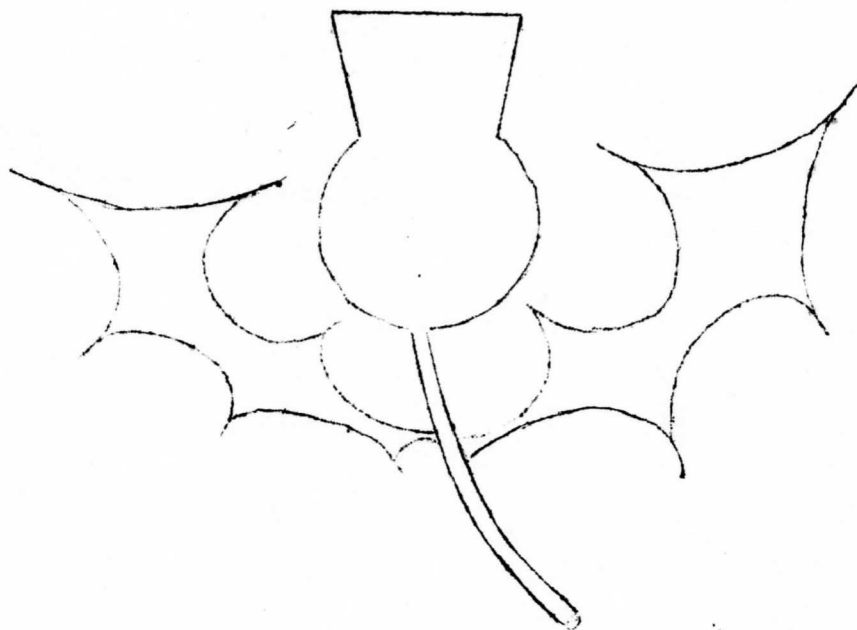


THE THISTLE



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

At the end of our fourth year we can consider ourselves established, though not settled. Our readership is increasing, though more slowly than we should like, and is gratifyingly widespread (from New Zealand to Scotland). Readers have been very understanding about our forced change of format : we still intend to return to proper printing when our readership justifies this.

We have seriously been considering changing to a quarterly, each issue being twice the size of the present ones. This will give readers more for their money (because twice four is more than six) and the increased interval would only trouble those who use our columns as a news sheet (which few do, tho all are welcome to). We welcome comments on this proposal.

We are grateful to Janet McDonald, Bob Campbell, Hugh Foss and John Rigby, who have sent us new dances. Although we like to base the core of our repertoire on a selection of traditional favourites, we also enjoy the novelty of modern compositions. Perhaps in a generation's time some of these will have become "traditional favourites".

OUR DANCES, No. 24: Somebody, by Hugh Foss.

Formation as for Circassian Circle.

- 1 - 4 Facing opposites, the two couples dance a half right and left and at the end turn to face partners.
- 5 - 8 They set to partners and turn with both hands into a diagonal joining the women's places with the men back to back in the middle.
- 9 - 12 They dance a half reel of four and end by taking both hands with their partners.
- 13 - 16 The men starting with their left foot, the two couples dance a half poussette to meet the next couple.

Tune : My heart is sair for somebody (strathspey).

This began as an ordinary longways dance. Hugh Thurston suggested that first couple should start on the "wrong" side so that (1) dancers met only the opposite sex in the half right and left, and (2) the men (and not first couple) should be back to back for the reel of four. Taking this idea one step further made it into a round-the-room dance.

The 8-bar tune (played twice through for the dance) suggested four steps travelling, two setting and two turning. The dance was devised with this in mind. Alternative tunes : The Braes aboon Bonaw, My Boy Tammie, Comin' thro' the Rye, or any other 8-bar strathspey that suggests four travelling, two setting and two turning.

COMING EVENTS.

Nova Scotia Scottish Country Dance Camp will be held in Amherst, Nova Scotia, August 18-21, sponsored by the Physical Education and Recreation Office of Department of Education for Nova Scotia. Instructions will be given at all levels and for all ages at this family dance camp. Staff will include Mrs. June Shore of Hamilton, Ontario and others to be announced. For further information write the sponsors at Box 578, Halifax.

LOCAL NEWS.

One of the most enjoyable of recent events was the ball at Gleneagles. Whether the organizers took a tip from Kamloops, or whether it was a coincidence we do not know, but this ball also mixed Scottish with modern dancing, most successfully. Not the least important point is that many people who are not familiar with Scottish country-dancing are able to see it, and moreover to see it as it is normally and naturally done, and not at some artificially contrived exhibition.

Two Vancouver teachers braved the snows of Edmonton to carry out a weekend "workshop" there; and were pleased to meet also friends from Calgary and Dawson Creek.

The informal Scottish/Polish alliance which seems to have sprung up continued with another demonstration of Scottish dances at the Polish Hall.

Mrs. Bingham's annual dance in aid of the "Save the children fund" was notable for the first public appearance of the official demonstration team of the Vancouver branch of the R.S.C.D.S. Among the dances they showed was McLeod of Dunvegan, and this raised an interesting question. Should they, being a R.S.C.D.S. team, necessarily demonstrate the version printed in the leaflet sponsored by the R.S.C.D.S., or should they demonstrate the original version as actually taught by Mrs. MacNab? They chose the latter.

Quite a number of our group went to the annual spring International Festival at Anacortes, Wn. We taught the folkdancers "The Glasgow Highlanders" and danced "Schiehallion" as an exhibition.

The Scottish and old-time fiddling championships were held a short time ago in the Scottish auditorium - a really good evening's entertainment for those who like traditional music. The reels and strathspeys set the audience's feet a-tapping, and there was intellectual interest too, in the adjudication and in the adjudicator's demonstration of how a strathspey should be played. We were sorry not to see any country-dancers in the audience: their apathy towards events of this kind tends to conform the charge which is sometimes made that Scottish country dancers are, on the whole, not very musical.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[From a letter from Miss Jean McLachlan, Cheadle].

I was re-reading your notes on dancing thirty years ago [Thistle No. 15], particularly with regard to "Waltz Country Dance". I think the solution is obvious if on bars 3 and 4 (also 7 and 8; 11 and 12; and 15 and 16) the dancers change places by giving right hands. This ensures that the women turn and the men go straight forward. This is the way in which I was taught by my mother when I was a little girl. The S.C.D.S. bears this out, though they omit the giving of hands, which, however, I always teach.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

Q. Your answer to a question about "Glasgow Highlanders" prompts another : Miss Milligan, in "Won't you join the dance?", at the end of the first reel of four, has no. 2 lady go to the head of the ladies' side and no. 2 man to the head of the men's side.

As taught by local instructors, instead of the above, no. 2 lady crosses over to the head of the men's side, while her partner goes to the head of the ladies' side. I wonder if I have misinterpreted Miss Milligan, or whether the instructions have changed.

A. You have interpreted Miss Milligan correctly. And, as far as we know, the instructions have not changed - we believe that the R.S.C.D.S. has always taught the progression in the way described by Miss Milligan.

If, however, you take the long view, that is to say, refer to nineteenth-century descriptions (for the Glasgow Highlanders is in fact a nineteenth-century dance) you will find that there was then so such thing as a "men's side" or a "women's side" - the dancers lined up initially in "couple facing couple" formation, that is to say, in the formation that we are in after the second chord. The usual instructions were "line up as for the foursome reel" and this would be very familiar and natural to dancers of those days. The dance would then start off quite normally - there would be no need for an extra chord. The old books did not say where the second man and woman stand while waiting at the top, and the way your local instructors teach would be the logical one. Possibly, therefore, your local instructors, or their teachers, have retained memories of the pre-R.S.C.D.S. way of doing this dance. Or possibly they merely felt that the logic of a cyclic progression round the sides and ends of the set was stronger than the logic of "each sex on its own side".

Q. When the first couple (starting from top place) dance down the middle and up, and finish in the middle of the set (in second place, or facing corners or somewhere like that) at what point of time should the second couple move up?

A. There is no "right or wrong" about this, only "good or bad". Traditional dancers did not lay down any law about when the move up took place and old books of instructions do not mention this point. It is, of course,

absolutely essential that the second couple do move up, and our practice of selecting a particular bar for them to move on is one way of ensuring that they do.

Assuming, then, that we want to select a particular time for them to move up, and that we use the usual step for moving up, which takes two bars, we have four possibilities: (a) bars 1 and 2, (b) bars 3 and 4, (c) bars 5 and 6, (d) bars 7 and 8. Let us consider points for and against each. Against (a) is the fact that it is very early, and the second couple might get in the first couple's way. In favour of (a) and (b) is the fact that the first couple see the other four dancers standing neatly in the four corners of the set as they turn to come up, and so they can judge their final positioning very nicely: conversely this is a point against (c) and (d) - a very strong point against (d), in fact. In favour of (b) and (d) is the fact that bars 3 and 7 are "weak" bars in the musical phrasing, and it is more suitable for an auxiliary movement like this to start on weak bars than on strong ones like 1 or 5.

If we look through this we see that there is nothing against (b) and two points in its favour. Second best is (c). These results agree with actual practice. Most good teachers we know teach (b), a few (c), none (a) or (d).

Our advice, then, is move up on 3 and 4.

THE NEW RIGGED SHIP (Villanelle)

We'll bide our time and take the tide.
I touch your hand: our faces glow.
We'll travel far, a star for guide.

Long days must we our secret hide,
But close I'll watch wheree'er you go.
We'll bide our time and take the tide.

And now I lead you as my bride,
Together bound, the world to show
We'll travel far, a star for guide.

When numbing Fates our way divide
Fond memories relieve our woe.
We'll bide our time and take the tide.

Are we now strangers, slaves or pride?
Search not the mud. Look forward. So
We'll travel far, a star for guide.

Our ship new rigged, we bravely glide,
Much we have lost, but more we know.
We'll bide our time and take the tide.
We'll travel far, a star for guide.

NORTHERN JUNKET.

The square-dance magazine that is different. \$2.50 for 12 issues, from Ralph Page, 117 Washington St., Keene, N.H.

Each issue brings you interesting articles on all phases of dancing: squares, contras, folk-dance, folk-song, folklore. Traditional recipes, too, for hungry dancers.