

# Thistle News



## Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers

Nanaimo, British Columbia  
October 2008

### Club Executive

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## President's Message

Dear Dancers,

Our dancing season, 2008-2009, started off well with a successful Open House on the 11th of September. This was well attended by our own members and we had nine visitors. Seven returned to dance with us. Since then eight more new dancers have come to the Thursday night class. Two of those dancers have danced before so they also attend the Tuesday night class. This makes a total of fifteen new dancers. We welcome all our new dancers and look forward to dancing with you. So far this season we have had four sets or more at each class, which is very good especially when many of our regular dancers are still on holiday. Bill Gibson, having been our treasurer for eight years, retired from this position, at the Annual General meeting in May. We very much appreciate all the hard work that he put into this job and we thank him for this and the years of trouble free accounting that he provided to our group. We welcome Wendy Strachan as our new Treasurer.

In June many of you attended the picnic at Eileen and Alex McConnell's lovely home and garden on Gabriola Island. John and I were unable to be there, however everyone tells us that the weather was good and everyone had a good time.

In August Hazel Macdonald organized a team of dancers to dance one Sunday afternoon at the Vancouver Island Exhibition. They were well received by the audience. Unfortunately it was the hottest day of the summer so the dancers were brave souls to dance in that high temperature. It gave more Nanaimo residents a chance to see our dancing.

Our first major event is our Annual New Year Ball on the 10th of January at the Nanaimo Yacht Club. Brian Mcfadden is again the Ball Chairman. Mary Ross, who is an accordionist, is playing for us again this year.

Looking further ahead our Workshop and Tea Dance is on the 18th of April 2009. Our teachers are Ruth Jappy and Rebecca Blackhall-Peters; the musicians are Alex Jappy, Julie Smith and Deborrah Jones

We have lots of good dancing to enjoy and I look forward to seeing you and dancing with you on the dance floor.

Wishing you a happy season of dancing

*Marguerite*



## New Year's Ball 2009

It may seem a long way to Christmas, but the Ball committee is already making preparations for our Annual New Year's Ball at the Nanaimo Yacht Club on Saturday, January 10th. I am fortunate, once again, to have the same team of committee chairs who willingly volunteer their time to ensure we have a great evening. The dance programme, as always, was compiled by our teachers, June and Hazel and Club President, Marguerite, and during the next several weeks you will no doubt see many of these dances appear on our regular Tuesday and Thursday classes. There is normally a Ball practice before the great event as well.

We have, once again, secured the services of Mary Ross as our musician for the evening, and the Spice Of Life will again provide the catering. This is the third year providing our evening meal and I think it's fair to say the food has been exceptionally.

Over the next few months the committee chairs will be asking for volunteers to assist with set up and

decorations on the afternoon of January 10th. If past events are anything to go by, we have always had terrific participation from club members. This is our premier social event of the year, so let's make it a great success!!

Ball Committee 2009

Chairman/MC: Brian McFadden

Ticket Sales: Edith Morgan

Set up/Decorations: Alison Shaw

Bar: John Bell

Programme Book: David Handley

Ticket sales will begin in early November and will first be available to our own club members and those who dance regularly in Nanaimo. As in previous years we limit our tickets sales to 80, thus ensuring we have enough room for dancing and socializing.

Brian  
Ball Chairman



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## Dancing Levels

In the last issue of The Thistle I outlined the requirements for "Basic" dancing

In this issue I will outline the expectations for Intermediate dancing. Intermediate has 2 levels – a standard intermediate and an upper intermediate.

For standard intermediate dancers they should be able to dance reels of 3 (right and left shoulder), reels of four, back to back and balance-in-line.

Poussette in reel and jig time, Ladies' Chain Promenade and Double Triangles also falls into this category.

Diagonal reels of 4 and cross over reels as well as turn corner, partner, corner, partner.

Upper Intermediate dancers should be able to easily dance set to and turn corners, set to corner and partner (Hello goodbye), Strathspey poussette

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(Half and all around), Rondel and Knot. They should also be able to do Highland Schottische Setting steps and have accurate footwork at all times.

Advanced and Very Advanced dancing includes more complex patterns and complex teamwork. I will not include them as the majority of our dancing falls into the Intermediate category.

Dancing is a social event and everyone should be there to enjoy themselves, however we should all be striving to dance at the highest level we can achieve to make dancing beautiful and graceful for everyone.

Hazel

If you missed the first one, both of Hazel's articles on "Dancing Levels" will be published soon on our web site, [www.nanaimoscd.com](http://www.nanaimoscd.com). Ed.

T.A.C. Summer School  
July 26 – August 2, 2009  
Shawnigan Lake, BC  
This is a wonderful opportunity for Nanaimo dancers to attend this school. Attendance is flexible, from the full seven day school, to weekend only, individual days, or even just the Saturday Reception, Banquet and Ball.

More information will be available in November and it is suggested that anyone interested should register early as it is frequently filled by February. Please talk to June, Hazel or Marguerite if you have any questions.

## From Classroom to Ballroom

**How to advance in Scottish Country Dancing and make sense of the lessons.**

*Presented at the Vancouver Island Scottish Country Dancers' Workshop 2007, by Evelyn J. Nixon, Comox, B.C. and reprinted here by her kind permission.*

Listen carefully to the teacher and watch him/her. Often there are hand movements that describe a dance track or form. At home, make brief notes on the formations. Walk the formations with counting. Draw the formation. Draw a complete dance pattern. Walk a complete dance pattern. Maybe even from other positions in the set. Take the dance notes and underline and highlight them. Look at your partner. Give firm arms and a good hand grip – even if you don't know what to do next! When you make a mistake – forget about it!! It is over. If it becomes total disaster. STOP, REGROUP, and BE READY to begin the next repetition with you in second place or the next couple ready for their turn. Don't keep dancing all by yourself—just because you know it! Don't wait to be asked to dance and stay at the back of the hall. Dance with MORE

EXPERIENCED DANCERS  
Try to be FIRST COUPLE in the set—they get the walk through, or to dance first after the briefing. Women, practice dancing as a man NOW not in a couple of years!

It is more important to learn FORMATIONS, not dances.

There are more than 10,000 dances—all made from the “alphabet” of formations or figures.

LISTEN TO THE MUSIC—it is in 8 bar phrases or compartments. Count so you know where you are and/or when to join in.

If as a supporting dancer you know that the next move involves you, look lively and interested. The dancing person may not be sure who is involved.

This is not a guessing game!! Keep your eyes up and show some delight. People are going to be taken up with your enjoyment—not thinking of your technique or mistakes.

Remember, we are all here to participate in an enjoyable activity so

ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST AND KEEP LEARNING.

*Evelyn Nixon is a long-time teacher of Scottish Country Dancing and also a teacher for teachers of Scottish Country Dancing.*

Thank you Evelyn.

*June McTadden*

### *A Message from Marguerite*

**Janetta Begg** -- we have missed Janetta these last few weeks and the word from her is that she is awaiting tests for her ailments. She hopes to have these tests over with in the next couple of weeks and should be back dancing with us after that. In the meantime she continues to teach her weekly class for the dancers in Oceanside SCD group.

**Gordon Harper** -- the news from Gordon is that he is currently attending Comox hospital for chemotherapy treatments and is scheduled to go to Vancouver to have a small operation on the side of his nose. Not pleasant but he is very bright and is fortunate to have his son living in Fanny Bay and is able to visit him and take him to his appointments etc. They both recently returned from a cruise to Alaska. He sends his regards to everybody.

**Kim Bandali** - those of us who danced with Kim and Mineera will be interested and saddened to hear that Kim is presently in Victoria in the midst of a lengthy series of radiation treatments. We wish him well.

**Dorothy Young** - We welcome Dorothy back and it is nice to see that she has regained full range of motion in her shoulder.

**Evelyn Myskow**, we are delighted to have Evelyn back dancing and looking well after her surgery.

*Marguerite*



## The Pleasure of the Dance?

People take up Scottish dancing for a variety of reasons but dancing is primarily a social interaction with other people. Whether we took up dancing because it is good exercise, or to meet people, or do so something different, our constitution says our purpose as a group "is to popularise the art and grace of Scottish country dancing". Perhaps it should have added "for the joy of dancing".

Our teachers are not merely teaching us steps and formations to be repeated as automatons, they remind us frequently of the visual effects of what we are trying to do, of keeping the beat, of moving in unison, of cutting the pattern of the dance and so on to achieve "art and grace". They also teach the importance of being "present" to your partner of the moment and the others in the set. This I see as the joy of the dance..

What is being "present" to your partners? It is not treating them as a prop, a necessity so you can do the prescribed patterns. Being present is recognising your partner as part of the pleasure of the dance. It is how you engage your partner, in how you touch physically or emotionally. Our eyes are best at showing our pleasure in the company of our

present partner and the joy of the dance itself which can also become a spontaneous smile.

It is unfortunate that when we are asked to recognise each other when the dance is being walked, we tend to respond with an almost forced or vacuous smile – we have to satisfy the teacher that we have heard the request. What we are really being asked to remember is to react spontaneously as we move through the dance itself whether it be in turning your partner, dancing four hands across or six or eight hands round. We are not broomsticks or robots going through the motions, we are part of a team enjoying what we are doing together and concerned for each other.

An unknown woman recorded it this way, "I look at my partner because he is the one I am dancing with. I smile or laugh because I am enjoying dancing and being alive. I smile because I want my partner to share in my pleasure".

My pleasure is enhanced when I dance with such a partner and there is joy in responding and adding to her pleasure. It is a win-win situation.

Enjoy your dancing, but don't keep it a secret.

David

I wish to thank you all for the lovely cyclamen delivered by Sandy on your behalf after my surgery. It's a beautiful plant and is still in bloom. Thank you also for flowers, cards, phone calls and visits, your thoughtfulness was very much appreciated and I'm sure helped in my recover. Thank you. Sincerely  
Evelyn Myskow

Morris, an 82 year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm. A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, 'You're really doing great, aren't you?' Morris replied, 'Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.' The doctor said, 'I didn't say that. I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'

**Thanks Eric**

### Minicrib

The most complete list of dance instructions on the web is "Minicrib" which at the last count had briefs for over 3600 dances. And if you need to brush up on "Diagonal Rights and Lefts" or "Set and Link for Three", Minicrib also has a descriptions of over 50 formations that appear in Scottish Country dances. You can find a link to Minicrib at our web site at <http://nanaimoscd.com>

## Two Scottish Country Dance Demos I Shall Never Forget

The first was a summer one at the Qualicum School – Qualicum Days? There were 6 of us, wonders upon wonder. 3 women and 3 men. I should add here that We Had Not been Drinking!

We were to dance Macdonald of the Isles, a 32-bay strathspey for 3 couples. It was a beautiful day, lots of spectators and we paraded on the grass in a happy mood. The happy mood continued and you have to remember that demos outside to a crowd is a whole lot different to demonstrating inside in a building. I remember that the sky was blue, there were lots of fluffy white clouds and gosh – there's a swallow diving with its mate and whoops – this isn't the partner I started out with. Oh well. Never mind. We'll switch at the next bar. No-one will notice. Well, I've switched, but now I'm dancing with another woman and I'm suddenly dancing as a man. How did that happen? Funny. There's a man dancing on the ladies side. Oh well, We can all switch at the next bar. How nice to see us all with happy laughing faces and oops! I've already danced in this position twice and now I'm a woman again and I seem to have had all 3 of the men as partners. But it music tells me to bow – or is it curtsy? And dance off. Everyone's clapping, so they must have enjoyed it. I'm so glad

the men danced off on the right side, even though no-one had their original partner. They must have all switched at the last bar! (Make mine a double!)

The 2nd was as demo for a charity at the Black Bear pub in Nanaimo. It was a very hot August day and again, an outside performance. The pub owners had very kindly found a brown wooden raised stage for us to dance on, which was better than the tufted clumps of grass in the field. Unfortunately the stage was the size of a scottish country dance set – exactly. To dance or not to dance - that was the question. Well, we'd all got charitable minds, so we danced. I don't remember the name of the dance, but I do remember that the brown painted stage was hot – very hot. Ghillies on a hot stage – something like cats on a hot tin roof? At one point the 4 dancers had to pas de bas towards each other in the centre and the stage sloped in as we danced in. Then we had to dance out again and we almost needed our partners to help us back out! There was no room to cast off and of course no room to dance down the middle and setting to another dancer was a “close encounter”. We laughed a lot and of course we made mistakes, but we did finish, bow and curtsy and finally got our poor feet off the stage on to some cool grass. What Scottish Country Dancers won't do for charity!

*Pat Fiddis*

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, 'Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly.' The other man said, 'What is the name of the restaurant?' The first man thought and thought and finally said, 'What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know... The one that's red and has thorns.' 'Do you mean a rose?' 'Yes, that's the one,' replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, 'Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?'  
**Thanks to Eric**

### Zen Sarcasm

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and a leaky tire.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how

to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.

There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works.

**Thanks Gavin**

## Scottish Country Dance Videos

The club has a number of VHS tapes, available through Hazel, for you to borrow.

### 1. "Reel Scottish Country Dancing"

This is a "how to" for beginners and experienced dancers and 34 popular dances are shown.

### 2. "Scottish Country Dancing with the Red Thistle Dancers Vol.1"

A technique video for beginner and intermediate dancers.

13 common formations are shown and 8 full dances.

### 3. "Scottish Country Dancing with the Red Thistle Dancers Vol 2."

Additional figures are demonstrated and 18 dances performed.

## COMING EVENTS

Sat Nov 1 - RSCDS Victoria Branch Mini Workshop, 35th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon and Nostalgic Afternoon Dance..

Nov 22 VISCDS St. Andrews Social 7:30pm at St. Martin In-The-Fields Hall, 550 Obed, Victoria

Port Alberni Christmas Dance. We don't have a date yet but it is held early in December and usually attended by a number of dancers from Nanaimo SCD

Dec 6 RSCDS Victoria Branch and VISCDS Joint Christmas Social

Jan 10, 2009 Nanaimo SCD New Years Ball

Further information on events can be found on our bulletin board and on our web site at <http://nanaimoscd.com>

## "Take the Floor"

Scottish Country Dance Music on The Web

'Take the Floor' is the longest running radio programme in Scotland. Presented by Robbie Shepherd the programme is broadcast live over the internet on Saturdays 11:00am to 1:30pm Pacific Time and is also available on demand until the next show

[www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/radioscotland/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/radioscotland/) and look for 'Listen Again'

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Many thanks as always to those who submitted articles, jokes and photos, and apologies if I couldn't use your contribution this time.

Be sure to check our web site <http://nanaimoscd.com> for the most up-to-date information about the club, especially the Tuesday Social Dance programme that June or Hazel posts each week, as well as the Coming Events page. Suggestions are always welcome for features that you would like to see included in the Thistle or the web site. Send them to:

Your editor

John Duffus

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