

Reel Time

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

Autumn 2005

Class Schedules

Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Class
Grace Episcopal Church on the Green, Windsor CT.
Tuesday 7:00 to 9:30 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.

Kilts & Ghillies Scottish Country Dancers Millennium School of Irish Dance, 12 Old Mill Road, Georgetown, CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 10:00 pm. Contact Angela Montague 203-762-9892 or Peter Price 203-675-9587.

Mystic Scottish Country Dancers St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 310 Fort Hill Road, Groton, CT. Friday 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Contact Ruth Walsh 860-536-6265 or www.mysticscottishdancers.com

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 Leslie Kearney, 203-281-6591.

Newtown Scottish Country Dancers St. James Episcopal Church, 25 West St., Danbury, CT. Monday 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Contact Ernie Harrington 203-938-2881 or Ed Davis, 203-264-0870.

Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers First Church of Christ Congregational Parish House, 5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge, CT. Friday 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Contact Donna Ives 203-393-3713 or Mollie Keller, 203-375-2840.

Upcoming Events

Medford Boston Branch Benefit Ball Saturday, Dec. 3, 2005, Springstep Center, 98 George P. Hassett Dr., Medford, MA. 5:30-11:00 pm. \$25. Music by *Sprig of Ivy*. Contact Lance Ramshaw, 978-371-8030.

New Haven Class Christmas/Holiday Party Sunday, Dec. 4, 2005, Medical Association, Whitney Ave., New Haven, CT. 4:00-6:30 pm. Contact Leslie Kearney at <mailto:LKDJQ@aol.com> for more information.

Windsor Holiday Party Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2005, Grace Episcopal Church, 311 Broad St., Windsor, CT. 7:30 pm.

\$10. Music by Norb Spencer & friends. Contact Karen Pestana at kjg3@email.med.yale.edu for more info.

Middletown Holiday Party Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2005, First Church, 190 Court Street, Middletown, CT. 7:30 pm. \$8.00. Music by Norb Spencer. Call Lucile Blanchard 860-347-0278 or Joyce Chase 203-238-0694 for more information.

First Night in New Haven Saturday, Dec. 31, 2005 7:00-8:00 pm dinner (potluck), dancing after. \$10 plus potluck dish. Toast in the New Year at midnight. Contact Barbara Austen at <mailto:beausten@att.net> for more information.

Northampton New Year's Day Dinner and Dance Sunday, Jan. 1, 2006. First Churches, 129 Main St., Northampton, MA. 5:30 pm supper (potluck), 7:30 pm dancing. \$10. Music by Earl Gaddis, Peter Barnes.

Robert Burns Dinner and Dance Saturday, Feb. 11, 2006. 5:30 pm to midnight, Groton Inn and Suites. \$45. Music by Finton Stanley International Ceilidh Band. Register on line at <http://www.mysticscottishdancers.com>.
Scottish social dance instruction: Jan. 27, Feb. 3 & 10, 7:00-8:00 pm, St. Andrew Episcopal Church, Groton.

New Haven Branch Highland Ball Saturday, March 4, 2006, West Hartford Community Center, 5:30 pm to midnight. **Sunday Brunch**, Sunday, March 5, New Haven Medical Association Building. 11:00 am. Music by Tom Pixton, Hanneke Cassel, David Knight, Mike MacNinch.
Ball Workshop: Sunday, January 15, 2006 2:00-5:00 pm. New Haven Medical Association Building, 362 Whitney Ave., New Haven.
Ball Workshop: Saturday, February 18, 2006 2:30-5:30 pm. First Church of Christ Congregational, 190 Court St., Middletown.
For more information, <http://www.RSCDSNewHaven.org>

Kilts & Ghillies Ball April 29, 2006. South Britain Congregational Church, Southbury, CT. Music by Terry Traub, Alice Backer, Jim Stevenson-Mathews.

For information on similar events, check <http://www.intercityscot.org>.

A Fine End to Summer

A workshop originally called SummersEnd took place every year on the last weekend in August. It has morphed into Hillsboro Highlands, which is held in a former girls'

camp on Peace Lake in Hillsborough, New Hampshire. The amenities are primitive, but the food is bountiful and tasty. It's the music and the teachers that are the real draw, an unbeatable combination. This year Christine Anderson led a group of five musicians including Terry Traub, Anne Hooper, Howard Lasnik and David Arnold, all of whom played valiantly for the Friday and Saturday night dances, then split up to play for the three classes. The teachers this year were of the usual high standard – Norah Link, Mary-Ellen Scannell and Dale Birdsall. Susan Haines is staunch in her determination to continue to draw us north for a true celebration of summer's end and we clapped loudly when she announced we could count on returning next August.



The Connecticut contingent of six, counting Jim Macnab even though he now lives in New Hampshire, had a lively time together. Some of us eschewed the bare bones cabins and stayed at the local motel, but we spent every waking moment at the camp, if not dancing or eating, then checking out the books and records on sale, enjoying coffee on the lodge porch with the great view of the lake, even swimming. After the Friday night dance, we took flashlights into the woods to find Sally Dee's cabin for the Silly Hat Party. Saturday night's dance was followed by the usual Ceilidh, and I can't print in this newsletter the joke acted out by Joyce Chase and Catriona Macauslan, but the audience roared.

So when the flyers come out next June, think about going to Hillsboro. It's a fine way to round off your summer and revive your dancing muscles. And mostly it's just plain fun.

Challenge Class – September

As nineteen dancers gathered in the Parish Hall of First Church in Middletown on Thursday, Sept. 22nd for the first Challenge Class of the year, Ken Way rubbed his hands together with a grin. He chose the program he was about to teach from unusual dances, as we soon found out. We started with the *Pinewoods Reel*, a popular dance but not done nearly enough, Ken says. From there we tried *Jim Dougal of Eyemouth*, a 32-bar strathspey from a collection by Muriel Johnstone. Next came *Cairn Edward*, an unusual 24-bar jig written in three-bar phrases from Hugh Foss's Galloway Collection. Once we got used to counting in threes, it worked well. The *Hebridean Weaving Lilt* was the big challenge of the evening since it was danced with a

running step, demonstrating the weaving process. We learned this 116-bar reconstruction of a Hebridean pantomime dance in segments, putting them together in longer segments until finally we danced the whole thing through with moderate success. Ken first encountered this dance at a Teachers' Choice class at Pinewoods taught by Jeanetta McColl. *The George Washington Bridge*, a strathspey in a four couple set, contained a novel three-dimensional reel of four. We ended with *The Glenalmond Gamekeeper*, a 32-bar reel devised by John Drewry. It was presented in Middletown many years ago by John Drewry himself, but many of us had only the faintest memory of it. We really liked the way it flowed, in typical Drewry fashion. A fine evening of learning and laughter.

The Mel Briscoe Workshop

Twenty-seven members of the New Haven Branch showed up in Middletown on Saturday afternoon, Oct. 22nd for the Mel Briscoe Workshop. They were taking advantage of the special offer the Board made for all those who paid their 2005-2006 dues early – the workshop was free. And well worth it. Along with ten or so dancers from out of state, we had a fine workout with Mel. He started with deceptively simple discussion and adjustments of our skip step. This led to a *Trip to Gatlinburg* where the women weave in and out of the men's side, and vice versa, making it necessary to vary your step to reach your goal in eight bars. Then we worked on the Pas de Basque, using it in a dance called *Fidget* which had, of course, a lot of setting steps, ending with a Poussette and Double Triangles. After a very short break we changed to strathspey, the Tourbillon figure in particular. This was incorporated in *The Dark Mile*. The workshop ended with *The Belfast Hornpipe* which Mel described as a 90-second dance.

We were sorry when the class was over, but felt refreshed in our technique. Susie Petrov played the accordion for the class, faithfully giving us eight or sixteen bars, or however much music Mel needed. Don and Marge Wills had the idea of making up paper masks of Mel's face, as was done at Pinewoods to celebrate his birthday. When he asked for our attention to start the class, everyone held masks up to their faces so that Mel found himself looking at a roomful of Mels. Many thanks to Joyce Chase and Ken Way for arranging this excellent event.



Since the Middletown class held its fall party the evening of the workshop, dancers spread out through town to sample the many restaurants for dinner. There is Indian, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Mexican and Tibetan fare available, all within walking distance of First Church. For the party dances, Norb Spencer joined Susie Petrov to provide the great music, and Ken Way's program was a pleasure.

On a Personal Note

Don and Ena Baxter's son-in-law is home from Iraq for good, to everyone's joy and relief.

Donna Ives is recovering from surgery on her toes – joints removed, pins inserted, stitches. Amazingly, she expects to come back to dancing in two or three weeks.

Mystic Fall Ceilidh

The Mystic Scottish Country Dancers hosted a Fall Ceilidh on Friday, October 21st at the Groton Inn and Suites. People always ask, "What is a Ceilidh?" We are quick to explain that it is an informal party whose roots go way back! Guests would come from miles around for a lively night of singing, eating, dancing, music, poetry, eating, socializing and even a wee dram of whiskey. We decided it was time to try this again, and we added a raffle for some lovely items, a tartan blanket, a Celtic shawl and a handsome piper doll dressed in the Stewart tartan with pipes and sporran, and more. Harpist Joanne Brown serenaded us with Celtic refrains, accompanied by her young daughter, Sabrina, on the violin. Bob Scent, the Master of Ceremonies, invited one and all to join in the fun, sing a song, tell a joke, dance a dance, and just enjoy. And enjoy we did! Cassie Fagan treated us to energetic and skillful Highland dances. She is the daughter of Sarah Fagan, a member of the Stirling Highland Dance Company. Becky and Rick Corbett performed on fifes which they play with a fife and drum corps in Rhode Island. Pipers from the Mystic Highland Pipe Band joined them for several great tunes. We heard lowland pipes, shuttle pipes as well as the great Highland pipes. Don Wills, fully recovered from last year's total knee replacement, not only played the pipes but joined in several dances with Marge. Later, band members Dave Lees and Erik Hluchan demonstrated the intricacies of a traditional sword dance.

Peter Leibert played the concertina and explained the how-tos of that instrument as well as the button accordion and the pipe and tabor. He then played for a social dance. Both Peter and Everett Munro are not only Scottish country dancers but also members of the Morris Men organization who perform at many functions from the Westerly Summer Pops to the first day of spring ritual at the top of Lantern Hill in North Stonington. A fine guitarist played and sang familiar tunes from Bonny Scotland. A hilarious pantomime joke was performed by four members of the Middletown class. Catriona MacAuslan was a bus driver, Joyce Chase a passenger boarding the bus, with Elizabeth Muir and Lucile Blanchard as passengers. The winning raffle tickets were drawn. We all ate and ate, then danced off the calories.

Plans are already afoot for our 2006 Fall Ceilidh at the Groton Inn and Suites on October 21st. Mark that date and plan to join us!

Ruth Holland Walsh

Jeannie Carmichael Ball

For years I had heard of the Jeannie Carmichael Ball, held by the New York Branch, but I never attended. This year a group of Middletown dancers decided to go and I joined them for a very interesting weekend. The Ball is given on the West Point campus in the Thayer Hotel which sits on a cliff overlooking the Hudson River. Our rooms were comfortable and we shared the hotel with several wedding parties. The New York dancers were pleased to have eight of us from Connecticut, and we danced the evening away in the grand ballroom to the music of Muriel Johnstone and Jim Lindsay. The after-ball party found us crammed into a smaller room where we could watch barge lights passing on the river. After the morning brunch, we danced another whole program, including several dances that took all our concentration to perform. We felt guilty because of the conflict with NOMAD in New Haven, and we hope that next year's Ball will not be held on the same weekend.

Lucile Blanchard

Report on NOMAD

The NOMAD food booth was very much a repeat of last year. It was nice to see that all the New Haven Branch classes contributed a wide selection of baked goods for us to sell, and they sold very well. Porridge was back on the menu this year, with Susan Leff doing an outstanding job serving. Volunteers came to help set up, display the food, make coffee and tea, and sell, working very well together. All Branch classes were represented which was heartening to see. Thanks to everyone for their time and effort. At the end of the weekend, the Branch had a profit of \$1,262, a very positive addition to our assets.

Dick Baxter, Ena Baxter, Stephen Rice

Challenge Class – November

On November 10th, thirteen brave ones gathered in Middletown for Kent Smith's Challenge Class. This time he focused on corner-pass-and-turn as well as several figures which are rarely danced. We were truly challenged but by the end felt we had learned and benefited a great deal from his teaching. One real advantage was that this class was evenly divided among men and women, with Kent filling in as the fourteenth dancer.

Starting with *Three in Schiehallion*, a three-couple dance like *Wind on Loch Fyne*, we struggled with the Schiehallion Reel, finally mastering it well enough to complete the dance although I'm sure we didn't have the finesse of more practiced sets. *Cairn Edward*, with music composed in 3-bar phrases, had many muttering *one-two-three* as we danced the jig. *Silver Anniversary*, one of Kent's own dances, gave us a chance to practice the Bourrel, not to be confused with the Burl which the RSCDS

condemns even though we found it practiced by many dancers in Scotland. The Burl actually showed up in *Sprig of Ivy*, a four-couple set dance with corner-pass-and-turn. From there we turned to *Rocks of Solitude*, a strathspey with the Tourbillon and the Highland Schottische which was danced in Allemande position by three couples down the set. The evening ended with *Domino Five*, a romp of a dance for five people with one of them in the middle. Altogether a fine class and we hope more Branch members will take advantage of these special opportunities next spring.

Party Programs

Windsor Holiday Party, Tuesday, Dec. 6:

The Happy Meeting	32J2	29:9
The Fudge Factor	32R3	Nutmeg Coll.
Lady Glasgow	32S3	MMMI
Laird of Milton's Daughter	32J3	22:10
Reeling at St. Paul's	32R3	Let's All Dance, Too
Winstanley House	32S3	Let's All Dance, Too
Rory O'Moore	32J2	1:9
Monymusk	32S3	11:2
The Sailor	32H3	24:4

Middletown Holiday Party, Wednesday, Dec. 28:

Border Meeting	32J2 RR	Goldring 24 G&S
The Silver Tassie	32S3	L/1
Catch the Wind	32H3	45/5
The Chequered Court	32J3	42/3
The Saltire Society Strathspey	32S4Cset	45/4
The Black Mountain Reel	32R5Cset	Glendarroch
Joie de Vivre	32J3	39/2
Gang the Same Gate	32S3	36/4
The White Cockade	32R3	5/11
Follow Me Home	32J3	38/3
Peggy's Love	32S3	8/2
The Duke of Perth	32R3	1/8
Extra: The Button Boy	32R3	Allenton Col.

First Night in New Haven, Saturday, Dec. 31:

The Frisky	32J3	26:10
Maxwell's Rant	32R3	18:10
Castle Douglas	32S3	Goldring
Pelorus Jack	32J3	41:1
The Duke of Perth	32R3	1:8
Adieu Mon Ami	32S3	24:11
Ladies' Fancy	32J2	13:12
The Minister on the Loch	32S3	Goldring 24 G&S
Starlight	32R3	44:1
Joie de Vivre	32J3	39:13
Monymusk	32S3	11:2
Riggs of Corn	32R2	Glasgow As'mbly
Mrs. Stewart's Jig	32J3	35:1
Balquidder Strathspey	32S3	24:2
The Reel of the Royal Scots	32R3	Leaflet:7

Please note: All programs are subject to change.

No Robert Burns Supper

Sadly there will be no Robert Burns Supper in Seymour this year. With Doreen and Jack Johnstone in Florida now, the Woodbridge class decided it would be a mistake to try to continue the tradition without their unique touch.

Since we are approaching the time of year when Rabbie Burns' birthday will be celebrated with song, dance and feasting on haggis, I thought this next item would be appropriate, thanks to Dick Platt.

The Art of Haggis Hunting

A strange and eerie sound drifts slowly down the glen, "uisge beatha! uisge beatha!" The sun is peeping over the horizon, but none can feel the warm rays through the swirling mist. The men are huddled by the traditional "siggah" rock, chanting and taking turns at the cask with the golden water of life. Suddenly, a tracker appears on the heathery slope and calls, "haggi! haggi!" In a flash, the men are up and running, spreading out in the ancient hunting pattern which each had learned as a boy. To catch a wild haggis in these days of scarcity would make a living legend of the team involved.

The most difficult part of the ancient art of haggis hunting is actually locating the beast and then chasing it in the right direction. The haggis has evolved to be just a bit faster than the fittest man and more sure-footed than a mountain goat. It runs along the hillside using its two long legs and the one short leg to maximum advantage. Once it slips through the hunting line, it can be gone into the gorse in a flash. The hunters must keep behind and on the uphill side so that the haggis is gradually driven down to lower ground. This can take over three hours, but once the critter is down on the glen floor the advantage swings quickly in favor of the hunters – because of its uneven legs the haggis can only run in circles when on flat ground.

As soon as the hunters see a haggis circling in this fashion they surround it, and bring up the cask for celebratory refreshment. Within about twenty minutes, the haggis can be found lying flat out through dizziness and exhaustion. Not long after that, the men will be seen lying flat out around the haggis, with an empty cask rolling amongst them!

The Art of Haggis Preparation

The snowflakes flutter and crash against the kitchen window as the high-pitched sounds of chattering women escape out into the white haze. Inside, the stove gives warmth to the grizzly scene – hearts and livers being chopped up with gay abandon. At first glance, a stranger might think they had stumbled on a covey of witches practicing an ancient craft. Of course, the knowledgeable Scot would know that this is the initial ritual in the ancient art of haggis preparation. Then comes more chop-chopping and in goes the suet and the onions . . . and what is left of the sherry — no, the whisky goes in the haggis and the sherry goes to the cooks.

The aroma of roasting oatmeal wafts its way into the air and causes a few smiles. Along with vegetable stock and seasoning, the strange mixture is packed into some unfortunate ewe's stomach (or a sausage skin if the sheep were clever enough to avoid those nice ladies). After boiling for three hours the concoction begins to resemble a haggis. At this point a fresh bottle of sherry appears and disappears, the women laugh louder, convinced that their spell has been successful. They actually believe that they spirited the creation of a wild haggis while the men were still out bonding around that "siggah" rock.

How did this ritual come to pass? Well, ever since the redcoats came north and shot everything on sight, wild haggis have been almost extinct. Some clever women knew that it troubled the men to go on a haggis hunt and come back empty-handed, so a substitute was created. On those bleak, misty, hunting days the women would wait till the whisky cask was empty, then go and quietly place their haggis in amongst the snoring hunters. For decades, it was a well-kept secret with only an occasional wink as the men returned triumphant, haggis in hand and ready for roasting. Tatties and neeps would be taken from the special store and boiled just right as the haggis roasted, and the men would go in search of another cask so the whole village could celebrate. Rabbie Burns knew better:

“Fair fa’ yer HONEST sonsie face!”

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	Leslie Kearney (203) 281-6591
Teacher Comm.	Ken Way (860) 653-5258
Intergroup	Don Wills (860) 536-1981
At Large	Mary Byrnie (860) 635-4056
	Bob Byrnie (860) 635-4056
	Joyce Chase (203) 238-0694
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	421-4060
	Nina Stein (203) 757-2539
Membership	Ed Davis (203) 264-087
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	lblanchard@wesleyan.edu

Editor's Note

Deadline for the next newsletter is **February 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.

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.