent some time dancing in Scotland this summer.

One of the last things that I did before leaving for Glasgow one Wednesday last June, was to check the Internet to see what dancing was available around Glasgow. The gods must have been smiling on me, as I came across an announcement for a day of Scottish Dancing in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the RSCDS and the Glasgow Branch. This was to take place that Sunday in George Square, just leaving me enough time to recover from the flight and to have a few mornings sleeping in.

When I arrived in Glasgow, nobody that I spoke to had heard anything about it, but when the Sunday dawned, I headed down into the city center to have a look. The first thing that I saw was a outdoor stage set up, with what could only be a Scottish Country Dance Band (John Renton) tuning up and doing their sound checks. Quite a few people were dressed in kilts and there were lots of children in dance attire, a pipe band was warming up. At 11:00 am the event began, with a march-in of the pipe band, followed by the children. After circling around the square, the band arranged themselves in the center and played for a while before marching off.

Next came some demonstration dancing by the children who were from the Buchanan School of Dancing, as well as several Primary Schools from the area. All the children then filled the center of the square and massed dancing took place with the adult bystanders asked to join in. Then the pipe band performed another solo and there was a one hour break for lunch.

After lunch, there was to be demonstration dancing by Monkton Country Dance Club, Stirling Branch RSDCS, New Kilpatrick Country Dance Club and Glasgow University Country Dance Club. Returning from lunch, I was delighted to see some of the people from the Ayr Branch RSCDS, who I had met when dancing at Troon two years previously. It is quite a thrill to run into someone who you have met a couple of times and be remembered, it really makes a truism of the "Scottish Country Dance Family" that Bob Blackie told us about at a previous workshop.

The demonstrations were superb, and it was really great to be able to watch so many accomplished dancers perform with immaculate footwork and phrasing. The exuberance and energy of the Glasgow University Country Dance Club as they went through their demo was enough to make you wish to be young again!

Dancing for all followed, with the MC and his trusty assistants making sure that anyone who had the slightest inclination to join the dance would. The dancing area was filled as both the experienced and the initiates went through Hooper's Jig, Monymusk, The Duke of Perth, J B Milne and of course, Mairi's Wedding.

At 3:00 pm there was a break for a half hour, and then the Ceilidh Dancing started. I am not exactly sure of the names of the dances that I did, but I remember the last dance, (by now the clouds had all cleared away and the square was about as hot as a square gets in Scotland) it was the Dashing White Sergeant. Well, once through the DWS at the end of a days dancing on tarmac should be enough, but not for this crowd! It was good to sit down and chat for a few minutes before wending my weary way home.

The next day was of course Monday, and the last two times I have been in Scotland, that means that whatever I happen to be doing during the day, the Monday evening dancing in Troon is a must.

The Ayr Branch RSCDS sponsor the dance at the Walke Hall at Troon. They apparently started off in a scout hut, had to expand to a village hall, and have become so popular that they are now able to have live bands and fill a hall with 100-150 dancers. They make up 6 programmes of dances and then rotate through them 3 times between May and the end of August. Each programme has 14 dances in it, and there are occasional encores. Cheat sheets are available, and there is a briefing for every dance, but only the occasional dance will have a walk through.

Two years ago when I first went to Troon, I had the usual doubts about whether I would or wouldn't. I phoned Mrs. Carlyle, who I had listed as a contact

person and she explained the format of the evening. I decided to give it a try. By the time I arrived in Troon, I was naturally a little nervous, after all, this was Scotland, where they know about this stuff, but the minute that I walked in the door, I was greeted by Mrs. Carlyle who not only immediately put me at ease, but made sure that I was introduced to partners, invited me to dance and ensured that I got a cup of tea at the break. The other dancers were also extremely friendly and receptive to visitors. No wonder that their Monday evenings are such a success. I would recommend this venue to any visitor who wanted to dance in Scotland and have a really enjoyable evening.

Tuesday evening was spent at Westerton in Glasgow, where they have an evening every fortnight, to learn and do dances that are a bit more complicated and are not often done. This is an enjoyable evening, as you do get walk-throughs, and some interesting dances. The night I was there, one of the dances was the Toy Boys of Toombawoomba!

On Thursday nights, there is dancing in Strathaven. Last time I was in Scotland, I never got to Strathaven as there is dancing in Alva on the same night. The dance at Alva is a great experience, but it requires study, as the dances are just announced, only the occasional one would be briefed, so you really have to know your onions!

Strathaven is a great place to go if you are looking for a smaller crowd, lots of interesting dances, great humour from both the dancers and the teacher, Alison Robertson and they are also very receptive to visitors. They have about 3 sets, and do about 12 dances each night. There are talk and walk-throughs of all the dances, and the programmes are interesting. Cheat sheets are also available. I would also recommend Strathaven to anyone looking for a place to dance. I know that next time I am there, Strathaven like Troon will be a fixture on my weekly calendar.

If you get a chance to visit Scotland, even if you are hesitant about dancing with complete strangers, give one of these places a try. The people there are as friendly and ready to dance as our own group here in St. John's, and you can be guaranteed that you will have an evening you will never forget.

Thank you Blair.

Periodically, newsletters and information about workshops etc. taking place at other branches are posted on our noticeboard. Please check it if you are travelling and may want to dance in another city.

Since this is the beginning of a new year of dancing, the following is a reminder of what it is like to be a beginner. It comes from the New Zealand Branch Scottish Country Dances, 1988.

A BEGINNER'S PLEA

Be kind, be considerate, be caring
for the new ones on the scene.
When a reel becomes a hazard
and you feel you'd like to scream.
Remember when you were learning
and never thought you'd know
How long it took to allemande
and that strathspeys must be slow.
The feet, the hands, the eyes, the head
must all do things in time
When just to find your partner
is the major thing in mind!

We look the same in snow white frocks,
in kilts and pumps and tartan socks,
But some are old hands, some are new
with lots to learn, so before you do -
Frown or growl, or push or pull,
sneer or snarl, remember too
That once, perhaps, long, long ago
you were new and didn't know.
Your heart would thump
your brain would freeze,
You legs would knock
about your knees.
You knew you were the only one
who'd mess the reels up one by one
So be kind, be considerate, be caring
for the new ones on the scene.
Then clubs will grow in numbers
which was Miss Milligan's hope and dream.

Caring and Sharing: Bruce Shawyer had a quadruple by-pass during the summer. We are delighted to hear that he is recovering well and on schedule. In another month he should be back at work and he is hoping, if all continues to go so well, to be Scottish country dancing again within a year. We look forward to this since he has been unable to dance for a long time.

Bill Libby from Moncton, NB died in May this year. A number of our members knew Bill and we were very sorry to hear of his death.

It was also sad news to learn of the death of Stewart Gillies' mother this summer. Our condolences go to Stewart and Penny and their family.

FEES are \$56 for the fall session which is the combined annual subscription fee and branch dues of \$16 and \$5 respectively and the \$35 class fee for the fall, until December. We have to pay our 6 pounds annual subscription fee to Scotland in pounds sterling, which works out to \$16. However, with the dollar fluctuating so much it may well increase, so be smart and pay your fees early! Fees are due now but potential new members have until the end of October, giving them time to decide if they want to join. The treasurer is Derek deLouche and cheques should be made out to The St. John's (Nfld) Branch R.S.C.D.S.

If anyone has a problem with the fee structure, please see Derek or your teacher since we do not want to exclude anyone from dancing due to financial difficulties.

Thursday techniques class is still \$3 per night and is on a pay-as-you-go basis.