



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

NEWSLETTER

February 1994

Advance notices: May 14th - Spring dance
May 16th - A.G.M. followed by social dancing

There may be either a 'family night' or another dance in March, depending on group interest.

Tongue Twisted: A Scotsman was on a hunting trip in the Canadian Rockies. He was having a quiet cup of tea when a large shape crashed through the clearing he was in, ran through his tent and carried it off.

"What on earth was that?" he exclaimed.

"A moose," replied his guide.

"Good grief," he responded in his Aberdeen brogue. "If that's a moose...what size are your rats?"

Happy New Year! We hope all our members had a good Christmas and are raring to go with the dancing.

Welcome to our newcomers, we hope you will enjoy dancing with us and not be too intimidated by the steps and figures at the beginning, it will slowly begin to make sense.

Classes will continue at Macpherson for the foreseeable future. Thursday classes at St. David's have also started with a small group of dedicated dancers. Anyone who has been dancing for a year or so is most welcome to come and join in.

St. Andrews Party was well attended and everyone enjoyed the evening. It is good to see the beginners at these events.

Twelfth Night Party was also very successful, with a good crowd enjoying themselves. The refreshments are always terrific and we thank everyone for their tasty goodies. Many thanks are also due to Bruce Shawyer and Rhum, Eigg and Muck for providing the music for both occasions.

Hogmanay at the Red Cross Centre was attended by about 24 of our dancers. Everyone had fun and sampled the haggis made by Jennifer Whitfield. There were many photos taken and they have been put into an album and can be seen at the Monday class. There were 93 donors at the clinic and 88 units of blood were collected. The Red Cross are very grateful that we do this each year and apparently the day's quota was reached so there was satisfaction all around. It was nice to have Olive Jackson with us, visiting from Nova Scotia.

Monday, 10th January, was the start of classes for previous members. Half the evening was taken up in learning how to step dance. Vaunter Maunder, a dance teacher in Brigus, came to teach us. It was great fun, very energetic and a couple, if not more, suffered from sore muscles for 2 days! Vaunter is one of the organisers of the Brigus Blueberry Festival in August and, for several years, has

the Brigus Blueberry Festival in August and, for several years, has invited the demonstration dancers to perform at the festival.

The demonstration dancers were invited to dance at the annual Burns Supper organised by the St. Andrew's Society. If any of you saw "Here and Now" on Friday, January 28, you may have seen the dancers on the segment with Carl Walls.

One of our teachers has been invited to teach at a couple of upcoming workshops. Martin Mulligan will be teaching at the Valentine Workshop hosted by the Caledonia Group of the Nova Scotia Branch R.S.C.D.S. on Saturday, February 12. In July, Martin will be teaching at the Pinewoods Summer Camp.

Every year there is a T.A.C. Summer School at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. This year it will be held on August 14 - 21. If you are in the area and can spare the time to take it in or would like to try it anyway, talk to Sue Scott who highly recommends it. There is a flyer on the bulletin board with more information if you are interested. On the reverse is a letter from a participant at the Summer School last year who thoroughly enjoyed the Summer School and describes it as a wonderful dancing and social experience.

Piano Fund. It has been suggested, and agreed upon by the Executive, that we start up a fund for an electronic piano which would be a great asset to Rhum, Eigg and Muck. Each time we have a social, we will have a container to collect donations. This is purely voluntary but we feel that most people will wish to donate something since we all enjoy the socials and the live music we now have will be even better with the eventual addition of a good electronic keyboard.

Many of our members will remember Lloyd and Catriona Leland who used to dance with our group. Catriona was the social convenor before Olive Jackson. An interesting article has been written about Lloyd in the paper "Am Braighs" published in Nova Scotia and available here from O'Brien's Music Store. "A Canadian Heritage Language: In conversation with Lloyd Leland, New Brunswick" is the title of the article. In it, Lloyd makes the point with Canada almost divided over French/English issues, that at one time you could

have gone from one end of Canada to the other and could find someone to speak Gaelic with. At the time of Confederation it would have been the third largest European language, Cree would have been larger.

Lloyd taught himself Gaelic as a young boy growing up in Caitness, N.B. Their three children and grandchildren all speak Gaelic which is quite an achievement since Lloyd never lived in a Gaelic community and did not have much contact with others speaking Gaelic. His daughter, Helen, has formed her own bands in which she sings Gaelic songs and plays the tin whistle. If you want to read the full article, Jim Orr has a copy.

Obituary. We are saddened to have to include the following obituary in our newsletter, written by Jim Orr.

"Bruce Miller died early this January. Bruce was a long-time member of the St. John's Scottish Country Dancers. He, and his wife Irene, were among the most skilled of the group when I joined in the mid-70's. Bruce, like all of us, would occasionally have a mental blank at the beginning of a dance, and he would solve it by doing the pattern that became famous in the group as "the Miller start", cross and cast. He added that air of levity that is reassuring to beginners.

Bruce was a member of the group that did the epic 1986 voyage to the "quatorze juillet" celebrations in St. Pierre. Through Felix Park, another member of the group, and hosted by member families of the "Orok Bat" Basque dancers of St. Pierre, nine of us spent the weekend dancing, chatting and being part of the celebrations. The return journey in really rough weather showed what a sterling character Bruce was. Another member of the group was in severe pain with kidney stones, and it was Bruce, the physician, who cared for him though he himself, as we later learned, had just experienced a mild heart attack.

It's been a while since Bruce last danced, but we treasure his memory."

The group has made a donation in his memory to Planned Parenthood.

Susie Petrov who used to dance with the group and now is in Boston was in contact with Noreen. She sends greetings to the group and wishes to be remembered to her friends. Incidentally, she is the music director for the summer camp at Pinewoods where Martin will be teaching, as mentioned earlier.