

Reel Time

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

Spring 2011

Class Schedules

Greater Hartford Scottish Country Dance Class
Grace Episcopal Church on the Green, 311 Broad St.,
Windsor CT. Tuesday 7:00 to 9:45 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, 9 Ethan Allen Highway (Rte 7),
Branchville CT. Tuesday 7:30 to 9:30 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 7:00 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
Whitney Arts Center, 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.

Woodbridge Scottish Country Dancers **New Location!**
Bunker Hill Congregational Church, 274 Bunker Hill
Ave, Waterbury CT. Friday 7:00 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 class.
New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand
Ave., New Haven. From 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Contact
Peter Price 203-675-9587

Upcoming Events

Pawling Weekend – 48th Annual Spring Weekend at the
Circle Lodge, Hopewell Junction, NY - May 20 - May
22, 2011. More information at www.rscdsnewyork.org.

Westchester Ball – Saturday, Jun 4, 2011 St John's
Episcopal Church, Fountain Square, Larchmont, NY.
Admission \$40. Music provided by Waverly Station.
More information at www.rscdsnewyork.org

Celtic Music Cruise – June 4 – 11 2011. Vancouver
Inside Passage, stopping at Juneau, Skagway and
Ketchikan.



Live concerts, ceilidhs, music workshops, and a **Scottish Country Dance**. This cruise looks like one heck of a lot of fun! Check <http://www.celticmusiccruise.com> for more info or contact Violet at Montrose Travel (800 301-9673).

Northampton Scottish Dance Class End of Year Party - First Churches Lyman Hall, Northampton, MA; Karen Lavalley-Tente 413-527-3407. More information at www.rscdsboston.org/events-calendar.html.

Rhode Island Highland Games - June 11, 2011 rain or shine. Washington County Fairgrounds, Richmond, RI.

Round Hill Games – July 2, 2011. The 88th Annual Highland Games at Cranbury Park in Norwalk, Connecticut. More information at www.roundhill.org.

Scottish Pinewoods Sessions – July 4 – 16, 2011.

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

New Haven Highland Ball and Brunch

The New Haven Highland Ball and Brunch took place this year on March 5th and 6th with new hosts Angela Hill and Kate Mahoney. Angela and Kate recruited two dubious but eager able-bodied assistants, Everett Munroe and myself to help with logistics, to set up the brunch, and to learn all the secrets of hosting a ball ourselves.

The ladies provided us with well documented instructions and lists of tasks and items to bring to ensure that the ball and brunch would run smoothly. We promptly forgot just about everything they told us.

One of the items that Everett and I brought to the ball is Bob Byrnie's Castle Eileen Donnan backdrop. The support for this wonderful painting is a plumbers

nightmare of interconnected pvc piping and supports. We strap all the components of this monster on the top of Everett's car and it looks like we are driving a battering ram down the highway. It does seem to clear the road of cars in front of us though.



When we arrived to set up the backdrop we found one Don Wills rolled up in the painting. So we set him up along with the painting before the dance. With heavy reliance on a GPS device during the trip to Hartford, Everett provided a nice tour of most of Connecticut by ignoring all the advice provided by the GPS. In fact the voice got pretty surly after being ignored and finally quit talking to us altogether.



George Thomson was kind enough to volunteer to greet arrivals at the ball with traditional bag piping tunes. The weather was kind to us this year and there were no frozen fingers on the pipe chanter.

The music for the ball was provided by *Tullochgroum*. The Grand March was devised by Peter Leibert and the ball began with *Kendal's Hornpipe*. The program was an interesting mix of the familiar and some unusual, such as *St Andrew's of Brampton* (which was practiced quite a lot), *The Hazel Tree* with the infamous Espagnole and the Strathspey *Dark Lochnagar* with its big and little spirals. The dancing ended with a rousing *Mairi's Wedding*. Then everyone gathered in a huge circle for *Auld Lang Syne*.

The West Hartford Community Center is a wonderful place to hold a ball. With its wooden floor and balcony viewing area, it is comfortable for both dancers and observers.



When group photos were being taken there was a rumor that three members of the Mystic group (Peter Leibert, Rick Corbett and myself) had snuck out to a nearby pub and were dancing on tables for free drinks. Nothing could be further from the truth.



Just look at this unedited picture of the group and you will see that we were definitely present for the photo. The ball was very successful this year, with 127 registered dancers, 3 complimentary tickets and 9 guests attending for dinner only. Attendance at the brunch was very high with 101 registered dancers.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said that 'An Army Marches on It's Stomach'. After providing logistics for the brunch I would say that 'Scottish Dancers Dance on their Tea and Coffee'. I found out early on in the morning that it didn't really matter how much food was available, it was coffee and tea that kept the show running.

Dave Lees

Mini Burns Supper at Stoneridge, Mystic Connecticut

The Mystic Scottish Dancers put on a 'mini' Burns Supper at the StoneRidge Retirement Community in Mystic Connecticut on 11 March 2011. The plan was to provide to the audience, all the aspects of a full blown Burns supper in 30 minute or less (sort of a Burn's Supper in a box). The planning for this idea was like

planning a bank robbery. Everything had to happen in proper sequence without any body collisions or physical injury. Things did not start off too well when a fire alarm activated before the program started (I suspect that Everett was playing with buttons on the wall again). Everyone had to evacuate the building when the alarm went off and they ran into these two jokers (Don Wills and Bob Scent) warming up their pipes.



This drove just about everyone right back into the building.

Thanks to some excellent planning by Ruth Walsh and some very organized ladies in the Mystic group the program went like this:

Introduction by Ruth Walsh, Pipes and drums charge into the room playing *Scotland the Brave* and *No Awa' Ta Bide Awa'*. (We have three pipers and two drummers in the Mystic group and we love our toys). Drop the instruments, Dave Lees grabs two swords followed by Colleen Cournoyer... a quick sword dance and a race from the room, stage left, as dancers hit the floor for *Mairi's Wedding*, stage right.



After *Mairi's Wedding* partners are switched and a quick demonstration of *The Gay Gordons* takes place. The dancers flee and Dave Lees grabs the podium and gives a brief Immortal Memory tribute to The Bard. He then grabs Joyce Chase and Kat Kliphon and hits the floor for a performance of *The Shepard's Crook*. Bob

Scent, accompanied by Rob Davis and Colleen Cournoyer playing the pipes present '*The Ode to the Haggis*'. Sarah Munroe presents '*A Grace before Dinner*' and the event ends with the playing of '*Amazing Grace*' and '*Auld Lang Syne*'.

This all took place within 30 minutes leaving plenty of time to have a nice dinner and a quick dive into a barrel of free beer.

Dave Lees

Middletown Tea Dance

On Wednesday, March 30, the Middletown class held their sixth annual Tea Dance. Ken Way devised a very interesting program of dances, including such specialties as *The Fireworks Reel* and *Ferla Mor* which has the spookiest music we've ever heard.



Twenty-four people attended including these lovely ladies, Barbara Austin, Susan Leff, Alwyn Thorpe, Mary Byrnie, Alice, Lucille and Elizabeth Muir.

While a few of the attendees were unable to dance, we had two 5-couple sets during much of the evening.



The high point of the evening was the Scottish tea served at break and a welcome break for relaxation and socializing. Elizabeth Muir and Catriona MacAuslan provided their extensive tea services and Middletown class folk brought a wonderful assortment of eatables. Ena Baxter had planned to take part in the preparations

but unfortunately she fell ill and couldn't attend. We all wish her a quick recuperation. And it was especially pleasant to see Ann Penfield there, not dancing, but recovering well from her knee injury.

Lucile Blanchard

Bob Greg's 93rd

There is a saying that Scottish Country dancing is not only good for the body but good for the mind as well.



No further evidence is needed after seeing Bob Greg teaching dances that he has devised while celebrating his 93rd birthday.

Dave Lees

Mystic St Patrick's Day Parade

By a strange turn of events the vernal *equinox* (first day of spring for those not fluent in Latin) fell on the same day as the St Patrick's Day Parade in Mystic Connecticut. Since the Mystic dancers were already scheduled to march/dance in the parade we figured this would be a great opportunity to visit Lantern Hill in Ledyard at sunrise to watch the Westerly Morris Men celebrate the equinox.



Everett Munroe is seen here leading his band of merry men to the brink of the precipice on Lantern Hill.

For nearly a quarter-century they have been greeting the sun on Sunday, the first day of spring. About 10 of the Westerly (R.I.) Morris Men, ranging from their 30s to their 90s, hiked to the top of Lantern Hill in town shortly before dawn and we were there to see them.

The Morris Men performed several dances in tribute to the rising sun and the brisk morning breeze. We were fortunate to have two bagpipers present (George Thomson and Colleen Cournoyer). One thing about piping in the cold though, is that it is just about impossible to get the reed working. My wife is a piper and she described the effort as 'trying to blow a ping-pong ball through a soda straw'. George did manage to get his pipes going and the sun kept coming up... and all were happy.



After greeting the sun we all hauled our frozen bodies back down the hill and headed for Mystic Connecticut and the St Patrick's Day parade. Somehow greeting the sun while freezing your tail on a barren hunk of granite before sunrise is just not the same as taking a couple of shots while sitting in a hot tub in your sun room.



This is the eighth year for the Mystic St Patrick's day parade and the Mystic Country Dancers have participated each year. Allison Pollick, Becky Corbett, Dorothy Lohmann, Mary Ruddlesden and Maureen Able are seen here with the parade pony. Since there would be a sea of green in the parade the dancers came up with a brilliant plan... To stand out in the crowd the group picked anti-green as the color of choice for their jackets

so that they would be more visible.



Peter Leibert provided the music and we provided the entertainment as we marched down the streets of Mystic, stopping periodically to do a quick dance. The weather was perfect, the crowd was enthusiastic, the music was melodic and the dancing was fun... what more could you want? Maybe some grog at the end of the parade?

Dave Lees

New York Tartan Day

Thanks to the organization skills of one Everett Munroe, about 45 people were able to attend the New York Tartan Day parade in New York City. The dancers have been participating in this parade for several years and it has always been a fun event.

The Tartan Day Parade is part of the New York Tartan Week, March 29th – April 10th. The parade is dedicated to pipers and drummers and supported by Scottish clans, clubs and societies. The aim is to provide a superb opportunity to connect with friends, enjoy New York and raise a glass to the future of all American-Scots and Scots in America.



Going on this trip was like winning the lottery... here you see the happy crowd comfortably riding in the luxury stretch limo on the way to the Big Apple.

This is an all-day fun event that includes hours of free time to stroll around New York city in you kilt. The trip includes a nice dinner at the St Andrew's Restaurant and Bar on 140 West 46th Street and plenty of time for sight seeing. Some attendees took a tour of the *Cloisters*, a wonderful museum in Fort Tryon Park.



Many others (like this batch of mostly members of the Mystic group) just hung around getting their pictures taken and played with the pigeons. The parade kicked off promptly at 2:00 PM and was run very efficiently with no delays in keeping the marchers moving. The dancers were accompanied with music provided by Peter Leibert and whenever there was a pause in the parade the dancers would break into a quick dance devised for parade events.

As you may know Lucille Blanchard injured herself while performing the dance. She is recovering very well and should be back on her feet and dancing again soon. This highlights the caution that needs to be taken when dancing on a hard pavement. I found out through experience that doing *pas-de-basque* steps through the streets of Mystic during the parade was about the dumbest thing I ever did. By the end of the parade I could barely crawl up the stairs at *Margarita's* to get my traditional St Patrick's day margarita on the rocks.

After a fun day in New York it is nice to not have to drive yourself back from New York. Everett was thoughtful enough to provide entertainment in the form of a movie on the trip home. The movie was (appropriately enough) named *Whiskey Galore*. It is a great story of a World War II cargo vessel wrecked off a remote Scottish island group – Great Todday and Little Todday – with 50,000 cases of whisky aboard. Due to wartime rationing, the islanders had nearly run out of the 'water of life' (*gasp!*). Needless to say, this was a fine finish to a well organized trip.

Dave Lees

Kilts and Ghilles Tea Dance

The annual Kilts and Ghilles Tea dance took place on April 30th this year at the South Britain Congregational Church in Southbury, Ct on a beautiful spring day.



Peter Price devised the program and music was provided by *Thistle Hill* (Jim Stevenson-Mathews, Rebecca McCallum, and Lisa Butkin).

This is the twenty-third Kilts and Ghilles Tea Dance and Peter put together a challenging program that included some old favorites like *Hooper's Jig*, and *Mrs Stewart's Jig*. *Gypsy Dreams* is a beautiful strathspey that provided the dancers with the opportunity to dance the Tournee.



Peter mentioned that the highlight of the ball was the youngsters that attended. Paul and Clarissa McRanor brought several youngsters and both Katie and Margaret (11 and 9) from Peter's class attended. Seeing the grins on the youngsters faces while performing a dance is a true treasure.



No ball is complete without the food... just ask Bob Gregg and Peter.

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).

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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 or dglees@comcast.net.

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