

Thistle News

Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers

Nanaimo, British Columbia



President's Message

April, 2005

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Hello fellow dancers:

It's hard to believe that in a few short weeks our dancing season will be coming to an end. Time seems to fly between New Year's and May. As this will most likely be our last Thistle News before we finish dancing for the summer, let me bring you up to date on past and planned future events. We had a lively group of dancers from NSCD attending the Annual Comox Valentine's Dance, and didn't John Duffus look great in his new kilt?? The terrific music of Alex Jappy was, this year, enhanced by the accompaniment on the keyboard of his daughter, Maureen who conveniently lives in Courtenay, which was truly an extra bonus. On Saturday, March 12th we celebrated St. Patrick's Day with a great dinner/dance hosted, as usual, by the Port Alberni club. A fine evening of dining and dancing was enjoyed by all.

April 8th is fast approaching and we hope to see everyone out for our own club's Friday night social. We missed our Annual New Year's Ball this year so this is a great opportunity to get together and make up for the evening of dancing we missed. Members are asked to bring finger foods for a light supper following the dance. You can find the evening's dance programme on our bulletin board; it's the one we all practiced so hard for and missed out on at the Ball.

The Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Thursday, May 12th to give our Basic Class dancers a chance to participate in, not only, the AGM, but our final wind-up dance and social evening.

Now to summer!!! Once again, Alex and Eileen McConnell have graciously opened their home on Gabriola Island for the NSCD Summer Picnic, this year to be held on Tuesday, June 7th at 2 pm. A phone/email committee will contact members prior to the 7th, with details of ferry times and requests for the Pot Luck Menu. The weather is always very cooperative, so don't miss this great event. I think that's about all from me for this issue. Look forward to seeing all of you at the Friday Social.

Happy dancing,

Brian McFadden



President

Health News

Cramps & Shin Splints

By Marguerite

To continue my series of articles on preventing injuries in Scottish country dancing. In these articles I stressed the importance of doing warming up and stretching exercises before we begin dancing.

I wrote of **RICE** (REST, ICE, COMPRESS and ELEVATE) if you are unfortunate enough to injure yourself. In this article I am writing of the painful conditions that may occur from dancing. These are:

1. **Muscle Cramps; and**
2. **Shin Splints**

Muscle Cramps

Muscle cramps are very painful. The muscles involved go into spasm, usually the calf, the hamstring, quadriceps muscles and sometimes the muscles of the toes. Cramps can occur while dancing, or at night after an evening of dancing. Other causes are:

- a) using muscles which have not been well stretched
- b) dehydration
- c) low levels of potassium in the body and some people seem predisposed to them.

To prevent them we should:

- a) warm up and stretch before dancing,
- b) drink fluids preferably water before, during and after dancing;
- c) include potassium in our diet (bananas, potatoes, orange juice are good sources of this);
- d) stretch muscles before going to bed;
- e) have a warm bath after dancing;

- f) keep our legs warm in bed, do this by using hot packs;
- g) some ladies wear leg warmers while dancing.

If you have cramps try to stretch the cramp out, however sometimes that is too difficult to do. On a personal note. I have had a bad cramp once and this was after dancing at the Spring Fling in Vancouver, where almost every dance was encored. I wrapped my leg in towels, which I rinsed in hot water and wrung out. This really worked well.

Some people drink tonic water and the quinine in this relieves leg cramps.

Shin Splints.

Shin splints are pains in the front of the lower leg and are caused by too much exercise, or in our case, too much dancing. They are relieved by icing at least 3 times a day for 15 to 20 minutes, pain killers and anti inflammatories, and by 1 or 2 weeks rest from dancing.

Marguerite



T.A.C. Summer School

I thought that you would be interested to know that the T.A.C. Summer School for 2005, which is being held at Shawnigan Lake School in August has been sold out since the middle of February.

This is wonderful but a little sad for many of you who applied too late to be accepted.

Dancers are coming from Australia, Japan, England, Scotland and all parts of the USA and Canada. It gives the Island members of T.A.C. an opportunity to show off our beautiful island.

Marguerite

Teachers' Corner

Getting the Basics!!!

The number one aim of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, to which we all belong, is: "To promote and further the practice of traditional Scottish Country Dances." With the Basic class on Thursdays, the Social class on Tuesdays, our Annual New Year's Ball, the Workshop and Tea Dance, and extra socials where possible, I think the Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers are successfully meeting this requirement.

Back to Basics: We are very fortunate, in Nanaimo, to have an excellent "Basic Class", where people who want to learn Scottish Country Dancing may come to learn correct foot work, steps, phrasing, technique, handing, posture, teamwork and, most importantly, about the "Spirit of the Dance". We all come to Scottish Country Dancing to have fun!!! And, with a solid grounding in the basics, we will find that every dance we do will be that much more enjoyable.

From Vision to Reality: When Miss Jean Milligan and Mrs. Ysobel Stewart formed the Scottish Country Dance Society back in 1923, they had a desire to preserve the Scottish Dances, which they saw fading into obscurity.

To this end, they researched, collected and published as many dances as they could find. This was no mean feat as many of these dances were written in the 1970's and were housed in Archives and Manuscripts in the Stately Homes and Castles around Scotland.

Others had to be collected orally and then written down. These two far-sighted women began teaching the dances wherever they could: Mrs. Stewart to Girl Guide Groups and Miss Milligan to her teachers taking their education degrees at Jordanhill College where, as Gym Teacher, she incorporated Scottish Country Dancing into her Gym Classes and made it a requirement that all graduating teachers should also be proficient at teaching Scottish Country Dancing.

From these small beginnings we can now see the reality of all their hard work. Now there are branches and affiliate groups all over the world all dancing from the same Royal Scottish Country Dance Society books that we use in our own club. This means that once you have learned the basics, not only can you dance with other groups on the Island, you can also pop your ghillies in the bottom on your suitcase and drop into any Scottish Country Dance group in any part of the world that you may be visiting and be welcomed.

The "Spirit of the Dance" is: loving to dance, loving the music, the friendliness of fellow dancers, not just in your own club, but in any other club you may visit. Get those basics and enjoy your dancing to the fullest.

Enjoy the rest of your dancing year and I hope you all have a lovely summer!

June



NSCD AGM – May 12, 2005
Our Annual General Meeting is being held on
Thursday, May 12 at 8:00 PM.
This is a great opportunity for all members
To 'have their say' in the running of the Association
and to learn more about our organization.
We strongly encourage EVERYONE to attend!

Get Well Message

One of our members, Muneera Bandali, has injured her leg skiing. We send Muneera our best wishes for a speedy recovery and hope to see her dancing again soon!



.....more from the Teacher's Corner

Scottish Country Dance Music

By Hazel

Scottish Country Dances are categorized into reels, jigs or Strathspeys. Reel time music is played in common or 4/4 time, and the tempo is 112 or 32 seconds per 32 bars of music. This gives a regular and even rhythm.

Jigs are marked at 6/8 time and you can count 6 beats or repeat a phrase like "jiggity-jig" to the music and it is played at 108 –118 speed on the metronome.

Strathspeys are also in common time and are marked 4/4. The characteristic feature of Scottish Strathspeys is the Scotch "snap". The tempo for Strathspeys is approximately 56 on the metronome – roughly 60 seconds for 32 bars. A strathspey, which is repeated 8 times, can take 8 minutes to dance.

Traditional dances, have traditional tunes attached to them and are recognized by the tune as well as the dance. When possible the correct tunes should be used for these dances and kept exclusively for these well known dances. The music should inspire you to dance, and should be played with variations and "light and shade" to urge the dancers on to dance with great spirit.

Listen to the music, its usually chosen very carefully to add to your inspiration to dance!

Hazel



A Quiz from Hazel

Let's see if you have been paying attention in class!

Answer the following questions:

1. Name an ambidextrous dancing figure (6) (3) (5) (**number of letters in answer**)
2. A formation usually performed in "tandem" (10)
3. A geometrical dancing figure (6)
4. A step with French origins (3) (2) (6)
5. Usually danced in pairs (i.e. doubles) (9)
6. Do this before you retire (7)
7. A place where dust collects (7)
8. A shifting bobbin (4)
9. There's a lovely one in Helensburgh (9)
10. Which teacher is nutty? (5)
11. Initially this is a great society (5)

Answers on the back page

Summer Dancing

For those keeners who do not want to give up dancing even for a few short months and you feel like 'tripping the light fantastic' outdoors on the occasional summer evening..The VISCDs and RSCDS Victoria co-sponsor 'Dancing in the Park' on Thursday evenings through July and August, starting July 7 at 7:00 pm. Check their web sites for contacts and more information.

Potpourri

The Scottish Country Dancer

Submitted by Hazel MacDonald

While glidin' in the country dance
Ma taes a used tae point.
A hirple noo, like in a trance,
Wi' pain in every joint.

Balanced and sure, the moves a ken't,
The newest tae the auld.
Am glaikit noo, ma shapes aw' bent,
An' ma heid's nearly bald!

Reel, strathspey, scottische and jig
Ma feet wid never sclaff.
Noo am worried about ma wig,
Fur fear it will fa' aff!

In "Maxwell's Rant" an' "Monymusk"
A'd smile wi' aw' ma teeth.
Noo a hiv only got wan tusk,
Tae glunch at "Lassie's o' Leith".

Up on ma taes in "Donald Bane",
Waublin' "Meg Merrilees",
In agony, am wracked wi' pain,
Mainly about the knees.

Reelin' "The Eight Men O' Moldart",
Wi' the leesome Nancy;
Noo am worried aboot ma heart,
Wimplin' "Ladies Fancy".

Crowlin' the "Merry Lads O' Ayr",
Tae the "Highland Laddie".
Noo a can only stan' an' stare,
Like a decrepit haddie!

Hamish Anstruther

Comedy Corner

Sandy was drinking at a pub all night. When he got up to leave, he fell flat on his face.

He tried to stand again, but to no avail, falling flat on his face. He decided to crawl outside and get some fresh air to see whether that would sober him up.

Once outside, he stood up and, sure enough, fell flat on his face. So, being a practical Scot, he crawled all the way home.

When he got to the door, he stood up yet again, but fell flat on his face. He crawled through the door into his bedroom.

When he reached his bed, he tried once more to stand upright. This time he managed to pull himself to his feet but fell into bed. He was sound asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

He woke the next morning to his wife shaking him and shouting, "So, ye've been oot drinkin' as usual!" "Why would ye say that?" he complained innocently. "Because the pub called an' ye left yer wheelchair there again!"

The Last Word

Many thanks to all those who made kind comments about your editors' first effort.

Of course the newsletter is only as good as its content, and thanks are mainly due to June, Brian, Hazel, Marguerite and Alison for supplying the interesting, as well as educational, articles and some light relief...

Again, we encourage all submissions – educational, funny, serious – articles, poems, ditties, etc., that you think may be of interest to our members.

In future issues, as well as providing members with information about club's activities, we hope that the newsletter will be a vehicle for giving beginners a glimpse of the wider world of Scottish Country Dancing, and the opportunities for their participation. So be warned all you "old-timers" – we will be after you to share your knowledge! As Brian mentioned, our season is drawing to a close, so the 'literary delights' mentioned above will be coming to you in the 2005/2006 season issues. So put your 'thinking caps' on over the summer because we will be looking for contributions!

Your Editors

Answers to Quiz

1. Rights and Lefts
 2. Petronella
 3. Circle
 4. Pas de Basque
 5. Triangles
 6. Advance
 7. Corners
 8. Reel
 9. Promenade
 10. Hazel
 11. RSCDS
-

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nanaimo Social (Ball Programme)
Friday, April 8, 2005

Nanoose Social
Saturday, April 16, 2005

RSCDS Victoria Beginner's Dance
Saturday, April 16, 2005

Salt Spring Island Club Workshop
Saturday, April 23, 2005

David MacPhail Memorial Golf Tournament
Sunday, May 15, 2005

Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers **AGM**
Thursday, May 12, 2005

NSCD Summer Picnic
Gabriola Island
Tuesday, June 12, 2005

T.A.C. Summer School
July 31 – August 7, 2005
Shawnigan Lake School, Shawnigan Lake, BC
**Further information on these events can be
found on our bulletin board**

*Irate golfer, on his way to a round of
150: "You must be the worst caddie in
the world!"
Scottish caddie (dryly): "That would be
too much of a coincidence, sir."*

Hope you enjoyed the April Thistle

That's all for this season. Our next issue will be out sometime after we get going again in the Fall. Comments, and suggestions for future issues are always welcomed by your editors:-

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