

Reel Time

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

Spring 2010

Class Schedules

Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Class
Grace Episcopal Church on the Green, 311 Broad St., Windsor CT. Tuesday 7:00 to 9:30 pm. Last class, June 8th. 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. Last class, June 16th. 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 7:00 to 9:30 pm. Beginners, 7-8 pm; Intermediates, 8:15-9:30 pm. No charge for classes. Contact Ruth Walsh 860-536-6265 or www.mysticscottishdancers.com.

New Haven Branch Scottish Country Dance Class
591 Whitney Ave., New Haven CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 10:00 pm. Contact Dick Platt 203-878-6094 or Leslie Kearney 203-281-6591.

New Haven Summer Class New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Ave, New Haven. Tuesdays, 7:30-10 pm. Contact Leslie Kearney lkdjq@aol.com for more information.

Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers First Church of Christ Congregational, 5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge CT. Friday 7:30 to 9:30 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. Summer dates: June 14, July 12, Aug. 9.

Upcoming Events

Pawling Weekend May 21-23, 2010. Circle Lodge, Hopewell Junction, NY. Teachers: Alex Gray, Ellie Briscoe, Rebecca Roman. Music by Bobby Brown and *The Scottish Accent* plus Jim Stevenson-Mathews. For more information, see www.rscdsnewyork.org.

Westchester Ball Saturday, June 5, 2010, 5:30 pm. St. John's Episcopal Church, Larchmont, NY. Music by *Tullochgorum*. \$40. For more information, Mary Zagami, 718-823-0119.

Northampton 20th Anniversary Party Sunday, June 6, 2010. \$10 and potluck dish plus \$1. First Churches, 129 Main St., Northampton, MA. Earl Gaddis will be playing with Karen Axelrod. See www.rscdsBoston.org for more.

Windsor End of Year Party Tuesday, June 8, 2010. Norb Spencer and the Central Connecticut SCD Orchestra will play. \$10. For more information, Barbara Austen, barbara_austen@att.net

Rhode Island Scottish Highland Festival Saturday, June 12, 2010, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Washington County Fairgrounds, Richmond, RI. For more information, see www.riscot.org.

Round Hill Highland Games, Saturday, July 3, 2010. Cranbury Park, Norwalk, CT. 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. For more information, see www.roundhill.org

Scottish Pinewoods Sessions July 9-17, 2010. See www.rscdsboston.org.

New Hampshire Highlands Aug. 27-29, 2010. St. Methodios Faith & Heritage Center, Contoocook, NH. Teachers: Stella Fogg, Howard Lasnik, Ralph Stoddard. Musicians: Emerald Rae, Howard Lasnik, Terry Traub and others. For more, www.rscdsboston.org/events

Fifth Annual Nutmeg Workshop Sat. Oct. 23, 2010. Save the date! Check www.intercityscot.org for similar events.

New Haven Branch Highland Ball and Brunch

For our last year as Ball chairs, Ellie Toy and I were pleased when the attendance this year (150) matched last year's. As a result, the Ball made money, helped along by sales of the Dancing Duds. The Ball was held at the West Hartford Community Center with its great floor and balcony for observers. The piano we needed for the band, in the past kept on the stage, had been stored in the basement because it was untuned and unplayable, so we were told. After two young men brought it up on the elevator, we had to wait until enough of our strongest dancers came to carry it up the four steps to the stage. Luckily it was not seriously out of tune. This year the decor was red and gold, starting with the rampant dragon banner

hung from the upstairs railing and carried out with red and yellow tulips on the tables. We were happy to use Bob Byrnie's Castle Eileen Donnan backdrop on the stage behind the band.

The Music Makars returned this year to play for us and Krause Caterers served their usual tasty dinner. George Thompson with his bagpipes led the Grand March which Kent Smith devised. The Ball dance program was devised by Barbara Austen and the briefers were Ken Way, Barbara Austen and Brian Haeckler. Leslie Rice did a fine job as a greeter and Ken Way's name badges were beautiful. Nina Stein provided a delicious punch for the dance. After Dick Baxter recited the Selkirk Grace, Don Wills took over the microphone to MC the evening.

Ellie Toy was wearing the International Peace Belt which was created in 2003 to travel around the world as a living link, joining all people and cultures in a common bond of peace. She passed it on to many dancers during the evening.



Ellie Toy with the Peace Belt

After a Grand March in the shape of St. Andrews cross, the Ball began with *Joie de Vivre*, a lovely opening dance. The program was an interesting mix of familiar and unusual such as the *Talcott Mountain Strathspey* and *She's Ower Young to Marry Yet* and it ended with a rousing *Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh*. Then we gathered in a huge circle for *Auld Lang Syne*. As people left, they kept telling us what a grand evening it was.



Once again, we looked for a satisfactory place to hold the Brunch, last year's American Legion Hall being too cramped. After much searching, the High Lane Club

in North Haven was chosen. The one major problem was that the directions from the Wilbur Cross Parkway were wrong, sending people onto strange roads, but most managed to find the club. Catherine Mahoney and Angela Hill, the Brunch co-chairs, found the kitchen to be excellent and the main room has a fine wood floor. We set up racks of clothes which Catriona MacAuslan had gathered for the Dancing Duds out in the hall. Mardene Hof was busy all morning selling this gently used clothing.



As usual, people brought all kinds of delicious foods to the serving tables. The weather turned so pleasant the French doors along one side of the room were opened onto a porch full of sunlight and we went out to sit in the sun like turtles after a long winter. Then it was time to dance. Mardene Hof devised the Brunch program and Karen Lavalley and Karen Pestana briefed the dances, starting with *Collichur*. People clearly enjoyed themselves with *Starlight*, *The Wild Geese*, *Catch the Wind* and many others, the program ending with *Red House*.

And then it was time to pack up. But the whole weekend was very satisfying and as usual everything worked well, thanks to the many hands that pitched in to help.

Lucile Blanchard

The Mystic Irish Parade

The first annual Mystic St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on March 21, 2004, organized by members of the Mystic Irish Parade Foundation. The parade was designed to be a celebration of Celtic culture and to honor all the immigrants who have contributed so richly to our country. and to "turn Mystic green ... except for the river." There were three pipe bands – the Mystic Highland Pipe Band and two others. The bands would rotate their positions in the parade each year so that no group would always be the last. That first year Mystic Highland Pipe Band was first with the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers directly behind them. When the line of march paused, the pipers played for the dancers to dance *The Gay Gordons* much to the delight of watchers. The Mystic Highland Pipe Band won the trophy for the Best Band and our Scottish Country Dancers won for the Best Overall Unit.

In the 2005 parade with more participants, the

Mystic pipe band and dancers were at the very end of the line, wondering if we'd ever start. The parade was a huge success. We danced our way through town, across the Mystic drawbridge, with cheers echoing in our ears. The 2006 parade was another fine year, despite the cold. There were some 1,200 participants by then including 14 bands, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Irish bagpipers and step dancers, and the first float. In addition, the Budweiser Brewing Company's beer wagon was pulled by a team of Clydesdale horses.

As the parade grew in size with more floats, fire-trucks, antique cars, fife & drum corps and pipe bands (eleven this year), Mystic's own Pipe Band was the host band. However with the visiting dignitaries and committee members marching directly behind the band, the Mystic dance group was moved further back so they couldn't dance to music by the band. With the new ruling that the line of march would never be halted, the social dancing ended.



This year we decided to take a bigger part in the festivities. With Peter Leibert playing his accordion, the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers could dance. We were determined to shine even back in position 64 out of 120. We had some 21 marchers (plus three happy dogs) and Peter started playing any time there was a lull in the parade. When they heard his music, the dancers moved into place and we danced as best we could.



For St. Patrick's Day 2011, we will ask to march behind one of the pipe bands. We can improvise a dance at the drop of a hat. Although we did not win an award this year, we felt like true winners for we marched with pride, were enthusiastic and had a ball in process. Thanks to the efforts of Marge Wills, Joyce Chase, Linda Scent

and many others, we were able to organize our marchers and dancers. And the weather cooperated, with the sun shining on us all.

Ruth Walsh

Tartan Day

Forty seven people took the Peter Pan bus to New York City on Saturday, April 10th for this year's Tartan Day celebration. In the city we drove down Fifth Avenue, admiring the newly leafing trees. After two got off at the Jewish Museum, more of us went to the Frick where the atrium was full of white orchids and lilies. We split up then as some went off to see the Brooklyn Bridge and others headed slowly toward 44th Street. After getting lunch, we gathered at our parade spot there.



No sign of the Brooklyn Bridgers who included Colleen Cournoyer, our piper. However Peter Leibert was there with his squeeze box. Once the parade started and we turned onto Sixth Avenue, we had to pause for crossing traffic, so we broke into the simple dance Joyce Chase had devised. Then Colleen and the others ran up to join us. And each time the parade paused, she and Peter played while eighteen of us danced. The crowds on the side-walks loved it, cheering and clapping, waving St. Andrews flags. It made for a really exciting display.

After performing in front of the reviewing stand, we drifted off into side streets, heading for Central Park where we rode the carousel. On this lovely sunny day,



the park was full of families picnicking on the lawn and climbing over large boulders. Through the trees, the New York skyline loomed like distant mountains.

We walked all the way back to St. Andrews Restaurant and Pub on 46th Street where we had two second

floor rooms next to large open windows with flags flying outside. Blue and white balloons bounced gently against the ceiling, and every once in a while, one of them worked its way out the window to go floating up into the city sky as we cheered. Then we heard bagpipes! A 6-member band on the sidewalk playing their hearts out. Colleen had been out by the bar, jamming with another piper. When the sidewalk band came upstairs, she joined them. And Joyce danced the Highland Fling.



At 8 o'clock, the Peter Pan bus drove up and we settled in for the trip home. This year the fund-raising was successful. Not only did we make money from the fares, Peter Leibert held a raffle that brought in more funds. So we look forward to next year doing even better.

Lucile Blanchard

Kilts & Ghillies Tea Dance

The Woodbridge and Wilton Classes, sponsors of the annual Kilts & Ghillies Spring Dance, decided to restructure it this year. The biggest change was holding it from 3:00 - 7:00 pm, with a break for punch, coffee, tea



and refreshments. We welcomed back Purple Thistle Productions (Jim Stevenson-Mathews on piano and Gaitley Stevenson-Mathews doing sound) and a talented lass from Middletown, Rebecca McCallum, playing the fiddle.

The music was great, as was the dance program, again devised by Peter Price. Peter's blog <http://kiltsandghillies.blogspot.com> gives more details and suggestions for next time. He and Leslie Kearney did the briefing.



The majority of the feedback is in favor of this format. As the Woodbridge Class lost money each of the last two years with declining attendance at this dance, we decided to try this format rather than scrap the dance entirely. It seems to have worked.

Donna Ives

Hanneke Cassel's Concert

It was unfortunate that Hanneke's concert at the North Madison Congregational Church conflicted with the Kilts & Ghillies Tea Dance on Saturday, April 17th. I managed to work in both events, but very few other dancers were there. She is an amazing fiddler and she played some of her own works along with Cape Breton tunes. Accompanied by Ari Friedman, cellist, and Chris Lewis, guitar, they made joyous music.



Ari's sister Mia, also a champion Scottish fiddler, joined them for a few pieces, singing and playing her compositions. Chris Lewis also sang and played his own piece. So it was a lively and varied evening. After the break, Hanneke gathered all the children from the audience to teach some Scottish dancing. And at the end of the concert, people gathered for the famous ice cream sundae treats. If you're interested in folk music, keep an eye on the Fire in the Kitchen concert series. It's really special.

Lucile Blanchard

Note from the Editor

This will be my last issue of *Reel Time*. I took over the editorship from Barbara Austen in the spring of 2004 and it has been an enlivening experience over the past six years. Since I had bought a digital camera, I began to add photographs to dress things up a bit. As editor and feature writer, I made a point of attending as many events as possible. But now I pass the torch on to David Lees who will edit the next issue, due out August 15th. As many of you know, he is a Mystic dancer and also plays the drums in the Mystic Pipe Band. I am sure he will do a great job with this newsletter.

Lucile Blanchard

Round Hill Highland Games

Come to the Round Hill Highland Games at Cranbury Park in Norwich on Saturday, July 3 and take part in the New Haven Branch demonstrations. We will have two small tents of our own that we won't have to share and plan to dance during the day, at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm. Joyce Chase says she will choose easy dances and we will try to attract audience participation for some of them. But we need dancers, so do think about joining us there. Admission is \$15. And there are a great many other attractive events going on that you can sample – Highland dancing, caber tossing, pipe bands galore. Pack your ghillies and join us.

May Day Celebration – Dancing at Dawn a Morris Dancing Tradition

May Day this year was an exceptionally fine morning for dancing at dawn, a tradition for Morris Dancers all over the world. For 35 years, the Westerly Morris Men have danced at Connecticut College in New London and I've taken part every year. Being a Saturday, a large crowd gathered to watch us. Several years ago the campus police escorted us away from our usual venue because we were disturbing the sleeping students. They now allow us to dance in front of Harkness Chapel. Modern college kids don't appreciate tradition. They can text and twitter but tradition is too old-fashioned.



Peter Leibert is the founder of the Westerly Morris Men and our musician. Morris dancing dates back to pre-Christian times, originally a type of fertility dance which reminds me of this ditty we sing ... "we do it all day, we do it all night, because it is a fertility right!" The dancers wear bell pads on their legs, each pad adorned with

colorful ribbons and 50 bells. The costume or kit is white shirt and trousers, vest, green in front, yellow on the back, with the Green Man embroidered on it.

The traditional dances come from English villages; Bampton, Fieldtown, Bledington, Aderbury, to name a few. Some dances require the waving of handkerchiefs and some require sticks. In England the Morris Teams would dance usually in the spring in front of a pub, pass the hat around (what we call busking), then go into the pub and drink beer. On to the next pub for the same ritual. The Westerly Morris Men have made several trips to England and one to Scotland. When we danced in Edinburgh with the Edinburgh Team, all their members were English. They were trying very hard to recruit a Scotsman.

Over the years, not to be outdone by the men, several women's teams have sprung up. Some teams are mixed but the Westerly Morris Men remain a traditional men's team. Our oldest dancer will be 95 this year, possibly the oldest active Morris Dancer in the USA. Many of us are not that far behind, which keeps us looking anxiously for younger members.

Ev Munro



Minutes of the New Haven Branch Board meetings are available to all Branch members. If you want a copy, let Barbara Garton know (barbaragarton@earthlink.com).

RSCDS New Haven Branch Officers:

- President Catriona MacAuslan (203) 421-4060
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- Secretary Barbara Garton (860) 871-0321
- Treasurer Richard Ives (203) 393-3713
- Branch Class Leslie Kearney (203) 281-6591
- Teacher Comm. Barbara Austen (203) 630-9749
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- Steve Rice (203) 630-9749
- Catherine Mahoney (203) 879-6000
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Editor's Note

Deadline for the next newsletter is **August 15** for publication by the end of the month. The new editor will welcome all of your reports, and particularly all calendar listings. David Lees' email is david.g.lees@pfizer.com

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