

# Reel Time

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

Winter 2005

## Class Schedules

*Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Class*  
Grace Episcopal Church on the Green, Windsor CT.  
Tuesday 7:00 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 7:00 to 9:30 pm.  
Contact Joyce Chase 203-238-0694 or Lucile Blanchard 860-347-0278.

*Mystic Scottish Country Dancers*  
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 310 Fort Hill Road, Groton, CT. Friday 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Contact Linda Scent 860-464-9081 or Everett Munro 860-442-7283.

*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 or Peter Price 203-675-9587.

*New Haven Branch Scottish Country Dance Class*  
New Haven Medical Society, 364 Whitney Ave., New Haven CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 10:00 pm. Contact Dick Platt 203-878-6094 or George Thomson 203-230-8553.

*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 <mailto:ech105@snet.net>.

*Bethany-Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers*  
First Church of Christ Congregational Parish House, Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge, CT. Friday 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Contact Doreen Johnstone 203-393-3189 or Donna Ives 203-393-3713.

In addition, be sure to check out some special classes such as *Peter Price's class*, held on the second Thursday of the month, 8:00 PM, the New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Avenue, New Haven. (Call 203-675-9587 for more information.)

## Upcoming Events

**Ball Workshop** Saturday, February 19, 2005 First

Church of Christ Congregational, 190 Court St., Middletown. 2:00- 5:30 pm, \$8. Dinner afterward at a local restaurant for those who sign up ahead of time. Contact Lucile Blanchard, 860-347-0278.

**Workshop and Tea Dance** Saturday, February 26, 2005 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. First Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Cranbury, NJ. \$35, includes lunch. Workshop, lunch, tea dance. Music by *Celtic Knot*; Teacher, Fiona Miller. Contact Bart Jackson, 609-936-0891.

**New Haven Branch Highland Ball** Saturday, March 5, 2005, West Hartford Community Center, South Main St., West Hartford. 5:00 pm to midnight. Music by *Local Hero*. Contact <mailto:joyceschase@cox.net>.  
**Sunday Brunch**, March 6, New Haven Medical Association Building, 362 Whitney Ave., New Haven. 11:00 am brunch, 12 noon dancing.

**Rerr Terr** RSCDS New Jersey Branch Ball. Saturday, March 12, 2005. First Presbyterian Church, 64 Passaic St., Hackensack, NJ (new location). Music by *Highland Whiskey*. Contact Jane Fraser, 201-825-8033 or Elaine Enger, 201-567-8727.

**Challenge Class** Thursday, March 31, 2005. First Church, 190 Court St., Middletown. 7:00-9:30 pm, \$8.00. Kent Smith, teacher. Call Lucile Blanchard 860-347-0278 or Joyce Chase 203-238-0694 for more information.

**Island Fling** Nassau Scottish Country Dancers Saturday, April 2, 2005. Irish American Center, 297 Willis Ave., Mineola, Long Island, NY. 7:00 pm, \$32.50. Music by Lissa Schneckenburger, Tom Pixton. Call Ann Smith, 631-271-5740 or David Goldberg, 516-295-2327.

**Challenge Class** Thursday, April 21, 2005. First Church, 190 Court St., Middletown. 7:00-9:30 pm, \$8.00. Jim "Fergie" Ferguson, teacher. Call Lucile Blanchard 860-347-0278 or Joyce Chase 203-238-0694 for more information.

**Fourth Annual Tea Party**, Middletown Class Wednesday, April 27, 2005. First Church of Christ, 190 Court St., Middletown. 7:00-9:30 pm, no fee. Social dance night with a Scottish tea.

**Kilts and Ghillies Ball** Saturday April 30, 2005. South Britain Congregational Church, East Flat Rd., Southbury, CT. Music by Terry Traub, Alice Backer, Beth Murrey.

**Pawling Spring Weekend**, RSCDS New York Branch May 20-22, 2005. Circle Lodge, Sylvan Lake, Hopewell Junction, NY. Music by Bobby Brown and the *Scottish Accent*. Contact Sheila Wilson, 212-849-8282 or <http://info@rscdsnewyork.org>.

**Westchester Ball** Westchester Scottish Country Dance Society. Saturday, June 4, 2005. St. John's Episcopal Church, Fountain Square, Larchmont, NY. 5:30 pm. Contact Naomi Lasher, 914-941-7358, or <mailto:nglasher@earthlink.net>.

For information on similar events, check [www.intercityscot.org](http://www.intercityscot.org).

### On a Personal Note

Don Wills has recovered well from knee replacement surgery and has been seen dancing on several occasions. He is back to marching full-time with the Mystic Pipe Band, and took part in their rousing performance at the Mystic Burns Night.

Doreen and Jack Johnstone have made the decision and will be moving to Florida in March. The Woodbridge class will feel their absence strongly and we will all miss their friendly faces. We wish them luck in their new home, and continued dancing.

### Coming Events

Joyce Chase has been a busy lady. When she found out John Wilkinson would be teaching at Pawling this year, she asked if he could add a visit to Middletown before or after that May weekend, and he said he would. Final arrangements for his workshop have yet to be made but we are very pleased by the possibility. Those of us who went to Scotland last September experienced his teaching when he came to Drumkilbo and worked us through the Book 44 dances. By the end of the evening we were in good enough form to join the Stirling group without trepidation.

Then there is Mel Briscoe, a well-known teacher and deviser of dances from Virginia, who will come north in October to give a workshop followed by a dance with live music. We will keep you posted on plans and date, so stay tuned. This will be a very exciting experience for all Scottish country dancers.

### What Exactly Does the Board Do?

Many of you probably have no idea of the organizational structure that supports Scottish country dancing in Connecticut. And it's all done by volunteers, including our teachers who spend a great deal of time preparing their classes and then patiently teaching us. The class officers collect our money, rent the dance space, buy insurance, print up flyers. The money we pay to attend class goes to cover the rent and insurance, and to pay musicians for special parties. The money we send in to become a member of the RSCDS New Haven Branch is split between the Branch and the

RSCDS organization in Edinburgh. For each member, the Branch pays Scotland ten pounds and, as you know, the dollar has lost ground to the pound lately, so this takes more of our \$25 fee than before. Thus the need for fund-raisers like the NOMAD food booth and Catriona's sale.

The Branch board consists of twelve officers, listed at the end of *Reel Time*. They meet once a month or so during the school year, usually at one of the officers' homes. They keep track of the Branch funds, develop and oversee special events such as the Highland Ball, and handle any issues that arise. Every New Haven Branch member is welcome to attend board meetings and I can attest to the fact that they are not long rambling discussions of boring topics. These meetings help to keep the classes going so that you will have somewhere to dance each week and someone to teach you.

Currently there are no term limits written into the Branch rules and officers have served for varying lengths of time. Dick and Ena Baxter are in their third year as President and Secretary and they have stated that they think it's time for others to take over these two positions. The nominating committee will be sounding people out about considering these jobs. If you think you are interested, please don't hesitate to talk to one of the officers or to your teacher. In any case we want to have each class represented on the board in one way or another if possible. So don't take for granted that the dancing will go on without a lot of participation. We need everyone's support.

*Lucile Blanchard*

### November Challenge Class

The major challenge for Leslie Kearney's class, held in Middletown on Thursday, Nov. 18, was to learn a new figure, the *philabeg*, and not confuse it with the *poussette right round* which it closely resembles. The *philabeg* was a big factor in *Macfarlane's Strathspey*, a dance by Bob Campbell, and when we finally mastered it, we enjoyed the whole dance very much. Leslie gave us an evening of strathspeys – *Miss Florence Adam*, *Three Sisters* and *Ythanside*, all by John Drewry and all of them delightful. Thank you, Leslie.

According to Ken Way, the *philabeg* (also phillabeg, philibeg, phillibeg, filibeg, filabeg, or fillibeg – but not fillabeg) is the name of the kilt worn today, different from the great kilt which is a very large piece of tartan cloth wrapped around the body in various ways. From the Celtic, feileadh = plait, beag = little. He read somewhere that this clothing was invented after the Scots were allowed to wear the kilt again, possibly by Sir Walter Scott.

### The Sale of Catriona's "Stuff"

The sale of "MacAuslan Stuff" on Sunday, December 5th went very, very well! I am forever grateful to the helpful hands that spent time sorting, labeling, ironing, giving pricing opinions, setting up, providing tables, selling, collecting money, "steering" customers,

making tea, baking scones, pies and cakes, serving, cleaning up . . . the list goes on! Lucile and Ellie spent a dusty day in and out of my basement revealing items I had totally forgotten I had. It was quite a treasure hunt producing an assortment of handknit sweaters, hats and mittens, beautifully woven plaid scarves, stoles, blankets, a selection of Scottish hats from Glen Garries to Balaclavas, many items made for children, a woman's coat of hand-loomed wool, even books, prints and pottery. They then took loads of finished goods home to iron and price tag. Ellie's cat had a nice soft nest for a while! It was a real transformation from black garbage bags of stuff to neatly ironed and folded goods parading through the door piled so high you could not see the person carrying them!

The day before the sale was spent setting up the bulk of the display. Thank goodness for Peter Leibert's long tables – we would have been lost without them. And also the card tables provided by many that were used to spread sale goods throughout my house, even into the kitchen. I had to hold off putting out the many hanks of yarn until the day of the sale – too much of a temptation for my dogs who found them fun to tug! Then Ellie, Lucile, Joyce, Barbra, Ena, Dick and Elizabeth Muir came early to finish setting up and delegate jobs. Barbra Link even made some festive door swags to supplement the sale. Ken Way brought his dulcimer and let us squeeze him into a small space to provide background music, always a delight to hear. On the television screen we ran a continuous video of our trip to Scotland. People crowded around to re-live the memories.

Joyce and Elizabeth united on the tea front, boiling, scalding, pouring, after Skip made a last minute run to the store for supplies. Elizabeth patrolled the rooms enticing folks to buy. Neiman Marcus could use her as a senior sales person! Ena Baxter settled into her seat of finance and did not move the entire time! Kudos for calculating and collecting. And special thanks for surviving on tea and biscuits and not leaving her post all afternoon! The tea table started in the dining room and spread into the kitchen with baked goods galore, including Steve Rice's wonderful scones – a great spread provided by our excellent bakers and cooks. We also had baked items for sale.

The crowds began arriving in a continual stream for almost four hours. For the five dollar donation, all the tea they could drink as well as eats. Bustle does not begin to describe the activity. People wandered around, tea cup in hand, musing over the woollens or chatting with friends. They tried on sweaters, posed in Sherlock Holmes caps, lived well through chemistry as I took silver clan crests dark with age and cleaned them to a new sparkle! My husband had done his part by calling our friends about the sale; he even introduced himself to our new neighbors in order to tell them to come up and buy. His ulterior motive is an empty basement. As the day wound down, the diehards helped to clean up, leaving me with next to nothing to do. Again, I am

truly grateful. It was with great satisfaction that I was able to give a check for \$500 to the Branch, a percentage of the sales and the entrance fees. It was fun, but I would not have been able to do so much without the help of friends. I feel truly blessed. Thanks!!

*Catriona MacAuslan*

### **Middletown Holiday Party**

Thirty-six dancers from as far as Westchester came to Middletown on December 29th, a Wednesday night, to celebrate the holidays with jigs and reels. Norb Spencer provided the music with three of his musical friends playing various instruments. Susie Petrov joined them at the last minute and got some sturdy helpers to wheel the church piano in from the sanctuary. So it was a lively musical evening. The program Ken Way devised included three ball dances, a helpful step up to learning them, and *New Park* which is one of this year's RSCDS Featured Dances. He also threw in some oddities like *The Rock and the Wee Pickle Tow* and *Ashley Pond's Reel*, Ashley Pond being the name of a man, not a place. In spite of some unfamiliarity, everyone joined the festivities and had a joyous time. The delicious treats at break also fostered the holiday spirit. A fine way to end the year.

Note: For the curious, the RSCDS Featured Dances for 2004-2005 are: *Bonnie Ina Campbell*, *Brechin Lassies*, *Clutha*, *The Diamond Jubilee*, *Green Grow the Rashes*, *Minard Castle*, *Miss Hadden's Reel*, *New Park*, *Nice to See You*, and *Roselath Cross*.

### **First Night in New Haven**

Three four-couple sets danced at the annual New Haven Branch New Year's Eve party, the largest turnout ever in the five years I have been organizing the party. Thanks to everyone who came! The evening started with a rather informal toast to the New Year in Scotland at 7:00 pm EST via television. (Unexpected entertainment provided by a soccer-playing dog named Eli.) We then feasted on a wide variety of sumptuous dishes provided by everyone for the pot luck dinner. Dancing started at 8:30 and, although a number of dancers left early to avoid drunk drivers after midnight (or to prevent a divorce!), we kept dancing until 11:30. By then, I had run out of dances and the dancers had run out of physical energy and brain power. A hardy group remained to don party hats and sip champagne until midnight when we greeted the entry of 2005. As always, thanks to the Byrnies for the decorations which enlivened the dance hall. And thanks to all of the people who helped in the kitchen both before and after. I could never do it without you! See you next December 31 when we gather again to welcome 2006.

*Barbara Austen*

### **Scottish Folk Dancing – First Impressions**

I hadn't been long in the country when the folk I'm staying with suggested I come along and see some of the locals enjoying themselves. So I went with them to the

local school. As soon as I arrived, the natives gathered round and made me feel welcome. They said how pretty I was and what a nice cardigan I had on. I have to agree. It was a white hand-knitted top with pretty blue press studs and a wee bear logo, and I do look fetching in it. After the hullabaloo of my arrival settled down, the head lady had them to get into a circle. They had to point their toes into the middle and waggle them about. Most unimpressive – you should see what I can do. I can tickle my tonsils with my toes. Next, the boss lady told them to stand in straight lines. Oh, dear me! They could cope with the standing bit but the straight lines were too much for them.

Nobody explained to me the nature of the game so I had to figure it out for myself. It seems there are two opposing teams, the men against the ladies. Apparently a lady can sometimes be an honorary man. On a given signal from the boss lady (the referee?) they all knit their foreheads, stare down at the floor and start running in circles, jostling each other by the shoulders, then some fancy footwork and handshaking and after four minutes, they're back where they started, some sooner than others. Keeping such an unruly mob under control must be quite a challenge. I'm not sure how she did it. After all she didn't even have a whistle and I can tell you I'd have red-carded a couple from each team if I'd been in charge. She does seem to have picked up one of my management tools – control the rabble with a smile and a twinkling eye. It works a charm for me every time even though my smile isn't as good as hers yet – I'm still waiting for my teeth.

I have to confess that by the end of the night, these folk and their dancing had really got me going and I started to tap my feet and let out a few loud heughs. Then, know what? My mum checked my nappy. Oh, the indignity of it all!

*Maythu Jean Pettigrew (aged 3 months)*

### **Burns Night I**

On Tuesday, January 25, the Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dancers celebrated two birthdays – Robert Burns' and Steve Rice's. We hold a Burns Night dance party every year, with dances that in some way reflect Burns' life. It is never easy to come up with a program. This year I chose dances based on Burns' songs (*Maggie Lauder*, *Green Grow the Rashes*, *A Man's a Man for A' That*), or with a title related to his life (*The Lads of Ayr* – he lived in Ayr part of his life). I filled in with 18th century dances or others suitable for rounding out the program. Norb Spencer and his group did a great job of keeping the spirit of the night by choosing Burns tunes and he even sang some of them! Sixteen dancers took part in the festivities, knowing ahead of time that this Burns Night almost coincided with Steve's 50th birthday (on January 21). We surprised Steve with a birthday cake while Norb accompanied the celebration with *Happy Birthday*. Thanks to everyone who made the extra effort to come to the party, particularly Marge and Don Wills, Bob

Cole and Lucile Blanchard, all of whom danced in spite of a variety of physical ailments. Steve also thanks everyone for coming and helping him transition into the next half-century. He especially thanks Barbara for putting it on while keeping it so secret.

*Barbara Austen*

### **Burns Night II**

Originally scheduled for January 22nd in Seymour, the weather interfered so it was held on Saturday, January 29th at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Bethany. Doreen and Jack Johnstone have been the movers and shakers for this event for 28 years and they certainly have worked out a fine program. The tables in the church hall were filled when Paul McRanor piped in the haggis, followed by Jack, George Thomson, Don Wills, Bob Byrnie, Catriona MacAuslan and Neil Johnstone. Jack addressed the haggis and glasses were raised in toasts to all the important figures. Dinner was delicious and the ceilidh program that followed was very entertaining. (I must apologize for this inexact listing of the performers. Doreen learned on Sunday morning after the supper that her brother died in Scotland, so she flew there for two weeks. With the deadline of publication looming, I am writing this for her without access to the names of every performer and helper.) George Thomson and Kate Mahoney impressed us all with their many musical talents. The twins, Trish and Nell, sang some lovely songs, accompanied by Andy on the guitar. Leslie Kearney directed the Woodbridge dancers through several lively demo dances, then played the piano for our sing-along. Ken performed a variety of Scottish tunes on the hammer dulcimer. Norvin Hein read some poems. And a girl named Emily showed us two Highland dances. At the very end, those of us still willing to put on our ghillies danced a selection briefed by Leslie. A fine evening for all.

*Lucile Blanchard*

### **Burns Night III**

Robert Burns told us of his birth and life in a poem entitled Robin:

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane (1759)  
Was five-and-twenty days begun,  
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'  
Blew handsel in on Robin. (first gift)

. . . . .  
Robin was a rovin' boy,  
Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin';  
Robin was a rovin' boy,  
Rantin' rovin' Robin!

So it is that Scots all over the world celebrate Robbie's birth and all that he achieved in his 37 short years. Burns Dinners traditionally include speeches honoring his Immortal Memory, songs including *Auld Lane Syne*, poems including *To a Mouse*, verbal portraits of his life and times in *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and of course partaking of "a dram" to focus on the present, bring the past more vividly to life and add a rosy glow to

the future. An integral part of the evening is the *Address to the Haggis* complete with its ritual presentation and the ceremonial opening of the haggis with a sharp dirk. All of this happened in Southeastern Connecticut on February 12th when the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers hosted a gala 246th anniversary celebration of Robbie's birth. Our 440 tartan-clad guests gathered at the Groton Inn and Suites for a wonderful evening of all things Scottish from start to finish. The formal part of the program began with a stirring presentation by the Mystic Highland Pipe Band.



We were inspired by Dave Lees' toast to the Immortal Memory and recitations of Burns' poems by great Scotsmen, then watched some beautiful dancing by the Stirling Highland Dance Company as well as the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers. Before Andrew Fraser's address *To a Haggis*, he invited the audience to assist him by providing the essential sound effects which we did with vigor!



After a "healsome" dinner and the toasts, we took to the dance floor for some Scottish social dancing as well as round dancing – an evening filled with good cheer and fellowship.

A' blessings on the cheery gang,  
 Wha dearly like a jig or sang.  
*Ruth Holland Walsh*

RSCDS New Haven Branch Officers:

President	Dick Baxter (860) 314-0363
Secretary	Ena Baxter (860) 314-0363
Treasurer	Richard Ives (203) 393-3713
Branch Class	George Thomson (203) 230-8551
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At Large	Mary Byrnie (860) 635-4056
	Bob Byrnie (860) 635-4056
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**Editor's Note**

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. 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.