

SUMMARY RECORD
of the
MEETING OF TAC AREA REPRESENTATIVES
August 8th, 2008

Chairman, Bob Anglin, welcomed the 25 area representatives present. The reps introduced themselves and mentioned which area they represented. Copies of the compiled reports received from area reps were distributed. As the meeting was held at 6:00 p.m., a buffet meal was provided. The topics for discussion on the agenda were based on submissions from various representatives. There was a request to add to the agenda some discussion of how to combine classes that are declining in numbers. This topic was added.

1. Responses to the recent 50% increase in RSCDS membership fees

Some groups (e.g. Ottawa) have raised fees accordingly. Some have absorbed the increase for one year (Hamilton). Several North American groups are considering seceding from the RSCDS. Other areas have a multi-tier membership – some dancers are RSCDS members and some are not. One area has 3 levels of fees – one for regular membership including RSCDS fees; a lesser fee for those unable to pay (honour system used) and a third level for those willing to pay more than the regular fee to cover the cost of the second group. One group found this issue so divisive that they split. It was noted that there is a constitutional requirement that members of a Branch be RSCDS members. One group calculated the cost per class despite the increase at \$3.72, which is considered very reasonable. The cost per class varies considerably from area to area. It was generally agreed that there is concern in North America that this increase may cause Branches to break away and may contribute to declining membership. The consensus was that individual groups as well as TAC should send feedback of this concern to RSCDS headquarters. The comment was made that members want more service from HQ which has a very small staff, but they don't want to pay the true cost of this.

2. “Scottishness” in dancing in regard to:

a) dress

Several noted that they encouraged the wearing of skirts in class by their own example and that of other dancers. Many men wear pants to class but kilts to socials. It was noted that more casual dress is a trend in society generally and not limited to SCD. Some stated that if dress codes were too rigidly enforced, they would lose members. One group has kilts to lend and offers “skirt swaps”. When some dancers are no longer able to dance, their kilts are lent to those not yet able to acquire them. Skirts that are not being used/don't fit anymore are offered to those whose lifestyle does not involve need for skirts. Often this serves as a bridge until dancers acquire their own. Some groups no longer have balls, but use the term “dance” instead, because the formal dress requirements for a ball discourage attendance.

b) niceties

Most teachers agreed that they continue to emphasize the niceties of SCD in taking of hands, dance floor etiquette etc.

c) traditional dances

Many agreed that the older, traditional dances are disappearing in many places. They may be used in classes, where they offer opportunity for good teaching points, but they are not frequently on programs. It was noted that often there are no traditional dances on a social program and sometimes no RSCDS dances. The comment was made that many of the older dances should be part of each person's repertoire of dances. The RSCDS has encouraged this through featured dances and the list of core dances.

d) RSCDS language and terminology

One rep commented that in her experience, mostly the terminology is correct although there is use of a few non-standard terms,. It was noted that the candidates at TAC Summer School are using the correct terminology. These newer teachers will continue the use of proper RSCDS terms. The comment was made that link words such as “grab your partner” were becoming too

common although another rep warned about becoming too rigid. Another commented that by not using correct terminology, the opportunity was missed to encourage a more polite atmosphere for dancing.

e) interest in technique

Discussion was brief on this topic. There was agreement that most dancers are not enthusiastic about technique which they equate wrongly with footwork. The term “dancing skills” could be more welcome.

f) contra-dancing with Scottish music and names

Most reps agreed that an overall casual approach, so that SCD almost turns into contra-dancing with Scottish music and names, was not in danger of happening in their area yet.

3.

a) Making full use of qualified teachers where there are more than required

An excess of teachers in relation to classes seemed to be a common situation. Many share classes in various ways. Some team teach in an evening; others rotate teachers throughout the year. In one area, there is a selection committee that assigns teachers to classes. The social classes will have several teachers in the course of the year, while the technique class has one teacher for continuity. In another area, teachers rotate after two months and the importance of keeping records and staying in touch was stressed. One area has ten teachers for one class. Some team teach and all teach for a few weeks. The class is taught at a basic level in the fall and at intermediate by spring.

b) How newer teachers gain experience

One area rep reported that there are two new teachers in her area but no opening to teach. One area rep commented that the experienced teachers may have had to “fight” for that class originally and are loath to give it up. It was agreed that all experienced teachers need to encourage new ones by offering them opportunities to use their training and by sharing classes. The suggestion was made that in such instances, the effort should be made by all to build new classes. Home schoolers were cited as one community where a class might be started, while another suggestion was to approach the recreational council in the area and offer to teach a 10-week introductory class in SCD.

c) Combining classes

One rep reported that in her area, the advanced dancers dance first and the newer dancers are welcome to watch. Then the class is combined. This gives the experienced dancers a chance to dance more challenging dances with others of similar ability and not at the end of the evening when they are tired. The beginners can benefit from watching the more advanced formations. Since the more customary combination is to have the beginners dance first, there was considerable interest in this model.

The suggestion was made that TAC collect the different models of combined classes. Area reps could send descriptions in their reports. A further suggestion was that teachers use the Forum on the TAC website to have a broader spectrum discussion. Lara Friedman-Shedlov, editor of TACTalk, commented that an article on this topic would be of interest.

4. Encouragement of local musicians

The use of local musicians for classes ran the full range from “never”, through “once a year,” “occasionally” to “most classes”. In the latter, the musicians were not paid, but were there to gain experience. There was general agreement that local musicians should be encouraged and supported. More than one rep stated that their musician(s) could only play one jig, one reel and one strathspey when they began. The dancers were happy to dance to whatever was offered. Gradually the musical repertoire expanded. Suggestions that could help in supporting musicians were made as follows: books of music were purchased by the group (RSCDS books, George Meikle’s book of arrangements); CDs were bought so that new musicians could hear the sound they were trying to produce; workshops could offer classes for musicians. The suggestion was made that TAC might offer such a class at Summer School. Some workshops offer a single class

while others have a whole morning and afternoon strand for musicians. The Pearl Homburg workshop for musicians only has been a great success. Musicians such as Barbara McOwen were suggested to lead a music workshop. An Outreach grant could be sought for support of a new endeavour to encourage musicians. The comment was made that a dancer who is also a musician is a good candidate for support. Those who do use local musicians stressed that the musician must be enthused to play for SCD and would be the prime mover in maintaining use of live music. They also commented that such support is long term and builds every year.

5. Cost of floors suitable for dancing

This topic was discussed briefly. Costs ranged from free to \$20 an hour to \$75 or \$100 a night. All agreed that it is difficult to find good floors for dancing of a size that we need.

6. Ideas for attracting new members

Bob Anglin reviewed the usual ideas and asked for other suggestions. He mentioned the most successful method of attracting new members was personal contact, followed by advertising in various mediums and demonstrations of SCD. One group had a booth at a Celtic festival and offered introductory classes to the winner of a draw. All those who entered were winners! Some groups have offered the incentive of 2 for 1 – a dancer who brings in a new member pays half the fee and the new member pays half. Regarding SCD demonstrations, the comment was made that this was more effective if the dancers were in ordinary clothes doing simple dances that observers could visualize themselves doing. Malls were suggested as a venue for such demos. A young male in a kilt at a registration table had been effective in drawing interest. One group had organized a community ceilidh in cooperation with other celtic groups. A celtic dance sampler was entertainment. There was group participation in dances and suitable food. One group had used posters from headquarters with a Dance Scottish theme and offered entertainment and a mini-class. Another group entered a boat in the local Dragon Boat festival with a piper leading the participants to the boat and the men attired in kilts. The kilts were removed with a flourish, revealing tartan shorts, before the dancers entered the race. [note taker cannot resist commenting that this gives new meaning to increased exposure for SCD!]

7. Value of Area Reps

Many reps noted that teachers in their areas appreciated receiving the regular reports of the activities of TAC which the reps passed on to them. Bob Anglin was thanked for sending these updates keeping area reps and teachers informed. Feedback from the area reps is very valuable to TAC as well. The chairman pointed out that comments from area reps are taken to the Executive who consider them seriously. He announced that one such comment had recently led to an increase in the maximum Outreach grant from \$400 to \$600 because a rep had noted that costs for travel were increasing and bringing in teachers and/or musicians for workshops was more expensive than previously. Bob encouraged area reps to report activities, successes, problems in their regions.

Following the above discussion of topics on the agenda, there were a few comments that a form for reporting, particularly for the annual report for the area reps' meeting, would be useful. Several mentioned that they were not sure what would be of interest to others. There was agreement that the reps would be willing to receive the compiled reports in electronic form next time.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Reports from Area Reps, 2008

Peterborough Area

Peterborough Scottish Country Dance Society

Peterborough membership has been running at about 60+ and includes dancers from Port Hope and other areas closer to Peterborough. Six dancers moved up from Basic Class into Experienced this year and nightly attendance averaged about 40, down from the previous year due to an incredibly bad and unusually long winter.

The Basic Class received a wonderful influx of YOUNG people, some of whom were eventually lost to Toronto and Berlin, Germany. The remainder will continue to feed the Experienced Class, keeping the PSCDS healthy.

The group's 24th annual Stoney Lake Workshop the end of May was a sold-out event that drew dancers from a record 15 groups, ranging from Brockville in the East to London, Ontario, and Orillia in the North to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the South

John Reeves continues to teach an Introduction to SCD at Trent University. This season was the 18th for that group and 2 former Trent students attended the local Basic Class.

Port Perry Scottish Country Dancers

This primarily social group, like Peterborough, an RSCDS Affiliate, elected to cancel classes for January and February, partly due to holidays planned for that time by a number of members, and partly in anticipation of bad weather, which was indeed terrible. Our meeting place was abruptly withdrawn due to owner's problems with our particular time requirements. Luckily, PPSC Dancers were almost immediately able to find us an even better location, although at a slightly higher cost.

As of this date, members are meeting to assess the feasibility of keeping the group going. Our two successful teacher candidates from several years ago are now teaching in other areas and/or unable to start up a Basic Class to feed our Experienced group. Without that help, the easy availability of dance classes in Toronto for about half our membership as well as physical problems and increasing retirement plans for travel make our prospects less than optimum.

Near North

To the best of my knowledge, there are now two teachers sharing a class in Gravenhurst with a few of the Parry Sound group practicing with Nandor Furstner. Age and/or infirmity have taken a heavy toll of these delightful folks. Those still dancing in these remote rural or small town areas will probably attend the annual Orillia Ball, the "Banks O' Couchiching", organized by Linda and Jason Argent, June 7th, dancing to the music of Bobby Brown. Haliburton continues to hold two major social dances each season under the direction of Mike Turner, though there, also is a problem with the graying of SCD.

Wisconsin

TAC Area Rep report from Wisconsin (John Muir Branch) includes 3 groups in the Branch, 50 dancers, 3 classes, 4 teachers and in Madison, WI Candidate Classes are occurring with Keith Bark and Deirdre MacCuish Bark.

Vancouver Island Area

Currently on Vancouver Island there are 38 Scottish Country Dancing teachers although not all of these teachers are teaching classes. Classes occur in 8 different towns, some small groups meeting and some much larger. In total there are 15 classes offered, the majority of multiple classes occurring in Victoria. Teachers meet for a workshop once a year; otherwise we meet only in social situations at dances etc. Several groups are growing and thriving while others are declining. Overall the area is enthusiastic and despite our widespread geographical spread there is a good core of strong dancing groups which offer workshops, balls and regular dance opportunities for anyone willing to drive to enjoy the fun of Scottish Country Dancing.

New Mexico

Greetings to all of you from all of us here in sunny New Mexico!

We are proud to say that, in spite of living in a really “spread-out” and sparsely populated state, we are still holding our own with several varied dance groups!

There is a regular Adult Dance Class meeting in Los Alamos, headed up by Marilyn Thayer. There are usually between one and a half to two full sets present on any given Monday night.

The Albuquerque Class meets once a week with an average attendance of six to eight. Rick Wood teaches once a month and the other classes are lead by Kenneth and Margaret Armstrong. They have performed at the Burns Night, the Celtic Games and lead a class at the Folk Festival.

We have Youth and Teen Dance Classes which meet in White Rock, taught by myself (Eileen Green), with about 14 dancers in Youth Class and about 16 in the Teen Class.

Rob Sanders is about ready to start up his Taos Adult Class again after a break this past year. Sales from dance books compiled by one of our fellow teachers, Jane Lataille (more about Jane below), have helped to provide some extra funding for room rental for the Taos class.

The ever-clever Jane Lataille heads up our Santa Fe Adult Class. Known as “The City Different”, Santa Fe definitely is. Jane’s class can vary in size quite dramatically. Sometimes there are only three dancers, but they are still quite keen to dance! Some weeks the class size “super-novas up to six”. Visiting dancers help to actually swell the class up to a full-size set or even more.

This has helped Jane flex not only her class-planning muscles, but also her devising muscles. Many of you are already aware of and using the two great books Jane compiled, called “Always Enough to Dance” and “Still Enough to Dance”. (I have heard at least one teacher say that he has taught Workshops based on these books!)

For those of you who are NOT familiar with these books, they are full of innovative dances written for small numbers of DANCERS (i.e., fewer than 8). Available thru TAC, of course. I commend the books to you – every teacher ought to be armed with ‘em!

Combining forces and/or separately, our dance groups have put on various demonstrations at a number of events and venues across the state including Burns Night Dinners, Highland Games, community fairs, nursing homes and senior centers.

We have begun a tradition of hosting an annual Beginners’ Workshop and Dance, suggested by our secretary Stefany Sanders. This year marks only our second anniversary of the function, but we all felt that it has been a wonderful addition to the slate of our regular events. You’ll notice that we refer to it as a “Dance”, not a “Ball”; that is due to the fact that New Mexico tends to be quite casual in general, and in order to help our beginner dancers feel less daunted by the effort to put together the regalia perceived necessary to attend a “Ball”, we are trying to attract and absorb our new dancers into the culture “step-by-step” so to speak.

This year our Branch published our own book of dances called the “New Mexico Branch Book of Dances for Members”. It was given as an incentive gift for those who decided to join as RSCDS members. The book contains 5 dances devised by members of the branch.

This Summer, for the first time that I know of, NONE of our groups will meet over the months of July or August. We will all plan to resume regular classes on the week following Labor Day. (that is, roughly, the 2nd week of September, 2008).

One thing I wish to report which is actually in our future, not our past, is our upcoming Workshop & Ball which is scheduled to take place the weekend of September 18-20 of 2009 in Santa Fe. In contrast to what I said earlier about New Mexico being rather casual, I believe this event will be both enchanting and elegant – an event worthy of our upcoming 25th Anniversary. The guest teachers will be Elinor Vandegrift and Bill Zobel, and musicians Muriel Johnstone and Keith Smith will provide the music. You won’t want to miss this one!

Our BIGGEST highlight this year, of course, is that we will get to introduce one of our finest young dancers to the TAC community – **Miss Katelynn Bond – as this year’s Bob Blackie Award Winner!!!** Katelynn has been dancing in our Teen Class for the last couple of years, and is a wonderful contributor to our group in many ways.

Katelynn is not only a beautiful dancer , but she is also an eager student of the dance, and an encourager to other dancers. She also helped raise funds for and sewed lovely new white dresses for our Teen demonstration team this year.

Everyone who meets Katelynn enjoys her happy spirit and wonderful smile. We are so very proud of her. Having the opportunity to learn from the best SCD teachers from around the world in such a supportive, absorbing and cheerful atmosphere as is provided at TAC Summer School will be a tremendous blessing for Katelynn. We just couldn't be happier or more deeply grateful for this generous award!

Delaware Valley

Dancing in the Delaware Valley Branch continues enthusiastically but with disappointing numbers. Our Teachers' Committee regularly discusses this as does our Executive and we find it hard to attract new dancer and/or keep them. As an example, I taught a summer beginner's class in '07 that was well attended (two sets) and everyone said it was fun, they liked the dancing and that everyone was friendly and welcoming. Branch regulars attended and supported the class. Yet when the regular dancing season resumed in September, we retained only four of the new dancers. Of those who didn't return, I called some and got vague answers about people's lives being too busy for a regular class commitment. Many of our regular classes suffer similar small numbers and difficulty both attracting and retaining new dancers. An eager young woman has taken on the publicity challenge of this year and we are cautiously hopeful.

The Branch teachers presented a variety of class series: Basic, Experienced, Advanced, Demonstration and Social. All were well received by those who attended. The Branch also supports some non-Branch classes at two area colleges (where PE credit is given for Scottish country dancing) and at a retirement community, Crosslands.

In the winter, we offered a workshop on RSCDS leaflet dances and another on the dances from the last two years RSCDS publications. Both were well attended. The teachers also led social dancing on a regular basis at three different venues (reflecting our broad geographic spread). A decline in attendance over the years at our Spring Ball has led to the decision to drop the Spring Ball but keep the Delaware (fall) and Hogmanay balls which have been well attended.

A significant number of our teachers are in demand at branches/events outside the Delaware Valley Branch. They lead workshops, are invited guest teachers at weekends, summer schools and camps and spread their talents in a variety of locations

The Branch has benefited from lots of excellent local live music that now is heard at many social dances, some classes and at workshops. The quality of our musicians improves because of their diligence, practice and regular workshop attendance.

The Branch suffered a major loss in the death of Robert Hunn. Robert was a founding member, founding teacher, early tutor and stern stalwart of RSCDS dances, styling and procedures. Robert had moved to Montana in his later years but kept up with Branch doings. He had started a SCD class in his retirement home. He would have been 90 in September.

Northern Gulf Coast

The group in Jackson, Mississippi is having a workshop on August 23, 2008. Stella Fogg will be teaching. The following Saturday, Stella will also teach in New Orleans.

The New Orleans group is currently taking its summer break. The room we have been using at St. Francis Xavier will be unavailable when we start class again but we hope to be moved to another room at this same site.

In addition to classes in New Orleans there is also a class in Baton Rouge. It is led by Lyndon Williams. Several dancers (namely the Mungall family) belong to both groups.

The New Orleans group belongs to the Carolinas Branch of the RSCDS. We usually have enough dancers for a set and often have 12 or so attend class. The class tends to be mainly social in nature.

Illinois

Melissa Whitson and Barbara Cool (two Branch teachers) offered a dance program planning workshop late August last year that was attended by a couple of other teachers as well as others from the Branch interested in learning how to develop social dance programs. (We have some members wanting to plan social programs but not necessarily interested in a teacher's course). Along with presentation of material (including some articles from TACTalk) and discussion of various points in social program planning we also had a hands on exercise to plan a program for a specific audience given some dances the teachers had selected. We've seen the successful results of these workshops in our social programs this year.

Austin

Austin Scottish Country Society

We continue to deal with two recurring (and constant) problems—getting new dancers and raising money so as not to increase class fees too much.

Our most successful resource for getting new dancers for the past couple of years has been to have a tent at the local Celtic festival at which we have a drawing for a month of free lessons. We give three of four options of times the winners (who, incidentally are all who enter the contest) can claim their free lessons. Wish we had some kind of festival in the spring for a similar promotion.

Don't know whether other large cities have a similar problem, but we're discovering that by the time people have worked late, spent time on the road to get home and eaten supper, they are more reluctant to take another drive to get to dancing. Don't know how to overcome that problem. We have tried to get people interested in meeting for supper before dancing at a restaurant close to the dance studio. It is marginally successful, but all who come enjoy themselves.

We had been dancing on two nights per week, but both classes had become fairly thin so beginning in June we combined the two classes. Energy has been much higher and attendance has been greater than the sum of the two separate classes. We plan to continue this plan, adjusting to give all dancing levels the best class we can.

The non-RSCDS dance group in Austin, Scottish Country Dance Alliance, has run the bake sale at the local Celtic Festival for several years on Saturday. They have offered to let us run the sale on Sunday. If our revenue is similar to theirs, it will remove a lot of the burden for raising extra funds. We will be stretched thin, but we're hopeful some of the "social" members of our group will make themselves available to assist with the bake sale. As of now, it's BAKE—BAKE—BAKE!

For most of the spring our two teacher candidates, Kate Walker (Unit 5) and Marty Livingstone (Units 2,3) have been working toward their exams. Both do an excellent job with their teaching responsibilities. We (and they) look forward to their successful completion of the exams.

Torf does a great job of providing music for us both in class and for demos. Unfortunately we do not have live music for our demos, but Torf creates tunes for whatever we need. We really appreciate his efforts.

Scottish Country Dance Alliance

In its 7th year, SCDA has a core of 18 member dancers.

This is a group that has no certified teacher but all the dancers are of intermediate level and above, therefore, we don't take beginners. We dance for our own pleasure.

We have a board to run our affairs which includes a VP SCD and a VP Ceilidh. Some members are very much into spreading the fun of ceilidh dancing, others are vehemently against ceilidh dancing, but all members are willing to help with events promoting one or the other and all love Scottish Country Dance. We make some of our money from teaching ceilidh dancing, having discovered that people value things they have to pay for. We have been asked for years to teach a regular ceilidh dance class, and at present have a class of 12 for the month of July. We've been asked also to have regular public ceilidh nights, but that is a work in progress.

We organize and/or sponsor Scottish events in the community – a Burns Supper for one, which makes a healthy profit as well as being pretty authentic and offers ceilidh dancing to the audience. Tartan Day at the State Capitol is also sponsored and organized by us.

For the Celtic Association we also organize and run a 'celtic' bake sale at their festival in November, striving each year to bake enough to meet demand, but never succeeding! This is our main fundraiser of the year.

We have taken 'ceilidhs' to underprivileged children – ie the food, the music, the dances, the decorations, the piper and a gift, like a tartan sash, for each child. We plan to expand this "portable ceilidh" to all the children's homes in Austin. It's a good use of our funds.

Funds also go to supporting other Scottish performers and musicians in the area, and of course, we purchase from Scotland and from TAC many CD's specifically for Scottish Country Dance, in support of the Society and the musicians who play for SCD.

London

Membership in the London branch is about one hundred, including non active dancers. We have three classes at one location on Wednesday evenings from September to May, basic, intermediate and experienced. We also have a social class most Fridays throughout the season except on Monthly dance nights.

We have several monthly dances, a Christmas dance, Hogmany dance on New Years eve, a Winterfest in January, a workshop in February, a Spring Ball in May. This makes a very busy programme of events for the committee to organize.

There are four full certificate teachers in the branch and two with prelim. The two most recently qualified full certificate teachers do not teach classes, they are only needed occasionally as substitutes and this issue is one I have put forward for discussion. How do branches make the best use of their teachers?

As one of the newer teachers myself I have organized a Low impact class locally which has been very popular but it is entirely independent of the branch. I have also organized an informal summer programme of "Dancing on the Grass" where all members are invited to attend evening dance sessions at the homes of volunteers to dance on their lawns. These evenings were well attended last year and this year we have got off to a good start.

Like most other clubs we have found it very difficult to recruit new members and our numbers are declining.

Another issue that has been brought up is where do we find premises with good floors? We had an informal sub committee spend a great deal of time and effort this past year looking for alternative accommodation for events and classes but the net result was no new premises were acceptable to the Branch for various reasons. In a city the size of London this is rather disappointing. We continue to struggle on with hard cement and tile floors and our members have lots of problems with feet, ankles, knees and so on.

Southern Ohio / Indiana

Cincinnati Branch RSCDS

The CINCINNATI BRANCH RSCDS celebrates its twenty-fifth year as a branch in 2008 and the fiftieth year of the founding of the Cincinnati group in 2009. Needless to say, a "Silver and Gold" celebration is in the planning stages for 2009. The branch has seen a great deal of growth and change over the past twenty-five years and the group that began in 1959 with Nora Kindness in the lead has sprouted into a branch sponsoring classes in Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Indianapolis. It is fitting that in this time of celebration the branch has expanded its officers to represent all of the groups across Ohio and is in conversation with several groups around the state in efforts to unify our dancing, teaching, and organizational abilities.

The CINCINNATI CLASS is taught by lead-teacher Tracey Applebee. She is supported by Susan McLennan. Sadly, Robert League has had to step down from his teaching responsibilities due to family health problems. The group has hosted several successful "Bring a Friend" nights which have helped to grow their weekly attendance and to bring in new dancers. They continue to sponsor a highly polished demo team under the leadership of Andy May and Tracey Applebee.

The COLUMBUS CLASS (Heather 'N' Thistle) is taught by lead-teacher Laura Russell with support from Sandra Utrata. Columbus hosted their annual Winter Workshop in February 2008, an informal day of classes divided into three levels and followed by a potluck. The group performed several demos around the region and were particularly pleased to "turn out" for veteran dancer Bob Clay's assisted living facility. The group is currently planning a Scottish tea dance in conjunction with the bi-annual Columbus Country Dance Weekend which links the ECD, SCD, and Contra community together in a weekend of dancing.

The DAYTON CLASS (Flying Ghilles) has been very active! Their three teachers — Lee Fuell, Patty Lindsay, and Joyce Lindsey — are all working toward their Unit 5 exams with support from their branch mentor. Blessed with a wonderful dance pavilion in their city, the group has hosted several dances throughout the season. Besides their celebratory “Golden Buckeye Ball” last October, they also organized their first weekend workshop and ball with the Music Makars this May. Well done Dayton!

An INDIANAPOLIS CLASS has been organized by members Ken Morgan and Laura Chatain who called upon their branch for support. Teachers have traveled over to give help as possible and much answering of questions and advice has been given throughout the season. The group has attracted a good number of new dancers and has brought many new faces to branch dances and workshops.

The branch continues to offer an ADVANCED SOCIAL CLASS led by Tracey Applebee and Laura Russell. The class is held in each of the three main cities and offers an opportunity for the more advanced dancers in the region to gather in an afternoon of more challenging dancing.

The branch was particularly pleased to note that Tracey Applebee was invited to teach at the 2007 Hamilton Weekend. This strengthened the strong ties between the two branches with a small return for all that the Hamilton teachers gave to Cincinnati in its early years by sending John Middleton and June Shore on a regular basis to teach weekend courses.

Other Groups Around the Region

There are four dance groups in Cleveland (Ohio) which function independently of one-another. David Klarer has resumed his infectious teaching and has brought along several new dancers via his Huron group and has encouraged their attendance at several regional workshops this spring. Kay Powers has been giving greatly of her organizational skills and has been in talks with all of the local leaders to bring some unity to the city and the region. Several of the groups gathered together under the leadership of Sheila MacMorran to do demonstrations at the Ohio Games this June. The Cleveland Heights group, led by Diane Klann, recently published a booklet of dances which includes her dance “Feisty Women.”

The Monday Night dancers, a small social group lead by Nancy Derenburger, Donna Boyce, and Sandra Utrata meet regularly in Worthington (a suburb of Columbus) to alternate between evenings of Welsh Country, Scottish Country, and Ceilidh dancing.

The Bloomington, Indiana, group continues to dance and offer demonstrations in their area. They travel over to Ohio workshops as weather permits. Leaders are Bob and Chris Cunningham.

Sadly, Don Corson’s group in Madison, Indiana, has largely disbanded. Despite a warm social space at a local Winery, the group could not muster enough dancers to continue meeting regularly. Likewise, the Dayton group lead by Doreen Bernstein has also disbanded.

Edmonton and Northern Alberta

The Edmonton area has five actively teaching fully certified teachers and four others who are teachers in training or have preliminary qualifications. There are two main groups (Edmonton Caledonian and Edmonton Scottish Society) and a few other small groups/classes in Edmonton and environs.

The RSCDS Edmonton Caledonian Branch is the main “teaching” club with three adult class levels (beginner, intermediate and experienced) and two levels of children’s classes (21 dancers last year). The Branch holds a fall beginners’ workshop (with guest teacher) and a February major workshop and ball with guest teachers and live music. Dancers come from across Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and NWT for this workshop. The Branch also has a demo team that performs regularly throughout Edmonton, with special focus on recruitment at the Ft. Edmonton Park Highland Games. The children’s group often performs with the adults at these demos.

The Scottish Society Group has two levels of dancers – a small beginner group and a social/experienced group with step and formation practice offered. The Society hosts a May Weekend (Friday social, Saturday Dinner and dance and Sunday Brunch and dancing). Live music for the dancing makes this an enjoyable and memorable weekend. The Weekend is well attended by dancers from all Edmonton groups and from Calgary. The Society has its own building – an excellent location for dancing.

The Branch works a casino every two years which provides funds to support Branch members’ attendance at workshops and provides support for the teachers to attend workshops. Our teacher numbers are insufficient to host teachers’ workshops so we rely on attending those hosted by other areas.

The four computers purchased by the branch with casino funds (onto which all our music is downloaded) ensure that all classes have access to all the club's dance tunes, and we have a highly portable system for demos and classes.

Last year Branch classes danced in a temporary location while our usual location was undergoing major renovation. We did lose members because of this. We expect to be back in our "usual" location starting in September and have a big recruitment effort underway to attract new members. We hope to start a "low impact" class this fall to appeal to members whose ages or physical limitations make regular classes difficult. We also hope to host a workshop specifically for the demonstration team members in late fall or early in 2009.

Southern Alberta

Scottish Dancing in Southern Alberta is alive and well and we are coming out of a great year. In Lethbridge we managed to attract a few new members who have become quite involved and active. We held a very successful one-day Beginners' Workshop in February which gave our newer dancers a chance to experience a workshop situation and dance with a live musician. We have also been able to start an advanced class which meets once a month and gives our more experienced dancers an evening to work on dem dances and more intricate figures. As always attracting and maintaining our numbers is one of our biggest challenges but currently we have a group of teenagers who have been attending the class and this has certainly changed the look of our group. The younger dancers add a level of enthusiasm which has made the group look more appealing to newcomers. Medicine Hat has also had an exciting year with a successful workshop weekend in the Fall and the start of a new Ceilidh Dance class which is attracting some younger couples. They held several fun social dances based on different themes which have also included the Ceilidh dances for the newer dancers and this seems to have helped to attract them to the main club. One of their dancers, Brenda Kean, completed her unit 4 teaching exam and she will be taking her unit 5 (full certificate) at TAC Summer School this year.

Vancouver and District

There are approximately 630 active dancers in Vancouver and District.

Our area is very fortunate to have some very well known and revered teachers: Ruth Jappy, Mary Murray, Simon Scott and Rebecca Blackhall-Peters who all teach locally as well as at workshops Internationally. Maureen Hood, has taught children's classes for many years, the children have demonstrated at the International Festival for Children, local Highland Games and the Pacific National Exhibition. Rosemary Coupe is Editor of the Vancouver Branch 'White Cockade' newsletter, where she also shares with us her wealth of historic knowledge of the dance. Fran Caruth is Teacher co-ordinator for the Branch and along with Mary Murray and Rosemary Coupe organizes Teacher Training in Vancouver and district. Maureen Lyon's demonstration team "The Tam O'Shanters" perform locally as well as internationally, this year the team performed at the Hawaiian Highland Festival and Games. Duncan MacKenzie our 'Ceilidh Master' runs a Ceilidh once a month targeting the youth of Vancouver. Hellen Stephen has for many years run the Seniors/Social class for the more experienced dancer and Maureen Hood teaches a Senior class at the beginner level.

We have 19 active clubs locally served by 22 teachers.

Class Levels being offered:

Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Seniors, General, Challenge (5 week sessions), Children's (Ages 3 to 15), Step Dancing, Ceilidh Dancing, Demonstration Team.

From September until May this year we had 36 events, mainly Club level dances. We also had several major events:

Gleneagles Ball, with music by the Vancouver Fiddle Orchestra.

Delta Spring Fling, music by Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent.

Love to Dance Workshop, with teachers: Barbara Johnston (Edmonton Alberta), Simon Scott (Vancouver) and Hazel MacDonald (Nanaimo) Music for the Party: Fiddlers Calum MacKinnon and Deby Benton Grosjean and pianist Liz Donaldson.

Pearl Holmberg Workshop for Teachers and Musicians:

With Leslie Martin (teacher and examiner from Aberdeen), Maureen Rutherford (Music director for the RSCDS): Piano & fiddle, Neil Copland (Leader of the Neil Copland Scottish Dance Band): Accordion.

Youth Weekend West Workshop: Teachers: Rebecca Blackhall-Peters (Langley), Irene Townshend (Edmonton), Bill Zobel (Comox)

Thistle Ball, with Neil Copland Scottish Dance Band.

NB. The Youth Weekend West was run in conjunction with the Thistle Ball to give the young people the opportunity to dance at a formal ball after the workshop.

White Rock Tea Dance with John Carmichael from Glasgow.

A couple of informal meetings with Vancouver TAC members took place in the past year. Some of the topics discussed: How to attract new teachers in the Vancouver area; The examination process; Core dances; RSCDS Fee increase; Teacher enumerations.

Denise Cunningham and her committee who organized the 2007 AGM in Vancouver so successfully have volunteered to organize the 2009 AGM.

The halls and caterers are booked and we all look forward to welcoming you to Vancouver once again.

New York Metropolitan Area

The area may be defined, very roughly, as within 50 miles of mid-town Manhattan. This area has two branches: New York and New Jersey, but they share teachers and dancers and collaborate closely on major events (see below.) New York has five classes or associated groups, and New Jersey has three. Most groups have a distinct (but overlapping) clientele and catchment area, and manage their own budgets. Altogether, there are about 22 RSCDS-trained teachers in the area, of whom 16 are active. There are five more teachers who do not have an RSCDS certificate. (Note: I've included New Jersey in these figures, although the NJ Branch does have its own Area Rep.) Several groups operate a rotation system among a cadre of teachers. Others have just one or two dedicated teachers. Each group has a social dance three or four times a year. Three of the groups organize an annual ball, and the groups work together on the major events - see below:

Major events in 2007-08:

November 2007: Annual Ball weekend, with Hanneke Cassel (fiddle) and Dave Wiesler (piano).

April 2008: Biennial Teachers' Workshop, with Marjorie Mclaughlin (teacher) and Chip Prince (piano).

May 2008: Annual 'Pawling' Weekend Workshop, with Bill Zobel, Muriel Johnstone and Jean Martin (teachers), Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent, and Jim Stevenson-Matthews (piano).

Other points of note:

Next year (2009) will be the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the New York Branch. We have tentative plans to bring a band from the UK for our November ball weekend.

Nova Scotia

Although there have been many dancers in Nova Scotia in the past, we are finding that our class sizes are dwindling. The obvious reason for this is attrition and no new younger people coming into the SCD world.

There are eight dance groups in the province. Each class consists of 1-4 sets. The Lunenburg group has had two teachers for several years, but now one teacher will handle the bulk of the classes, while the other teacher will fill in. The other groups all have one teacher. We try to substitute for each other when necessary, if time allows and travel distance is reasonable

The South Shore Scottish Country Dance group out of Lunenburg meets every Monday night. The group has been continuous for 25 years. They hold a social dance every month during the dancing season (October – April). The groups hosts a workshop in October, alternating years. This years' workshop is October 25. Teachers: Jody and Craig Williams. Come to beautiful Lunenburg and partake in this workshop. Our friendly dancers will host you in style!

The Seaforth group meets on Wednesday nights and has two socials a year in the most beautiful setting with an ocean view. The Halifax Bon Accord group transforms two regular Thursday night classes into special socials. The Annapolis Valley group hosts a Burns' Night and a Spring BBQ, plus holds "Advanced" sessions several times during the year.

The St.Peter's group in Cape Breton hosts a Burns' Night.

The Thistle Dancers do demonstrations and various functions including weddings throughout the year.

The Nova Scotia Branch hosts a workshop in February - for Musicians and Dancers - with a social in the evening. They also put on a delightful Spring Tea Dance.

Mark your calendars now for the International SCD School in July 2010. Great musicians and teachers. Watch for announcements.

Niagara Region / Northwest Pennsylvania

We try to meet once a year as a group. Last September we discussed uncommon formations, how they were performed and how to teach them.

Teachers:

Buffalo: Three (3) active, Two (2) Inactive, One (1) retired

Rochester: Two (2) active

St. Catherines: Three (3) active, Two (2) Inactive, Four (4) retired, and One (1) teacher not affiliated with branch who has her own social group

Classes:

Buffalo: Three (3) - Beginners, Intermediate-Advanced, Demo - shared

Rochester: One (1) - Social

St. Catherine's: Two (2) - Beginners, Intermediate-Advanced

Monthly Dances:

Buffalo: Six (6) - Burns Night is open to the public

Rochester: Two (2) - Open

St. Catherine's: Four (4) - Two (2) Open

Ottawa Area

There are about 300 dancers in the Ottawa area and places to dance most days of the week. There are two main Scottish country dance groups – The Ottawa Branch of the RSCDS and the Ardbrae Dancers of Ottawa. In both groups, dancers pay only one dancing fee but are encouraged to dance in more than one class. A number of dancers belong to both groups.

Although the Ottawa Valley is awash in fiddlers and other musicians who play Celtic music, we have not been very successful in getting any to play for Scottish country dancing. They say we are too demanding in our requirements for regular tempo, chords and style of playing. Almost all dancing in our area is done to recorded music.

Ottawa Branch, RSCDS

The Ottawa Branch has a membership of about 225 and runs 8 regular classes at advanced, intermediate, basic and beginner levels and one combined class in a satellite town south of the city, all on a weekly basis. In addition, there are two small groups that do demonstrations at various social gatherings and retirement residences. Our membership is aging, just as it is everywhere else, and we are having the usual difficulties competing with all the other leisure pastimes for recruits but most years we seem to attract two or three sets of new dancers which tend to offset attrition. We cater to our older members who may not wish to drive at night by offering one of our social classes in the afternoon.

We have teachers sharing two of the classes. In both cases there are two teachers who team-teach. This arrangement works well most of the time.

The Branch holds an annual Ball in April with music supplied by Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent. This year we held a weekend workshop in conjunction with the Ball. The teachers were Mary Murray, Jean Noble and Ian Souter.

The Ardbrae Dancers of Ottawa

The Ardbrae Dancers, an affiliate of the RSCDS, have a membership of about 75 and run three weekly classes. On one night we have a beginners' class and an intermediate class in two separate gyms of the same building. After about 1 ¾ hours, there is a 15 minute break, after which, the classes are combined for another half hour of dancing. Beginners respond very well to learning in a congregated class for most of the evening and then having a chance to dance with more experienced dancers. There is an advanced social class on another night.