

# Reel Time

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

Fall 2008

## 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 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](http://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.

*Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers* First Church of Christ Congregational, 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 Monday of the month, 8:00 pm, New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Ave., New Haven. **Winter dates:** Dec. 8, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, Mar. 9, April 13, May 11.

## Upcoming Events

**Windsor Christmas Party** Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2008, 7:30 pm. \$10. Norb and friends will be playing. Call Karen Pestana for more information, 860-298-8311.

**New Haven Christmas Party** Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008 2:00 – 5:00 pm. New Haven Medical Society, 364 Whitney Ave., New Haven. Contact George Thomson, 203-230-8553 for more.

**Middletown Holiday Party** Sunday, Dec. 27, 2008, 2:30 to 5:00 pm, \$10. Norb Spencer and friends providing the music. First Church of Christ Congregational, 190 Court Street, Middletown. Call Lucile Blanchard for more information, 860-347-0278.

**Northampton New Years Day Party** Thursday, Jan. 1, 2009. Potluck, 5:30 pm, \$1 plus dish; Dance, 7:30 pm, \$10. Music by Vince O'Donnell, Ken Allen. First Churches Lyman Hall, Northampton, MA. For more call Karen 413-527-3407 or Julie, 413-584-5035.

**Mystic Burns Night Supper** Saturday, Jan. 31, 2009, Groton Inn & Suites, Groton, CT. Reservations must be made by Jan. 15th. For more information, Ruth Walsh at 860-536-6265 or [www.mysticsscottishdancers.com](http://www.mysticsscottishdancers.com).

**New Haven Branch Highland Ball** Saturday, Mar. 7, 2009, 5:00 to midnight. West Hartford Town Hall, 50 So. Main st., West Hartford. \$60 or \$65 after Feb. 23. Music by *Music Makars*: Etienne Ozorak, Fred Mamula, Jack Lindberg, Nicholas Ozorak, Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak.

**Sunday Brunch:** Mar. 8, New Haven Medical Society, New Haven, CT, 11 am.

**Ball Workshop:** A Sunday in January in New Haven. TBA.

**Ball Workshop:** Saturday, Feb. 21, 2:30-5:00 pm. \$10. First Church of Christ Congregational, Middletown. Teacher, Ken Way.

For more, contact Ellie Toy, [eltoy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eltoy@sbcglobal.net) or Lucile Blanchard, [lblanchard@wesleyan.edu](mailto:lblanchard@wesleyan.edu).

Check [www.intercityscot.org](http://www.intercityscot.org) for similar events.

## New Hampshire Highlands

It's tempting to still call it the Hillsboro Highlands, but they have definitely moved, to the small town of Contoocook where the workshop is now held at the St. Methodios Faith and Heritage Center. Elizabeth Muir and I can report that the cabins are a definite improvement over what was available at Hillsboro, being newly built with wonderfully clean bathroom facilities. We shared a cabin with seven other dancers, mostly from Connecticut. There was one unique detail – a sign over the toilets asked us to hold the handle down long enough to recite *Supercalifragilisticexpialadosis*. Good old Mary Poppins lives.

Much of the weekend took place in Hamilton Hall, a large lodge with a kitchen for our meals. After supper on Friday night, the evening dance was held there with a great band headed by Barbara McOwen who plays the fiddle. She was accompanied by her husband Robert McOwen on the bass viol, Howard Lasnik on drums, Gregor Borland, a young Scot fiddler who now lives in Spain, and Ken Allen a young pianist who was brought in to replace Marianne Taylor who very tragically died of cancer just a short time ago. The dance program was full

of familiar favorites, starting with *Roaring Jelly* and ending with *Australian Ladies*.



When the dance ended, we lined up for ice cream sundaes, then changed to take part in the singalong led by our own Robert Cole. Sitting around a blazing fire, we used flashlights to read the words, mumbling and humming our way through a dozen songs or more including *Skye Boat Song*, *Road to the Isles*, *Will Ye No Come Back Again?* There was even a song called *Woad* which is the name for the blue clay men painted their faces with (think Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*), and it compared woad with what the Roman and Saxon invaders wore. “Half a pint of woad will clothe us . . .” Meanwhile the round brick firepit full of old lumber was snapping and crackling and sending showers of sparks up at the stars.

A church bell woke us at 7:00 am. The morning classes started with serious warm-ups which we found necessary after a summer of little dancing. The teachers were Robert McOwen, Norah Link and Andy Taylor-Blenis. Andy is Marianne Taylor’s daughter. After her mother’s death, she was asked if she still wanted to teach at the Highlands, and responded with a very positive *Yes*. The classes were held in Hamilton House, the Red House, another large space with a wooden floor, and Netherby Hall, their name for a cabin with all the furniture removed. A bit crowded, it held only two 4-couple sets, but the teachers managed very well.



Lunch was a barbecue on the sandy beach along the beautiful lake. Kayaks and canoes were available for the brave ones among us and later in the afternoon, there was a steady parade of people in bathing suits who insisted the lake water was warm. The Intermediate and Experienced classes combined to learn half a dozen tricky dances from the Saturday night program while the

Advanced class worked on *Falling Leaf*, a lovely dance composed by Andy Taylor-Blenis after her mother’s death.

The end of the afternoon was filled for many by checking out the Scottish Exchange, where people found gently used clothing offered for sale, and Thistles & Things, which had a very interesting array of Scottish jewelry as well as ghillies, CDs, dance books and other items. Some then took a nap while others sat in the shade enjoying the perfect weather. The sherry party produced tasty trays of spanikopita (spinach and feta cheese in filo dough). After supper we dressed for the evening dance where some New Hampshire dancers who live nearby joined us. Starting with *The Isle*, we danced the evening away with *Roselath Cross*, *Asilomar Romantic* and others, the less experienced dancers benefiting from the afternoon lessons. When the final strains of *Rest and Be Thankful* died away, we changed once again to return for the Ceilidh which was managed by Gary Apfel. An array of music, song, dance and story kept us entertained to the very end.

The Sunday morning program was a combined class prepared in memory of Marianne Taylor, and it featured dances and music she had composed, a fitting tribute to a fine musician. All in all a lovely weekend and we hope the New Hampshire dancers continue to provide us with such a fine SummersEnd.

*Lucile Blanchard*

### **Dance Scottish Week Event**

The New Haven Branch decided to hold a special event to celebrate Dance Scottish Week. Sarah Jane Ripa was able to reserve Beckham Hall on the Wesleyan University campus in Middletown for Sat-urday, September 13th. Ken Way welcomed 16 dancers from the Branch and any Wesleyan students or staff members who wanted to come try it out. By the end of the evening, we had 13 newcomers learning various figures and enjoying themselves.



Ken started the evening with *Middletown Welcome*, a walking exercise dance he devised that includes such figures as 4 hands round, ladies’ chain, 4 hands across and back-to-back. After some step practice, he taught *Highland Rambler* which uses some of the same figures. We went on to dance *St. Andrews Fair*. A short lesson in

rights & lefts, then Ken taught *Machine Without Horses*. Everyone welcomed the break, time to get a drink and sample some of the delicious cookies Barbra Link had made. For the final dance, Ken began with reels of 3, then went on to *Weaving 101*, a dance he devised as something that used the inter-woven Celtic designs which are so unique. By 10 o'clock, everyone was satisfied with their introduction to Scottish country dancing. There is hope that some, at least, will show up in the local classes to continue.

*Lucile Blanchard*

### **Bake-Off for Fundraiser**

On August 16, thirteen dancers showed up at First Church in Middletown to bake pastries for the Celts & Currachs fundraiser in New London. Ev Munro organized this and provided recipes for shortbread, oat cakes and gingersnaps. Steve Rice and Barbara Austen brought their delicious scone recipe and some of the special ingredients. Others contributed butter for the shortbread or baked goods from their own kitchens. Many brought cookie sheets, mixing bowls, spatulas, drying racks, so we didn't have to depend on utensils from the church kitchen. With the two ovens going, we divided into four groups to mix, stir, pat, shape and soon sheets of pastries were baking away, taken out and slipped onto drying racks. Then more, with an occasional nibble of a broken piece. Catriona MacAuslan came with ingredients to make her lemon curd. Elizabeth Muir donated a dozen jars of her wonderful homemade rasp-berry jam. The cool pastries were slipped into baggies, labeled and stored in boxes to be frozen. We had dozens of pastries wrapped by 5:30 pm. It was a terrific group effort and all the help was much appreciated.



Ev the chef

Celts & Currachs on Saturday, August 23 took place on a dock in New London where fifteen of our dancers showed up to help man the food booth. Without NOMAD this year, this was the Branch's main fundraising event. The final amount netted was \$272, a disappointing sum for so much effort. While those who participated had a good time, the Board felt we need to continue looking for an event that will bring in more money for our labors.

### ***Déjà vu All Over Again***

On June 9, 2008, twelve valiant dancers braved the unseasonable heat wave for the last challenge class of the season. We focused on figures of varying degrees of familiarity done in unusual contexts or with alterations. The evening opened with Derek Haynes' reel, *The Clansman*, the dance that introduced the Targe. Then we moved onto the Targe as interpreted by Terry Glasspool in the mirror dance, *Tempest in a Teacup*. This dance features both the targe and the ladies' chain. The added challenge is, after dancing the first round with the second couple in the normal manner, the ones dance the second round with the third couple from the opposite sides of the set. Not only does everybody have to master relatively unfamiliar fast-moving figures, but they have to do them from both the lady's and man's position. We tried this dance in a challenge class a couple of years ago and I'm happy to report, it went much better this time. We then worked on the beautiful figure *La Barratte*, first in strathspey time as found in another dance by Glasspool, *A Moment for Marilyn*. Bob McMurtry's *Dancing with Fyre* uses this figure in jig time and on the diagonal, an interesting and, as we discovered, slightly disorienting variation. Next we worked on Julee Montes' witty variation on the Knot, the *Fraid Knot*, that sends the two couples in opposite directions to start. By this time, the heat was taking its toll, so we concluded with the relatively easy jig, *The Abbot of Unreason*, that features the half-setting step, like *Caberfeì*. We placed this dance in a somewhat different context musically, by doing it to bluegrass musician Bill Monroe's *Scotland*. This intriguing set of Scottish tunes, played on different instruments and in a different style from what we're used to, was remarkably danceable and, like the weather, incredibly hot. Thanks again for the opportunity to present a challenge class and for your enthusiastic participation.

*Leslie Kearney*

### **Nutmeg III**

A rainy weekend for the third annual Nutmeg Workshop on Saturday, September 27th. Nevertheless forty dancers arrived for the afternoon classes at the Incarnation Center in Ivoryton, CT. The committee was pleased that they had arranged for a buffet supper to be served indoors rather than last year's outdoor barbecue.

The teachers this year were Mel and Ellie Briscoe from Virginia. Mel and Ellie both found Scottish Country Dancing in 1977, but Mel was in Boston, Ellie in San Francisco. They met at TAC in 1984 and settled in Alexandria, Virginia in 1987 where they now teach classes and participate in workshops all over America as well as in Japan. Mel is an oceanographer, now running a consulting firm. Ellie is a library manager at the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC. They are both serious scuba divers, had just returned from a month of diving in Indonesia.



Ellie & Mel Briscoe

One of the suggestions last year's teachers made was to have two separate classes instead of one. So the Tumble Inn was rented as well as All Saints Hall. Aptly named, Tumble Inn was reached by taking a waterfall of steps down a precipitous hill, but upon arrival we found a comfortable space with a wood floor large enough for a set plus. Since the Intermediate class was small, this worked well.

Both teachers focused on footwork as well as a few figures such as the strathspey pousette right round. Susie Petrov played for the Tumble Inn classes and Norb Spencer played in All Saints. By the end of the afternoon, everyone welcomed the cocktail hour with wine bottles appearing like magic from carryalls and backpacks. The buffet supper was served at the Lodge, half a mile away. The sturdy ones hiked along the roads, while others car-pooled. Once seated we were serenaded by a choir made up of children and adults who apparently enjoyed singing for their supper. After a tasty meal, back to All Saints by foot or wheels for the evening dance, the program devised by Joyce Chase.



Starting with *Jubilee Jig*, the dance included *Follow Me Home*, *Rest and Be Thankful*, *Sugar Candie* and ended with *The Reel of the 51st Division*. One dance that is sure to be on every Nutmeg program was *Laurelwood*, devised by James "Fergie" Ferguson, the New York dancer who has been a strong supporter of New Haven Branch events. He named it in honor of the first Nutmeg Workshop which was held at Camp Laurelwood in North Madison. A successful day and the committee hopes to keep this annual event going.

*Lucile Blanchard*

## Middletown Fall Dance

It was a warm night on Saturday, October 25 when 22 dancers gathered at First Church in Middletown for the annual fall dance. Ken Way devised a lively program that included old favorites such as *Davy Nick Nack*, some Ball dances like *EH3 7AF* and *Fair Donald*, and a couple of challenging ones like *Kelloholm Jig*, ending with the *Reel of the Royal Scots* where everyone flings themselves across the set. Norb Spencer, accordion, and Jeff Friedman, guitar, provided a constant set of lively tunes to keep us dancing. And the table was loaded with treats brought in for the refreshment break. It was such a fun night we didn't even mind going out into a firehose rainstorm afterward.

*Lucile Blanchard*

## Mystic Fall Ceilidh

The Mystic Scottish Country Dancers hosted a festive Fall Ceilidh on Friday evening, the 17th of October at the Groton Inn and Suites. A bonnie evening as we greeted our guests who were looking forward to an action packed party – and as it turned out, we were actually "packed" into the room. Even so, we had a ball! Traditionally our get-togethers provide rhythms that set your feet a-dancing and your pulse a-thumping. We also held a raffle of items including a basket of fine wines and other Scottish goodies. Thanks for the successful evening go to Mary Ruddlesden, Lynne Horr, Maureen Able and Jan Grosskopf.

Peter Leibert served as our Master of Ceremonies. We were treated to performances of Highland dancing by students of the Stirling Highland Dance Company, including newly enrolled Alanna DeGaetano, daughter of Mystic dancer Minna DeGaetano. The Mystic dancers performed several Scottish country dances: *Wind on Loch Fyne* and *Mairi's Wedding* and then helped our guests learn some social dances. Peter Leibert played several tunes on the concertina, explaining how this instrument works and then taught a social dance. He makes it look so easy.

Don Wills and Everett Munro performed a great vignette showing Will Rogers conferring with newly elected President Woodrow Wilson in the Oval Office in 1920. President Wilson had invited Will to the White House to learn some of his folk wisdom. According to Will, "We quickly learn out West that one shouldn't squat with spurs on!" Will's advice for dealing with women when having an argument: "There are two theories about arguing with women ... and neither one works!"

We thoroughly enjoyed the premier performance of *The Mystic Haggis* by a talented group featuring of two of our beginning dancers, Bill and Colleen Cournoyer. A family affair, Colleen plays the pipes and the tin whistle, mother Diane the violin, Melody the bodhran as well as singing, and another family member on the guitar. Look for their web-site to learn more.

Bob and Mary Byrnie, Dick and Ena Baxter, Ellie Toy, Jane Leibert, Elizabeth Muir and Catriona MacAuslan danced *The Wild Geese* dressed in clothes worn backward, with masks on the backs of their heads and wigs over their faces. The effect was that they were dancing backward, facing out of the set. Very clever!



Our own Becky and Rick Corbett performed several pieces on fifes. Pipers and drummers from the Mystic Highland Pipe Band also played some fine Scottish tunes. Ellie Toy, a master storyteller from the Middletown group, held us spellbound with her story. *The Kelpie on Loch Ness*. Kelpies are mischievous spirits that are said to haunt, lochs, fords and ferries at night, especially during storms. After laughing and eating, we danced off some of the calories with more Scottish social dances. The evening ended with the traditional *Auld Lang Syne*. A bonny time was held by all!

Ruth Walsh

### Wanted: Dancing Duds

Do you have some clothes in your closet that you've stopped wearing but that are still in really good shape? Tired of that ball gown you've worn several times? What about your old kilt now that you wear the new one all the time? We want your gently used clothes. Please bring them to the New Haven Brunch on March 8, 2009 at the Medical Society. Catriona MacAuslan has offered to hold a clothing sale there. And be sure to hang around and check what we have. You might find just the right outfit for the next party.

### Surprise Birthday for Catriona

On Friday, November 7th, after much planning, replanning, e-mailing and even outright lying, the Mystic and Middletown classes held a surprise party to celebrate Catriona MacAuslan's 60th birthday. Originally planned for the Mystic dance class, a new location had to be found when it turned out the church needed its space on that night. Ruth Walsh very kindly arranged for us to use the large meeting room at StoneRidge, the lovely retirement community where she lives. To make sure Catriona came, Mardene Hof told the Greater Hartford Demo Dancers that they were holding a demo at StoneRidge on Nov. 7th at 7:30 pm. Everyone else was asked to arrive at 7 to be ready to surprise her. And when Catriona walked in the door, dressed in white with a tartan sash,

she staggered back at the sight of 30 people, men in kilts but only Karen Pestana in a white dress, with all the tables set for refreshments, flowers around and a big banner on the wall saying *Happy Birthday Catriona!*



Dancing followed, briefed by Joyce Chase and containing some dances of special interest to Catriona including *Laurelwood* and ending with *Mairis's Wedding*. For the last dance, Stuart Douglas came out in full regalia with his bagpipes to play the music. He is a member of the Mystic Pipe Band and a dancer with the Mystic class. There was cake, of course, and tea and a fine variety of goodies brought by people to make a very successful evening. Joyce Chase says it could not have been done without the enthusiastic help of Elizabeth Muir, Ena Baxter, Ruth Walsh and Mardene Hof.

Lucile Blanchard



### From Catriona . . .

White dress - check. Tartan sash - check. Red ghillies - check. Directions - check. Navigator, Paula - check. As I prepared for our November 7th demo at StoneRidge, I ran around the house, anxious that I'd miss the practice dance and the demo rule is if you miss the practice dances, you don't do those dances in the demo. With Paula in the car, I drove around the StoneRidge complex, not sure where the building was. Then I saw a white dress . . . Yahoo! We parked and rushed over. There was Joyce, but why not in her white dress??

We came through the doorway and SURPRISE! Karen Pestana was the white dress decoy. The room was filled with friends for my 60th birthday party! I was totally surprised. It really does happen – your jaw falls down to your chest.

It was a wonderful evening and I cannot thank everyone enough for the work, the many emails, the phone conversations that went into this amazing event. Joyce programmed a set of dances that I love, Mardene had totally deceived me with her plans for this "demo," Marge and Don drove back early from the south to help us celebrate, Ellie even came back from China, Betty did the tea, Lucile did her usual "roving reporter" photos. So many others with kind thoughts and funny cards made it a very special evening for me.

Many, many, many thanks to one and all and much love.

*Catriona*

P.S. And it made turning 60 less of a shock!!!

**Minutes of the New Haven Branch Board** meetings are available to all Branch members. If you want a copy, let Barbra Link know (blink6325@yahoo.com).

From the Editor: I apologize for the delay in publishing this issue of *Reel Time*. I had the whole issue pretty much completed when I went out on errands and came back to find my house had been broken into and the computer taken. And of course I had not backed up the latest work. A very good lesson to learn.

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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
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Membership	Ed Davis (203) 264-087
Newsletter	Lucile Blanchard (860) 347-0278 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.

The internet address for the New Haven Branch web site is: [www.rscdsnewhaven.org](http://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.