

The Thistle



The newsletter of the
**Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers -
January, 2010**

Club Executive:

President:

David Handley
mtembene@shaw.ca

Past President:

Marguerite Bell
mhjbell@telus.net

Vice President:

Doug McConnell
djmccconnell@shaw.ca

Treasurer:

Wendy Strachan
wmstrach@sfu.ca

Secretary:

Edith Morgan
edithwmorgan@shaw.ca

Social Convener:

Joan McConnell
djmccconnell@shaw.ca

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

President's Musings:

The fall season of dancing was highly successful. Not only did we have record numbers at both the social and beginner's dances but the new, monthly technique class proved much more popular than anticipated with as many as 18 dancers, each seeking to learn and polish their dancing ability. This appears set to be an evolving undertaking. Thank you Hazel for initiating and leading this venture. Another measure of 'success' has been the number of visitors who have braved the weather to join us from north, south, and west on Tuesdays. Welcome travellers, we value your presence.

I always enjoy watching the new dancers as they progress from the "what have I got myself into stage" and "how will I ever remember what my feet must do as well as all the moves in the dance" to how well they reward our teachers by the time of our December social program where they clearly enjoyed themselves. Well done but no resting on your laurels, I really want to see grace and style displayed at our April Tea Dance after honing your skills at the workshop.

The Infomercial filmed and shown by Shaw Cable certainly gave us publicity. I was surprised at how many of my own acquaintances told me they had seen it and members seemed to enjoy seeing themselves dancing. Thank you to our 'voices' June, Edith, and Bill and Brian for arranging it all.

Our website has become an excellent window for visitors and I thank John Duffus for his continuing work in developing our home page and providing a wide range of interesting information and links. The increasing number of links to view individual dances provides a great way to learn, especially for any having difficulty reading dance descriptions. If you have not visited the site, please do at www.nanaimoscd.com. Also, if you have ideas to improve the site in any way, please talk to John any Tuesday or Thursday.

And now the 2010 Annual Ball is behind us. It was a wonderful way to begin a new season of dancing. I am especially pleased by the numbers who turned out to set up tables etc and transform the hall to Our Ballroom for the night. Thank you to all of you as well as those who helped restore it to its normal look when they might have preferred to leave. The success of the ball was an outcome of the devoted teaching of June and Hazel; the dance booklets courtesy of Keith; the meticulous planning and presence of Brian; the behind the scenes organization of Joan and faithful assistant Doug; the generosity of our members who provided enough for Iona, Evelyn, and Jeanne to make up 11 baskets; the painting from Rita for the raffle, the 'salespersonship' of Mary and Katherine; the service of our barkeeper Trina; the dance 'walkers and talkers' - June, Marguerite, Hazel and Brian - and, last but by no means least, the musical inspiration from Mary Ross. THANK YOU ALL! You did us proud.

David Handley

New Year's Ball 2010

For this Scottish Country Dancer the most important "Social Event of the Year" as described by our President, David, has come and gone and all the planning, organizing and, I must admit, worrying is now over and I have to say for me it was all worthwhile. To see so many of our dancers enjoying themselves, made planning this year's ball both satisfying and enjoyable.

Our committee, as always, did an outstanding job and everyone who was asked to help, be it with baskets, booklets, booze, decorating or raffle sales pitched in to ensure it truly was for many of us the social event of the year. The baskets were a great success and it was gratifying to see May Stimpson, our oldest dancer, win one of the ticket draws. Wendy Strachan was the winner of the big prize which was Rita Gibson's beautiful watercolour.

Mary Ross was in top form and I'm always amazed how just one person can produce such a variety of music and background accompaniment and make it all sound as if she had a four-piece combo on stage.

Cheryl and her crew, once again, provided an excellent dinner all the while babysitting her baby daughter in the Yacht Club kitchen (she likes to start them young!).

I can't finish without thanking everyone who helped to take down the decorations and those who assisted with the general clean up. We stopped dancing at 11:30 pm and I was locking the front door for the night at 12:15 am; an amazing effort, and one which saved yours truly from having to make an extra trip to the Yacht Club on Sunday morning.

So, in closing, let me say to everyone, a sincere thank you for helping to make the 2010 New Year's Ball a resounding success!! Or, as John Bell proclaims every year, "The Best Ever."

Brian

Dancing Matters

Bows & Curtseys

Each dance begins and ends with a bow and curtsey. This is to recognise and honour your partner and it should be simple, unaffected and done rhythmically to the music. The bow and curtsey should be fitted to the music which is often 3 notes – e.g. da rum da = and, down – up. Some bands just use 1 chord but the same 3 movements need to be fitted into that chord.

The Man – on the first note the man draws himself up slightly, on the second he bows from the waist, keeping his back straight and still looking at his partner, on the third note he returns to the starting position. Throughout his arms are held naturally at his side.

The Woman - on the first note she draws herself up slightly, on the second note she places the toe of one foot close up to the heel of the other foot and bends both knees equally, keeping the body erect and looking at her partner. Finally she too returns to the starting position. It is a matter of individual preference which foot is placed behind.

So no excuses, let's have lovely bows and curtseys.

Hazel MacDonald

4 Hands across and back

This figure is basically a circle drawn on the floor. The size of the circle is dictated by the length of the dancers' arms. The figure usually starts and finishes on the sideline and takes 4 bars of music clockwise and 4 bars back anti-clockwise. Dancers must start by going *round and in* NOT in and round, joining hands with the person diagonally opposite. They must slow down on bar 4 (shorten their step, pivot, drop hands,) and be ready to start back on bar 5. Note that the 1st lady and 2nd man have to dance almost up and down the side lines at the start, while 1st man

and 2nd lady have an awkward movement dancing out to place and finishing facing their partners.

This figure is also referred to as a "wheel". There should be some tension in the arms to assist dancers especially when dancing in quick time. Dancers remain in the centre of the figure when changing directions. Hands are given in "shake-hand hold" with the opposite person and usually it is danced right hands clockwise and left hands back anti-clockwise. Dancers take 1 bar to form the circle and 1 bar to break and return to sidelines.

Hazel MacDonald

1700 - 2010

It's hard to believe we are now in the year 2010. When I was a young woman 2010 sounded so futuristic, yet here we are enjoying life and still dancing with most of our faculties in tact.

January 5, 2010, our first night of dancing after our Christmas break, saw 45 people take to the floor as we prepared for our annual New Year's Ball. We managed to get through nine of the fifteen Ball dances and had a fun time doing it.

Many of the dances we do today were written in the 18th century, when Scottish Country Dancing was at its height of popularity. Dances such as "The Duke of Perth, Seann Truibhas Willican, The Birks of Invermay, Blue Bonnets, The Bob o' Dowally, The Duke of Atholl's Reel, The Flowers of Edinburgh and many, many more are still being danced today, more than 250 years later. It was during this time that beautiful, large Ballrooms were built called "Assemblies", where people would gather to learn and dance the old Scottish Country Dances to music written and played by masters such as: Neil Gow and his son,

Nathaniel, William Marshall, and many other talented musicians.

Although the "Assemblies" were built for the upper classes of society, the poorer country folk weren't neglected. Robbie Burns, the son of a struggling Ayrshire farmer, attended a dancing school in his youth, long before he became Scotland's greatest bard. The dancing teachers of the time were a unique breed. Given the affectionate name of "Dancies", they would travel, by foot or bicycle, to stately homes or local villages, where they would teach Scottish dancing while they accompanied themselves on the fiddle. Whether high or low-bred the etiquette was the same for everyone and these dance teachers were sticklers. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and her brother, David were taught Scottish Country Dancing in their home by Dancie, Neill of Forfar, which has led to it being a favourite past-time especially when the Royals are up in Balmoral.

Dancie, John Reid (1869-1942), the last of his breed of fiddle-dancing masters, practiced his art right up to the very end. He died shortly after collapsing, fiddle in hand, while leading the Seann Truibhas during an "Assembly" Ball for his former pupils. We owe these wonderful "Dancies" a lot!!

Continuing to keep Scottish Country Dancing alive and well is the aim of all Scottish Country Dance teachers and it can be the aim of all Scottish Country Dancers, too. So, talk to friends and family and bring them along to see what we do and how much fun we have.

Wishing you all a wonderful 2010

Happy Dancing!!

June McFadden

These '**commandments**' from the Frankfurt (Germany) Scottish Country Dancing Club website contain good advice for us all.

Ten Commandments for Balls and Socials (King James version)

These may not have been carried down from Mount Schiehallion on shortbread tablets, but anyway, you will not make a mistake by trying to adhere to them:

Thou shalt not overestimate thyself when asking people to dance, lest thou beest embarrassed if the set breaks down six times out of eight because of thee.

Thou shalt dance now and then with other people than thy spouse and immediate tribe – possibly even with someone from the other table or yon wallflower from the outer reaches of the hall.

Thou shalt not walk on the dance floor too early, neither shalt thou do thus alone, for lo! the MC will announce the dance when it is time, and even in Scotland it takes at least two to dance.

Thou shalt join a set at the bottom and not in the middle (especially if it may already have been counted), lest thou not cause much wailing and gnashing of teeth before the dance has even started.

Thou shalt count the lines if thou art the top man, for the knowledge of one's station in the set produces good will in all men (and women!) if thou art a woman on the men's side, this commandment may apply to the next man down the line.)

Thou shalt look at thy partner during the dance and not at thy "Pilling," so that she (or he) may remain friendly towards thee and thou mayest ask her (or him) to dance again.

Thou shalt not hinder thy neighbour's dance by returning from thy Down-the-middle-and-up on bar 9, blocking forever the centre of the set with extra twiddles and hand-clapping during a half diagonal reel of four, or otherwise not acting as a team player.

Thou shalt honour thy musicians, that thy dance may be long into the night and they might even repeat a dance that

thou hast liked. But similarly shalt thou help thy MC; clap both loudly and long, but remain on the dance floor if thou wilt do that dance again or clear it speedily if not.

Thou shalt not chide, lest thou be chided – for verily, nobody hath appointed thee (of all people!) judge of thy neighbour's dancing ability or outlook on what is enjoyable. If thou must chide people, become a dance teacher and chide them in thy class; at balls and socials it is an abomination.

Thou shalt enjoy thyself – in spite of these tedious commandments – and help others enjoy themselves, too. Other dancers will be commented upon on thy way home.

Hazel MacDonald

Effect of Scottish Country Dancing on Bone Health

As a former physiotherapist, Scottish country dance teacher and a person who suffers from Osteoporosis, I found this very interesting article in the magazine of the RSCDS "The Scottish Country Dancer" and I would like to share it with you.

Marguerite Bell

Sabita Stewart, a Researcher at Glasgow Caledonian University Division of Physiotherapy, carried out a study in collaboration with Glasgow Branch into the effect of SCD on bone health. Here is her report.

Background

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bone strength is reduced because of a change in bone quality and a reduction in the amount of bone material present. It is thought to affect 1 in 3 older (postmenopausal) women and 1 in 12 older men. It is often called the 'silent killer' because it may not be diagnosed until one or two bones are broken. There are

20,000 osteoporotic fractures every year in Scotland and the bones most commonly broken are wrist, spine and hip. Following a hip fracture one third of people do not regain their former independence. The personal costs, in terms of finance and well-being, are immeasurable, affecting not only the individual, but also family, friends, neighbours, work and leisure.

Studies have shown that fractures can be prevented by improving bone strength and avoiding falls. To improve and maintain bone strength, current guidelines recommend that low to medium impact exercise, such as stepping, marching or intermittent jogging, is more appropriate for individuals aged over 50 (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 1999). In the Glasgow area, there are 15 physiotherapist-led exercise classes a week which are specifically for individuals diagnosed with, or at risk of developing, osteoporosis. These classes, which cater for approximately 450 people a year, incorporate exercises such as stepping, marching and sidestepping to provide the recommended impact forces.

How much impact force is enough?

A large well conducted study undertaken in Germany (Kemmler et al. 2004) used 50 postmenopausal women and showed that activities which generate impact forces between 1.5 and 3.5 times body-weight could offset bone loss.

It has been suggested that certain forms of dance, including Scottish country dancing (SCD) may provide similar impact forces and therefore also be good for bone health. Latest figures provided by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society show that there are 3,700 registered members in Scotland dancing each week as well as an unknown number of unregistered individuals dancing with both affiliated and unaffiliated groups.

Scottish Country Dance Study

There has been very little research on different types of dance that could provide suitable impact forces to improve and maintain bone health. A study to evaluate SCD focusing on the pas de bas step was undertaken at Glasgow Caledonian University in 2008. The pas de bas step was compared to marching and sidestepping, two of the exercises included in physiotherapist led exercise classes.

To recruit volunteers, adverts were placed in RSCDS Glasgow Branch newsletters and one Glasgow club was visited. Twenty one ladies each made a single visit to Glasgow Caledonian University where they walked, marched, danced and sidestepped over a force plate set in the floor of the movement laboratory.

The force plate measures the forces produced as each foot strikes the plate and from this, the vertical forces reflected limb bones, can be calculated. The group who took part in the study had an average age of 65 years (ranging from 55 to 82).

Results

On average, the pas de bas step generated forces almost twice body weight through the lower limbs. This is visually represented in the figure 3 and was shown to be significantly higher forces than generated during walking, side stepping or marching. Walking and sidestepping generated similar levels of force whilst the forces recorded during marching were higher. The horizontal green line illustrates the minimum force recorded during Kemmler's study (1.5 times body-weight).

(Ed's note: a copy of the original article will be placed on the notice board so that you may see the graph.)

Implications

From this study, we have shown that the levels of force generated during the pas de bas step are higher than those recorded for walking, side stepping and marching. Therefore, as the pas de bas step generated almost twice bodyweight, it would appear to be a good exercise to offset bone loss. It would be sensible to propose that Scottish country dance should now be added to the list of recommended activities for women who wish to maintain bone health. In addition, the pas de bas step could be a valuable addition to the physiotherapy led exercise classes.

Scottish Dance Attire - What are the rules?

(Borrowed from RSCDS London Canada Branch editor Marel Fielding)

According to "Introducing Scottish Country Dancing" written by Jean C. Milligan, co-founder of the RSCDS ,Chapter VI: Dress, she notes it is a privilege to wear this national dress and those who do so must realize it is their duty to wear it correctly.

MEN

When wearing a kilt

- kilt should be almost knee cap length
- shirt should be white, but a pale green is also allowed
- sleeves should be fastened at the wrist
- a plain tie should be worn (not a tartan tie)

Day dress

- a tweed kilt jacket is correct, or a well-laundered shirt with a plain tie is acceptable
- long-haired sporran is not suitable for day wear - a leather one is correct
- stockings are plain coloured - fawn, green, blue or white

Evening dress

- a belt with silver buckle and diced hose are worn only with evening dress

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- Bonnie Prince Charlie or Robert Douglas black evening jacket, with or without vest
- white tuxedo shirt with studs/links
- black bow tie, not a tartan one
- white stockings with matching tartan flashes
- dress sporran
- sgian dubh should not be carried at social events. Remember, historically, it is a weapon.

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LADIES

Day dress

- short white frock or any light summer dress

The tartan sash is the ONLY traditional thing the ladies may don, and even the sash should really be worn only in the evening.

Wearing the sash

- worn with white or pale pastel shades to show it off Not worn with bright strong colours or patterned material

Placement of the Sash

- Fastened on the LEFT shoulder or passed over the left shoulder and fastened at the waist on the RIGHT side.

Robert Seiden

Inventor of the dishwasher?

Did you know that someone in my family invented the dishwasher? My mother called her aunt, my great aunt, the "dishwasher lady".

In Britain many years ago the Monday morning chore for the woman was the laundry. We had a huge copper boiler which was powered by either gas or electricity and all the wash - sheets, pillowcases, towels, etc. - went into the copper and were boiled until they were clean.

My great aunt Alice saved all of her dishes for the week and put them in the boiler! My mother thought aunty was a little off her head, but I think otherwise, don't you?

Another aunt worked in a convent in Ireland. The thought was that she had had a child out of wedlock and the convent took them both in, as long as the aunt worked there. (Mother always wondered why the aunt didn't like men!).

Aunty May had a small bedsitting room and of course that was where she had to undress before she went to bed. Television came along, aunty May got a small one, but undressed behind it because she thought the people on it could see her!

Pat Fiddis

How to make Tablet, a traditional Scottish sweet

Tablet is an original Scottish confectionery. There are a number of variations on the recipe and the method. Some prefer it very smooth and almost like fudge, whereas others prefer a rough (and more authentic) texture and appearance. Tablet is hard to describe if you haven't had a Scottish upbringing; it's like fudge, but more grainy and should not be part of a calorie-controlled diet!

Tablet is an original Scottish confectionery. There are a number of variations on the recipe and the method. Some Some prefer it smooth, almost

Making this recipe has even been listed as one of the 100 Things To Do In Scotland Before You Die. Marian McNeill in 'The Scots Kitchen' cites the Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie (1692-1733) as listing among the purchases 'tablet for the bairns'.

An important thing you'll need is a good saucepan with a thick bottom. We have an old cast aluminum pan that works well for candy making and use a wooden spoon for the stirring and beating. You also need a lot of patience and a strong arm for the beating.

1 1/2 lbs sugar
1 cup milk
1/2 tin sweetened condensed milk
(Eagle or store brand)
4 oz (1/2 cup) butter
1/4 tsp salt

Bring sugar, milk salt butter to the boil very slowly, stirring occasionally, in order to dissolve the sugar thoroughly before it boils – 2 or 3 mark on an electric element. This should take about 20 minutes.

When dissolved, add condensed milk, boil slowly and stir constantly until colour changes to a golden brown and the mixture begins to thicken and stick to the side of the pan (about 20 minutes more).

Remove from heat and beat for about 5 minutes with wooden spoon until the mixture lightens a little in colour and begins to thicken and 'grain'. Don't allow it to become too thick or it will not pour!

Pour immediately into a shallow tray and mark into squares when it cools a little. (I use 3 aluminum pie plates, these plates work well as it is easy to remove and break up when set.)

Sandy Shaw's recipe

Alison Shaw

IN MEMORIUM

Eric Wynne 1919-2009

Eric died peacefully in Victoria on November 1st, 2009. He would have been 90 on the 24th November.

He, Paddy and their two children, David and Lesley came to Canada in 1955, living and working in Montreal and Kitchener / Waterloo, retiring to Nanaimo in the 1990s.

Eric and Paddy Scottish country danced in Kitchener and became loyal members of our group here. He was an honorary member of the Nanaimo Scottish Country Dancers.

Eric was a wonderful man, gentle and kind. He was the first Nanaimo Scottish Country dancer whom John and I met when we came to the Ball 10 years ago this weekend. He welcomed us at the door of the Yacht Club. He and Paddy have been our friends ever since then.

We loved Eric and he is missed by all of us who knew him.

Paddy is planning a celebration of his life to be held at a Masonic Lodge on Morpeth Avenue here in Nanaimo on the 28th of March.

Marguerite Bell

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2010

- Feb 13** Comox Valley Valentine's
Mar 13 Port Alberni St Patrick's Day
dance
Mar 20 Oceanside Gala dinner/
dance \$28.
April 17 Nanaimo Scottish Country
Dancers Annual Workshop
and Tea Dance. Brochures
and registration forms will
be available soon.

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.

Please check our website for the most up-to-date information about classes and upcoming events. John Duffus, our Web Master has searched out many dances on the web and made them very easily accessible to us. Thank you John.
www.nanaimoscd.com

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