

Reel Time

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

Spring 2007

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.mysticsscottishdancers.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 203-664-1315 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.

Peter Price's Class Second Thursday of the month, 8:00 pm, New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Ave., New Haven. Summer dates: June 14, July 12, August 9. This class welcomes everyone with an interest in Scottish country dancing.

Note: The *New Haven Class* hopes to hold its Tuesday Summer Social classes, the location to be announced.

Upcoming Events

Challenge Class Thursday, May 17, 2007.
Green Street Arts Center, 51 Green St., Middletown.
7:00-9:30 pm, \$8. Kent Smith, teacher. For more information, Barbara Austen at beausten@att.net.

Pawling Spring Weekend May 18-20, 2007. Circle Lodge, Hopewell Junction, NY. \$225 or \$295. Teachers: Mel Briscoe, Ruth Jappy, Graham Donald. Music, Bobby Brown's *Scottish Accent*. Contact Sally Clayton, mitzzu@hotmail.com or Ellen Sears, ellen@tlotsondesign.com

Rhode Island Scottish Highland Festival Saturday, May 19, 2007, 9 am to 5 pm. Washington County Fairgrounds, Rt. 112 South, Richmond RI (Exit 3 off Rt. 95 North). For more information, www.riscot.org/

Westchester Ball Saturday, June 2, 2007. St. John's Episcopal Church, Larchmont, NY. \$35. Music by Terry Traub, Liz Donaldson, Hanneke Cassel. Contact Mary Zagami, 718-823-0119 for more information.

Northampton End of Season Party Saturday, June 9, 2007. First Churches. 5:30: Potluck, \$1 plus dish; 7:30: Dance, \$10. Music by Tom Pixton.

Summerdance XVIII at the United Nations fund-raising for UNICEF. Saturday, June 23, 2007. \$15. 12:30-4:00 pm. Contact Sheila Wilson 212-744-1470 or info@rscdsnewyork.org

84th Round Hill Scottish Games Saturday, June 30, 2007. Cranbury Park, Norwalk, CT. For more information, www.RoundHill.org.

English-Scottish Pinewoods Session July 2-6, 2007 Pinewoods Camp, Plymouth, MA. Teachers: Ron Wallace, Graham Christian. Contact Marianne Taylor 603-463-7771.

Scottish Pinewoods Session I July 6-9, 2007
Scottish Pinewoods Session II July 9-14, 2007
More info, Bob-Littlehale@comcast.net

TAC Summer School July 29-Aug. 5, 2007
See TAC website: <http://tac-rscds.org>.

New Hampshire Highlands (formerly Hillsboro Highlands) Friday-Sunday, August 24-26, 2007. \$155. Teachers: Dale Birdsall, Stella Fogg, Charlie Inglis. St. Methodios Faith & Heritage Center, Contoocook, NH For more information, Morven Troost, 207-967-3813 or Loren.Wright@nashuascd.com

Nutmeg Camp Saturday, Sept. 8, 2007. 12 noon to 9:00 pm, \$25. Incarnation Center, Ivoryton, CT. Robert McOwen, Kent Smith, teachers. Music by Norb Spencer,

Susie Petrov. For more information, Lucile Blanchard at 860-327-0278 or lblanchard@wesleyan.edu.

Jeannie Carmichael Ball Saturday, Nov. 3, 2007
Thayer Hotel, West Point, NY. Music by Dave Wiesler & Hanneke Cassel.

Check www.intercityscot.org for similar events.

2007 New Haven Highland Ball Weekend

This year's ball was attended by approximately 150 people from twelve different states. The Mystic Scottish Dancers turned out in force, a number of whom came for the first time this year. The welcoming committee consisted of George Thomson piping on the steps and Susan Wall greeting us at the door. Walking into the auditorium, we felt as if we were walking into a spring garden, thanks to the lovely pink and lavender flowers that Catriona MacAuslan chose to decorate the tables.

The band, Thistle House, was fantastic, providing lively and excellent music. The ball program, devised by Kent Smith, was easy on the brain and appreciated by all in attendance. The brunch program, devised by Barbara Austen, added a bit of spice to the weekend, with a few more challenging, but not terribly difficult, dances. The brunch was excellent, thanks to the organizational skills of the brunch coordinators, Ellie Toy and Lucile Blanchard, and to all the members of the New Haven Branch who contributed the delicious food.



Barbra Link, Ellie Toy, Jane Leibert, Lucile Blanchard

As always, the success of the weekend was a result of hard work done by the dedicated members of the New Haven Branch who pitched in and did whatever was needed. Many people have particular jobs that they do every year, without even being asked. They happily offer to bring items that they know we will need, or to come early, or stay late to set up or clean up. Without their help, this ball would not be what it is – a high-energy, friendly and all-out fun event for everyone who comes, wherever they're from. Thank you, every one of you, for everything that you did this year.

Your Ball Committee is already hard at work preparing for next year's Highland Ball Weekend. Mark

your calendars now – we hope to see you on March 1 and 2, 2008. Same time, same place.

Barbra Link and Jane Leibert, Ball Chairs

Why Do They Do It?

I recently had the pleasure of attending my first Highland Ball hosted by the New Haven Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. I have been a member of the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers for years, but had never attended a ball. I confess that I found the idea of learning and practicing the steps for eighteen dances and then trying to remember the steps while dancing with someone I had just met to be somewhat intimidating. On top of that, just dancing that many dances in one evening had to be physically taxing. Since the proper way to dance is on your toes, it would inevitably result in worn out calf muscles, tired and sore feet, and just plain aches and pains. I always wondered, "Why do they do it?"

After attending the ball, I now know the answer to that question. There are many parts to the answer, but in the final summary it is actually quite simple. Before the dancing even starts there is an opportunity to socialize and make new friends. After dinner the guests all prepare for the Grand March. In my opinion the word 'grand' is a gross understatement. The march is a magnificent display of color and pageantry with the men in tartan kilts and the women in their finest gowns. From the ground level, I marched to the tune of pipe music, arm in arm with my partner in a pattern that let me see and greet many other dancers. We continued until finishing in the center of the ballroom with all couples facing the stage to sing anthems together. I can only imagine how this march appeared to someone looking down from the mezzanine.

Then the dancing started. In sets we listened to a description of the dance. Some dancers read the instructions in their dance books like students cramming for a final exam. Others had a quiet look of concentration on their faces as they visualized the pattern in their head. Still others had a confident look of anticipation for the music to start. I was nervous for the first dance and prayed that I would not make a wrong turn or forget to move and cause a collision that might disrupt the dance. All of those feelings vanished when the music started. While still nervous and thinking way too hard about what to do, I was swept up by the unbridled enthusiasm and simple joy on the faces of everyone as they danced to the fiddle. It didn't matter if I made a mistake or turned the wrong way, there were seven other people there to help me get back to my position.

After the first dance, the rest of the evening just seemed to flash by. A reel, a jig, a strathspey and on and on. It was not uncommon to see people panting after a particularly lively dance while at the same time raising their hand to the band to signal 'one more time.' Yes, my muscles did get tired, my feet did get sore. But if any-

thing, my dancing grew more and more lively as the evening progressed. I noticed other dancers throwing in additional moves and styled steps as they were captured by the music and the spirit of the evening. Everyone seemed to put all that they had left into the last dance, *The Reel of the Royal Scots*, and then did the dance a second time. The evening concluded with an exhausted but exhilarated band of dancers joining hands for a rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*.

So what is the simple answer to "Why do they do it?" It is fellowship and brotherhood. The highland ball is the epitome of the dream of Scottish poet Robert Burns of universal brotherhood and compassion. Where else is there such a fine example of so many different people getting together for an evening to share their good will and fellowship through music and dance?

Dave Lees

Note: Dave Lees is a Mystic Scottish country dancer who attended his first Highland Ball this year. He and his wife Jody are members of the Mystic Highland Pipe Band as well. Dave is a tremendous supporter of "all things Scottish" and delivered *The Immortal Memory* at the Mystic Burns Night dinner. In addition, he choreographed the Sword Dance presentation by the Band.

Challenge Class 2

The ten dancers who gathered on Thursday, March 22nd for the first of the spring Challenge Classes were in for an entertaining evening of dance, history and music. The space, a dance studio in the new Green Street Arts Center, was a welcome practice room, and Peter Price prepared an exciting program. He started off with *Carla-verock Castle*, a reel of his devising.



Carluverock Castle, Dumfries, Scotland

Another reel he taught, *John Paul Jones' Apology to Lady Selkirk*, has quite a story behind it. John Paul, born in Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland, was accused of murdering a sailor in Tobago so he added Jones to his name to avoid the British authorities. We know him as the captain of the *Bonhomme Richard* which defeated the British frigate *Serapis* in the American Revolution. Before that, he captained a smaller frigate, *Ranger*, sailing first to France where he and Benjamin Franklin became close friends. After terrorizing the English town of Whitehaven, he decided to kidnap the Earl of Selkirk and hold him

for ransom. The Earl however wasn't at home, so the crew took a silver plate adorned with the family crest. The dance has a very complex middle segment of 16 bars which are supposed to illustrate the chaos of that event. Later John Paul Jones purchased the plate back and presented it to Lady Selkirk with his apologies. Diane Dow of the Boston Branch devised the dance to honor this event.

After *The Silver Nutmeg*, a jig by Peter in honor of New Haven's 25th, he taught two John Drewry dances. *Blairmormond*, a 2-couple strathspey was named for an estate in Aberdeenshire. With five couples on hand, the 5-couple set dance *Black Black Oil* was very appropriate. It took some practice, but the class did manage to perform it all the way through. The evening ended with *Gordon Straloch*, a Peter Price strathspey with lovely music derived from ancient lute pieces including the tune, "I long for thy virginity." One of its figures, corners pass and turn, was repeated throughout the evening.

Peter started off by saying he wanted to focus on pacing, how to dance the figures in such a way – speeding up sometimes, slowing down at others – that the dancers were always finishing on the last bar, ready for the next figure. We don't know how successful we were overall, but we certainly enjoyed the effort.

Lucile Blanchard

RSCDS Winter School

Application forms for RSCDS Winter School in Pitlochry, Scotland, are available from headquarters now. The dates for Winter School are 2/21/08 - 2/26/08. If you wish to attend you must request an application form in May, 2007 from RSCDS, 12 Coates Crescent, Edinburgh, Scotland EH3 7AF. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Or, you can download the application form beginning on Monday, June 25, from the RSCDS website: www.RSCDS.org. Applications will close on Friday, July 20. If you have questions about Winter School, please contact Jill Henderson at jill.henderson@rscds.org.

The RSCDS Annual General Meeting in Scotland will be held on November 3, 2007. This year's agenda includes a Members' Forum. RSCDS members are asked to raise any issues that they would like aired on any aspect of the Society and its activities. "Even if you are unable to attend the forum, if you have a 'bee in your bonnet' you are very welcome to submit an item for discussion." Suggestions should be sent to Andrew Smith, the Bristol Branch working group co-ordinator for this event, by email to afsmith@talktalk.net, by post to 148 Southmead Road, Bristol, BS9 4LX. Send your suggestions no later than 18th August, 2007.

Letter from Isobel Jackson's Husband

I regret to inform you that Isobel passed away on Tuesday, April 3rd in Halifax Hospital. She had been hospitalised for 40 days and I was allowed to stay with

her night and day. We did not know she would not be coming home until last week. By then she was under sedation. We enjoyed each other's company in hospital and looked forward to coming home. Isobel taught the New Smyrna Beach class here and we attended most of the area RSCDS dances until December when she succumbed again to her illness. We were very close and I miss her so much.

Will Jackson

Challenge Class 3

After some tense moments wondering what challenging two-couple dances I could find, a contingent rolled in from Mystic and we were able to begin. For warm-up, I taught *A Brighter Day*, a dance devised to highlight set & rotate and crossover parallel reels of three in the Tullochgorm style. Moving on to the challenge department, we worked on *The Stampede Jig*, a 40-bar dance from the Nova Scotia Collection which includes a unique four couple poussette, in which the inner two couples do a shuttle type movement timed like a quick-time poussette right round. Eventually each couple was able to get their arms around the shuttle parts from both places in practice. In the heat of battle, however, there was some evidence of synapse lapse, compensated for by making the outer poussette outlandishly huge, which in turn rendered the final eight bars almost impossible. We did do it from every position, though.

We then moved on to *Kate's Conundrum*, an Alex Gray dance incorporating a modified corners pass and turn, so that the corners dance a half turn and twirl to end on the diagonally opposite sides. This results in the unusual circumstance that at the end of the concluding six-bar reel of three, it is the corners who have to cross over.

Time was fleeting, so I felt it would be good to move on. We did *Flock of Geese*, the Mel Briscoe five-couple version of *Wild Geese*. Feeling I hadn't given the class their money's worth, I conned them into doing *The Flying Spur*, a really neat John Drewry dance that used to be a staple in the Middletown group during the Will Sawyer era. They did it very well and as we finished one of the Arts Center volunteers showed up to ask if we were ever going to leave. We then left.

Ken Way

Letter to Margaret Argyle, co-editor
The Meriden Magazine
Meriden, West Midlands, England
Dear Mrs. Argyle,

I realize you must be hard at work right now, but there's a situation I feel I must call to your attention because of the great danger involved.

I noticed the other night, while watching an episode of "Prime Suspect" on television, that people in your country continue to drive on the wrong side of the road. Maybe you can put a stop to this irresponsible behavior.

Driving is difficult enough these days – blathering

away on the phone and fiddling with the radio while at the same time slurping your coffee and puffing on a cigarette leave little enough time for an occasional rude gesture or even a quick glance at the road, but in England there's the added distraction of having to change gears with your left hand. I think there's even something in the Bible (possibly in St. Paul's letter to the Norwegians) to the effect that, if God had intended us to put our steering wheels on the right, forcing us to shift gears with our left hands, then surely He would have made most of us left-handed. As we know, He did nothing of the sort, and therefore you and all of your countrymen are putting yourselves in unnecessary peril every day.

Suppose you're motoring along without a care in the world when some annoying pedestrian lunges into the road without warning. What do you do? In very short order you are forced to (1) put your caller on hold, (2) put down your drink, (3) lower the music, (4) clamp that cigarette between your teeth so the upholstery won't catch fire if the car winds up on its roof in the ditch, (5) blast the horn at the offending pedestrian, and, if all else fails (6) consider applying the brakes.

That would be true in any country, of course. But in the U.K., you also have to (7) make a difficult downshift with your weaker and less adroit (even the French understand this) left hand so that, if the pedestrian hesitates for a moment, you can (8) blast past him, preferably while (9) shooting a quick glare of reproach out the window.

And now I'll let you get back to work.

Glenn Richter, Meriden Record Journal
supplied by Joyce Chase

Message about a new CD

Kind listers: Begging your indulgence, but I thought I might be so bold as to post a note regarding a new CD of historical music. Robert Mouland's "Historical Musick of Scotland" explores the music of Scotland from a variety of authentic 18th century sources, presented on period and antique instruments. Further details may be found at: http://www.wireharp.com/wireharp_015.htm

Best regards, Ed St.Germain

Something you didn't know . . .

Single malt whisky can beat the threat of cancer, thanks go high levels of a powerful antioxidant that kills cancer cells, a medical conference in Scotland was told. According to research, single malt whisky contains "more ellagic acid than red wine," said Dr. Jim Swan. Ellagic acid is an effective free radical scavenger that absorbs rogue cells that occur in the body. "The free radicals can break down the DNA structure of our existing cells, which then leads to the risk of the body making replacement rogue cancer cells." Lesley Walker of Cancer Research UK was dubious. "Ellagic acid is a powerful antioxidant, but that does not mean it is necessary to hit the bottle." It can also be found in soft fruits.

Submitted by Joyce Chase

6th Annual Scottish Tea

The Middletown class held its sixth annual Scottish tea party on Wednesday, March 28th. Twenty-eight dancers from Connecticut classes showed up to enjoy a free program of social dances devised by Ken Way. At class break, everyone crowded around the long table which was loaded down with a beautiful combined tea service. Class members brought in their best china and a wide range of delicious food. Betty Muir, Catriona Mac-Auslan, Ena Baxter, Joyce Chase and Mary Byrnie were kept busy going back and forth to the kitchen to refill the tea pots with fresh boiling water.



It was a pleasure to see men in kilts and women in fine dresses, some even wearing hats. What started as a quirky change from the usual class refreshment break has become an event everyone looks forward to.



Greetings from New Zealand!

This year our annual Summer School is being held in Wellington from Dec. 28, 2007 to Jan. 6, 2008. In the last few years, we have been delighted to host a surprisingly large number of dancers from overseas, so we want to keep as many folk informed as possible. Our interchange with overseas dancers has been so enjoyable that we hope it may long continue! See our website www.rscdsnz.org.nz.

Report on the AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the New Haven Branch of the RSCDS was held on Saturday, May 12th at the Medical Society Building in New Haven. Ken Way, the president, started off with general remarks on the year, giving special thanks to Barbra Link and Richard Ives for their work as secretary and treasurer. Ken noted that one of the projects he completed with the help of the board members was to update the Procedural Manual. There was a general discussion of the one fundraiser the Branch holds, the food booth at NOMAD in November. The core committee, three people who have worked tirelessly for some years, has resigned. If this fundraising project is to continue, there will need to be some serious commitment from a number of RSCDS members to cover the food booth over that weekend. Last year, the food booth earned \$1,400 which comes to approximately \$20 per Branch member. This is the same amount of money the Branch sent to the RSCDS headquarters in Edinburgh for our members, so the fundraiser serves a very important purpose.

The treasurer was pleased to report that our treasury is several hundred dollars richer than last year. We hope to continue to run in the black. Reports were presented from all the committees. Don Wills, head of the Inter-group Committee stressed that each Connecticut class should give him 20 of their class flyers early in September so he can stock the Flyer Board which he displays at various Scottish events during the year such as Goshen and NOMAD. Ed Davis, for Membership, reported the only change in the membership form this year was the elimination of the family membership discount. This is due to the rising cost of sending our membership fees to Edinburgh. We will be encouraging the classes to hold a special RSCDS night in October to promote new and continuing memberships. After some discussion of the recent Kilts & Ghillies Ball, it was decided that teachers need to remind their classes of ball etiquette. (See below) There is some question as to where the New Haven summer classes will be held this year, as the Divinity School floor is being refinished. The meeting ended with the election of the slate of candidates for the 2007-2008 Board of Directors which was unanimous. All twelve members serving currently have agreed to continue on the Board.

We adjourned to the ballroom where we danced a program devised by Joyce Chase. She focused on dances with place names in Scotland, even producing a map to show us exactly where these locations were. Starting with *Sauchie Haugh* (formerly a meadow in Glasgow), the dances included *Bedrule* (a small town near Selkirk), *Neidpath Castle* (near Peebles in the Borders Region), and *Rest and Be Thankful* which is a spot marked by a stone at the top of a steep road near Loch Lomond. *Mairi's Wedding* finished off a fine afternoon.

Lucile Blanchard

Dance Etiquette for Balls

- It is customary to dance with different partners throughout the evening.
- Form sets after the dance is announced or the band plays the opening bars of the music.
- Take the first available place in a set. It is improper to push your way into a place nearer the top.
- The top couple in each line of sets is expected to count off the number of couples.
- While the dance is briefed, listen quietly, including those sitting out, so all can hear.
- Try to partner at least one person during the evening whom you have not danced with before.
- Helping others during the dance should be done discretely, using eye contact, gentle hand gestures, quiet verbal cues if necessary.
- Smile and enjoy yourself. It can be contagious.

modified from The Tartan Times

RSCDS New Haven Branch Officers:

President	Ken Way (860) 653-5258
Vice President	Catriona MacAuslan (203) 421-4060
Secretary	Barbra Link (860) 345-8925
Treasurer	Richard Ives (203) 393-3713

Branch Class	Leslie Kearney (203) 281-6591
Teacher Comm.	Barbara Austen (203) 630-9749
Intergroup	Don Wills (860) 536-1981
At Large	Mary Byrnie (860) 635-4056
	Bob Byrnie (860) 635-4056
	Joyce Chase (203) 238-0694
	Ev Munro (860) 442-7283
	Nina Stein (203) 757-2539
Membership	Ed Davis (203) 264-087
Newsletter	Lucile Blanchard (860) 347-0278
	lblanchard@wesleyan.edu

Editor's Note

Deadline for the next newsletter is **August 15, 2007** 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.

The internet address for the New Haven Branch web site is: www.rscdsnewhaven.org

Note to Readers: If you would rather receive Reel Time by e-mail, please send an e-mail message to me so that I will have your preferred address.