

The Thistle and Tartan Newsletter

September/October 2017

President's Message

The new season is well underway. To our returning members, welcome back and thank you for joining again! I am expecting a great year! We are still missing a few people. Just come visit us, if your schedule doesn't allow you to dance on a weekly basis. You are always welcome.

I strongly believe in the power of physical activity. Scottish Country Dancing is one of the best forms of exercise. It promotes bone strength and heart health. This remains true as long as safety precautions are adhered to.

I can't stress enough the importance of warming up before dancing begins. Warming up properly guards against serious injuries and increases stamina.

Warming up in colder weather will take longer and is even more vital. Lessons start at 7:00 p.m., so plan to come a little early to walk around. This will help the teachers Bev Will (September-December), and Jean Gibson (January-April) tremendously.

One of my goals as President is to keep this club active and dynamic. I strive to keep members in the know about our traditions and annual events, but at the same time, keep it interesting for long-time members.

How much you get involved is up to you. Personally, I truly believe in the old adage, "The more you are involved, the more you get out of it". I see myself actively involved for many years to come. I am grateful and feel blessed to have found such a wonderful group of people.

On a personal note, time does indeed fly when you are having fun. I am having the time of my life at the moment. Things are going to get even busier for me as I continue to grow my photography business. I am not sure when the next newsletter will come out. Please bear with me.

Included in this newsletter is information on our club traditions, and the corresponding Scottish traditions. If you have anything (poem, article, information), you would like to see in future newsletters, please e-mail me. Happy Thanksgiving! *Marian Holmes*

DANCE SAFELY

1. Come before class starts to walk around and then stretch. You can walk and talk at the same time.
2. If your shoe lace becomes untied, excuse yourself immediately and fix the problem. Your partner might have to dance with a ghost, or someone can quickly replace you. That way everyone stays safe.
3. Listen to the teachers and do the footwork the best you can. If you can't do something, walk if you have to.
4. Listen to your body. If you start aching, stop dancing, just observe, or volunteer to run the music.

2017-2018 Executive

Past President: Bill Pollock

President: Marian Holmes

Vice President: Tara Zrymiak

Treasurer: Robert Clark

Secretary: Diane Cross

Librarian: Bob McNaughton

Demo Team Convenor: Diane Davis

Teacher's Representative: Jean Gibson

Teachers: Jean Gibson and Bev Will



The SSCD logo has been digitised for embroidering. The result is illustrated in the attached photo.

With the digitising done, any of us can take whatever shirt, jacket, hat etc. we wish to Jeff's Crestwear (A1 - 116 103rd St. E., Sutherland) to have the logo embroidered on to it for \$15.00 plus tax.

For more information, contact Bob McNaughton.

Social Nights: Held the last Wednesday of the month, except September. Our first social is the Open House. If you wish, you may bring finger food, especially related to the theme. Most of our socials feature live music featuring The Peat Fire Flame. Jokes, entertainment and of course, dancing, rule the night!

Special Social Nights and Events for 2017

All events take place at St. Mark's Church Hall unless otherwise noted! 1406 8th Ave N. Start time is 7:00 p.m. until around 9:30 p.m.

- **October 25** – Halloween Social – bring finger foods (optional), costumes (optional and encouraged)
- **November 29** – St. Andrews Day Celebration – Potluck.
- **December 13** – Annual Christmas Ceilidh. Finger food, entertainment, and merriment all around. Celebrate the holiday season with us! All are welcome! Last formal dancing for 2017.
- **December 29** – Old Year Dance. Celebrate a great year behind us and get ready to welcome 2018!
- **December 31** – Hogmanay. Jean Gibson hosts this Annual event. A come and go at her place to welcome the New Year.



Classes resume January 10, 2018.

Special Social Nights and Events for 2018 include: Burns Night (All Saints Anglican Church), Valentine Day Social, St. Patrick's Day Social, Spring Ceilidh, and our AGM and Potluck, More information to come!

A Wee Bit about Saskatoon Scottish Country Dancers Traditions

We Scottish Canadians believe in celebrating all that we can! If you are new, or fairly new, here is a short list of what our social events look like. Burns Night will be in our next newsletter as it deserves a focus all its own. The dates are when we celebrate at the club level. Even if you can't dance on a regular basis, write these down, and join us for a fun evening. \$5.00 Drop-In Fee.

- **Halloween** - We celebrate Halloween in North America and have been since before we knew how to walk. Many of us come to express our inner child by wearing costumes. It is always fun to see what people come up with. Finger foods and live music keeps us happy and entertained.
- **St. Andrew's Day** - This is Scotland's most important national holiday. Our club holds a potluck. Everyone has a great feast.
- **Christmas Ceilidh** - A ceilidh is a celebration or party. It reminds me of kitchen parties on Cape Breton Island or PEI. Music, entertainment by the attendees, nibbles to munch on and dancing are on the agenda.
- **Old Year Dance** - Three years ago December 31st fell on a Friday. We already have the hall for Friday nights. That year we decided to hold an evening of dancing with recorded music. It is a treat for those staying close to home over the holidays.
- **Hogmanay** - Jean Gibson hosts an annual come and go as we await the New Year to arrive.

Scottish Traditions

Samhain - (pronounced SAH-WIN)

This Ancient Celtic festival is the forerunner to what we call Halloween in North America. In the Celtic culture, it marked the end of the Harvest and the beginning of the Darker Half of the Year (namely winter). It was celebrated beginning at sunset on October 31st and ending at sunrise on November 1st. It was the time to stock herds and food supplies for the harsh cold months ahead.

The veil between the living and the inhabitants of the Otherworld was considered at its thinnest. Therefore, it was believed the souls of the deceased walked amongst the humans. It was also believed that communication between the two were possible at this time of the year. Therefore, a lot of divination and games were played during this festival.

Mumming was the practice of going door to door in guise or costume, often reciting verses in exchange for food. Some would leave sweets at the doorstep. Its purpose was to hide from the souls of the deceased, and appease them by food. Children were locked in their homes to protect them of evil spirits.

Bonfires, built on the hilltops of villages were a significant part of the ritual. Fire was seen as cleansing, purifying and burning negative, stale energy. Some villagers would extinguish their hearth fires and re-light them with the flames from the bonfires. People would jump through the smoke to cleanse their souls. Sometimes, a villager would walk around each house in the village to protect the occupants from evil spirits for the year. Bonfires may have also been a source of warmth in late October. Historically, it was the ideal setting for storytelling. Ancient Celts associated fire with strength, passion, inspiration and spiritual illumination.

Here are some other interesting facts about Samhain:

- In the 9th century, Western Christianity established All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2), gradually combining these with the Samhain to create what we know today as Halloween. There is still an All Saints' Day in many religions and cultures.
- The Celts often held a Dumb Supper to honour their deceased loved ones the night before Samhain. Supper was served and eaten in complete silence. There would be an extra seat and serving at the head of table for all the ancestors to join in. They were given physical food and drink. No one dared to look at the head of the table at supper for fear something terrible would happen to them in the course of the year. After the meal, the extra plate, and untouched food and drink, would then be carried to a nearby woods.
- To celebrate Samhain today here are some suggestions: go for a nature walk, listen and reflect, write in your diary. Create an ancestors altar with photos, heirlooms and reminders, along with lit votive candles. Now is a good time to read tarot cards or other spirit decks.
- Common Spirit Guides associated with Samhain: The Morrigan, Hecate, Pan, Persephone, The Spider and the Raven.

St. Andrew's Day Facts

- St. Andrew is the patron saint for Cyprus, Scotland, Ukraine, Greece, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria and Barbados. He was first recognized as Scotland's patron saint in 1320.
- St. Andrew was a Galilean fisherman who, along with his brother Simon Peter became a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- St. Andrew never set foot in Scotland. He was crucified in Greece and much of his body was buried in Amalfi, Italy. Some of his bones were taken to Scotland after crashing onto the shore of the East Coast where St. Andrews is today.
- He is the patron saint of fishmongers, gout, singers, sore throats, spinsters, maidens, and old maids.

Websites: Wikipedia, circlesanctuary.org, gaia.com, lonerwolf.com, Scotland.org, Archaeology magazine (Interview with Jenny Butler, October 27, 2006)