



THE BLETHERS



Ingrid Kendall, Chair

Laurie Walter, Editor

New look for publication: If you think the current issue of The Blethers looks different, congratulations on your perspicacity! I have started to produce it at home. Hope you like it!

New Year's Ball: The RSCDS, Chicago Branch, 16th Annual New Year's Ball will be held on January 6, 1996, at Killarney Castle, 8055 W. 103rd St. (corner of Roberts Rd.), Palos Heights. The cash bar will open at 5:30, to be followed by dinner at 6:00 and dancing at 7:30. Call Julie Douglas (708-799-7925) or Ingrid Kendall (708-957-4494) for reservations in the unlikely event that you haven't received a flyer. There will be a sweets table after the Ball so Chicagoland dancers are asked to bring a goodie, please.

On January 7, the Great Lakes Fiddle Club will host a Potluck Brunch (11:00-12:30) at the Scottish Home in North Riverside, followed by a Musicians' Workshop (12:30-5:00). Call Ruth at (708) 492-1839 for information about Sunday. There will also be an Ensemble Workshop on Saturday; call Ree at (312) 528-7824 for information on that one. And call Laurie at (708) 799-4011 for hospitality. Hope to see you at one or more of these fun, kick-the-early-Winter-blahs, events!

Additional chances to hear Elke and Liz: Our fine Ball/Musicians' Workshop musicians are playing other gigs while they are in the area. These include a concert at the Scottish Home on January 5, 8:00, \$4 for Great Lakes Fiddle Club members, \$8 non-members, and a Contradance at the Abbey Pub, Grace and Elston, 8:00-11:00 PM on January 8. For more information on any of these events, call Ree Grisham at (312) 528-7824, e-mail ReeG@aol.com, or Greg Breiland at (708) 803-5416, e-mail CPQE02@email.mot.com (that's a zero in the address).

Start of classes: Regular classes at St. Josaphat will begin on January 14; ScotReel on January 25. Dance your way to Spring!

1996 June Workshop: The RSCDS, Chicago Branch, June Workshop will be held on June 7-9, 1996 (not 1995 as indicated in the flyer; note that this is one week later than the usual date), at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. The teachers will be Jim Rae (Lockerbie, Scotland), Fiona Miller (Leth-bridge, Alberta), and Charles Inglis (Ottawa, Ontario) and music will once again be provided by Tulloch-gorum. For additional information, please contact Melissa Whitson, Registrar, 244 Powell St., Clarendon Hills, IL 60514, (708) 655-4154, or Noel Chavez, 111 S. Scoville #1, Oak Park, IL 60302-2934, (708) 848-9218, Noel.Chavez@uicvm.cc.uic.edu.

Friday Socials: Our Friday socials are held from 7:30-9:30 on the following evenings: January 19, February 23, March 29, April 26, and May 17, at Hamlin Park, corner of Barry and Damen Aves. in Chicago. These get-togethers are informal, dances are talked through, spectators are welcome, there is nearby street parking, and admission is free.

Snow policy: With the arrival of Winter, it's a good time to remind dancers old and new of the Branch's policy on cancellations due to weather, applying both to Sunday night classes and to Friday night socials: the teachers will make a decision on the afternoon of the day in question and will relay it to the "hotline." So call Ree at (312) 528-7824 for Fridays and either Ree or Noel (708-848-9218) for Sundays.

New Committee of Management member: Bryan Luce has been appointed Member-at-Large of the Committee of Management to serve the remainder of Kent Smith's term. Let's all join in thanking Bryan for agreeing to serve!

English Country Dancing: Upcoming dates for English Country Dancing at St. Mark's Church, Evanston, IL, are January 24, February 28, March 27, April 24, May 22, and June 26. Call Tom at (708) 433-8704 for more information.

Rampant Lion Celtic Traders: Our friends Jack and Gayle Baker have been running a fine Celtic trading company (they have good taste in CD's!) for some years now and I just received their Fall, 1995, newsletter. Write to them at 225 Indiana St., Elmhurst, IL 60126, call at (708) 832-6608, or FAX at (708) 833-3701. Otherwise, drop by and see them at the Scottish Fair, Highland Games, etc.

British Aisles: Also selling lots of fun stuff from--you guessed it!--the British Isles is British Aisles Co., 124 Centre, Park Forest, IL 60466, (708) 481-8855. The store is tiny but well-filled with British imports of all kinds.

Why Scottish Dance? I've been Scottish Country Dancing for a number of years now. I keep going back and have been sacrificing Sunday evening church services so that I can attend RSCDS every week. I also occasionally attend classes in Scottish Country Dancing at Fermilab, and I have been attending many balls and Scottish dance parties. Why do I spend over 90 hours a year Scottish Country Dancing?

For one thing, Scottish dancing is very social. Good teamwork is essential for the success of a set doing a dance. I may know the dance 100%, but if I don't help people not knowing the dance as well, the set may not get it and I will fail in this particular dance.

The touching and the eye contact in Scottish Country Dancing is very encouraging to me. Scottish dancing can help form relationships that are very special. Psychologists tell us that if a small child is neglected by not being touched, he or she will have problems later in life with social development. What's true for small children is also true for adults. Not only does touching build good relationships with other Scottish dancers, but the encouragement that touching provides helps me form good relationships with people outside of Scottish Country Dancing as well. Eye contact is nonverbal communication that says when done with a smile, "I care about you. You are a valuable person to be around." Personally, my favorite touch in Scottish Country Dancing is being chased by my partner through a figure, then turning around and turning my partner that's right behind me and has been there all the time, though I didn't always see it. The figure done more often that's my favorite is any Strathspey Poussette.

Scottish dancing is a form of celebration. We are, in fact, commanded to dance in Psalms 150, "Praise the Lord with the timbrel and dance." Celebration is good since it fosters a positive attitude towards life. It also helps us to live in the present. Worry about either the past or the future is very difficult while Scottish Country Dancing.

Scottish Country Dance celebration is like music, which I like also. Both, to be effective, involve the use of the right combination of light and shade. What I mean by this is that there are times we hold back (shade) and prepare for what's to come (light). Most people sing refrains in songs more robustly than they sing the verses. The same is true for Scottish Country Dancing. Some parts of the dance we hold back and other parts we dance with all the gusto we can come up with.

Scottish Country Dancing reminds me of a painting I saw once from another dancer. People are holding hands in several small circles in the midst of bleak surroundings. The message the picture por-trays is the same reason why I dance. Whatever we face in life, be it bad or good, happy or sad, encour-aging or depressing, sunshine or rain, we can always smile and DANCE! DANCE! DANCE! (Paul King)