

Fees are \$40 for the Monday night winter session. These are the class fees. The combined annual subscription fee and branch dues of \$20 are optional for those joining in January only. The September newcomers will have already paid this \$20. Payment is accepted now and up to 2nd 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.

Please remember, if you happen to be late for class, please be patient. We cannot always hear the bell or respond immediately.

Snow line: In the event of bad weather we try to contact individuals if dancing is cancelled. If you are new to our branch, please make sure you fill out a form with your name, address and phone number. If there is any doubt about dancing going ahead, you can call:

Kathy McKay 579-0721
Brenda Burness 895-2712

Caring & Sharing

George and Rosalind Grey were in St. John's for Christmas. They danced with our group in the past and now live in Australia. They wished to be remembered to those who knew them.

We are sorry to say that Bob Blackie is not at all well but he still manages to stay cheerful. Our thoughts are certainly with him.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 3rd February Glenbrook Lodge - 7 p.m.
- 21st March Social - Vanier School - 8 p.m.
- 4th April Family night social - Vanier School
- 2nd May Social - Vanier School - 8 p.m.
- 4th May A.G.M. with dancing to follow
- 11th May Last day of classes - Mon.



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

NEWSLETTER

January 1998

Happy New Year to all our members. Hopefully everyone had a good Christmas with family and friends.

Hogmanay at the Red Cross Centre couldn't go ahead as usual due to space problems etc. However, Jennifer Whitfield made a haggis and oatcakes for the donors and Noreen and Kathy supplied Scottish music and mingled with everyone. The Rev. John Duff, the new minister at the Kirk was also there.

For those of you who keep their old RSCDS newsletters, last January we gave a few examples of Hogmanay traditions in Scotland, promising more in 1998.

In Scottish towns, Hogmanay was very much a communal celebration. Everyone crowded into the streets and the traditional meeting places. Bonfires were lit, torches were waved and tar barrels burnt. All these customs were linked to celebrate the Old Year being burnt out before the new could begin. During these ceremonies the Scots enjoyed the traditional drink of Hogmanay, het pint - warm mild ale spiced with nutmeg and laced with whisky.

Inside the house, Hogmanay was the time for putting everything in order before the New Year arrived. The whole house had to be swept and all the debts paid. Anything that had been borrowed had to be returned, clothes mended, clocks wound up, musical instruments tuned, pictures which hung crooked on the walls straightened, silver, brass and pewter polished, and the beds in the house made up with clean sheets. Then there was the special Hogmanay food to be prepared: oatcakes, cheeses, shortbread, black bun, treacle bannocks and ankersocks.

On the stroke of midnight Old Years Night the head of the house opened the door wide until the last stroke of the church clock's bell had died away. The Old Year had been let out and the New Year let in. Sometimes the windows were also opened and the household bells rung, trays bashed, and pots clanged. Afterwards the windows were shut to stop the spirits slipping back in again and Auld Lang Syne was sung, more het pint drunk, and the family staggered off to bed. If they were not first-footed first.

First-footing was once familiar to everyone in Scotland, a large part of the north of England, and some parts of the south. At the stroke of midnight, as everyone was standing around the fire, tot of het pint in hand, a knock would come at the door. The door would be opened in silence and a red haired man would enter. In one outstretched hand he would be holding a small branch and in the other a piece of mistletoe. The stranger would then walk to the fire, put his branch into the flames and place his mistletoe on the mantelpiece. Next he would wish the family a happy New Year and in return be given wine or whisky and a piece of cake. Sometimes, instead of the branch and the mistletoe, the first-footer brought bread, salt and coal, which symbolised life, hospitality and warmth.

Twelfth Night social was a great evening. Thanks go to Corryvreckan for the music, Don and Kathy for arranging the programme and to everyone who talked through the dances and brought the food.

A pleasant surprise came at the end, when Jindra Mimra, choreographer with the Kittiwake Dance Theatre, thanked the Scottish country dancers who had taken part in The Nutcracker. He, and Derek DeLouche in his capacity as Chairman of the Kittiwake Board, presented a beautifully decorated cake to the group in appreciation of their help.

We have had a request to print the first two verses of Auld Lang Syne, the second verse being the problem!

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days of auld lang syne?

And there's a hand my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o'thine.
We'll tak a right gude-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.

If you look up last January's newsletter, it was there!

Burns Supper. A reminder that the St. Andrew's Society of St. John's will hold their Burns Supper at the Legion, Pleasantville on Saturday 24th January. The demonstration team will be dancing and Corryvreckan playing. Tickets are \$30 each, available from Ian Gall, Noreen MacLennan or Robert MacIsaac.

Glenbrook Lodge. Once again we have been asked to dance there on Tuesday, February 3. All our dancers are welcome and for new people, we would explain that this has been a tradition for the last eleven years. They celebrate Burns night and a haggis, donated by the St. Andrew's Society, is piped in. Refreshments are served and we each take a small plate of goodies, suitable for elderly people (no nuts).

We have details of upcoming workshops, balls, etc. posted on the notice board. The **Toronto Tartan Ball** will be held at the Royal York Hotel on February 14th, and the **RSCDS Montreal Branch 40th Anniversary weekend workshop** is scheduled for 5th-7th June. Check the board for others. Information about a Scottish country dance week in Prague in August is being given to Jindra but if anyone is interested, we can retrieve it.

Our branch has a representative in Scotland, Jim Healy, who speaks for us when necessary and attends functions such as the RSCDS annual general meeting, reporting back to us. He has sent a fairly comprehensive report on the AGM and, for those interested, this is also posted on the notice board.

Thought you would enjoy another poem from Pat Batt:

INJURIES

I pulled a muscle last night in class-
I've a great big bandage to prove it.
It's not too bad if I keep it still
But it gives me hell when I move it.

It's rather lucky my twisted knee
Is almost entirely well.
But I'll have to look after the ankle
That's recently started to swell.

My instep is nearly better,
And the pain in my toe's getting less,
But the ligaments round the back of my heel
Are rather a nasty mess.

I had a few days of concussion -
An error in Postie's Jig -
It was only a hairline fracture
But the bump was uncommonly big.

My shoulder has never been quite the same
Since my partner got out of hand
And twizzled me wildly in Hamilton Rant
And I ended up in the band!

Oh, it's lovely to do Scottish dancing,
But to my eternal sorrow
I've decided it's just too rough for me
So I'm taking up Rugby tomorrow.