

• It will be greatly to the benefit of our Branch (and thus to dancers) to have more qualified teachers to help us enjoy Scottish Country Dancing. You may have noticed that from time to time no teacher has been available to take a class. With more teachers available, this is much less likely to happen.

During the time leading up to the exam, we ask your support for the hard- working candidates. If you would like to be a stooge, please give Bill Scott a call or see him on Monday night. No experience is necessary, and we need your help. In return, we can promise you that you will be very well taught by the time the exam comes.

Caring and Sharing.

Jim and Robin Orr became grandparents again when their daughter, Fiona, gave birth to her second son, named Cameron Stuart. Congratulations to them and to Fiona and her husband Glen.

We are sorry that Alison and Ian Carr will not be dancing with us in future. Alison badly injured her leg and has been advised not to dance. We will really miss them and extend an invitation for them to attend our socials, even though Alison may just have to watch.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

8th March	Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m.
12th April	Family Night - Vanier School - watch for more details
5th May	A.G.M. with dancing to follow
10th May	Social - Vanier School, 8 p.m.
12th May	Last day of classes - Monday



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

NEWSLETTER

January 1997

Happy New Year to all our members and a big welcome to our new dancers. We hope everyone had a good Christmas.

Hogmanay at the Red Cross Centre was attended by twelve dancers, six men and six women with a couple of spectators joining in. There isn't much room to dance at the centre so this was a good number. Although Jennifer Whitfield was away, she had made the haggis in advance, for which everyone was grateful. Thanks go to her and her daughter, Arwa and Arwa's boyfriend, who served it.

The celebration of Hogmanay is a Scottish tradition commemorating the passing of the old year. Many explanations have been suggested for the name Hogmanay. It has been variously derived from French, Greek, Norse or Spanish words connected with the season, but there is no agreement as to its source. Whatever its origin, it is the term used firstly to refer to the last day of the year and secondly to the gifts and entertainment given to a visitor on this day.

There are numerous customs associated with this time of the year in Scotland. One such ancient custom "The Burning of the Clavie" involved carrying a flaming tar barrel through the town. In another, associated with the Highlands, one man wearing the hide of a cow accompanied by others, paraded through the village visiting houses. Guizing (mumming) was another feature of the Scottish Hogmanay. Young men dressed up and visited homes, singing and acting out plays. For their performance they were rewarded with oatcakes. Children were also involved at Hogmanay. In some areas they would parade up and down the streets, sometimes dressed in a single sheet like a Chinese dragon, calling out for Hogmanay (oatcakes) at the doors of houses and reciting a special rhyme.

Get up, goodwife, and shake your feathers,
And dinna think that we are beggars;
For we are bairns come out to play,
Get up and gie's our hogmanay.

There are many other customs but space does not permit them in this newsletter. Next January we'll cover them!

Twelfth Night Social saw an excellent turnout, with everyone having a great time. Thanks to Corryvreckan for the music. Tara Bryan was not able to play, due to tendonitis so Stuart Macdonald filled in. We are very grateful that he did. Thank you Stuart. As usual, there was a lovely variety of food.

At the end of the social and probably, for many people on New Year's Eve, Auld Lang Syne was sung. "Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang syne?" What does it mean? "Lang syne" was archaic at the time Burns wrote the song in 1788, and translates literally to "old long since" or times past. "We'll drink a cup of kindness yet." "Drink" was originally "tak" (take), and Burns added the words "days of" to both the first verse and chorus several years later, so as to let the words fit the now-familiar tune, then an air known as "The Miller's Daughter."

Burns, at first, had preferred a different and far more lugubrious melody. The "cup of kindness" is clearly a libation. It also shows up in the final verse: "And there's a hand my trusty fiere (friend), and gie's a hand o' thine. We'll take a right gude-willie waught (a good-will draft), for auld lang syne." So it condenses down to: "Should we forget old times? Let's drink!" It is predominantly a very sad song, of people and places that are gone.

The **Demonstration Team** will be dancing at the St. Andrew's Society of St. John's, Burns Supper, on Saturday 25th January. Tickets are \$30 per person, available from Noreen, Robert or Ian.

Glenbrook Lodge would like us to dance there on Tuesday 21st January at 7 p.m. For new members, they celebrate Burns Night at Glenbrook and for the last 10 years have invited us to dance. The haggis, donated by the St. Andrew's Society, is piped in and refreshments are served. We each take a small plate of goodies, suitable for elderly people (no nuts) and everyone is welcome.

Mugs. Don't forget to bring your own mug for refreshments on Monday nights. Saves having to use the styrofoam cups and is more environmentally friendly.

A cheese cleaver was left after the Twelfth Night social. Would the owner please claim it from Penny or Lorraine.

Fees are \$40 for the Monday night winter session. These are just class fees and anyone joining in January is also required to pay the combined annual subscription fee and branch dues of \$20. The September newcomers will have already paid this \$20. Payment is accepted now and up to 3rd February, giving potential new members time to decide if they want to join. The Thursday night techniques class fee remains at \$3 per night, payable each time you attend.

If there is a problem with the fee structure, please see our Treasurer, Ingrid Pardoe, since we don't want anyone excluded from dancing because of financial difficulties.

Many balls and workshops take place at different branches throughout the year and these are posted on our notice board. A few of our members are attending the Tartan Ball in Toronto in February. If you are interested, Sue & Bill have details. Martin will be teaching at the 39th Annual Weekend Workshop in Montreal in June. Check the notice board if you are travelling and are interested in attending certain events.

The following comes from Bill Scott.

Branch Teachers in Training

This year several members of our Branch have undertaken the training which ultimately leads to the Teacher's Certificate of the RSCDS. This process requires significant commitment, and has several stages.

The first stage is to pass the Preliminary Test. Candidates face a written exam, a test of their dancing ability, and a test of their potential to become good teachers of Scottish Country Dancing. The dancing test is based on a set of 12 prescribed dances, any one of which can be requested of a candidate. So that the candidate will be well-supported, a set of experienced dancers will be learning all 12 dances. To test teaching potential, each candidate will also be asked to teach, to two sets of dancers, a step and two figures (for example, pas de basque, and down the middle and back followed by allemande).

For the exam, which will probably be held in St. John's in late April, we shall be visited by two Examiners, one from Scotland and the other from Canada. The Branch will hold an examination session for which we shall provide two sets of dancers, as well as the supporting dancers for the prescribed dances.

Once the candidates have passed the Preliminary Test, they will teach for a minimum of two years under the supervision of a teacher. Finally the candidates will prepare for and sit the exam for the Teacher's Certificate.

To prepare for the Preliminary Test, the candidates are taking a weekly class with Bill Scott, complete with homework assignments. Four people from our Branch are taking the classes: Penny Gillies, Robert MacIsaac and Michael Heald are planning to sit the test in April of this year, and Margaret Connors is taking the classes in anticipation of taking the test in the future. In addition, Brenda Porter, who is from Dartmouth, may be coming here to sit her examination for the Teacher's Certificate. Some of you may remember her, because she danced here at the Mini-Workshop two years ago when Bob Blackie taught us.

In addition to the classwork, the four candidates are practising teaching each other the steps and the common figures of SCD. In addition, they are all briefing some of the prescribed dances in the second half of the Monday night social class. Shortly we will be convening a class of dancers, universally known as "stooges", on several weekends, so that the candidates can get practice in teaching the two sets required for the exam.