



The THISTLE

A MAGAZINE OF SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING AND ALLIED SUBJECTS

Issued by the West Point Grey Scottish Country Dance Club of B.C.

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No. 2

December, 1961.

EDITORIAL

The first time one of us launched a magazine for Scottish Dancers we nearly had to write it all ourselves. By the third issue we were exhorting our readers "Please write something, if only a letter of complaint". You can guess what we got for our fourth issue.

Vancouver has done better. Almost before our first issue appeared we were sent a poem; a research article is ready for our next issue. We have been promised several other items.

We shall not reprint again the list of Dance Groups, but we shall be pleased to add any which we have not yet included.

THE WEST POINT GREY SCOTTISH DANCE CLUB — We are honoured that Dr. Norman Mackenzie, President of the University of British Columbia, has consented to become the president of our club.

OUR DANCES. No. 2: Drambuie (devised by Hugh Thurston)

"Drambuie" was devised by Hugh Thurston last spring and proved popular, first in the West Point Grey club and then at the Prince Charles. Its first public appearance was in the Edinburgh festival last summer, when it was the final dance in that delightful programme "An Edinburgh Fancy", beautifully danced by an R.S.C.D.S. team (from the Edinburgh branch). The music has been composed by Murray Shoolbraid. (If anyone likes the tunes, and has a new dance which needs music, why not write to Murray at the editorial address?)

Because music in staff-notation cannot be typed, we give it here in tonic sol-fa. It can easily be re-written if your musician cannot play from tonic sol-fa.

Tune A (Key E; time 6/8)

drd: m-d/f-d: l-f/m-d: smd/t, -r: r-m/bars 1-2/mrd:t, dr/m-d:d-d/repeat bars 1-8.
mrd:f-d/l-d:d'-l/s-s: smd/t, -r:r-f/bars 17-18/smd:t, dr/bar 8/bars 17-20/
mfs:fsl/slt:d'tl/sfm:rdt,/d--:-

Tune B (Key A)

s,/d-d: mrm/f-r:t, -r/d-d:rdr/m--:drm/f-f:rmf/m-m:d-m/rmr:dt,l,/s,--:s,l,t,/bars 1-4/f-l:l-f/m-s:s-m/f-r:d-t,/d--:-/repeat bars 1-16.

Tune C (Key D)

s,/d-m: mrm/d-m: mrm/d-m:s-m/f-r:t, dr/bars 1-3/frt,:d-s,/repeat bars 1-8/s-m:mfs/f-r:rmf/m-d:drm/r-d:t,l,s,/bars 17-18/mrm:f-r/t,l,t,:d-d/repeat bars 17-24 except the last note.

Play ABCBA. Total 5 x 32 bars

Steps — Skip-change step, used whenever no other is specified;
Pas-de-basque, as in country dancing;
High-cutting;
Balance, as in McLaine's hogmanay;
Polka.

Formation - As for the eightsome reel.

Figure 1: Balance and chain.

Bars 1-2 Balance to partners with right hands joined.

3-4 Dance a quarter of a grand chain (pass partner with right hands and the next dancer with left hands).

5-16 Do this three more times.

Chorus

1-2 Balance to partners with right hands joined.

3-4 Retaining right hands, partners dance forwards to change places, turning about as they do so (men clockwise, women anti-clockwise) so that they finish by facing each other. The joined right hands pass over the women's heads.

5-8 As much again.

9-16 With ball-room hold the couples polka anti-clockwise round the set.

Figure 2: Spin into line.

1-4 The couples turn rapidly with the crossed-hand hold. The top and bottom couples end where they started, but the other two couples separate, so that two facing lines of four are formed; one with the top couple in the middle, the other with the bottom couple in the middle.

5-8 Each dancer changes places with the dancer opposite, passing right shoulder.

9-12 Each dancer changes places with the dancer opposite, passing right-shoulder, and turns to face his partner.

13-16 The couples turn as in 1-4 to re-form the square.

Chorus

Figure 3: Men in the middle.

1-4 Each man turns one-and-a-half revolutions clockwise with four pas-de-basque, moving slightly forward as he does so (the four men will then be in the middle, facing out,) and

5-8 dances high-cuts to his partner.

9-10 Each man turns his partner with the right arm and

11-12 the woman who was on his left in the original square with the left arm.

13-16 As 9-12.

Chorus

Figure 4: Women all round.

1-16 The men stand still and the women dance a reel-of-eight (as in Schiehallion) round them. Each woman starts by dancing clockwise round behind her partner.

Chorus

Figure 5: The women stand still and the men dance a reel-of-eight (as in Schiehallion) round them. Each man starts by dancing across to the woman on his right.

Chorus

BEGINNERS' ODE TO SCOTTISH DANCING

With drooping heads and shoulders bowed,
Attentive and unmoving crowd
Submissive now, we wait to hear
The sharp command, direct and clear -
Quick off the mark! Take up the chain!
Step right and left and right again!
Steady the line! Set the square!
To rest awhile we do not dare;
Faltering footsteps, shuffling feet,
Following still the endless beat.

On, on yet, though our throats are burning,
Sweating, reeling, twisting, turning,
Ah, naught there is to quench our thirst
For lack of air our lungs should burst;
At last we drop, so weak and faint,
Yet none shall hear our sad complaint -

What! you ask us how we bore it?
Havers man! we just adore it!
D.S.

LOCAL NEWS

BORN - To Joyce and Douglas James, a daughter, Fiona Catherine.

VISITORS - Friends from the Fidalgo Folk-Dancers spent one evening with us and another at the Folk Festival. We were also pleased to see members of the "Gaelic Ceilidh" of Seattle at our U.B.C. Week-end Institute; we were sorry that the group from Portland couldn't come.

EXHIBITED - At the Folk Festival in the Queen Elizabeth: Country Dances by the Night School classes, Highland Dances by the Mary Isdale Dancers, and a reel by the Braemar Group.

ENTERTAINMENT - A Ceilidh was held at International House on St. Andrew's Night. Dancers from Vancouver were invited by the Victoria Scottish country dancers to a very pleasant weekend.

COMPARISON CORNER

SPANISH DANCING - A TOURIST'S IMPRESSION.

Only two familiar forms of traditional dancing employ a precise and elegant technique of both footwork and armwork - namely Highland dancing and Spanish dancing. There is this further point in common - neither is today danced purely, or even mainly, for the dancer's own enjoyment. Highland dancing is mostly found at highland games and similar competitions; Spanish dancing on the stage. In other words, the main purpose of the two types of dance is the same: they are meant to be looked at.

A very obvious point of difference between them is this: whereas the Scottish dances are national, the fling being as much at home in Perth as in Wick, Spanish dances are regional, and a dance for Moorish Andalusia would be quite out of place in the north. The Andalusian dances are probably the best known. They are the ones which are danced in the long, brightly-coloured flounced dresses to the rhythm of the dancers' own castanets. These dances, Spanish-Moorish in origin (the castanets are a development of the Moorish finger-cymbals) were kept alive by the gipsies, and one can still see performances in the gipsy quarter of Cordoba. One must admit a little sadly that these traditional performances lack the technical competence of performances by highly trained professionals. The dancing is often ragged and the costumes dirty, while in the figure dances glaring mistakes are not unknown. In fact, though the performances are of great interest to the folk-lorist and the dance-historian, they are definitely less worth while than stage performances for the spectator whose only desire is to enjoy the beauty of the dance itself.

The castanets have spread from Andalusia over almost the whole of Spain. The left-hand castanet, which has the deeper note of the two, beats out a steady rhythm, while the other fills in with either beats or rolls to a pattern which is determined by the type of dance - one pattern for a Bolero, another for a Sevillana, another for a Jota, and so on. There are about ten different rhythms, every one of which is in triple time. The roll is made by striking the edge of the castanet by the fourth, third, second and first fingers in quick succession. Castanets are not hard to play when one can sit down and give all one's attention to them, but to play them while making the vigorous arm movements of the dance is quite another matter.

Galicia is the Celtic part of Spain, and it is here that the Spanish bagpipes have survived. However, it was not the Galician dances but the Aragonese ones which reminded me most strongly of Scotland. The principal step of the famous Jota Aragonese resembles that Scottish one which D.R. Mackenzie calls the side-cut, and which some teachers call the "toe-off" step. Points, shuffles, and the back step are also used. Moreover, the dancers wear light shoes not unlike our Gillies in pattern, though they are usually white. Whether these details add up to more than a coincidence I cannot say, but at any rate a well-performed Jota is one of the liveliest, most entertaining, and most interesting dances to be seen south of Gretna.

SASH PROBLEM (By Hugh Foss)

"Hullo, Drummond," I said. "What on earth were you doing in Duke of Perth? Was it a game?"

"Yes," he replied. "We were five couples and were dancing it with the full progression, each couple dancing three times through without slipping. We started the dance in that order. We were all wearing our own tartans."

"Of course."

"Not of course at all. The women were our fiancées and had each borrowed one of the others' sashes. Their names and tartans were."

"Abercromby, Buchanan, Cameron, Drummond and Erskine."

"Exactly. How did you guess?"

"I recognised the tartans."

"Quite. None of us is engaged to a girl of the same surname as himself. None of us danced with our fiancées and no women danced with the fiancé of the woman whose sash she borrowed. My fiancée borrowed Joan Erskine's sash. My sister -"

"But what was the game?"

"The game was to get the sashes back to the owners, which could only be done via the man wearing the tartan corresponding to the sash. The borrower gave the sash to the man the first time she set to him and he gave it to the owner the next time he set to her. All the owners had their sashes back by the time we had danced through the figure seven times.

What is the name of Miss Cameron's fiancé? - Whose sash did Miss Drummond borrow?

CORRESPONDENCE

We still have none, so we remind readers that letters are welcome. If you have something to get off your chest, here is a place where you can do it.

SCOTTISH DANCE GROUPS.

The Prince Charles Scottish Dance Club - Lord Tennyson School, 1900 block of West 11th, every Tuesday, 7.30 - 10.00 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Kerr, 4258 Ontario. TR 4-2181.

The Vancouver Branch of the Scottish Country Dance Society of B.C. - Dunbar Community Centre, 4747 Dunbar, first and third Saturdays of each month, 7.45 - 11.00 p.m. Mr. H.P. Gregory 3369 Puget Drive. RE8-5333.

The West Point Grey Scottish Dance Club - The University dance hut, Fridays, 7.30 - 10.30 p.m. Mr. Andrew Shawyer, 995 Bute. No phone.

The Night School Classes. - Fairview School, Broadway, three classes: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Information from the School Board, or Mrs. Thomas Bingham, 1020 Harwood. MU4-4900.

The White Rock Branch of the Scottish Country Dance Society of B.C. - Ocean Park Hall, Wednesdays. Mr. and Mrs. Miller, 14739 Goggs Ave., White Rock.

The Gaelic Ceilidh, Seattle. - Yolanda Landon, 11640 3rd Ave. Sth., Seattle 88. (Scottish and Irish dancing.)

Bill and Barbara Howie's group. - 2035 London, New Westminster, Fridays (except the first in each month), 8.00 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Howie, 2036 London, New Westminster. LA6-7638.

Victoria Scottish Country Dance Society - Willows School, Victoria, first and third Wednesdays of each month. Nancy Ferguson, 4897 Cordova Bay Rd. GR9-3112

Kamloops. St. Andrews Church Hall - Saturday 8.00 p.m. Mrs. McSween, 253 Battle St.

COMING EVENTS

THE VANCOUVER SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB (AD. ED. DEPT.)'s CHRISTMAS PARTY, 28th DECEMBER 8 - 12, MASONIC HALL, 4426 WEST 10th.

THE VANCOUVER BRANCH'S HOGMANAY PARTY: DECEMBER 30.

NOTE: NOT THE 31ST. - DUNBAR COMMUNITY CENTRE 8 - 12. \$ 2.00.

IF YOU HAVE ANY LOCAL NEWS OR COMING EVENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED, PLEASE LET US KNOW.