# RSCDS WELLINGTON REGION NEWSLETTER



# Volume 24 No. 4 December 2021

#### **President's Column**



From Ann Oliver, President

The festive season is upon us and once again, we have clubs enthusiastically extending the dancing season to make up for the earlier enforced closures due to Covid restrictions. I note the final club event for the year is on 12 December – Capital City Club offering an afternoon of dance

suitable for all. This, I believe, sets the record for the latest event in the year (bar Hogmanay of course).

Unfortunately, Covid restrictions resulted in the cancellation of this year's New Dancers' Celebration, an event which is always keenly anticipated. Many thanks to Carterton Club for being prepared to run this event and for all the organisation that they put into it in advance of the decision to cancel. Thanks also to the Saltire Band who, I know, would have put in many hours of practice prior to the cancellation.

The introduction of the Covid Protection Framework ('traffic lights') will hopefully give greater certainty for events next year, as happily, where participants are fully vaccinated, we will be able to dance at any colour light. **To protect all dancers, the Region Committee has decided on the policy of requiring Vaccine Passes (fully vaccinated status) for all Region classes and events.** I encourage you all to get the jab and a vaccine pass so we can continue to enjoy your company on the dance floor.

The Region AGM in November saw a few changes to the Committee. We welcomed Michele Miller as secretary, Ann Aspey standing down from this position having completed a three-year term. Thank you both: Ann, for all your help and support over your term; and Michele, for being willing to move from Branch Secretary to Region (hopefully a less time-consuming role). We also welcome Aileen Logie to the committee and farewell Duncan McDonald. Duncan added enormous energy to the committee and we very grateful for his considerable efforts in the organisation of the 60th Anniversary Dinner and Dance this year. Full details of the committee members are on the Contact us page of the website. Thank you to all the committee members who have given their time to supporting the Region.

I am happy to report that there will be a Hogmanay event held in Wellington thanks to Elaine Laidlaw volunteering to organise this. You can see the details further on in this newsletter and on the Region website. I encourage everyone to come along and enjoy the evening. The programme incorporates many dances that were to be danced at the New Dancers' Celebration and a pre-Hogmanay class will be held on Monday 27 December, to go through less familiar dances on the programme. Music will be provided by Aileen Logie and her band.

Throughout this year we have celebrated the 60th year of dancing in the region and I hope you have

been able to take part in the reminiscing and celebrations. Two initiatives for the 60th will continue though into next year. These are:

- the Archival Project with further articles and information continuing to be posted to the Region website; and
- the launch and sale of *The Wellington 60th* Anniversary Collection – a book of dances devised by Wellington devisers. A session to try out some of these dances is planned for early in the new year.

And finally, looking forward to January – Summer Dancing will again be held at the Old Government Buildings on the last two Tuesdays of January and the first two Tuesdays of February. We would love to see you all there. At this time Victoria University has not confirmed policies for use of the inside venue (required if the weather is wet), but keep an eye out for details on the <u>Socials & Events</u> page.

I know that for many, it feels like it has been a long year. I hope that you are all able to relax and enjoy the festive season with friends and family and that you stay safe and well.

### Some Ne'erdays for you

#### From the Spurtle-wielder

When the *Harbour City Happenings* publication was created, the Region President wrote *The Spurtle* column. When there had to be a change in President, another person was invited to 'wield' *The Spurtle* – a Scottish utensil used to keel (stir) the pot, basically a stick. Fancy ones often have the handle end carved as a thistle. The ingredients in the HCH pot are selected by the wielder. This edition's pot has a variety of ingredients.

Christmas is a Christian celebration. Ongoing efforts are made to depict it in a New Zealand setting but scenes with snow and steaming Christmas puddings are hard to dislodge and the tale of *A Christmas Carol* resonates – some of its poignancy might be lost if set in a warmer climate. When the author, Charles Dickens, visited the Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh, he noticed the grave of Ebenezer Scroggie (born Kirkcaldy 1792, died Edinburgh 1836), *a meal man*, which he misread as a '*meaN' man*, which fired his imagination. Very different from Dickens's *Scrooge*, Mr Scroggie was a jovial and generous man who was engaged as a caterer during the famous 1822 visit to the city by King George IV, largely orchestrated by Sir Walter Scott. He was a cousin of economist Adam Smith of *The Wealth of Nations* fame. Apparently, *Ebenezer* was a popular boy's name but fell out of favour with the publication of the story!

From very early times, most traditional celebratory events were in response to the changing seasons. In the northern hemisphere, dark winter lasts a long time and so it is little wonder that ways were devised to make it more bearable - the warmth and light of fire festivals seemed very appropriate. The Shetland Up Helly Aa is an example of such ancient Nordic rites. The repetitiveness of the seasonal changes lends itself to the annual recognition of a new cycle; the timing of this 'new year' varies from country to country, depending on the choice of the starting point. With the Julian calendar being adopted in many countries, the widespread use of January 1st has brought a useful uniformity as the world's people are brought into closer and closer contact. And of course, as people migrated, they took their traditions with them, adapting them to fit their new locations.

Numerous suggestions as to the origin of the word 'Hogmanay' are inconclusive. As expected, being an ending, it is a time for 'remembering', especially the loved ones lost during the year; and as a beginning, a time for peering into the future and giving gifts in the hope for prosperity - the dark-haired First Foot fending off the fear of invasion by fair-headed Vikings. In Scotland 'the daft days' – the twelve days from Christmas to Twelfth Night – were a time for gaiety and merriment, with church bells ringing joyfully, and bustling fairs, though nowadays the holiday period is shorter. On Handsel Monday employers would treat their workers by expecting lighter work - sometimes even giving them time off by switching places with them - and providing them with a 'handsel' (gift in the hand), latterly more commonly called their "Ne'erday" (New Year's Day c.f. Boxing Day).

In Edinburgh's High Street the Tron Church was the city's parish church: beside it was the tron - a weighing beam to check weights for the nearby market; it was a longtime gathering place to celebrate the bringing in of a New Year with a clock in the spire and its bells loudly ringing a welcome. Many towns had a Tron Church in their centres.

Just as the seasons anciently evoked reactions, so did natural phenomena. The colour and movement of winter's Northern Lights appeared like the gods at work or play – in Shetland they are called *The Nimble Men*, another popular name is *The Merry*  *Dancers* (the song about "old Aberdeen"). So our much-loved activity has heavenly connections!

The evergreen holly was sacred to the druids, seen as a symbol of immortality. Before the Christmas tree was introduced, it was widely used to decorate houses – sometimes planted outside – a protection against evil spirits and witches! So we have the dance *The Hollin Buss*. Whichever season is being celebrated, wherever Scots gather, an excuse can always be found to dance – in midwinter, how better to keep warm; in summer, a delight in the open air! Doesn't matter if you don't have your dancing shoes! Just enjoy it!

# The Daft Days

by Robert Fergusson (extract)

Fiddlers! your pins\* in temper fix, [\*to tune strings]
And rozet weel your fiddlesticks,
But banish vile Italian\* tricks [\* Italian music]
Frae out your quorum;
Nor fortes wi' pianos\* mix – [\* pianofortes]
Gie's\* Tullochgorum. [\* give us]

For nought can cheer the heart sae weel, As can a canty Highland reel; It even vivifies the heel To skip and dance: Lifeless is he wha canna feel Its influence.

Let mirth abound: let social cheer Invest the dawnin' o' the year; Let blithesome innocence appear, To crown our joy; Nor envy, wi sarcastic sneer, Our bliss destroy.

Book: The Daft Days by Neil Munro (great story)

# Cooking, eating ... and dancing in Pitlochry

From Loralee Hyde

As part of the 2021 Wellington Region Archive Project <u>Celebrating 60 years of dancing</u>, I've perused old issues of *Harbour City Happenings* for stories about our people, events and history. In the May 2000 issue, I came upon an article I wrote about my time living in Scotland and the range of good food I helped to cook (and eat!).

Over 1979-1980, I worked as a 'mother's help' for a family in a three-storeyed stone house dating from 1831 called Urrard, on a 2,500 acre estate of farmland and moor in Killiecrankie, a beautiful area near Pitlochry in the Central Highlands of Scotland. This was the site of the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 – the opening battle of the first Jacobite Rising in Scotland against the Government.



Urrard on 28 December 1979. It snowed on Boxing Day so we didn't quite have a white Christmas.

My job in the morning at Urrard revolved around cooking. Perhaps it's the mind-sapping cold from the winds sweeping in from Siberia or just the ageold recipes that inspire the concentration on good food in that part of the world. A liking that has been transported to New Zealand, as so many of us have Celtic blood in our heritage (my connection is to Clan MacMillan).

During the afternoon, I worked in the family's Malt Shop in Pitlochry, 6 km south of Killiecrankie. The shop had a range of over 120 whiskies from distilleries all over Scotland. The small shop was extremely busy over the summer, with tourists crowding in to buy their choice of whisky.

I wrote long letters about my life in Killiecrankie to my parents and my sister (Karen is also a Scottish Country Dancer and she worked in Pitlochry at the Green Park Hotel in 1977). My mother kept all the letters and they form a wonderful archive of memories, including of my dancing experiences.

In October 1979, I started dancing with a group in Pitlochry. Often I got a lift there with Ruth, a dancer who lived in a house at the bottom of the steep drive up to Urrard with her husband Archie, who was the tenant farmer on the Urrard estate. From November, I went to regular Saturday night dances with live music in Scotlands hotel. As usual with dancing, everyone was very friendly!

With living in such a scenic area, I took lots of photos at Urrard and around Pitlochry, but no photos of dancing as in those days I didn't have a flash on my camera. However, in 1983, Ruth and Archie visited New Zealand and I had a wonderful catch-up with them. With Scottish Country Dancing, we make friends and connections around the world!



With Archie and Ruth from Killiecrankie at the Te Awamutu Rose Gardens, Easter 1983

Find out more about my time at Urrard in a reproduction of my article *Simple but full of flavour* from *Harbour City Happenings, Vol 3, No. 2, May 2000* (including a recipe for oatcakes), and see some memories of dancing in Pitlochry gleaned from my letters home at <u>https://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/</u> <u>2021/12/05/loralee-hyde-pitlochry/</u>

# Tuesday afternoon dancing during 2021

From Pat Reesby

It has been another good year for Tuesday afternoon dancing.

The dancing sessions (12:45 to 2:45 pm) take place in St John's Church hall, Johnsonville, on every Tuesday except the first of a month. The very popular general group, taken by Catherine McCutcheon, meets on the third Tuesday and also the fifth when there is one. The general group is aimed at 'independent' dancers who already know the common steps and formations and who'd like to dance with others at a similar level. Besides dances such as *The Orpington Caledonians, Bill Little's Strathspey* and *Scott Meikle*, dancers recently learned and enjoyed *The Wind on Loch Fyne* and *The First Rain of Spring*. People come to dance from as far afield as Waikanae and Upper Hutt, so there's the bonus of meeting people from other areas and clubs. Catherine often teaches dances that are coming up on clubs' annual dance programmes, so when Tuesday dancers attend dances around the Wellington region, they find they already know many people there. Of course, several club dances had to be cancelled this year, but we're crossing our fingers for 2022.

The advanced Tuesday afternoon group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. This group caters for people keen to try more challenging dances and formations that aren't always possible on club nights. This year, tutors Damon Collin, Iain Boyd and Gaye Collin each took the group for several weeks, while Rod Downey took one session in September.

Besides introducing us to new and unusual dances, our tutors haven't let us forget technique, for at any age, we can be in the right place at the right time and dance to the best of our ability. To quote Gaye, "Keep striving, and make sure you think about the little things that make a dance flow and look good."

This year, up until the end of November, we've had 29 Tuesday afternoon sessions: 12 general and 17 advanced, with a final advanced session scheduled for 14 December. Three sessions had to be cancelled in August – one because the hall was needed unexpectedly for a funeral; and two because of a Covid lockdown.

We've had the bonus of live musicians (two each time) on four occasions this year. Aileen Logie, Hilary Ferral, Lynne Scott and Mary McDonald have given an extra zing to general sessions.

Thanks are due to the Johnsonville SCD Club for the loan of their Coomber for the use of our advanced group tutors this year. And thanks too to John Homes who has looked after the Coomber and brought it along each time.

After the final 2021 session on 14 December, the Tuesday advanced group will resume in the new year on 22 February with tutor Iain Boyd, and later sessions will be taken by Rod Downey, Melva Waite and likely one or two others.

Next year, Tuesday general sessions will continue with our tutor Catherine McCutcheon. Again, they're to be held on the third Tuesday of each month (starting on 15 March), and the fifth when there is one. Catherine says she very much enjoys her Tuesdays and is delighted that March will have five of them! The door charge for each session is \$5, which covers hall hire, tutors, musicians when we have them, and incidentals such as hand sanitiser, slip stop, a storage bin and occasional gifts of appreciation. The Tuesday group is not a club and there's no joining fee (some people are regular attendees, others come along when they can) and although we need to keep some funds in hand, the intention is not to accumulate a large surplus.

We don't have a committee, but Maureen Sullivan, John Homes and I (Pat Reesby) all live in or near Johnsonville, so do most of the 'organising'. However, everyone is encouraged to have a say in how the group is run.

If you'd like to put your name on an email list for Tuesday afternoon dancing (either general, advanced or both), just let us know: <u>pmreesby@gmail.com</u>.



The final general group session for 2021 danced to the music of Aileen and Hilary

# **Upper Hutt 50th Anniversary Dance**

#### From Erika Arthur

The Upper Hutt Club celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a dance on 24 July this year. There was a great turnout – current dancers, previous club members, and some foundation members. Linda Glavin (RSCDS NZ Branch President), Sue Lindsay (RSCDS NZ Branch Communication, Publicity and Membership Co-ordinator) and the Wellington Region President, Ann Oliver, also attended.

A 6 pm start with refreshments and a mix-andmingle time enabled some good reminiscing and browsing of 50 years of photos and memorabilia.



Dancing followed, to the music of 'Strings Attached' – Lynne Scott (fiddle), Sharlene Penman (keyboard), and Richard Hardie (double bass). Mary McDonald and Ann Goodbehere joined the band to play the Anniversary dance 'The Golden Fantail'.



Lynne, Sharlene and Richard

The dance programme included

'Cadgers in the Canongate' – a dance that has been on every Upper Hutt annual dance programme for 50 years – and a new five-couple strathspey 'The Golden Fantail', devised by Gaye Collin for the anniversary. The fantail is an icon of Upper Hutt, seen on street signs and artwork throughout the city.

The fantail theme was continued through to the

decorations and cake. Michelle Cooper, a club member, made and decorated the cake. Barbara Gill, a life member and former tutor of the club, and Chris Kelly, the current tutor, cut the cake in time for supper.



# Seatoun SCD Club

#### From Robyn Ching

As has been the case for many groups, Covid has disrupted our dancing, but we have had some new innovative dances which our tutor Edith Campbell has created, when we have been able to dance at Level 2. The *Dealing with Delta* version was particularly successful.

The Seatoun Club is small but very enthusiastic and without members travelling overseas, our numbers have been more consistent – usually between six and twelve dancers.

We have several people to thank for the smooth running of the club. Our treasurer Celia Conner's

new system of payment in advance for our weekly dancing has been successful. Celia has been a great worker for our dancing group, doing tasks other than those with her "treasurer's hat".

The secretarial duo Ross and Sarah have kept us updated with Scottish dancing events, what is going on in the Wellington Region, and even further afield. We have appreciated Elaine Lethbridge's teaching and encouragement when Edith has been unavailable.

Our thanks go to Edith for her teaching and patience with us, as well as giving us historical background. Our dancing is a lot of fun and we do learn something at the same time.

And without our faithful dancers, our happy times together would not happen. We rounded off the year with a great night of dancing through a request programme of favourites. This was followed by supper and socialising.

Our dancing will start again on the first Friday in March 2022.

# Linden SCD Club

#### From Vicky Ryan

Once again, we were able to hold our Annual Dance this year, during a timely break in Wellington's COVID restrictions. It was another popular evening, with fabulous music from The Saltire Band, a great programme of dances, and delicious food provided by club members. Our thanks to Ann and Philippa for sharing the role of MC for what was a very successful night.

We had a keen group of beginners join us at the start of the year, most of whom have continued their Scottish Country dance journeys with us and made great progress. Several members attended the beginners', intermediate and advanced classes run by the Region, and these were all well received.

Unfortunately we were unable to go ahead with our theme night in August this year, but we have been assured by Philippa that all her careful planning will become a reality in our Murder Mystery theme night early next year. Watch this space, it will surely be a great night!

Despite the COVID disruptions, Linden Club returned to dancing at Level 2, and continued for the rest of the year, albeit with slightly lower numbers. We ended our dance year with supper and wonderful live music from Aileen Logie and Hilary Ferral. I, for one, have found the friendship, fun and (relative) consistency of dancing a real comfort through a challenging year.

Linden Club will start 2022 with **four beginners' classes, starting on Monday 7 February,** with club nights officially re-starting on Monday 7 March. Here's hoping for a smoother, less disrupted, healthy and enjoyable new year ahead!

# Music and celebration to end the year at Johnsonville

#### From Kristin Downey

Despite the challenges of this year, Johnsonville Club dancers have enjoyed lots of good music and good dancing since lockdown.

Linda Glavin and Linden dancers visit us at the bowling club. We were fortunate to have Johnsonville Bowling Club as a back-up venue for a few weeks, when Khandallah Town Hall was not an option. During that time we welcomed Branch president, Linda Glavin, and dancers from Linden Club, to a combined night of dancing. It was a pleasure to have them with us, making for a fun and lively night.



Branch president Linda Glavin (centre back in white top) dancing at Johnsonville Bowling Club. *Photo: Robert Vale* 

**Return to Khandallah.** Two weeks later it was back to Khandallah Town Hall, with a <u>Live Music Night</u> and more of our members returning to dancing. The timing was co-incidental, but it was wonderful to be surrounded by the joy of live music, on our first night back dancing 'at home'.

It's not just dancers who've had a lot of adjustments this year, musicians have suffered cancellations, and

postponements, with changes to dates and venues. What started out as a 20 September Live Music Night became a moveable feast, finally taking place on 18 October. Many thanks to musicians Aileen Logie, Hilary Ferral and Jason Morris for their endless flexibility.

Halloween celebrations. Hot on the heels of our return to Khandallah, came the club's <u>Samhain/</u><u>Halloween celebrations</u>, with Rod bringing us themed dances and spooky music. Members really entered into the spirit of the night, with some fantastic costumes, and we danced Rod's dance, <u>Maggie Boag's Jig</u>, to farewell Maggie, who has now returned to Scotland.



Johnsonville members entered into the spirit of Samhain. Photo: Loralee Hyde

Tartan and Final Night – celebrating Johnsonville

**members.** Then suddenly, it was the end of the year, and time for the club's <u>Tartan and Final Night</u>. Again, our plans became very fluid, morphing from a Saturday night dance at Ngaio Town Hall, into a Monday night at Khandallah Town Hall, with a shortened programme.

Tutor Rod Downey designed the <u>programme</u> to celebrate Johnsonville members, in recognition of their continuing support for the club, despite many disruptions. It featured six <u>dances written for members</u>, five by Rod, and one by former Island Bay Club tutor, lain Boyd. It was lovely to have members Allison Kay, Elizabeth Ngan, John Markham, Loralee Hyde, Moira Broughton and Prisilla Conroy all there on the night, enjoying dances written for them.

Again, we owe much to our musicians for the success of the night. *Airs and Graces* (Lynne Scott, Mary McDonald and Glenice Saunders) kindly made themselves available for whichever date was possible, and gave us a very good time on the night.

The club also really appreciated the many visitors from clubs across Wellington, who made it such a convivial night of dancing, and joined us in our first shared supper since lockdown. You made our end of year celebration that much more special, thank you.

See photos and videos from these events at <a href="https://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/">https://www.johnsonvillescd.org.nz/</a>

# Wellington Archival Project Celebrating 60 – Our Musicians

#### From Kristin Downey

As part of the Wellington Region's 60<sup>th</sup> Celebrations, a small team has been gathering information relating to the Region's history.

This ongoing project aims to build a historical resource, and in so doing, honour all the people who've been a part of the Region's history.

Those who attended the **Wellington Region's 60<sup>th</sup> Ball** this year, had the opportunity to enjoy viewing some of the historical photos and videos collected and digitised by the project team and other volunteers.

Recently there's been an exciting development – we've received material from the families of two SCD musicians who played in the 1980s, fiddler **John Foden** and accordionist **Tom Barnes**.

**Margaret Foden** has shared some of her personal photos, and **Sono Barnes** has donated cassette tapes of Tom and John playing for various SCD events. These are valuable additions to the Region's archival collection – many thanks to both for giving us this window into SCD musicians.



Wellington SCD musicians (from left), Roger, Tom Barnes, John Foden, Merren Simmonds, playing in Cambridge,

If you have material you could share with, or donate to, the Region's Archives Project, or recollections of those times, please email Region committee member Philippa Pointon at <u>philippapointon@gmail.com</u>



#### RSCDS New Zealand Branch AGM

Will be held via Zoom at 1:30 pm, on 1 January 2022

Details on the Branch website: <u>https://dancescottish.org.nz/agm-reports/</u>

If you need help with the technology, then chat to other dancers your area – you may be able to get together to zoom.

If you are struggling to find anyone to help, email wellington@dancescottish.org.nz

# Victoria University of Wellington Scottish Interest Group

Meets on the 28th day of the month – hopefully starting March 2022 – at VUW Law School, Old Government Buildings (arrangements to be finalised), Lambton Quay (Bunny St entrance). Parking on grounds.

Visitors welcome; no charge, no university connection needed. For a brochure, phone 388-8069/567-0557, or visit the website <u>www.wellyscots.wordpress.com</u>



#### Summer Dancing 2022

Old Government Building, 55 Lambton Quay, Wellington

**Covid Passports Required** 

Tuesdays: 7.30pm – 9pm 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Feb

On the front lawn (Wet weather venue to be confirmed in Jan - Check www.wellingtonsed.org.nz for updates)

**Gold Coin Donation** 

PLEASE NOTE

Dancers will need to show their Vaccine Pass at all Region events

#### **Beginners' Classes**

#### Johnsonville SCD Club

Three weeks, starting Monday, 14 February, 7.30pm

- 3 Mondays in February (14, 21, 28)
- Khandallah Town Hall, 11 Ganges Rd, Khandallah
- \$5 per session
- Vaccine pass required for entry
- Queries to Rod/Kristin 478-4948 or johnsonvillescdc@gmail.com



#### **Pre-Hogmanay Class**

To go over the less well-known dances

Monday 27 December, 7:30 -9:00 pm

Epuni Community Hall, Cnr Mitchell Street and Oxford Terrace, Lower Hutt

Cost : Gold coin Vaccine Pass required

