

Light and Airy



Scottish Country Dancers of Winnipeg

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From the Chair....

Welcome Spring! I trust everyone is enjoying this wonderful weather and that Easter spent with family and friends was joyous. It is good to see our friends home from winter vacations safe and sound. It is hard to imagine our dancing year coming to an end. The Basic /Back to Basic Class Social is on April 22nd, another chance to enjoy the music of Scotch Measure. Peter has put together a lovely program and I know that the dances are being reviewed in all the classes. Please mark this date on your calendars and make this a memorable evening for our newest Branch members as they host for the first time. The Ft. Garry Social Class has invited members of the Branch to join them on April 26th for their "snow day" make up class. Thank you Gerry. We look forward to seeing you all on the 22nd and 26th.

Another reminder about the Everything Scottish Sale on April 17th at St. Paul's 1:30pm - 4:30pm. This is the place to find that kilt, sash, book or record or as Joan Curle, the organizer says, perhaps a tea cup that was once used by someone Scottish. Good fun and no doubt a bargain or two.

The Workshop Committee is hard at work putting the finishing touches to the planning for the Weekend April 30th - May 1st. If you haven't already registered please do so. There is a Step Dance Workshop scheduled for May 2nd (separate registration form) subject to suitable enrollment numbers. The Workshop is always a highlight in our dancing year, a great opportunity to meet dancers from out of town and our Guest Teachers Ron Wallace and Margaret Zadworny.

I want to say a special Thank You to Christine Wallace for stepping and teaching the Technique Class during Margaret's recent illness. Our thoughts, prayers and wishes are sent to Margaret as she continues her recovery.

2009/2010 Dance Season

Thursday April 22

Class Social NB Change of date

Week of April 19

Last classes of winter term

Saturday May 1

Workshop and dance

Tuesday May 11

Spring Dancing, St Paul's, 8-10 PM

Wednesday May 19

AGM

Tuesday June 1

Spring Dancing, St Paul's, 8-10 PM

Please note: All dates are subject to change – please check the calendar each month. All socials are at St Paul's Church Hall at 8:00 pm unless otherwise noted. For class socials, the admission charge is \$5; others are as noted.

From the Editor



Did you find out why the thistle is Scotland's national flower? In 1263 at Largs, a small seaside town on the west coast of Scotland, the Viking longships approached the shore silently in the dark moonless night, the Scots oblivious of their presence. As the barefoot Vikings disembarked, they stepped on the thistles, yelling out in pain, alerting the Scots. Battle ensued with the Scots defeating the Vikings due to the thistle's prickly warning system. Prickles occur all over the plant - on surfaces such as the stem and flat parts of the leaves, discouraging herbivorous animals from feeding on the plant.

The meaning of the word thistle is generally accepted to be bright fire. The purple and green thistle, which blooms in August, is an ancient Celtic symbol of nobility of character as well as of birth. For this reason the thistle is the symbol of the Order of the Thistle, a high chivalric Order of Scotland. It is found in many Scottish symbols and logos. Carnegie Mellon University features the thistle in its crest. Schools in Scotland, celebrating St. Andrew's Day, November 30, make thistle coasters. Thistle is the name of several Scottish football clubs. This floral emblem of Scotland appears on UK currency.

The thistle is an inspiration in the world of literature, publishing, architecture, music, and

dance. A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle is a long, 2685 lines, poem by Hugh MacDiarmid written in Scots and published in 1926. The poem is a male perspective of the condition of Scotland, ranging between comic and serious modes and looking at a wide range of topics, including the thistle, "To meddle wi the thistle and to pluck/The figs frae't is my metier, I think" - the figs being the thistle's flower heads.

There is the Thistle News in Nanaimo, British Columbia, the Thistle Times in St. Louis, Missouri. There is a Thistle and Shamrock book publisher, and a Thistle and Shamrock programme on NPR radio in the US. The thistle appears in the titles of books, like Grasping the Thistle by the Macleods.

There is a Thistle Center in Stirling, Scotland, for the performing arts. Thistles are carved on headstones, such as Robin MacDougall's. Gilis is famous for its Thistle Chapel. There is a Thistle Hotel in Edinburgh.

Musician Dave Wiesler's group, Thistle Horse, plays traditional music for dances and concerts around the world. Dave plays the piano and guitar, sings, and writes witty songs and original tunes. The first track on the CD Beauty of Scotland, by the Flowers of Scotland, is The Thistle of Scotland. Winners of Scottish music awards are given shiny silver thistle-shaped trophies. Ipswich has a Thistle Pipe Band.

There is a Thistle School of Scottish Country Dance in Louisiana, and there has been one in Los Angeles. There are the Thistle and Scottish Country Dancers of Nova Scotia and the Thistle and Ghillies Dancers sponsored by The Scottish American Society of Idaho. There are Thistle Balls annually in cities around the world.

Through the 1980s and 90s, there was a Thistle Club right here in Winnipeg, organizing occasional social dances as the Branch calendar allowed. Former members Don and Margaret Mettam noted that "thistle" is an acronym for "take heed, it's a super thrilling leisure experience", and so the club was named.

We will be dancing the Wisp O' Thistle Strathspey at our workshop May 1, 2010. We look forward to seeing you there.

April Fool Has Passed ...

One disadvantage of being a monthly, rather than daily, publication is that opportunities such as 1 April are closed to us. However, we can pass on the clever inventions of others ...

A public school teacher was arrested today at London Heathrow International Airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a compass, a slide-rule and a calculator. At a morning press conference, the Attorney General said he believes the man is a member of the notorious Al-Gebra movement. He didn't identify the man, who has been charged by Scotland Yard with carrying weapons of maths instruction.

"Al-Gebra is a problem for us," the Attorney General said. "They derive solutions by means and extremes and sometimes go off on tangents in search of absolute values. They use secret code names like 'X' and 'Y' and refer to themselves as 'unknowns', but we have determined that they belong to a common denominator of the axis of medieval with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philanderer Isosceles used to say, "There are three sides to every triangle."

When asked to comment on the arrest, Gordon Brown said, "If God had wanted us to have better weapons of maths instruction, he would have given us more fingers and toes." Downing Street aides told reporters they could not recall a more

intelligent or profound statement by the Prime Minister. They believe that the Nobel Prize for Physics will follow.

Class Reports

Fort Garry Social Class

We welcome back more snowbirds, Reg and Joan Curle from winter travels to Hawaii. We are also glad to see Virginia Stevens back in dancing form, after a recent bout of illness.

A new development at Fort Garry Social worthy of note is the number of men attending. (Maybe our publicity people could use this as a marketing tool to get more ladies into Scottish Country dancing.) If we attract any more men into our class, at least one of us will have to dance as a lady! Personally, I think Scott Macrae should get that privilege, since he is the only male to regularly appear in his kilt.

(Ed. Note: Back in the day - where do these ghastly phrases come from - anyhow, it used to be the case that the man in trousers was the one to dance the lady's part. How things have changed!)

Gerry Mayes has dusted off a number of "challenge" dances over the last few weeks. According to Gerry, she encounters dances we have not done in a great long while, and now we know why! One titled "Two Four Six Eight" proved to be well beyond our abilities, despite repeated attempts. Also, we tackled a number of dances for square sets that entered that realm of "challenge". Others, such as "Irish Rover" and the "Bees of Maggie Knockater" we managed to dance passably with only one or two trial runs. Judging which dances are beyond our ken clearly remains an art form for teachers to acquire.

When it comes to difficult dances, Gerry says it all boils down to remembering the geography of the dance. No argument there. All of us have photographic memories so we should be able to capture each dance quickly, in theory. What Gerry hasn't accounted for is that some of us have run out of film before the dance is completed!

-- John Giesbrecht

Tuesday Technique Class

Maureen reminded us last night that we are in the final weeks of the winter term and with the bright but cool temperatures this week it really feels like spring is coming. Quite a few people have been away these past few weeks trying to catch some sun in more southern climates but even the south (e.g., Florida) has offered no guarantee of warmth. I was in Pensacola Fl. for a week and the day of arrival the wind was fiercely blowing, palm trees were bending and I was wondering why I had not brought my toque and long underwear! It did warm up somewhat later in the week but always had my jacket with me. While there I went to a Scottish country dance class ... about 12 very friendly people who had a very substantial tea half way through the evening and indulged me by doing Montgomery's Rant and an interesting dance called "The Clumsy Lover".

Our Tuesday class continues to be well attended and we were glad to have Margaret back last week to help us work through a five couple dance with an interesting progression called "The Jimp Waist" where a fancy little over and under arm movement is involved. Last night Christine revisited the Glasgow Highlanders Strathspey, another dance in which the progression is unusual.

Margaret has unfortunately had to be away for a few weeks and Christine has been taking her spot. We very much appreciate Christine very ably filling in and wish Margaret well and a speedy return.

-- Lynn

Thursday Class: Basic and Back To ...

Well, it's been a quiet month in the Thursday class. (Any other fans of A Prairie Home Companion out there?) Anyhow, quite a few members away for some or most of the month, some due to illness, and some, more happily, on various holiday trips. We are very grateful to Berna, Donna M, Anne, Sandy, and Yvette for helping to make up our numbers – hope you'll come again, now that you've found us. Class was cancelled on April 1 due to church services, and now we'll be getting ready for our social on April 22. We hope you can join us then.

Social Dance

Hosts: Thursday Class
Thursday 22 April, 8 PM
St Paul's Hall
Music by Scotch Measure
Admission \$5

Programme

Talisker	32R2	Whisky Collection
Mary's S'spey	32S3	Winnipeg: 4 SCD
Machine W'o' Horses	32J3	Book 12
Montgomerie's Rant	32R3	Book 10
Hope Little's S'spey	32S3	Goldring G&S 2
Joe Macdiarmid's Jig	32J4	RSCDS 5/82
Flowers of Edinburgh	32R3	Book 1
The Lairds' Diamond	32S2	Leaflet
Tribute to the Borders	32J3	RSCDS Leaflet
Reel of the 51 st Div'n	32R3	Book 13
Waltz		

Notes available from the Branch web site.

All Things Scottish Sale

Do you have any new or gently used Scottish items that need a new home? Then the Branch **All Things Scottish Sale** may be the answer. The sale will be held on Saturday, April 17, 2010 at St. Paul's Church Hall. New and gently used Scottish items will be for sale, including clothing, dancing shoes & apparel, jewellery, books, music (records / CDs), knick knacks, and dishes. Items can be donated or sold on consignment. Contact Joan Curle (254 6697), Debbie Forrest (284-4667) or Heather Ferguson (257-9885) for more information.

Winnipeg Branch Workshop and Dance

Saturday May 1, 2010
Churchill Park United Church
Teachers: Ron Wallace (Santa Rosa, CA) and
Margaret Zadworny (Winnipeg)
Musicians: Ron Krug and Ken Natrass (classes)
and Scotch Measure (dance)

From the Workshop Committee ...

The Spring Workshop is coming up on Saturday, May 1st 2010 at Churchill Park United Church (the same venue as last year). Deadline to register is Friday April 16th

A reminder - there is a charge of \$10 for any non-dancers attending the evening social.

The workshop committee has asked me to pass along the message that a sign-up sheet will be in your class asking for the following contributions to the workshop's success:

sweet & savouries for the evening social;

assistance in the kitchen in the morning and evening.

Workshop Practice dance and ceilidh evening – Friday April 30, 2010 at St. Paul's Anglican Church Hall at 7:30 p.m. Please join us.

Also, we would like to solicit for donations to the door prize draw. If your company or organization would be interested in contributing items, please contact Joan/Reg Curle or Yvette.

Workshop Committee members are: Yvette Berube, Joan Curle, Reg Curle, Doug Durnin, Christine Wallace, Jean Highmoor, Sandy Kizuik and Janet Newediuk/Betty Poole. If there are any questions about the workshop, please ask any of the above.

The Origin and Tradition of the Grand March -- by Christine M. Wallace

Earlier this year, there was concern expressed, that we were in danger of losing some of our traditions associated with Scottish Country Dancing, one of which was the Grand March. This was and is a very colourful, yet dignified way of opening a Ball with everyone in evening dress, walking or one could say promenading round the Ballroom to the accompaniment of the bagpipes, and being directed by the Master of Ceremonies. At the conclusion of the Grand March, one finds oneself in position with one's partner ready to participate in the first dance of the evening. (On inquiry to RSCDS Headquarters many years ago, the late Miss Gibson, who was the Secretary at the time, after doing some research herself, informed us that in

those days when the Grand March was on a Scottish Country Dance Ball programme in the U.K. it was usually followed by the Reel of Tulloch!) I started my research into the origin and tradition of the Grand March, when I was asked to write an article on this subject for the L&A in 1988 and again in 1993. As the Grand March is on our Saturday evening programme at this year's Workshop on May 1st, 2010, I was asked if I would write this article again for the L&A, with any further information I might have discovered.

In my initial inquiries in Winnipeg, I discovered that very little was known of the origin of the Grand March, except that it was always accompanied by the bagpipes and probably had a military background. Over many years, the Grand March has always been the first item on the programme for both Highland and Military Balls -- "The Opener" -- so to speak, thereby becoming a tradition. In the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the method of conducting the dancing at assemblies or balls in both Edinburgh and London was found to be very similar. In his book "A Social History of Scottish Dance," the late George Emmerson wrote "at court and very select assemblies, the company took their places in the dance according to social precedence. The Balls usually opened with a 'promenade' round the room followed by Minuets." Could this promenade mentioned here, not possibly have been similar to what we now call the Grand March? Certainly at the Military Balls, the Grand March is lead by the highest ranking officers and guest of honour, if there is one, and so on through the rank and file. In our own Branch institution i.e. at our Ball, the Grand March is lead by the Chairman of our Branch with the guest of honour e.g. the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

In the book "The Darling Diversion" by Evelyn Hood, there is a delightful description of a dance class taught by James Neil in Glamis in the early nineteen hundreds. He was a well known and favourite figure among the aristocracy of his day, and among his pupils was the late Queen Mother, the Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyons. He had a class of between thirty and forty students. But the highlight of it all, wrote one of his students, now an elderly lady, "was the Finishing Ball where we got all dressed up in lovely dresses, and big bows of ribbon in our hair, and sashes to match our dresses and all took part in the Grand March."

You will probably have gleaned from this article so far, that in years gone by, our Ball was a formal occasion, and for our Branch, it was the highlight of our dancing year, held at the end of April. The ladies wore long self coloured gowns with their tartan sashes. The men wore their kilts, black jackets and diced or off-white hose, or evening suits, for those who did not wear the kilt. The dancers formed up in couples outside the hall, behind the piper. The Branch chairperson and her/his partner would lead the other couples, or, if there were guests of honour, they might lead the other couples. The couples would follow the piper around the hall, and up the centre, where they would be directed alternately right and left by the Marshal, eventually meeting to form fours, then eights. The March would finish with the lines of four, or eight, facing the top, with the guests of honour in the centre of the first line.

In recent years, we have become less formal and we no longer have our annual Ball. Our year now ends with our May Workshop, at which we have a dance on the Saturday evening. This is a less formal occasion, but we usually dress up a little more than at our regular class socials, and we can still enjoy the pageantry of the Grand March. Certainly our band members look really "smashing" in their tuxedos trimmed with Manitoba tartan.

I am sure that there may be more background to the origin of the Grand March and I hope that during my visit to Scotland next month, I will be able to do a little more research. In the meantime, what is important is to come out to the Workshop classes and the Dance on May 1st. We have two very talented, experienced guest teachers, and great music to dance to----and participate in a little history by joining in the Grand March accompanied by the bagpipes--a great tradition!

Another Internet Resource

This has just come to our attention. One of our Thursday class members has already been using it, and found it very helpful. Further comments will be welcome.

<http://www.scottish-country-dancing-dictionary.com/>

In Concert

The Sugar Babes

Farewell Performance
Sunday 25 April, 2 PM
Crescent Ft Rouge United Church
Admission: Adults \$10, under 12 \$5
Fund Raiser for the Church

The Babes include our own Jane Natrass, and the accompanist is Ron Krug

Out of Town Events:

Waterloo, ON

8-15 August, 2010
TAC Summer School
More details and forms at www.tac-rscds.org

Washington State

10 -12 September 2010
Fort Worden Workshop
Details and forms at
www.rscds-seattle.org

Calgary AB

15-16 October 2010
St Giles SCD Group
Ceilidh, Workshop and Ball
Teachers: Sharon Barker (Calgary), Fred DeMarse (San Francisco, CA), Ferne Katzberg (Yorkton, SK)
Music: Ron Krug and Ken Natrass (Winnipeg)
See brochure on St Paul's notice board

COM meetings: first Wednesday of the month, October 2009 to May 2010.

Next L&A: Starting in October, L&A deadlines will be the Fridays following COM meetings.

Contributors are requested to send their submissions either in Word (.doc) or .pdf format, or typed directly into an email message. Other formats cause us difficulty.