

## Hogmanay 2013-2014

from *Désirée Patterson*

The Wellington Region nearly didn't have a Hogmanay Dance, as no one had offered to be the organiser. However, at quite a late stage, Pat Reesby decided it would be a real shame if we didn't have the yearly celebration, so she took up the challenge, and did a wonderful job. We had a grand evening.

The dance was held at the Crofton Downs Primary School hall, an excellent venue. The evening was well attended, with seven sets, and several non-dancers. Peter Elmes, John Smith, and Aileen Logie provided the music, and Betty Redfearn, as MC, had prepared a lovely programme of popular dances.

One of the dances was a repeat of last year's 'surprise' inclusion, *Oompah, Oompah, Shove It Up Your Joompah*. Devised by John Drewry, the music for it was selected by Peter Elmes—not your regular jig or reel, but a lively quickstep. It was a lot of fun to dance. Pat took a video—see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nl7EKW5y6M>

About half-way through the evening, we were treated to a delightful musical item by *Chintz*, a trio consisting of Cici Kong, playing an ancient Chinese lute known as a *pipa*, Moggie Grayson on guitar, and Emily Clemett on violin. Cici is a Chinese student who has been boarding with Moggie during the past year, and whom Moggie introduced to SCD—naturally!

Just before midnight, songsheets were handed out, and we sang a few Scottish favourites. Then it was time for the midnight ceremony. All stood up to clasp hands with their neighbours, to sing *Auld Lang Syne* while Old Father Time and the Sweeper, acted by John and Aline Homes, circled the hall.

This year, no baby was available for the traditional emergence through the 'New Year' hoop, so Moggie's three-year-old grandson Tama Marchant was to take on the role. But the poor little boy, all dressed up in a kilt for the occasion, had been kept awake way past his bedtime, and when his big moment came, he wouldn't have a bar of it! It must have been pretty frightening for him, when the lights went out, strong torches shone, and he was expected to push through a hoop covered in paper. Result: one very tired little boy throwing a paddy!

The next part of the ceremony was the arrival of First Foot. This is supposed to be a tall, dark man, carrying gifts of coal, symbolising warmth, salt or money for wealth, shortbread for sustenance, and whisky for good cheer.

The ritual went as follows: MC: "Who is that knocking at the door?"

Doorman (Doug Sinclair): "It is a stranger". MC: "Is he tall?" "Yes he is". "Is he handsome?" "Yes he is."

Then: "Does he have the necessary equipment?"

At this, everybody burst out laughing. What the MC meant, of course, was "does he have his tray of gifts", but obviously people had something else in mind entirely!

When the laughter had died down, First Foot (John Gregory) was piped into the hall by Ross Edwards, and circled the room before presenting his gifts to the MC and RSCDS representative Kath Ledingham (Wellington Region Treasurer).



Piping in the First Foot.

The last part of the ceremony was for all to join in a toast, as trolleys of whisky (and sherry and apple juice) and shortbread were wheeled out.

Finally, after the toast to the RSCDS, and the all-round hugs and Happy New Year wishes, it was time for the last dance of the evening, the *Eightsome Reel*.

What a grand evening it had been. Congratulations are due to Pat Reesby and her helpers, especially Jean Denne and Elizabeth Ngan, for organising a wonderful Hogmanay.

Everyone went home feeling thoroughly satisfied with a great start to 2014.



A musical interlude from *Chintz*—Cici Kong, Moggie Grayson and Emily Clemett.