

Reel Time

Newsletter of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, New Haven Branch

Winter 2003/04

Class Schedules

Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Class
Grace Episcopal Church on the Green, Windsor CT.
Tuesday 7 to 9:45 PM. Contact Barbara Austen (203) 630-9749 or Karen Pestana (860) 298-8311.

Middletown Scottish Country Dancers
First Church of Christ Congregational, 190 Court Street, Middletown CT. Wednesday 7 to 9:30 PM.
Contact Joyce Chase (203) 238-0694 or Lucile Blanchard (860) 347-0278.

New Canaan Kilts & Ghillies Scottish Country Dancers
Millennium School of Irish Dance, 12 Old Mill Road, Georgetown, CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 9:30 PM. Contact Angela Montague (203) 762-9892.

New Haven Branch Scottish Country Dance Class
New Haven Medical Society, 364 Whitney Ave., New Haven CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 10 PM. Contact Dick Platt (203) 878-6094.

Newtown Scottish Country Dancers
St. James Episcopal Church, 25 West St., Danbury, CT. Monday 7:30 to 9:00 PM. Contact Ernie Harrington (203) 938-2881 or ech105@snet.net.

Bethany-Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers
First Church of Christ Congregational Parish House, Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge CT. Friday 7 to 9 PM. Contact Jack & Doreen Johnstone (203) 393-3189.

Upcoming Events

***Ball Workshop** Saturday, February 21, 2004. First Church of Christ Parish Hall, 190 Court Street, Middletown, CT. 2:00-3:00 pm, Waltz, Gay Gordon and others. 3:00-5:30 pm, practice ball dances. Afterward, join us for dinner at a local restaurant. Contact Lucile Blanchard, (860) 347-0278.

Workshop and Tea Dance Saturday, February 28, 2004. First Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Cranbury, NJ. 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, workshop, lunch, tea dance. Music by *Celtic Knot* (See flyer in back.)

***New Haven Branch Highland Ball** Saturday, March 6, 2004. West Hartford Community Center, South Main Street, West Hartford, CT. 5:00 pm to midnight. Music by *Millbrae* with Terry Traub and Dave Wiesler with guest musicians David Knight and Matt Petrie. Sunday Brunch, March 7, New Haven Medical Association Building, 362 Whitney Ave., New Haven, CT. 11:00 am brunch, 12:00 pm dancing. Contact Joyce Chase (203) 238-0694.

New York Branch Spring Workshop for Current and Prospective Teachers Saturday, March 20, 2004. Holy Cross School, 332 West 43rd Street. 9:00 am - 4:30 pm workshop. 8:00-11:30 pm, Spring Dance for all dancers. Teacher, Ron Wallace; music by Jim Stevenson. Contact Sheila Wilson (212) 849-8282 or Chris Ronald at <mailto:CRonald878@aol.com>.

Island Fling Nassau Scottish Country Dancers. Saturday, April 17, 2004. 8:00 pm - midnight. Irish-American Hall, Mineola, NY. Music by *Waverly* (Liz Donaldson, David Knight, Ralph Gordon). Contact Ann Smith (631) 271-5740.

***The Kilts and Ghillies Ball** Saturday, April 24, 2004. South Britain Congregational Church hall.

Rerr Terr RSCDS New Jersey Branch Ball. Saturday, April 24, 2004. 5:30 pm. Christ Church, Ridgewood, NJ. Music by *Highland Whiskey*. Contact Cindy Carlone (908) 876-1330 or <mailto:cindycarlone@msn.com>.

***Third Annual Tea Party** Middletown Class. Wednesday, April 28, 2004. 7:00-9:30 pm. First Church of Christ, 190 Court Street, Middletown, CT. Social dance night with a Scottish tea. No fee.

Pawling Spring Weekend RSCDS New York Branch. May 21-23, 2004. Circle Lodge, Sylvan Lake, Hopewell Junction, NY. Music by Bobby Brown and the *Scottish Accent*. Contact Sheila Wilson (212) 744-1470.

Westchester Ball Westchester Scottish Country Dance Society. Saturday, June 5, 2004. St. John's Episcopal Church, Fountain Square, Larchmont, NY. Music by *Highland Whiskey*. Contact Judy Zingher (914) 592-5862.

* indicates New Haven Branch events.

Can you help the Branch?

The Branch-run food booth at NOMAD has been our main fund-raising event for some years. NOMAD's change of venue this fall raised a problem with the commercial food vendors, and the organizers decided not to allow volunteer food booths like ours to participate. There is some chance that we can talk them into letting us back in next fall, but if this doesn't happen, we will be in dire need of a fund-raising event to keep the Branch treasury in the black. If you have any thoughts on how we can raise money, please let Dick Baxter know. He can be reached at 2 High Ridge Road, Seymour, CT 06483 (snail mail) or <mailto:shorty0424@aol.com>.

Lucile Blanchard

Reminder of New Classes

Peter Price is holding a new series of dance classes on the second Thursday of the month at 8:00 pm at the New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT. The remaining dates for the spring are March 11, April 8 and May 13. For more information, call (203) 675-9587.

Middletown Holiday Dance Party

On the Sunday after Christmas, the Middletown class held their usual holiday dance in the Parish Hall of First Church and thirty-eight people spent the afternoon dancing to the wonderful music of Norb Spencer and his talented friends. Among the dances were three ball dances, so we felt especially virtuous, enjoying ourselves and practicing for the ball at the same time. At the break, Joyce Chase, Betty Muir, Catriona MacAuslan and others served a Scottish tea which was so delicious, it was hard work to get the dancers back on the floor. Joyce invited everyone to a potluck supper at her house after the dance, so the festivities went on into the evening.

Lucile Blanchard

Burns Night in Seymour

We do very little advertising for our Burns Night, hoping a local newspaper will put in a blurb. This year, I preceded the notice with the fact that Jack and I started this event 27 years ago. I got a call from the *New Haven Register's* premium feature writer, Jim Shelton, who came to our house with a photographer and stayed for two hours. His article filled a page of the *Register* and he got most of it right. On Saturday, January 24th, a hundred people came to the church hall, including newcomers from as far away as

Pennsylvania and Oregon. One couple from Fairfield, in their 90's, had received their tickets as Christmas presents and vowed that they would be back next year. The Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers began the evening with demos of a reel, strathspey, jig and gave a terrific performance. Norvin Hein, also in his 90's, said the Selkirk Grace and recited *To a Toothache*. We held our first Burns Night at his house and he is a very dear friend. Jack carried the haggis in the parade led by the piper and gave the *Address to the Haggis*. After the dinner, Theodore Arm, violinist and world-class musician, played a wonderful selection of reels, jigs, strathspeys and other Scottish tunes. Ken Way, a man of many talents, played the hammer dulcimer and sang a "A Man's a Man for a' That." Karen Lavallee-Tente gave a beautiful performance of highland dancing. Diana, my granddaughter, showed the Irish dancing she's been studying for 5 years. Gina Dunlap, well-known in the New Haven area, sang a selection of songs, accompanying herself on the guitar. Our bagpiper, Paul McRanor, the son of Jim and Ellen McRanor, provided the wonderful piping. His daughter and the youngest performer was Ehlana Bellamy-McRanor. She took every opportunity to steal the show and someday may well be a superstar. Leslie Kearney played piano for the sing-a-long and led the Ceilidh dancing at the end of the evening.

Doreen Johnstone

Burns Night in Mystic

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed!
Or like the snow fall in the river,
A moment white – then melts forever,
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm,
Nae man can tether time or tide.

Tam O'Shanter

David G. Lees, a member of the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers and a sword dancer as well as a drummer with the Mystic Highland Pipe Band, saluted the memory of Robert Burns as he presented *The Immortal Memory* at the annual Robert Burns dinner hosted by the Country Dancers on Saturday, January 31 at the Mystic Marriott Hotel in Groton.

Though we cannot stop time, or relive a single moment of it, our 400 or so guests captured the magic of Burns Night and amassed wonderful memories of the night devoted to honoring Robbie the poet, Robbie the humanitarian, Robbie the man of sensitivity to the world about him, and Robbie the lover of nature. We know Robbie would have spoken eloquently about the moon that shown so brilliantly

on the snow on the 31st as we made our way into the hotel ballroom. And there was Robbie's portrait flanked by the St. Andrews flag and the Rampant Lion flag. Lads and lassies were resplendent in handsome kilts and frocks with tartans abounding. What a fine sight!

We were treated to a rich array of all things Scottish in an evening that was all too short. The 30-member Mystic Highland Pipe Band was led into the ballroom by Drum Major Bob Scent and Pipe Major Karen Trant. The band's superior presentation set the stage for the entire night from *Scotland the Brave* and a stirring Drum Salute to an outstanding sword dance and the moving rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*. The program included a performance of the Stirling Highland Dance Company; the young women were precision in motion. Our Scottish Country Dancers danced the elegant *John McAlpin*, a strathspey, and a lively reel, *Bhratach Bana*. Several of Robbie's more familiar poems, *To a Louse* and *To A Mouse*, were recited to the delight of one and all.

Andrew Fraser of Sparta, NJ held the audience spellbound with his address *To a Haggis* as he most eloquently described the ceremony. Then one and all were asked to react as a haggis would upon its demise as the dirk "cut you up wi' ready slight, Trenching your gushing entrails bright ... and Then, O what a glorious sight, Warm-reekin', rich." The enthusiastic audience provided glorious sound effects that would have thrilled Robbie! Andrew's dad, George Fraser, performed *To a Haggis* for us until his death in 1996. Andrew had been apprentice in training while his dad waxed eloquent, and he then took on the recitation. We were delighted to welcome Andrew's son Alexander who is now in training and will be the 3rd generation of the family to offer the Ode in years to come.

The sumptuous buffet dinner, including haggis and neeps, was followed by toasts to the President, the Queen, the lassies, the laddies, the performers, and our Master of Ceremonies Neil Sharpe then paid the Piper – sipping superior Scotch from a handsome quaigh! Dancing came next – Scottish social dances plus, and we tripped the light fantastic until midnight. All too quickly it was time to join hands for the singing of *Auld Lang Syne*. After such a bonnie evening we are looking forward to the 12th of February next year when we will host Burns Night 2005! Mark your calendars now!

We left the hotel with thoughts of the last stanza of *The Star O'Robbie Burns* that states:

On fame's emblazon'd page enshrin'd his name is
foremost now,

And many a costly wreath's been twin'd to grace his
honest brow.
And Scotland's heart expands wi' joy whene'er the day
returns
That gave the world its peasant boy, Immortal Robbie
Burns.

Ruth Holland Walsh

Update on Scotland Trip

Hello from your local tour operator!! A bit of information on our upcoming **RSCDS New Haven Branch Scotland 2004 trip** in September. I traveled to Scotland in January to investigate the property we had decided was the place for us. Very very nice with a long winding drive, lovely gardens even in mid-winter, gracious and helpful staff. Sooo ... the trip is on and the spaces are all booked with 15 dancers and 4 nondancers. We have switched the dates around a bit to accommodate those folks who wanted to stay 2 weeks and spend the second week touring Scotland. The dates are Sept. 3-12 and Sept. 3-19.

I met with the various classes/groups that we will be dancing with and they are all very excited about our visit. Most importantly, their classes resemble ours in so many ways, fun/laughter/good and not-so-good dancing! They will talk through our dances at each location. What a relief!! So far we are booked for Sunday, Sept. 5 in Inverness with the Glen Orrin dancers, Tuesday, Sept. 7 with the Stirling RSCDS branch, Thursday, Sept. 9 (still tentative) with the Edinburgh RSCDS, and Saturday, Sept. 11 with the Helensburgh RSCDS class, who have already booked hall/band and developed a program! I am also working at having an RSCDS teacher come to our home-away-from-home to teach one of the evenings/afternoons. That is still in the works. Sightseeing during the day, evenings at home, pub visits are all on the agenda. If you would like to be on the waiting list, let me know. There's always a chance that someone won't be able to go.

Catriona MacAuslan

Pinewoods Scholarship

As you may know, a scholarship in memory of Dick Morrison, past president of the RSCDS New Haven Branch, was established some years ago. Each year it is awarded to a promising young Scottish country dancer for one session at Pinewoods. Further details can be found on the application form attached. This year's deadline is March 15. If you are interested or know of a dancer who might be, please consider applying.

Ghillies Worn Out?

The Middletown class has an assortment of new ghillies for sale. If you are in need, call Joyce or Lucile (see Class Schedule for numbers).

The Etiquette of Scottish Country Dancing

Choosing Partners

Dance with as many different partners as possible during parties or classes. *All* members of a host group are expected to ask out-of-towners, guests, and newcomers to dance and to make them feel welcome. It is acceptable for the less experienced to ask an 'expert' to dance and for a woman to ask a man. Dance often with a partner whose expertise is different from your own so that all help each other. Ask a partner to dance just prior to the announcement of the dance. Don't book dances ahead, with occasional exceptions for a particularly special dance or for a particularly special partner.

Forming Sets

Begin forming the sets *after* the dance is announced. Longwise sets are formed from the top of the room (nearest the music). Each couple joins *only at the bottom* of the nearest line. A square, triangular, or round-the-room set can be joined in any position. If one person of a couple is temporarily alone in line, that person, man or woman, stands on the men's side until the lines are counted. The man at the top of the line counts the sets. When reaching the bottom of the line, he indicates to the MC how many couples are needed. He then lets him know when the sets in his line are complete. If you are not comfortable with your place in the set, you may ask another couple in the same set if they are willing to exchange places. Do not leave a set after the set is formed or the lines are counted. *Never* leave a set during the dance except for an injury or other emergency and be sure to announce your departure to the rest of the set.

Dance Reminders

'Cheat' sheets contain brief notes or diagrams giving only the essentials of how to do a dance. Refer to these sheets *before* the talk-through only, not during the dance. If you and your partner are sharing a sheet, stand on the men's side so that the line can be counted off easily. A talk-through, or briefing, by the MC provides instructions spoken once before the dance begins. Expect to hear these instructions given in 8-bar phrases. Listen and imagine the pattern of each phrase. Do *not* talk to neighbors during the talk-through.

During the Dance

Smile and look at your partner during the bow and curtsy at the beginning and end of the dance. Keep lines straight, step up or down on the correct bars, be alert and helpful to others. Smile, make eye contact with the other dancers, and be friendly to help add to the social enjoyment of all. It's all right to make a mistake! Sort yourselves out and keep dancing. You may often have to reposition the set for the beginning of the next figure or repetition of the dance, then wait for the appropriate point in the music. Help your partner and other dancers with eye contact, gestures, and quiet instructions. Don't shout instructions or shove others into position.

At the End of the Dance

Thank your partner and your set, then walk with your partner off the floor.

Thanks to *Ken Way*



RSCDS New Haven Branch Officers:

President	Dick Baxter (203) 735-5079
Secretary	Ena Baxter (203) 735-5079
Treasurer	Brian Haeckler (203) 732-1017
Branch Class	George Thomson (203) 230-8551
Teacher Comm.	Ken Way (860) 653-5258
Intergroup	Don Wills (860) 434-0415
At Large	Mary Byrnie (860) 635-4056 Bob Byrnie (860) 635-4056 Catriona MacAuslan (203) 421-4060
Membership	Ed Davis (203) 264-087
Newsletter	Lucile Blanchard (860) 347-0278 lblanchard@wesleyan.edu

Editor's Note



Barbara Austen gave me a glowing recommendation as the new editor of Reel Time. I hope I can live up to even part of her praise. This issue is very much an amateur effort and I apologize in advance for all errors or omissions. Please send along any material you think will be of interest to our readers and I will make sure it shows up here.

Deadline for the next newsletter is **May 15** for publication by the end of the month. I will welcome all of your stories or reports, and particularly all calendar listings, as many of us depend on Reel Time to jog our memory. My home address is 1061 Millbrook Road, Middletown, CT 06457 and my e-mail is <mailto:lblanchard@wesleyan.edu>.

Note to Readers: If you would rather receive Reel Time by e-mail, please send an e-mail message to me

at <mailto:lblanchard@wesleyan.edu> so that I will have your preferred address.