

# The Thistle

The newsletter of the  
**Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers**

Nanaimo, British Columbia  
February, 2009



## President's Message

### Classes

Social Class each Tuesday  
at 8:00pm

Beginners/Basic Class each  
Thursday at 8:00pm

All classes at Pleasant  
Valley Hall  
6100 Doumont Rd  
Nanaimo

For more information  
contact:  
June - 756-6182  
Marguerite - 756-9836

### Club Executive

#### President

Marguerite Bell  
mhjbell@telus.net

#### Past President

Brian McFadden  
bjmcfadden@shaw.ca

#### Vice President

David Handley  
mtembene@pacificcoast.net

#### Treasurer

Wendy Strachan  
wmstrach@sfu.ca

#### Secretary

Edith Morgan  
edithwmorgan@shaw.ca

#### Social Convenor

Alison Shaw  
alliesandy@yahoo.com

We had a good term of dancing from September to December 2008, all our classes being very well attended,. Most nights at both classes we had at least four sets. This tells me that our dancers enjoy our classes and enjoy the teaching of Hazel and June. The last night of the basic class on 18th December had to be cancelled because of a snow storm. This was the start of a several weeks of snow and below freezing weather.

Despite the wintery weather Anne and Alastair Berry held their New Years Eve party . Many of our dancers attended and had a very nice time. Anne and Alastair are gracious and generous hosts.

On January 10th we had our Annual Ball. Fortunately there was no fresh snow that day but it was rainy and the visibility poor.

The Ball was a grand event and everyone appeared to be having a good time. The dance floor was full until the end and when the floor is full for the last dance, this is a sign that it was as my husband says “ the Best Ball Ever.” Everyone enjoyed the meal, Mary Ross’s music and the ambiance. The program was one which everyone could dance. It was heart warming to see our new dancers dancing and having a good time. Very many thanks to Brian who was the Ball Chairman and to all our dancers who so willingly helped him to make it a success.

On a sad note Jean Hartje, our oldest member, died in November. She was in her ninety fifth year. Her funeral was on 29th of November. Twenty of the Nanaimo Scottish Country dancers attended her funeral in St Andrews United church, the men wearing their kilts. The church was full, showing the esteem in which she was held. Jean was the first Nanaimo Scottish Country dancer whom John and I met. We came to the Ball in January 1999. That year Jean and her friend Paddy Wynne were the joint chairmen of the Ball. They greeted us at the door of the Yacht Club. Their welcome was so friendly, and this was one of the reasons that we returned to dance with Nanaimo Scottish Country dancers.

Jean had an interesting and eventful life, hers was a life well lived and one can only rejoice for such a life.

I would like to remind you that our Workshop and Tea Dance is on the 18th of April. As usual I am sure that it will be a good day.

Wishing you a happy term of dancing.

*Marguerite*

## Hands - Helping or Helpless?

How much attention do you pay to your hands when you are dancing?

By Hazel MacDonald

Helpful hands are a very important part of Scottish Country Dancing. Some folks may not have the best technique and the most skilled footwork but we can all have wonderfully, helpful hands. Your hands express the social aspect of dancing, sometimes even define the shape a formation takes, example being circles, and also they direct and guide your partner in the timing and phrasing of a dance.

- \* ALWAYS use a handshake hold

- \* Keep your elbows down and your hands at shoulder height

- \* Hold long enough but never hinder the formation e.g. in rights and lefts release hands as you pass shoulders,

- \* Keep elbows tight for a 2 bar turn and lean away from your partner

- \* Keep arms more extended for a slower turn.

- \* Men generally turn palms up and ladies place their hands palms down

- \* If you are the middle person in a threesome (e.g. advance and retire) then turn palms up

Dance with your hands as well as your feet.

*Hazel*

## Nanaimo Workshop and Tea Dance

This is to remind you to keep the 18th of April free.

On this day we are holding our 7th annual Workshop and Tea Dance.

This is being held at Dover Bay Secondary School.

We welcome back this year Ruth Jappy and Rebecca Blackhall-Peters to teach us. Alex Jappy and Julie Smith to play for the classes. Julie and Deborah Jones to play for the Tea Dance.

The classes are for Basic and Intermediate dancers, however if you are an Advanced dancer you will enjoy Ruth and Rebecca's classes. If there is something which you would like Ruth or Rebecca to teach. It may be a formation or a tricky part of a dance would you let Hazel or me know. The first three dances on the program will be taught at the Basic class so if you are a new dancer you will be able to dance those with aplomb at the Dance.

The workshop and Tea dance costs \$45; this includes coffee at the beginning of the day, juice at the morning break, lunch and three classes. A class on jigs, a class on reels and a class on strathspeys and the day finishes with the dance and afternoon tea.

For those who would find dancing all day too tiring there is the dance and afternoon tea, this costs \$12. Some of you may like to come and visit with your friends but not attend the classes you can have lunch for \$10

You are guaranteed a good time with good dancing, good food, good company and fun. What more could you wish.

We look forward to seeing you there.

*Marguerite and Hazel*

### Thank you Bill!

Many thanks to Bill Greig, who has been going to McGirr Elementary School twice a week, and teaching SCD to one of the grade six classes. The students have learned quickly and are enjoying the dancing.

*Katherine Miller*

## 2009 New Year's Ball Report

from Brian McFadden, Ball Chairman

I don't think I was the only one with my fingers crossed praying for good weather on Saturday, January 10th. The week leading up to our Annual New Year's Ball had everyone nervous, but in the end our concerns about the weather were groundless and it turned out to be a terrific evening. It was great to see so many of our new dancers take the floor, some with enthusiasm and others with reckless, gay abandon.

Our teachers are to be complimented for encouraging and coaching us all through the programme in the weeks leading up to the ball.

As this year's chairman I want to say again what a treat it was to work with, not only the committee, but all the volunteers who turned up on the Saturday afternoon to help set up the hall for the evening's festivities.

The meal, supplied by Spice Of Life, the music of Mary Ross, and, of course, the dancing made for a most enjoyable evening.

A special thanks to Rita Gibson for providing one of her beautiful watercolours at such short notice (my fault, I forgot to ask). I know there was a space left on her living room wall after my urgent call.

Another special thank you to Renee who did a fantastic job with the nine gift baskets. Choosing the items, filling and decorating the baskets was a lot of work; I don't think she knew what she was letting herself in for when she took on the task, however they were spectacular and most appreciated, especially by all who were lucky enough to win one.

The Ball is now history, but I think it's safe to say it was a great evening, enjoyed by all.

*Brian*

## Good Health for the Future!

Keeping our bodies and brains healthy is an investment we must make if we want to look forward to many vibrant years ahead, years that we want to spend Scottish Country Dancing. New studies show that the brain doesn't just keep on getting older and more decrepit until we finally lose all our mental abilities. They show that the brain's "plasticity" that we have as babies stays with us throughout our lives. Good news indeed!

For the body: getting daily exercise, such as walking, jogging, bicycling, keeps our hearts and circulatory systems healthy as the blood is pumped to all our organs and muscles. One of these organs is the brain and, as we age, we want to keep our brains as healthy as possible. Evidence is showing that tasks, such as crossword puzzles, and games where you have to think, help the brain to retain its cognitive abilities. Scottish Country Dancing incorporates these two important factors: exercise for the body, while at the same time providing exercise for the mind, making it an excellent activity to keep us fit both mentally and physically well into old age.

Routinely doing things the same way is good for learning, but studies have been done that show that if you change how you do routine tasks, forcing your brain into a constant learning mode, that new neurons can be produced even in an old brain.

Learning a musical instrument or a new language wakes the brain up. Learning new dances does the same thing with the added benefit of the accompanying aerobic exercise which gets blood and oxygen into the brain to keep it healthy and functioning. When tasks are too easy or routine our actions don't release neuro-transmitters and nothing changes in our brains. We want these changes to occur and the way for this to happen is to learn new things!. The saying "use it or lose it" couldn't be more valid when it comes to brain health.

What we eat also determines health of the body and the brain. A healthy diet should provide us with all the nutrients we need for optimum health. However, as we age we can't always eat the same size portions and find that food has lost its taste. This could be due to a lack of zinc in the diet, sources of which are: meat, liver, eggs, seafood, milk and whole grains. The food choices we make are also very important. What we put into our bodies

cont. on p4

should be the healthiest, freshest, most nutritious food we can get. "They" now have a 1:4 rule. For every ounce of protein you eat it is suggested that you eat 4 ounces of vegetables. This would mean for a normal dinner where you are eating 3 ounces of protein you should be eating 12 ounces of veggies.

Studies are also being done with raw foods with a view to reviving old bodies. As we age crucial enzymes are lost, but raw food contains lots of enzymes and consuming a daily quantity of these through either fresh fruits or uncooked vegetables (both well-washed) should help get us back to peak performance.

So, it all "boils" down to these three elements for staying young: 1) Use your body (exercise) 2) Use your brain (be willing to learn new things and 3) Eat healthy nutritious foods. One other component of a healthy diet that is sometimes overlooked is getting enough fluids. Drink enough water to keep yourself hydrated throughout the day. Dehydration can produce senility symptoms and we don't want any of those! Keep Healthy.

See you on the dance floor,

*June McFadden*

---

## Videos

The club has several videos which members can borrow. They are:

### 1. "Reel Scottish Country Dancing"

This is a "how to" for beginners and experienced dancers. It includes demonstrations of basic steps and formations, and 34 popular dances.

### 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.

Speak to Hazel to borrow a video

## Local Clubs

(Driving distance anyway!)

### The Oceanside (formerly Nanoose) Scottish Country Dancers

Beginners' Classes Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00 p.m..

Intermediate Classes Wednesdays from 8:10-10:00 p.m.

<http://www.oceansidescd.net/>

### Cowichan Valley Scottish Country Dancers

Thursdays at 6:30pm. at the Firehall in Crofton All levels

<http://cvscd.00cd.com/>

### Salt Spring Scottish Country Dancers

All Saints Anglican Church in Ganges

Mondays 6.00-8.00pm for new and inexperienced dancers and 7.00-9.00pm for more experienced dancers.

Fridays (locations may change - check the site) 6:30 pm to whenever. Advanced technique and practices for coming dances and balls. <http://saltspringscottishdancers.org>

### Comox Valley Scottish Country Dancers

Mondays (except holidays)

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

<http://cvgo.com/scd/>

### Cowichan Valley SCD May Social

All Scottish Country Dancers are invited to join us for our Social on

May 09, 2009 at 7:30pm

Roberts Street, Crofton

Cost: \$10.00

Dance programme at <http://cvscd.00it.com>

### Minicrib

Brush up your Targe, Tourbillon and Tournee and many other formations, as well as over 3000

dance briefs with Minicrib, available at

<http://www.minicrib.care4free.net/index.htm>

## Survey results

The results of our recent survey indicate that most dancers are happy with what we are doing.

In both the Tuesday and Thursday night classes 75% of the respondents indicated that they are happy with the present starting time. It is unfortunate for the 25% who would like an earlier starting time and consequently an earlier finishing time.

90% of the respondents would like a new dance to repeated twice or more often after it has been taught. Most people would like us to have the same number or more of our familiar dances.

While quite a large number of people in the Tuesday night classes indicated that they would like more step practice it should be pointed out that the Tuesday night class is designated as a social class so

for those looking for more step practice should consider occasionally attending the Thursday class.

Among the comments there were several that will help our teachers to improve our classes. For example more consideration will be given to those people with hearing problems by using a microphone. Perhaps even fewer walk-throughs.

Should anyone at any time have further suggestions our teachers are always willing to listen.

*Hazel McDonald — John Bell*

	Tuesday Class			Thursday class		
1. Is the starting time convenient?	Yes 24	Earlier 8	Later 0	Yes 16	Earlier 9	Later 0
2. Is the warm-up time adequate?	More: 1	Less: 3	Same: 28	More 2	Less 1	Same 22
3. Step practice. Do you wish?	More 5	Less 3	Same 24	More 4	Less 4	Same 17
4. Formation teaching. Do you wish?	More 11	Less 4	Same 15	More 11	Less 0	Same 23
5. Familiar dances. Do you wish?	More 12	Less 3	Same 14	More 11	Less 2	Same 12
6. Having been taught a new dance would you like it repeated?	Once 3	Twice 16	Often 11	Once 4	Twice 12	Often 17
7. Do you find there is enough time for socializing?	Yes 25	No 7		Yes 19	No 4	
8. If your answer to 7) was "no" would you like a longer break between dances or a longer intermission	Between 0	Intermission 7		Between 0	Intermission 4	

An Englishman is being shown around a Scottish hospital. Towards the end of his visit, he is shown into a ward with a number of people with no obvious signs of injury. He goes to speak to the first man he sees and the man pipes up: "Fair fa' yer honest sonsie face, Great chieftain e' the puddin' race! Aboon them a' ye tak your place, painch, tripe, or thairm: Weel are ye wordy o'a grace as lang's my arm."

The Englishman, being somewhat taken aback goes to the next patient and immediately the patient launches into: "Some hae meat, and canna eat, And some wad eat that want it, But we hae meat and we can eat, And sae the Lord be thankit." This continues with the next patient: "Wee sleeokit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie, O, what a panic's in thy breastie! Thou need na start awa sae hasty, wi bickering brattle: I wad be

laith to rin and chase thee, wi murdering pattle!" The Englishman turns to the doctor accompanying him on the visit and asks, "What is this, the psychiatric ward?" "No, no," replies the doctor, "it's the Serious Burns unit."

**Thanks Elspet**

**Update your personal information**

It sometimes happens that the executive have to contact members at short notice, re cancellations etc., so if your email address or phone number changes be sure to let Edith know.

**TAC Summer School 2009  
July 26 to Aug 9  
Shawnigan Lake School**

This is an excellent opportunity for local dancers of all levels to participate in this event, which draws dancers from all over the world.

Full 7 day course -- includes meals and accommodation from Sunday dinner, July 26th to Sunday lunch, August 2nd, 2009. All classes, evening events, most optional activities, Saturday reception, banquet, and ball are included for one low price.

Individual activities-- may be available, space permitting.

Interested dancers are urged to apply now as registration fills up early.

More information on the TAC web site at <http://www.tac-rscds.org/>

**For Sale****1 pair of Scottish Dancing Shoes (Ghillies)**

Black, size 9 1/2, Can be used by male or female dancers. Used on ( 2 ) dancing occasions, New price: \$ 65.08 ( with receipt ). Asking price: \$ 45.00

Contact Len at [sqn439tiger12@shaw.ca](mailto:sqn439tiger12@shaw.ca)

**COMING EVENTS****Friday, Feb 20 A Ceilidh at the Cedar Heritage Centre**

(Next to the Cedar High School) from 8:00pm to 11:30pm. \$10 per person at the door

**Saturday, Feb 21 "Love to Dance" Workshop and Dance.** Scottish Cultural Centre, Vancouver**Sat Feb 21 2009 Valentine's Social**

7:30 p.m. at St. Martin In-The-Fields, 550 Obed Avenue, Cost: \$8 at the door

**Sat March 7 Port Alberni St Patrick's Dinner/Dance.** Music by Mary Ross .  
Registration required**Friday March 27th to Sunday March 29th  
VISCDS Spring Workshop and Ball  
Weekend****April 4 Oceanside Spring Gala****Apr 18 Nanaimo SCD Workshop and Tea  
Dance****June 12-14 - Salt Spring Scottish Country  
Dance Club presents "Simply Scottish on  
Salt Spring" - A Workshop, Ball and  
Dance Weekend**

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

---

Many thanks as always to those who submitted articles, news and jokes.

Be sure to check our web site at [www.nanaimoscd.com](http://www.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

Your ed.

John Duffus

---