

Reel Time

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

Spring 2013

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.

Wilton Country Dancers Millennium School of Irish Dance, Top Floor, 9 Ethan Allen Highway [Route 7] Wilton, Connecticut. Between Keogh's Hardware and Dunkin' Donuts North of Routes 57 and 107, South of Route 1102. \$5.00 for adults and \$2.00 for dancers 21 and under. Contact Sandra Bethray 203-322-8341 or Angela Montague 203-762-9892.

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 Linda Scent 860-464-9081.

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.

Peter Price's Class Fourth Monday of the month class, New Haven Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Ave., New Haven. From 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Note: This class will only take place if there are 8 dancers who have confirmed with Peter that they are coming. Contact Peter Price 203-675-9587 or Peter.price1672@gmail.com

Summer Dancing in New Haven The plan is to start on Tuesday, June 25th (the week after the Windsor class ends). 7:30-10 PM at the Friends Meeting House, 225 East Grand Avenue, New Haven. This is the current plan (keep in touch).
Leslie

Upcoming Events

Pawling Weekend – Circle Lodge, Hopewell Junction, NY. Friday, May 17 - May 19, 2013. 50th Annual Pawling Weekend For more information see www.rscdsnewyork.org.

Boston Highland Ball Weekend – May 10-12, 2013. Moseley's on the Charles, Dedham, MA. For additional information see www.rscdsboston.org/events.html.

Fairlee Spring Fling – May 18, 2013. Tracy Hall (Norwich Town Hall) 300 Main Street Norwich, VT. More information at www.rscdsboston.org/events-calendar.html

Westchester Ball – Saturday, Jun 1, 2013. More information at www.rscdsnewyork.org/westchester.html.

18th Annual Spring Frolic – June 1, 2013. Lancaster Town Hall, 25 Main Street, Lancaster, NH. More information at www.rcdsboston.org/events-calendar.html.

Rhode Island Highland Games - June 8, 2013 rain or shine. Washington County Fairgrounds, Richmond, RI. More information at <http://www.riscot.org/>

Charlie Zam Concert – Sunday, June 9, 2013. The First Methodist Church, 23 Willow Street, Mystic CT 06355. The concert starts at 2 PM.

Windsor End Of Season Dance – Tuesday, June 18, 2013. Norb Spencer and friends as musicians. Program to be announced.

Scottish Pinewoods Sessions – July 12 – 20, 2013. More information at <http://www.pinewoods.org/schedule2013.shtml>

Round Hill Games – July 6, 2013. The 90th Annual Highland Games at Cranbury Park in Norwalk, Connecticut. Rain or shine. More information at www.roundhill.org.

New Hampshire Highlands – August 23 -25, 2013. Methodios Faith & Heritage Center, Contoocook, NH. More information at <http://www.rscdsboston.org/events-NHHighlands.html>

Bob Gregg Workshop – Saturday, October 5th. First Church of Christ, Woodbridge. 3:00 – 7:00 PM

Nutmeg Workshop – October 19 2013. First Church of Christ Congregational, 190 Court Street, Middletown CT.

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

New Haven Highland Ball

As usual our members came forward and helped organize our annual Highland Ball. Many thanks to one and all for your kind efforts in helping us provide an opportunity for dancers to spend an enjoyable evening eating, renewing old and new friendships and dancing the night away to the music of *The Parcel of Rogues* (Susie Petrov, Keyboard – Calum Pasqua, Fiddle – Dan Houghton, Pipes, Whistle, Guitar).



Bob Byrne's Eilean Donan Castle backdrop along with Lion Rampant and Saltier Flags decorated the hall very nicely.

Leslie Kearney and Lucile Blanchard organized the two Workshops to prepare dancers for the event. Many people behind the scenes worked on Ball Booklets, Crib Sheets, Dance Posters, Hospitality, Labels, Proof Readers, Publicity, Registration and Welcome Letters. Which all led up to our Highland Ball held again at the West Hartford Meeting & Conference Center on March 2, 2013. Ken Way again provided us with interesting badges. Ball Dance Program Devisor, Kent Smith provided us with a well balanced arrangement of dances. Special thanks to our teachers who took the time to teach the dances to members of the various classes.

The Windsor and Middletown Class provided a vast array of appetizers. Heidi Krause and her staff from *Krause Caterers* served a very tasty buffet meal which we ate at tables decorated with lovely bouquets of blooming crocuses. Dancers and guests were met at the door by Piper George Thomson and greeted at the welcome table by Minna DeGaetano and Linda Scent. Doug Clough, led the Grand March which was devised by Linda Scent through the dance hall and got us lined up for singing of *The Flower of Scotland*, *God Save the Queen* and *The Star Spangled Banner* and the start of the first dance EH3 7AF. Our Ball Briefers Brian Haeckler, Kent Smith and Karen Pestana kept us on track. Our M.C. Don Wills did his usual fine job assisted by Time Keeper Ev Munro.

We had dancers from CT, MA, NY, NJ, ME, WV, VT, NH, IL, UT, and SC.

125 had dinner and 116 danced. Financially we almost broke even (-130.00) which isn't bad considering this event is not a fundraiser but is organized annually to promote Scottish Country Dancing.

The evening ended with *The Deil Amang the Tailors* followed by a lovely waltz and singing of Auld Lang Syne.



Everett Munro

Mystic Scottish Country Dancers Burns Supper

Organizing a Burn's Supper is always a difficult task but this year was very special. Due to the unexpected dumping of several inches of snow on our state the day before the scheduled supper the Mystic Country dancers had to postpone the event. The Burns Night occurred on Saturday the 9th of March.... one month later than planned. Needless to say, this required a lot of communication to everyone who had purchased a ticket for the event.

To add a little more excitement to organizing the event, the dancers had picked a new location for the dinner. The supper was held at the Norwich Holiday Inn in Norwich CT.



It turned out to be an excellent location with a very helpful staff that was able to handle all the changes as they rolled in. The Mystic Scottish Country dancers are already planning the next Burns Supper in 2014.

Once again Bob Byrnie's Eilean Donan Castle was present for the event.



Neal Sharp was, once again the master of ceremonies. The evening included Highland dancing, piping by Danny Pislowski, social dancing and an Immortal Memory (the text of which is included in this newsletter). I discovered something before delivering the Immortal Memory. Neal had the podium and was having a great time telling stories and jokes. I was waiting for him to finish so I could deliver the address. As it turns out Neal is like the Energizer Bunny... he will keep going and going until told to stop. I didn't get that word... Ruth finally came up and gave me the word.

Joyce Chase and The Mystic Scottish Country Dance Troupe had practiced a dance that included *Wild Geese (Jig)* and *Lake Geneva* (a Strathspey). The dancers practiced this dance for weeks before the dinner and remembering the words of Robert Burns ... *'The best laid schemes of mice and men Go often awry'*. Somehow Susie Petrov and the Parcel of Rogues sort of dropped six bars in one part of the dance. It is at times like this when the advice 'keeps smiling and keep dancing' comes into play.



Andrew Fraiser was present to provide his *The Ode to the Haggis*. The evening was a big success thanks to hard work of the organizers of this event. The social dancing went on well into the evening.

Dave Lees

Mystic Irish Parade

Several members of the Mystic Scottish Country dancers marched in the 10th annual Mystic Irish Parade on March 24th. The weather was gorgeous, the music was triumphant, the participants were enthusiastic, and the audience was outstanding! Unfortunately I was not able to attend the event to get some photos of our dancers.



However, I am sure all the participants behaved with dignity and grace.

Dave Lees

Middletown Annual Tea Dance

On March 27, 2013 the Middletown class sponsored their annual tea dance at the First Church of Christ, 190 Court St in Middletown. Music was provided by Norb Spencer and his buddies.



The usual suspects brought their finest dishes and silverware and everyone brought food. Some of the women wore hats, and George Thompson borrowed Catriona's wide-brimmed black hat and wore it through the whole dance. When she left, she took it with her and he said *Now I can't dance* and proceeded to limp through the last dances, dragging one leg.



We had two sets plus with people there from other classes. Norb Spencer's band played very well and Ken Way's program was a good one. Even the unfamiliar dances weren't that difficult. We served tea and goodies at the break. After break, Ken had us dance *The Hussy's* (housewife), an interesting jig. So it was another successful dance party.

Lucile Blanchard

New York Tartan Day Parade 2013

Although we were unable to organize a bus ride to New York City to participate in this year's Tartan Day parade, we did manage to have some members sneak down to New York for the day.



Here is a little history of the parade.

The Scots have played a vibrant and influential role in the development of this country. This contribution was recognized by a US Senate Resolution that appeared in the Congressional Record of April 7, 1997. In 1998 National Tartan Day was officially recognized on a permanent basis when the U.S. Senate passed Senate Resolution 155 recognizing April 6th as National Tartan Day. This was followed by companion bill House Resolution 41 which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on March 9, 2005. The passage of this bill was due to the work of the National Capital Tartan Committee, Inc., and president James Morrison.



That date of National Tartan Day – April 6th – commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, which asserted Scotland's sovereignty and which was an influence on the American Declaration of Independence. Canada has been celebrating "National Tartan Day" since 1993. The idea and motivation for creating a similar American holiday was provided by the Scottish Coalition, a group of national Scottish- American cultural organizations.

Dave Lees

Kilts and Ghillies

The Kilts and Ghillies Tea Dance was held this year at the South Britain Congregational Church Parish House in Southbury Connection on April 27th. Music was provided by Terry Traub (piano) and Catherine Miller (fiddle).



Peter Price created the dance program. I was unable to attend the event so I have provided some photos of a very successful tea dance.



The Bethray Family



Spring is Definitely Here



Peter Leibert, founder of the Westerly Morris Men, plays the accordion while members of the group dance at sunrise on the green at Connecticut College in New London in celebration of May Day Wednesday, May 1, 2013.

Dave Lees

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church 50th Anniversary

For many years the Mystic Scottish Country Dancers have been practicing on Friday evenings at the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church. On May 3rd the church celebrated the 50th anniversary and invited a group of dancers to have dinner and demonstrate some Scottish Country Dancing.



Bob Scent was there to welcome all the church members with traditional bagpipes. A little history of the church... Dr and Mrs Jay Buckley spearheaded efforts for the founding of St. Andrew. They were assisted by the Rev. Gordon Wiles of Waterford and the late Rev. Steward Robinson of Waterford (a chaplain at the Submarine Base). The group met in the William Seely School until the dedication of the building five years later in 1968.

The church was packed with church members young and old and tribute was paid to the church pioneers. There were remembrances and history of the church construction over time. Eight of the Scottish Country dancers were privileged to attend this ceremony and provide a demonstration of Scottish Country Dancing. Joyce Chase selected *The Reel of the 51st* and *Minister on the Loch* as the dances.

Joyce described the history and the style of the dances, especially *The Reel of the 51st*, a dance created by Lieutenant Atkinson of the 7th Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in a prisoner of war camp in Germany. The story is that the instructions and symbols for the dance were intercepted by the Germans and they spent the rest of the war trying to break the code. After the dance demonstration we were treated to fine meal.



Although it looked like some of the dancers were not all the familiar with using silverware, the sure can dance....

Dave Lees

Mom & Tots Dance Class

I have been meeting a couple of times a month over the past school year with the Moms & Tots group at St John's Basilica in Stamford - a group of home-schoolers. My daughter-in-law, Bridget, is one of the moms and made the suggestion that Scottish country dancing could be included in their curriculum of art appreciation, Spanish language, religion and fieldtrips. The dancers are aged 4 through 9 and are very enthusiastic but not ready for footwork or fancy figures.

We found that placing a large dot of washable marker on their right hands relieved the left hand / right hand tension that most new dancers experience. We also found that small children have a limited patience waiting for other dancers to complete figures and so developed dances that included all of the dancers most of the time.



Our repertoire included child-friendly dances such as *The Express Train*, *Hello Neighbour*, *Baby Baby Nick Nack*,

Following the Leader, and the Merry-Go-Round. Even the smallest dancer can count to four so circles, right hands across, slip down the middle, cast behind the lines all work very well. The children love the sound of the music which is new to them and moving in time to the music presents no problems.

Scottish country dancing evangelists might find fertile ground in coalitions of home-schoolers who are young and enthusiastic. Parents are always looking for sports-type activities especially for children who do not enjoy organized sports. The dancing is ideal: it involves a team, provides aerobic and cardiovascular exercise, improves coordination and balance, and combines music and movement which appeals to young children. It is an activity that parents and children can do together. While it does require patience and availability during the day, the rewards are obviously enormous.

Sandra Bethray

Shelton Library Escapade

We were invited to participate in Scottish Day at the Huntington Branch of the Shelton Library. We knew we had arrived at the correct location when we spotted the Litchfield Pipe Band "jamming" outside. Shawn Fields and his co-librarians gave us a warm welcome, all decked out in kilts and tartan sashes. There were great displays of literature, TV and films, dress, and other forms of Scottish culture and loads of food from local restaurants including a huge sheet cake decorated with bagpipes. Catriona MacAuslan joined us with flyers from the Society and a laptop playing the recent Ball program.

We started our demonstration with a short introduction on the history of Scottish Country Dancing and the part played by the Society in preserving traditional dances, music and figures as well as publishing newly composed dances and music every year. After describing the many social and health benefits of dancing, I concluded with on-line sources for dancing information and music. Our two demo dances were Deil amang the Tailors followed by The Haggis Tree.



Our group of six dancers included Jeff Rossman, Helen McCullum, Joanna Sanderson, Deidre Frost, Mary Bethray and Sandra Bethray. We did very well, considering that the group had not had any opportunity to practice together, and were able to convince some on-lookers that you don't have to be Scottish to have a good time with country dancing. The invitation to join us for a user-friendly dance was warmly received and we had dancers of all ages participate in Hello Neighbour and Following the Leader.

Sandra Bethray

Robert Burns Immortal Memory 2013

Good evening and welcome to our tribute to a remarkable man named Robert Burns – born the son of a poor farmer in Alloway Scotland 254 years ago.

In 1776 he was 17 years old – He studied land surveying and geometry – just this year he was honored by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors’ – the first to be granted a posthumous membership in the organization.

In 1788, he was 29 years old – he returned to Ayrshire after spending two years in Edinburgh with the first edition of Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect published.

In 1789, he was 30 years old - He was appointed to duties in Customs and Excise and gave up his farm in 1791

He was a ploughman

He was a romantic

He was a lover.

He was a Freemason

He was a Nationalist

He was a Revolutionary.

Robert Burns was anything but a mere poet.

In 1796, he died in poverty at the age of 37 and yet more than 10,000 people attended his funeral

There have been many revolutionary thinkers throughout history. There have been Libertines and there are those who have championed the cause of the poor and oppressed. There have also been nationalists, who dared to fly the flag against foreign powers risking death, imprisonment and transportation. There have both been lovers and romantic fools. There have been many revenue collectors, preservers of folk songs and guardians of heritage. There have been all manner of men, national heroes, champions and famous sons.

There have also always been many poets whose works are quoted from time to time. Yet there is only one who combines all these things and that is Rabbie Burns. For over two hundred years we have paid homage to the name, the reputation and the wonderful poetry of Scotland's favorite and most honored son RABBIE BURNS. This is true here tonight as it is true in hundreds of countries around the world where folks are gathered to honor and toast this most enigmatic and talented of men.

We are not just honoring a poet who had a way with words. Rabbie Burns was undoubtedly one of the greatest poets writing in any language. And ... he did so in a dialect and in a language that is foreign to many, yet the meaning, the feeling and the intent of those words is understood by all.

He was a master of words and emotion....

*Princes and Lords are but the breath of kings.
An honest man's the noblest work of God.*

Phrases that are short, elegant and powerful and so far.... Immortal.

The fact of Robert Burns' humble birth should not surprise us. Many great men have started out behind a plow. Look at our own Abraham Lincoln. One of the things that makes a man like Robert Burns stand out is his native wit, his personal genius at bending the language to a point where he can affect the images and emotions in the minds of people that have been born over 250 years after him and half a world away.

Here is a little piece from Tam O' Shanter.... With Tam on his way home after staying a bit too long in the local pub.

*We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.*

Now that paints a picture I have to say I have personal experience with the sentiment expressed in that phrase.

When Robert Burns was writing his poetry and collecting songs, there were 900 million people in the world... now there are 7 billion (almost 8 times as many people) and remarkably his writings still resonate in a world that has gone through drastic changes. You only have to pick up a newspaper to see what a complicated and tough world that we living in.... It seems that never a day goes by without some sort of crisis or new evil popping up somewhere in the word.

Earlier you listened to Neal reciting Epistle to a Young Friend

In this poem Burns moralizes about man and his propensities for good and evil. The poem stands as a simple and eloquent testament of moral belief and is one of the clearest statements of his own simple creed that he ever penned. Basically, people are a sad lot, but the genuinely wicked are rare.

*Ye'll try the world soon, my lad;
And Andrew dear, believe me,
You'll find mankind and unco squad,
And muckle may they grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.*

Mankind is made up of people of varied assortment, many of whom will cause grief. You should be prepared to face adversity at all times and you must accept that the fact that you may fail in your endeavors

*I'll no say, men are villains a'
The real, harden'd wicked
Wha hae nae check but human law
Are to a few restricked
But, och! mankind are unco weak
An' little to be trusted
If Self the wavering balance shake
It's rarely right adjusted!*

Not all men are out and out villains, but few can be totally trusted, and if you cross the line between right and wrong, you will find it difficult to come back.

You should not criticize your fellow men as everyone will have to answer for their sins on the Day of Judgment, nor should you judge anyone according to their wealth as the man facing poverty can still be kind and caring.

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile

Assiduous wait upon her;

And gather gear by ev'ry wile

That's justified by honour;

Not for to hide it in a heedge,

Nor for a train attendant;

But for a glorious privilege

Of being independent

You must pursue your fortune through hard work, and take pride in your belongings, safe in the knowledge that you have acquired them by honest endeavor.

Words from over 250 years ago and still relevant. Let me close by saying that Burns had another art – the art of stopping; the art of stopping at the right place. Nothing is more difficult than this. Burns wrote short poems and he knew when to stop. So too shall I.

We are here tonight because Robert Burns embodies that which we all hold most high: a deploring of hypocrisy and unearned status; and a love of life, of friendship and of honesty. And, as the final measure of what we all strive for: a belief in the final kinship of humanity, as echoed in the final lines of “A Man's a Man”:

Then let us pray that come it may,

As come it will for all that.

That, man to man, the world o'er

Shall brothers be for all that”

So, charge your glasses, raise them high, and join with me:
To Robert Burns!