

Reel Time

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

Fall 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. 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 7:00 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.mysticsscottishdancers.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 Class - Waterbury Scottish Country Dancers Bunker Hill Congregational Church, 274 Bunker Hill Ave, Waterbury CT. Friday 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Parking is on the street and the hall is on the lower level. 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: Sept 14, Oct 12, Nov 9.

Upcoming Events

Middletown Holiday Dance: The Middletown class will host their annual holiday dance on Wednesday, Dec 29th from 7:30 – 10:00 PM. Music provided by Norb Spencer and friends. Cost is \$10. Location is First Church, Court Street, Middletown. Contact Lucile Blanchard for more info: 860-347-0278.

Windsor Holiday Dance: The Windsor class will be hosting a holiday party on Tuesday, December 14, 2010 at 7:30 PM. Cost is \$10. Music will be provided by

Norb Spencer and Friends. Refreshments will be served.

Mystic Burns Night Supper: Saturday, Feb 12, 2011. Brunch on Sun. Feb 13. Groton Inn & Suites, Groton, CT. For more, check www.mysticsscottishdancers.com or Ruth Walsh, 860-536-6265.

New Haven Highland Ball: - Save the date. Highland Ball - March 5, Brunch March 6, 2011'.

Rerr Terr Save the date. Tenaflly, NJ Saturday, April 2, 2011. For more information see www.rscds-nj.org.

Tartan Day - Save the date. April 9, 2011. Plans are in the works to take a bus to New York as we have done in the past.

Kilts and Ghillies 2011 Tea Dance – Save the date. 30 April 2011.

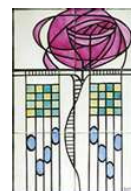
Pawling Weekend – Save the date. Hopewell Junction, NY Friday, May 20 - May 22, 2011. For more information see www.rscdsnewyork.org.

Check <http://www.intercityscot.org> for similar events.

Sad News

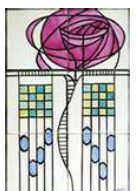
Since the last issue of Reel Time two loved ones in the dancer's community passed on.

Margaret G. "Peggy" MacAuslan, age 95, of Clinton passed on Monday, September 20, 2010. She was the beloved mother of Catriona Nan MacAuslan, and Alasdair James "Sandy" MacAuslan.



TO THE DANCING COMMUNITY

I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY THANKS FOR THE KINDNESS OF SO MANY, FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF MY MOM. ALL THE CARDS AND LOVELY SENTIMENTS WERE A STRONG SUPPORT DURING THIS SAD TIME. THANK YOU TO A CARING GROUP OF FRIENDS



CATRIONA



Mary Kate Adami-Sampson, 49, died Wednesday, September 1, 2010 at the Massachusetts General Hospital after an illness. Mary Kate danced with us in New Haven, in fact that's where she and Mike Adami met, married, and started their family.

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.

New Hampshire Highland Games

On August 27, the New Hampshire Highlands held their dance weekend in Contoocook at the St. Methodios Faith & Heritage Center, the third year since they moved there from Hillsboro. The weather could not have been nicer and the welcoming party was full of friendly faces. Six Connecticut dancers attended, including Jim MacNab who now lives in New Hampshire but has danced with us for years. The teachers this year were Stella Fogg, Ralph Stoddard and Howard Lasnik. Terry Traub and friends provided the usual wonderful music.

The Friday night program included many familiar dances such as *Australian Ladies* and *The Isle*, ending with *The Reel of the 51st Division* which is always a romp.



We were all treated to an ice cream social before heading off to our cabins for needed rest. The Saturday classes were enlightening as always with the teachers trading off for the three different classes – Basic, Experienced, Advanced. We were even granted free time for those who wanted to swim in the lake or take out a canoe.

The swimmers found a snake in the lake (rumors of a malevolent irritable sea serpent were apparently overrated) but that didn't interfere with their activities. There are now two new Scottish specialty shops set up in the Lodge, a brand new, beautifully timbered affair with a fully outfitted kitchen and all the amenities. Something to think about for future visits.



We gathered for the sherry social, followed by dinner and the evening dance starting at 8. This program had some interesting new dances – *Foggy River Reel* and *Corner After Corner After Corner* – along with *Pelorus Jack* and *The Minister on the Loch*, ending with *Left-Handed Fiddler* which, as you can imagine, featured a lot of left handing. We went off to change into casual clothes, returning for the ceilidh which Gary Apfel MC'ed very well.



On Sunday morning, one final gathering for a jointly taught class. By then some of us tended to drift off to our cars. Having danced very little for two months, our bodies were rebelling. But it was a very enjoyable weekend for all.

Lucile Blanchard

Dancing Myths Exposed

The Princess Royale is a 28 bar RSCDS dance. In the town of St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Barbra Link and Ken Way spotted a quiet back street with the same name. In depth investigation of the street, however, revealed that it did not have twenty-eight bars.

Ken Way

Dance Scottish Week – Frasier concert.

On Sept. 19th, the 'Fire in the Kitchen' concert series held by the North Madison Congregational Church featured Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas in a fine performance. The musical combination of fiddle and cello works very well with Celtic music, and it was a joy to hear.

After playing a great medley of tunes, Alasdair said, "I'm going to rummage around in the Scottish condition from the 'fiddlers' perspective." And indeed he did. Describing his fiddle which was built in 1760, he asked who'd have thought that drawing the tail of a horse across the intestines of a cat would make such music. For centuries, the fiddle and cello were the dance band of choice in Scotland and now it's returned "to put the groove back in dancing."

The musicians then proceeded to played the *Valley of the Moon Reel*. The 18th century was the golden age of music in Scotland, with pieces ranging from wild crazy music to beautiful nuggets. He "drinks deeply from that violin repertoire." Cape Breton is an important part of Scottish fiddle playing. *John McDonald*, a slow reel, starts with high singing harmonies, then the fiddle takes the melody while the cello stays on long low notes. A happy reel, *Jenny Banged the Weaver*, and a hornpipe, *Crossing the Minch*, ended the first part of the evening.



After the intermission, two three-couple sets of RSCDS dancers went up to stand before the platform, dancing *The Duke of Perth* while Alasdair and Natalie played. This was followed by a cello solo of Robbie Tannahill's, *Goodly Winters Knew Awa'*. This piece was used as background music in the movie *Piano*. A song Alasdair composed for a cook named Lorna was used in the Disney movie *Treasure Planet*, a version of *Treasure Island* set in outer space where a bunch of aliens even hold a ceilidh (I knew it!). So they played a medley called the *Alien Ceilidh*.

Alasdair's fiddle spent three generations under the bed of Lutheran ministers, and there was a time on the Isle of Skye that fiddles were suppressed and even burned because their music lead to promiscuous behavior (*hmmmm*). For a long time, people in Spain loved Irish music and played it at their parties. Then they began to write their own dance music, based in Spanish melodies. We heard *The Witch*, a dance tune based on Spanish themes and Alasdair's *Theme for Scotland* which was played for the King of Spain's wedding. The concert ended with music from the Shetland Islands where they treasure fiddles and still play the old dance tunes.

Lucile Blanchard

Mystic Fall Ceilidh

The Mystic Scottish Country Dancers hosted its annual Ceilidh on Friday night, the 15th of October at the Groton Inn and Suites. It was a chilly, rainy and blustery night but this didn't deter the 84 people who attended.

It is always interesting to see the reaction of those who are unfamiliar with the word Ceilidh. When we explain about the wonder of this action-packed evening... most are mystified with the concept and cannot wait to attend to see what "it" is all about. It is a fun-filled evening with music and dancing that will set feet a-dancing and pulses a-thumping. One and all can join in the social dancing and witness Scottish Country as well as Highland Dancing in addition to "other" things Scottish including pipes and drums! Not only that but we are famous for delicious refreshments including traditional shortbread for dessert!



Joyce Chase had invited several members of the medical staff at her hospital to join in the fun – and though they had never attended a Ceilidh before, they were spotted singing, dancing and generally having a great time of it. We hope that they will return again and again!!

Colin DeGaetano, Minna's 4 year old son was the hit of the evening as he greeted guests, dressed in a handsome USMC Tartan kilt, complete with a sporran and knee high white stockings. Overheard was a lady who said that she "would wait" for Colin to grow up !!

Peter Leibert served as our gracious Master of Ceremonies and played several tunes for us on his concertina, explaining how the instrument works as he taught us a lively social dance. He always makes everything look so easy! He and Jane had just returned to Connecticut from their summer home in Canada and felt that we should know a special bit of history: that back many thousands of years ago, Scotland was truly "attached" to Nova Scotia in Canada. Peter played The Beavers' Dance that depicted all that happened – and you have to know that some of us "believed!"



We welcomed back to the Ceilidh a wonderful group called *The Mystic Haggis*, including Bob Scent on the pipes, two of our dancers, Bill (on the bodhran) and Colleen Cournoyer on the pipes with Colleen's mom Diane on the fiddle. Melody is vocalist for the group and charmed us all with several beautiful songs



Rick and Becky Corbett, both of whom are members of fife and drum groups in Rhode Island, performed several pieces on their fifes. Joyce Chase, Dave Lees and Kat Kliphon performed a dance entitled *The Shepherd's Crook* that most gracefully "described" the gyrations of a shepherd utilizing the crook in an attempt to keep his sheep under control. It was fascinating to watch the dancers virtually "turn inside-out" and one could virtually "see" the crook in use (and promised, no sheep were injured in the performance of the dance). Colleen Cournoyer accompanied the dancers on the pipes and no sheep were harmed in the performance of this dance.

Later in the program, Dave Lees and Colleen Cournoyer presented what was termed "Flourishing Tenor Drums" Dave explained that the composition of Battalion Pipe Bands ordinarily include only 5 pipers and the pipe major with a drum utilized to keep the cadence.

The flourishing tenor drums have been added to enhance the cadence as those drummers twirl, swing, flourish while being virtually silent on the actual drum. The truth came out when it was revealed that tenor

drummers were essentially hyper-active rhythmically-challenged exhibitionists that rarely even hit the drum. The word on the street is that tenor drumming keeps you young. It sure looks like that is true, take a look at this picture... Dave never looked so good.



Later in the program, and for our pure pleasure, pipers and drummers enchanted us with the excellence of several tunes, including *Amazing Grace* that provided chills to one and all!

Ellie Toy told us a wonderful fairy story that happened in Scotland on Mid-Summer's Eve when enchantment reigned...and of a golden coin was left by the Fairy Queen to assure a young lad that he had indeed encountered the magic of that evening.



You could have heard a pin drop as we all envisioned the special magic of that night...and all that occurred. And it did, you know.

The evening concluded first with the Scottish Country Dancers performing *The Reel of the 51st* and then with the traditional *Auld Lang Syne* played by Bob Scent as we sang away. One and all extended thanks to Mary Ruddlesden, Lynne Horr, Jan Grosskopf, Alison Pollick and other volunteers for such a successful and bonnie night - made even more delightful because there was NO snow...and the moon was out before we left for our homes at the conclusion of the party. We shall see everyone for Burns Night on the 12th of February 2011.

Ruth Walsh

Scottish Dancing Is Good For You

If you read the last issue of *Scottish Country Dancer* you would have seen an article titled '*Proof: SCD is good for you*'. The article cited two studies conducted by the University of Stathclyde in Glasgow and Glasgow Caledonian University Division of Physiotherapy. In a nutshell the studies concluded that in addition to the social aspects of dancing, the dancers were shown to have more agility, stronger legs and to be able to walk more briskly than people who took part in other forms of exercise. Furthermore, mental alertness is enhanced because Scottish dancing has steps that have to be followed precisely.

I spend a lot of time in my 'man cave' at home in the company of three hyperactive ferrets. I am always looking for ways to make sure they get plenty of exercise. After reading this article I figured... why not? Maybe the ferrets would like the rhythm of the dance and it would add structure to their playtime. I played some tunes and showed them the steps. The results were interesting... they loved jigs and reels. Just looks at this weasel reel-of-three!



While biting each other on the head while during a pass and turn is not strictly specified in the dance instructions, it does add an interesting element to the dance.

Alas, they really didn't care much for strathspeys. It must be something with their metabolism. These sneaky little weasels have only two speeds of operation – 'full steam ahead' and 'yawwwwnnnnn'. When I played some of my favorite strathspey tunes I got the following results.



Dave Lees

Goshen Games

St. Andrew's Society of Connecticut's 27th Annual Scottish Festival was held on Saturday, October 2nd at The Fairgrounds, Goshen, Connecticut. The day before the games almost three inches of rain fell on the Town of Goshen but the following day was a glorious fall day with lots of sunshine and a brisk temperature.

There was a great hustle and bustle early in the day as the Clan Villages and Vendors set up their tents to welcome the expected crowds of people who would be storming the gates when they promptly opened at 9 a.m.



One of the highlights of the day was the Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Demonstration Team led by their teacher, Mardene Hof. There were two performances scheduled during the day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The biggest crowd attended the afternoon session and from their reaction they were more than pleased with the description of the dance given by M. Hof and the performances by the dancers themselves.



I'm sure the live music helped stoke the enthusiasm for both the dancers and the crowds in attendance. Norb Spencer and Rebecca MacCallum played lively Jigs, Reels and Strathspey as the dancers and their partners just about floated around the floor in step with the music.

Many of the dances were familiar to the Scottish Country Dancers in the audience and you could see their

feet tapping in tune with the music as the dancers worked out the many steps to: *Shiftin' Bobbins/Kendals Horn Pipe, Seann Triubhas Willichan, Red House, Lammermuir Hills, The Reel of the 51st Division, Irish Rover and Gang the Same Gate.*



After the dancers finished you could see several of them answering questions from people in the audience and other people gathered around the flyer board selecting the flyer for the class nearest them. Hopefully some new people showed up in several of the weekly dance classes which are scattered throughout Connecticut.

Ev Monroe

5th Annual Nutmeg Workshop

The 5th Annual Nutmeg workshop was held on the October 23rd at the High Lane Club in North Haven Connecticut. It was a beautiful fall day that New England is famous for (if you are so lucky to get one). The High Lane Club is the location that the New Haven Highland Ball brunch was held last year. The club has a huge ballroom and great kitchen facilities to handle the 51 dancers that attended.

The dance instructors were Rebecca Roman and Robert McOwnen. As part of her instruction, Rebecca introduced the concept of 'green light' opportunities in country dancing. Basically if you do the steps of a dance correctly you should end up at the end of that step with a 'green light' to go to the next step. In other words, there should be no hesitation or adjustment of position... you should just flow into the next step effortlessly (just like driving). This may explain why my car is so scratched and dented.

Robert introduced a couple of 'Halloween' type dances that were designed for doing the opposite of the usual dance sequence. I am still trying to get my arm straightened out after being bent out of shape by a reverse Allemande.

Both basic and advanced classes were conducted with music provided by Jim Stevenson-Mathews (piano) and Rebecca McCallum (fiddle). Peter Price handled the sound system and Joyce Chase devised the program for the evening. Her goal was a program

that was not too difficult and at the same time not too simple. She succeeded admirably.



Gracious thanks, to the three amigos that organized this dance event. The session included a buffet dinner and a 50-50 raffle. The raffle was proceeding nicely, but after the raffle was almost finished and Everett's tickets had not won, he declared that if he couldn't win with them, he would wear them.



He was working on a snappy ascot tie when the final drawing for the 50% of the money took place and his ticket was drawn. Everett almost strangled himself getting the winning ticket free from around his neck. He then graciously donated his winnings to the 'Dick Morrison Scholarship Fund.' If you are wondering if all of this really happened... come to the event next year and see what really goes on, it is great fun.

On a more serious note, Ann Penfield, a Middletown dancer tripped and broke the patella in her kneecap after tripping over a speed bump while walking into the club. She was operated on and is recovering, but it is a lengthy process. We can only hope she'll be dancing again in several months.

Dave Lees

On October 29th the Mystic group attended a barn dance at Peter and Jane Leibert's barn. Many of us have wondered if this was just a sneaky ruse instigated by Peter to get us to come out and help him clean up his barn. Even if that was true, it was still worth it!



A group of people are gathered in a large, rustic wooden hall. In the center, a man wearing a white shirt and a green kilt is shaking hands with a woman in a purple jacket. To the left, a woman with long blonde hair in a purple sweater is seen from the back. To the right, a woman in a black vest over a light blue shirt is smiling. The background shows the wooden structure of the hall and other people in the background.

You can just see the happiness on everyone's face at this event and we look forward to more dances in this wonderful setting.



Dave Lees

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Editor's Note

Deadline for the next newsletter is **February 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 or dglees@comcast.net.

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