

# *Light and Airy*



**Scottish Country Dancers of Winnipeg**  
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**Volume 57, Number 3**

**December 2025**

## ***Important Dates***

### **Dancing in 2025**

Thursday, December 11 – last afternoon class of 2025

Monday, December 15 – last evening class of 2025

### **Dancing in 2026**

Monday, January 5 – evening classes start 7:30 – 9:30 at CPUC

Thursday, January 8 – afternoon classes start 1:30 – 3:30 at CPUC

Saturday, January 17 – Burns Social

Sunday, January 25 – Challenge Class

Sunday, February 22 – Challenge Class

Saturday, March 14 – Friends Spring (Ceilidh) Social

Note: all events are held at Churchill Park United Church (CPUC) 525 Beresford Ave. unless otherwise stated.

## ***A Word from the Chair of COM ....***

Autumn greetings from the Chair. This weather has been incredible...so easy to get to Churchill Park to dance. The main obstacle is sickness, which was why I was unable to attend the recent St. Andrew's Social. I hope those who were there had a marvellous time. I'm thinking that it was a real *shindig*.

I have a book called *Gaelic in your Gob* by Michael Newton, of English words that have their origin in Scotland. The word *SHINDIG* is in it. "*A shindig, in American slang is a frolicsome party featuring music and dance*". Apparently the word shindig involves a blow to the shins. Shindig is also connected to shinty which is a stick and ball game once played all over Northern England but now surviving primarily in the Scottish Highlands.

I hope the St. Andrew's Social didn't involve any shin digs.

Blessings as you prepare for upcoming holidays whether it be Christmas, Hanukkah, Hogmanay, or other celebrations. I wish you a safe and enjoyable December.

Heather Robbins

Next COM meeting – December 2

## ***Have you heard?***

### ***St. Andrew's Society Dinner***

The St. Andrew's Society held their namesake dinner on November 22. This year the branch was asked to show some dances and engage the crowd in some dancing.

To this end, dance teaching sessions were held on the four Thursday evenings leading up to the dinner. One couple, James & Tracey, attended each week and were invited to dance with us a dance of their choosing. They selected The Barmkin, a square set formation dance. They were paired with experienced dancers and did a marvelous showing.



### ***St. Andrew's Social – November 24***

What a wonderful evening of dancing, friendship, and snacking! AND all at a great price as members were admitted free since this took place on the regular Monday class time.

The program set by our teacher candidates James & Sharyl included many familiar favourites. There were 3 four-couple sets for many dances, right to the last dance. Sharyl and James shared the task of introducing and briefing dances, and Cheryl organized the music. Thanks once again to Ray for his sound system.

The library was out for perusal and much interest was shown. The nearly new shop was out as well with many items finding new owners.

As always there was a plentiful variety on the snack table to choose from with all being delicious.



Dancers at the St. Andrew's Social

### ***From the Classes ...***

#### **Monday Class**

*At time of publication I have had no report from the Monday dancers. -ed.*

#### **Thursday Class**

Oh, it was an eerie afternoon on the eve of Halloween. Cheryl had dug through her caldron of dances to put together a scary class. She had some witch's hats to share around too.

The Witches Reel began our warm up to the music of Caddam Wood. Imagine witches swirling about the trees in misty dark forest, slipping through the trees, and threading a needle (arch) formed by the top men, then top ladies.

Then 5 dancers made up 3-couple longwise sets – where the third woman was missing! The dance was The Ghost and Mary Jo and involved shadow reels across with a lead change on last 2 bars of the reel to move into another reel on the side. What a neat dance!! The music Cheryl chose was The Slinky.

We moved along through Slytherin House (music of the same name) which ends with sixteen bars of the Serpentine figure as the dancers move from hands across to a chase. We have enjoyed this dance from Chris Ronald before.

The next week there were a record number of dancers out for the class including long time friend Mike Lynch visiting from Vancouver Island.

Cheryl embarked on a cruise theme of dances with Trip to Bavaria, a dance we have done in the past. Cheryl & Doug were in Bavaria as part of their cruise on the upper Danube River in October.

Now she has launched her Holiday theme with a dance called Frosty set to the music Frosty the Snowman and other fun tunes.

Doug

### ***A Reel Question ....***

The dance *Fair Donald* was taught in the Thursday class earlier in November, and Lynn noticed a relationship with the dance *Macdonald of the Isles*: both dances have the name Donald in the title, and the distinctive diagonal reels of four in the instructions. She wondered if this was just by chance? Doug suggested this could be researched, and any answer published in the L&A.

*Macdonald of the Isles* is a relatively modern dance, written by Derek Haynes and published by him in 1966, and *Fair Donald* was published by the RSCDS in Book 29, in 1979, with no source being given. Usually, if an RSCDS dance comes from an old collection, that is acknowledged, but I could find no such acknowledgment in this case, which makes one wonder.

It is fairly common for a teacher wanting a dance with particular formations, not being aware of one in published sources, to simply invent one. I've certainly done it. Such dances are not usually published, but could that explain the origin of *Fair Donald*? We'll probably never know.

There are two Donalds attending the class. More coincidence?

Peter McClure

### ***Challenge Class***

More on the cruise theme!

Cheryl found a book – The Vienna Book of SCD - at summer school some years ago and liked the dance Trip to Vienna. This dance is a 40-bar Strathspey, a bit unusual which keeps us thinking “What? There’s one more figure?”

The figures of the dance signify specific places to visit in Vienna. They include:



a **circle** representing the circular road around the centre of the city known as the Ring;

a **promenade** representing the people strolling in parks or castle grounds or gardens;

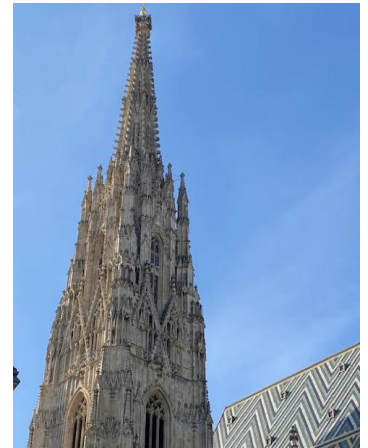
a **lead up** by third couple representing the spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral;

a **rondel** representing the Big Wheel in the amusement park known as the Prater; and

a **poussette** right round representing the Viennese waltzes.

I have included photos of locations taken on our visit to Vienna.

Doug



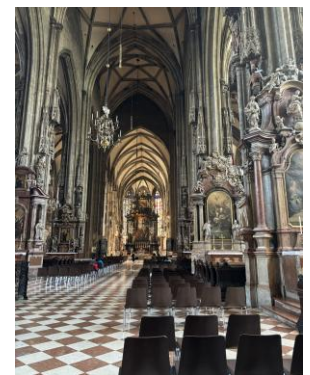
The Big Wheel



view of the old tram cars



view from the top

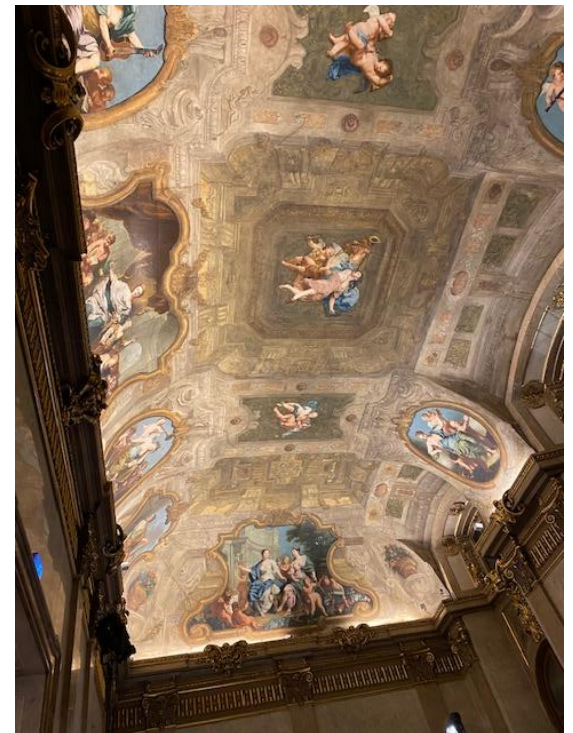


St. Stephen's Cathedral



The ensemble playing for the private concert on our cruise.

Ceiling of our concert venue where Beethoven conducted the premier of his Third Symphony.



## ***Step Dance Class***

I have had questions about the Step Dance class and thought I should put the information about the class in writing.

The Scottish Step dancing that I will be teaching is a soft shoe version of “Traditional Scottish Ladies Step Dancing” that has been danced for hundreds of years. There are many modern dances that have been devised for solo performance, and small group performances that include ladies and men.

The steps that are used include some Highland, Scottish Country and Ballet type movements.

The soft shoe step class would be for dancers who are competent with Scottish Country dance steps.

There is only one class scheduled at this time Sunday January 11, 2026 starting at 7 pm at CPUC. Dancers can try the class and if there is a consensus to continue we will then plan for future classes on a monthly basis.

Cheryl Durnin

## ***Helpful Links***

It has been great to get back to dancing this fall and we have been delighted to welcome our new dancers! We hope you are feeling “well welcomed” to our dance community, and we look forward to getting to know you as we enjoy our time together week by week, class by class.

Most of us started Scottish Country Dance from ground zero. The various steps and techniques and formations and dances sound like a foreign language from time to time. Therefore, we certainly identify with the steep learning curve! Even the more experienced dancers sometimes need help and more information to figure out or review different dances, formations and progressions.

There is an excellent resource available which is a 'go to' for many of us. The web address is as follows:

<https://www.scottish-country-dancing-dictionary.com/dance-cribs.html>

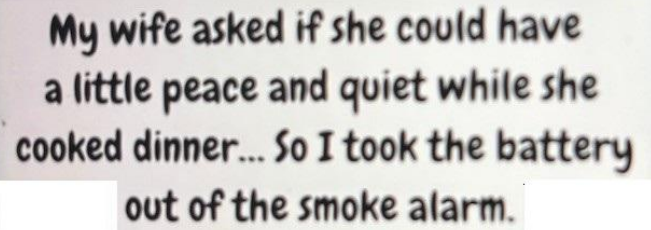
We hope you will use it and enjoy it as much as several of us do!

Claire Buys & Sharon Plaitin

Another resource for SCD is the Strathspey server <https://my.strathspey.org/dd/> which has many helpful sections and one teachers often turn to for information. -ed.

### *from the editor's desk ...*

It has been a busy month since returning from our cruise. Dancing 3 or even 4 times a week, curling 3 games a week, clearing the last of the leaves from the yard. But so far – no snow in Winnipeg!



My wife asked if she could have  
a little peace and quiet while she  
cooked dinner... So I took the battery  
out of the smoke alarm.

Our teacher candidates have been busy. They prepared and guided the St. Andrew's Social program, and each has taught figures and dances in our regular classes. Thank you! It's good practice for them and gives the class teacher a bit of a breather.

Very soon it will be December and the end of first term dance classes. Dancing will resume after the Holidays to help in wearing away the Christmas turkey & treats. Be sure to keep the **Dancing Dates** handy to see what is happening in addition to the regular weekly classes.

No travelogue this issue. Seems no one was out and about this month. So you are left with our Challenge Class visit to Vienna.

A wee note about the Big Wheel in Vienna. The original metal cars of the wheel were removed for the metal during WWII. After the war it was decided to refurbish the Big Wheel and old city tram cars were installed to be the people carriers.

Doug Durnin, Editor  
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### **The PUN / FUN Corner:**

**Just in time for Christmas -  
sign seen in a shop window:**

**For an additional \$2.95  
We will Provide a Receipt  
That Matches what you Told  
Your Spouse you Paid.**



## ***Here and There...***

### ***Some Out of Town Events***

**February 7, 2026 – Toronto, ON – 60<sup>th</sup> Tartan Ball** returning to the Royal York Hotel.

This is more than a ball... it's a celebration of tradition, dance, and community in one of Canada's most elegant venues.

Planning to travel? If you have an internet connection, browse for RSCDS & city for dancing where you are going. For instance, RSCDS Toronto hosts workshops and monthly dances and has links to dancing events all over the world. Almost every city in Canada has an RSCDS group. Many have a Facebook site as well.

Here are links to some branch sites:

[RSCDS Winnipeg Branch](#)

[RSCDS Saskatchewan Branch](#)

[RSCDS Calgary Branch](#)

[RSCDS Edmonton Caledonian Branch](#)

[RSCDS Medicine Hat Branch](#)

[www.lethbridgescottishcountrydance.org](http://www.lethbridgescottishcountrydance.org)

[RSCDS Vancouver](#)

[RSCDS Toronto Branch](#)

[RSCDS Ottawa](#)

### ***L&A Submissions***

**Next L&A:** January 2026    Deadline for submissions: December 18.

Members are encouraged to submit articles, pictures or information of interest to Branch members.

Submissions for the *Light and Airy* can be sent to the Branch e-mail address: [info@rscdswinnipeg.ca](mailto:info@rscdswinnipeg.ca) or to the editor at [Douglas.Durnin@umr.umanitoba.ca](mailto:Douglas.Durnin@umr.umanitoba.ca)

This and past issues of *Light and Airy* are available at: [www.rscdswinnipeg.ca](http://www.rscdswinnipeg.ca)