

The Thistle

The newsletter of the
Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers - October, 2009



President's Message:

We started our 40th+ season of dancing at our Open House on September 10th. There was an excellent turn out of almost seven sets, which included 22 potential new dancers. All augurs well for the year; preparatory planning for the Ball on January 9th and the Workshop and Tea Dance on April 24th is complete.

Little did we know, however, that, on the same day, tragedy struck one of our NSCD families. Sandy Shaw collapsed and died while leading a hiking party on a Blacktusk trail. I am immensely proud of how unstintingly our dancers responded to help when called upon. Food arrived at the house and Alison accepted our offer to cater for the Celebration of Life at Oliver Woods hall. Our members played the major role in setting up and taking down chairs and tables, Hazel and Elspet organized the food and drink which members provided in abundance. Len Campbell piped the family in and ended with a lament and Auld Lang Syne.

Sandy and Alison joined our first beginners class in September 1999 and soon established themselves as active members. Sandy was the muscle power behind Alison during her tenure as Social Convenor and was ever present when work was to be done for the Ball and Workshop and Tea Dance. Fun was never far away when Sandy was around and his twinkly eyes were a trade mark for his presence. As I said at the Celebration of Life, Sandy was the epitome of a Burns poem and was truly "a man for a' that and a' that". We will miss him and offer our sincere condolences to Alison and all the family.

A new venture this year is the offering of monthly classes on the first Sunday of each month from 1.30-3.30 pm for dancers wishing to improve their finesse. This is open to all experienced dancers. Cost will be covered by a drop in fee. If you are not signed in, please advise Hazel – 250 758 6224 or kirco@telus.net.

My first meeting as chair of the board is now over and should get easier from now on. A number of issues of importance to members were acted upon.

1. Dues. There was a failure at the AGM. The intention to raise our dues, which is the first increase in over ten years. The matter was mentioned in a report but never presented as a motion. This explains the confusion on opening night when the proposed dues were announced. Doug and Wendy will analyze our finances and report back at our next meeting. This could result in a Special General Meeting to approve an increase for the balance of the year.
2. Constitution. Our new vice-president has done due diligence and pointed out some weaknesses (kindly). He now bears the burden to prepare and present revisions at our November meeting and later ratification by members

David Handley

Club Executive:

President:

David Handley
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Past President:

Marguerite Bell
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Edith Morgan
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Social Convenor:

Joan McConnell
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Classes:

Social Class each Tuesday
at 8:00 pm

Beginners/Basic Class each
Thursday at 8:00 pm

All classes are held at Pleasant Valley Hall, 6100 Doumont Rd Nanaimo

For more information contact:

June—250-756-6182

Hazel—250-758-6224

Marguerite— 250-756-9836

Summer School 2009 – Shawnigan Lake

Now Summer School is all about Scottish Country Dancing but it also has an element of fun. Our Nanaimo dancers showed their fun side at the “theme” night, which was based on the 2010 Olympics.

Katherine Miller and John Duffus dressed up in hospital scrubs and became dope testers, complete with urine samples and Dixie cups to receive the contributions. Barbara Eagles and her family created a “boozoni” dressed in matching tee-shirts and skimming the ice. (Her son and daughter are surnamed “Booz”). Hazel of course, dressed as a ticket scalper with irresistible offers of the most incredible tickets. Call if you want one!

Robert Seiden wore a bright red and white Canada flag tee-shirt promoting the maple leaf.

Hazel MacDonald

The Bonnie Lass of Bon Accord

Recently we were researching our family tree (which took us to the town of Fetteresso, now part of Stonehaven) and came across this information which I thought might be of interest to fellow Scottish Country Dancers.

James Scott Skinner (the Strathspey King) composed the famous tune *The Bonnie Lass o’ Bon Accord*. But who was the Bonnie Lass? A visit to Fetteresso Cemetery gives us that answer. A gravestone bearing the inscription “In loving memory of Mina Bell, who died 8th June 1938, aged 72 years, immortalized in James Scott Skinner’s masterpiece *The Bonnie Lass o’ Bon Accord*”.

Scott Skinner met Mina Bell one evening when he and some friends were invited to a house in Union Terrace (where they were holding dancing classes). There he found a girl performing menial tasks as a servant, but it was plain that she was a “cut above” the servant lass of the day.

When the floor was cleared for dancing Mina proved that she was a splendid dancer. When Skinner asked why she was working as a servant girl she explained that her father was a farmer and had co-signed a promissory note which was defaulted and he lost everything. She was forced to find work to help feed the other 11 children in her family.

On hearing this Skinner said “Never mind, my lassie, I’ll make a tune that’ll keep ye in min’ when we’re baith deid”. Next morning Skinner composed *The Bonnie Lass O’ Bon Accord*. With the tune in his pocket he met and showed it to Alexander Dinnie who proclaimed “there’s something great in that tune. You’ll need to call it something about *Bon Accord*”. At that moment Mina passed by and Skinner said “there goes the bonnie lass the tune is about. I’ve got, it ca’ it “*The Bonnie Lass o’ Bon Accord*”.

Mina Bell’s name never appeared on a musical program but she inspired a great tune.

Hazel MacDonald

Gathering of the Clans—2009

I exclaimed with excitement to my wife over breakfast, “Fern, did you know that they are going to have an actual Gathering of the Clans in Scotland next year!”. She just looked at me with eyebrows raised. “And?” “They have never had a ‘Call’ before – ever!” She was still just mildly curious.

After I had got over my excitement, I realized that the whole event was scheduled for just two days! That was crazy! Anyhow, I went on the Internet and explored. Two days in Edinburgh, Scotland at the grounds of Holyrood Palace filled with pipe bands, dancers, heavy-duty Scottish sports and clan members from all over the world!

By the time we finished our exploration we had extended the two days in Edinburgh by about two weeks. We had never visited either Scotland or Ireland, so we booked an 8-day bus tour of all of Ireland, including Northern Ireland and a 7-day tour of all of Scotland.

Quickly the excitement rose when the official Gathering Passports arrived with details of the events. Every week until we flew, the Gathering webpage brought up more exciting details.

Finally the day arrived. We flew Air Canada to London; hopped on a plane to Dublin, Ireland and joined our bus crew for two weeks of exploring. It was a mixture of Canadians, Aussies, a lone Korean and a mob of Americans.

We saw Dublin; the Book of Kells; visited the Irish Stud farm; crystal at Waterford; “kissed the Blarney Stone”; drove the “Ring of Kerry” with its cliffs and bays – including Galway. Saw the Cliffs of Moher; Derry, the magnificent Giant’s Causeway; loved isolated Donegal; walked the walls of Belfast and took the ferry to Scotland.

Here, we visited Robbie Burn’s home; were entertained with a ceilidh in Glasgow (haggis included); a boat tour of Loch Lomond; a long run to tour the Isle of Skye; searched Loch Ness for the monster (no luck); walked the entire battlefield of Culloden (no Ramsays were there!); were amazed at the mighty highlands and their heather; drank Scots whiskey; stood on St. Andrews golf course and finally arrived in Edinburgh where we toured the Castle and said goodbye to our many new bus friends.

Overall, the tour was a great success – the green of both Ireland and the Scottish highlands was earth-shaking. The people were all friendly and Kenn had a tough time keep-

ing up his daily diary! We visited dozens of friendly and exciting pubs – and kept to Cider all the way.

Now we were ready for the Gathering!

Kenn dressed in his kilt and we went out to begin our visit to the Gathering.

Over 6,000 people, Clan Members, had arrived from all over the world. There were 63 different Clan Tents and dozens of tents selling the “goods “ of Scotland; plus restaurants and cafes . There were tents with non-stop local music and performances; demonstrations of country dancing; hefty men from all over throwing the hammer, hurling the weights, carrying the huge stones and tossing the cabers. There were constant pipe band competitions and performances. You could also, with help, search your heritage on computer and visit with famous writers of Scotland. Alistair McCall ‘Smith of “Number One Ladies Detective Agency” fame; Diana Gabaldon author of “The Outlander” and many other famous historic fiction novels, were there. We had just tons of things to do!

At our Clan Ramsay tent we were welcomed by the Earl of Dalhousie, our Clan Chief (“Call me Jamie”); signed the visitor’s book and were helped to find what we wanted to see. We called back often; had coffee and met many of the Ramsays from all over the world - Russia, Scandinavia, Germany, Australia, America, Poland and Hong Kong – even some local ones from Scotland and the UK.

At the end of the busy first day, we were reminded that we needed to prepare for the long “march” up Princess Street from Holyrood Palace to the Castle. Fern, who suffers from Fibromyalgia, was worried about whether she would be able to make the whole route over the cobblestones of Edinburgh.

Being part of the ‘Ramsay’ clan, alphabetically speaking we were at the tail-end of the march – behind all the Macs! The march began about 4pm and we were scheduled at about 6.30! Finally, the Ramsays gathered – all 43 of them in their selection of vivid Red and flashy Blue (dress) kilts and scarves, and we marched 5 abreast behind the banners and Ramsay sign. There were over 6000 in the march with pipe bands between many groups to keep up the spirit.

It was not hard to do because over 20,000 people lined the streets and cheered us as we passed by. The Pubs emptied and many waved their tankards and cheered. Finally we reached the Castle; took our (very good) seats in very nice weather and were entertained by the special play, “AISLINGS CHILDREN” featuring an early Scottish woman and her family. Generations went by in the music and the light shows, from the early days in the Highlands through all their troubles with the English Kings; through travelling to the various colonies; then

WW1 and WW2 up to the present time. It was beautifully done with lots of “ahs”!

The second day we toured the brand new Scottish Houses of Parliament – next door to Holyrood Palace – awe inspiring – and had a full day eating good Scottish food – including wonderful scones with jam and cream. We saw all the “finals” of the Sports – including the winners of the men who had raced up the mountain behind the grounds and survived. Few could toss the very large and heavy caber – only three succeeded! Kenn watched a demo of Country dancing and then was invited to join a crowd of spectators on the grass and dance – and did well!

The grand surprise of the whole event was an invitation at the end of the day to join a busload of Ramsays from all over the world for a drive to the Ramsay Castle south of Edinburgh. On arrival, two pipers piped while the Earl of Dalhousie and Lady Ramsay welcomed us.

After a tour of the Castle – now run as a grand Hotel – we were treated to a wonderful buffet dinner with wine; entertained during the evening with traditional Scottish music by the children and grandchildren of the Earl and had a wonderfully unexpected finish to our visit to Scotland and Ireland. Fern said “This is the first time in my life I have been kissed by an Earl!”

We flew home from Edinburgh – via London – much poorer, exhausted and overwhelmed.

Kenn and Fern Joubert

In Memorium

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Gordon Harper, who died in Nanaimo hospital on August 3rd, having battled with cancer and other illness for many years. Born and raised in Paisley, Scotland, Gordon, his wife and son Dale had lived in Ontario before moving to Vancouver Island. Gordon first started dancing with Janetta’s Wednesday afternoon group and, dancing as long as was possible, was always willing to volunteer to help in any way he could at dances and workshops. His Memorial Service was very well attended by dancers. He was also well represented by his bowling friends, golfing friends and many members of the Qualicum Beach local Seniors group. He will be sadly missed.

"Scottish Logic"

A man in Scotland calls his son in London the day before Christmas Eve and says, 'I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing; forty-five years of misery is enough.' 'Dad, what are you talking about?' the son screams. 'We can't stand the

sight of each other any longer,' the father says. 'We're sick of each other, and I'm sick of talking about this, so you call your sister in Leeds and tell her.'

Frantic, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone. 'Like hell they're getting divorced,' she shouts, 'I'll take care of this.' She calls Scotland immediately, and screams at her father, 'You are NOT getting divorced. Don't do a single thing until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don't do a thing, DO YOU HEAR ME?' and hangs up.

The old man hangs up his phone and turns to his wife. 'Okay,' he says, 'they're coming for Christmas and they're paying their own way.'

June McFadden

June promises us a topic on dancing when she gets back the use of her broken arm!

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—within driving distance

The Oceanside (formerly Nanoose) Scottish Country Dancers

Qualicum Beach Community Hall, Corner of Memorial Ave & Veterans Way

Beginners class: Wednesday from 6.30-8.00 pm

Intermediate class: Wednesday from 8.00-10.00 pm

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

Cowichan Valley Scottish Country Dancers

Thursday 6.30 pm the Firehall in Crofton. All levels.

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

Salt Spring Scottish Country Dancers

All Saints Anglican Church in Ganges

Monday 6.00-8.00 pm for new and inexperienced dancers and 7.00-9.00 pm 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://saltspringsscottishdancers.org>

Comox Valley Scottish Country Dancers

Monday (except holidays)

7.30-9.30 pm

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

Mark Your Calendars:

Oct 24 VISCDS October Harvest Social at St. Martin In-The-Fields, 550 Obed Ave—Oct 24 - Cost \$8.

Nov 7 RSCDS Victoria A Gathering of the Clans

Nov 21 VISCDS St Andrews Social

Dec 5th Port Alberni Christmas Dinner/Dance

Dec 5 Victoria Clubs Joint Christmas Social, time and details TBA

2010

Jan 9 Nanaimo SCD Ball

Mar 20 Oceanside Gala \$28.

April 24 Nanaimo Workshop and Tea Dance

All contributions are greatly appreciated. If you have any news that you would like to share, please send it to Dorothy Young, Thistle newsletter editor at: dyoung10@shaw.ca

Please check our website for the most up-to-date information about classes and upcoming events.

www.nanaimoscd.com