

# RSCDS, Chicago Branch

## The Blethers

Carlyn Bromann, Chair

December 2005

Sue McKinnell, Editor

<http://rscds-chicago.org>

### Greetings from the Committee of Management:

The Committee of Management wishes everyone a spectacular set of holidays! Thoughts to contemplate over your plates of good holiday fare:

Dancing at Fermi is livelier than ever, thanks in part to Doug's newly acquired cache of music. Come out to the Barn any Tuesday, including through the holidays, for some fine dancing and socializing.

The downtown class offers both regular and special classes on Sundays. It is fun to have an evening of dancing devoted to a special theme. The latest special class illustrated the fun and challenge of doing dances with more than one reel. If you are a person who enjoys the patterns in dances, you might be interested in these 2 upcoming special classes: January 20 -Memory Mind Games, and February - Quadrilles.

Finally, one of the latest trends among dance aficionados is to use computer animation to show dance formations and patterns. If you are interested in seeing what an animated Scottish Country dance looks like, you can check out <http://members.shaw.ca/dancimation/scd.html>.

- Carlyn Bromann

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**Loch Mich Holiday Party:** Everyone is invited for an evening of pre-holiday dancing and dining at the annual Loch Mich Holiday Party, Sunday, December 18, 6 - 8:30. The dancing will include a mix of old favorites, lesser known dances and items off of the Ball program. A post-dancing potluck/supper will be held, so if you have a dish to share, please bring it along.

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**New Year's Ball:** We're looking forward to many of you joining us on January 14th for the New Year's Ball. This year's Ball will be back at the Ukrainian Center (so you can look forward to the borscht!). The evening will begin with a social hour from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner, and then dancing to

the wonderful music of the Music Makars. And the band will include the Ozorak's younger generation, their son Nicholas, on bass, as well as the three we know and love so well, Etienne, Elizabeth and Fred.

At the first interval we can indulge in our classic sweets (and snacks) table, and we are asking local dancers to bring goodies for that. Robin Gaston is coordinating those contributions, as well as serving as registrar for the ball. Please get your reservations to her before the New Year begins! (You can reach her at 847-475-4589 with last minute questions or contact Mady Newfield at [folkdance@fnal.gov](mailto:folkdance@fnal.gov) or 630-584-0825 ).

Also, as you're doing your holiday shopping or cleaning, please think ahead to our Raffle. We'll hold a raffle of items you've donated during the Ball, with all proceeds going towards the cost of the musicians for our Weekend Workshop (which will be June 9-11 at Beloit College, with the music of Laura Risk and Nicholas Williams and teaching by Ron Wallace). Raffle tickets will be \$1 each or 6 for \$5 and will be sold that evening, with the drawing held during the second interval. We'd be glad to hear in advance what items you might bring, and if you'd like to drop items off in advance, please let us know. It's also fine to bring raffle items the evening of the Ball. Please contact Carlyn ([carlyn@core.com](mailto:carlyn@core.com), 630-469-6029) with your raffle questions or offers.

After substantial consideration and surveying, the Ball committee decided not to hold a Brunch dance this year. The musicians could not stay to play for it, and while there was some interest among our dancers, we couldn't find a hall that was both affordable and centrally located enough to potentially attract enough of a crowd. Sincere apologies to anyone who is disappointed by this.

- Mady Newfield for the Ball Committee

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If you have lost your Ball application, you can pick one up at your local dance class or download it from the Branch website. Please make checks payable to "RSCDS - Chicago Branch."

**2005-2006 Committee of Management:** Carlyn Bromann, Honorary Chair; Noel Chávez, Honorary Secretary; Greg Canfield, Honorary Treasurer; Doug Jensen, Mady Newfield, and Mary Pankonen - Members at Large.

**From the Chicago Tribune:**

**Highland fling at home in Chicago**

Scottish dance group keeps traditions alive with steps from past -

By Jon Anderson

Tribune staff reporter

September 15, 2005

"It does have the stuff of history," said Melissa Whitson, standing on the sidelines as the group on the dance floor formed into two lines.

No, it wasn't a castle in the highlands of Scotland, come alive as the light-of-foot crowd gathered in a great room for an evening of elegance and courtesy and reels and rants and jigs. It was, in fact, the second-floor gymnasium in the parish hall of St. Josaphat Church, at 2311 N. Southport Ave.

For members of the Chicago branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Sunday night was the kickoff of their fall season.

In the domain they like to call Loch Mich, it was a time to rejoice in all things Scottish--and see how far they dare to go.

As a flier at the door warned, a person who starts with Scottish country dancing might soon find themselves "being fitted for a kilt," acquiring a pair of soft-soled shoes and developing "a new love for bagpipe bands."

Then--gulp--"you might just be willing to try haggis some Burns night."

Not in sight at the hall was any trace of haggis, an encased melange of steaming animal innards featured at dinners honoring the Scottish poet, Robert Burns.

But there was a table covered with books of old Scottish songs, printed descriptions of old Scottish dances and plenty of CDs with such tunes as "Blue Bonnets Over the Border," "The Rock and a Wee Pickle Tow," "Flying Scotsman" and "Lassie, Come and Dance Wi' Me."

Nor was there any shortage of smooth moves as the group formed a circle then, after courtly bows, moved through a series of careful formations.

"I am totally not Scottish, but I love the history, Mary Queen of Scots, the Highland Games, everything," observed another dancer, Mary Pankonen. She got into Scottish country dancing after seeing a demonstration at a summer games tournament. "I thought, 'What fun! I'm going to do it,'" she said.

The North Side group meets from 6 to 8.30 p.m. Sundays.

"Most folk dances don't have a lot of precision," Whitson suggested, pointing out that Scottish dancing--with its balletlike foot positions--"attracts a lot of people from math and sciences." The North Side group, for example, includes physicists, sound engineers, computer technicians and mathematicians.

Now, thanks to the far-flung country dance society, Scottish country dancers can practice their skills around the world.

Formed in Edinburgh in 1923 by Scots determined to keep traditions alive, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society now has 166 branches, 21,000 members and runs a certification program for teachers of Scottish dancing--to keep them in line. Or at least in step.

>From "Aberdeen to Adelaide, Cape Town to Chicago, there's a branch near you," the society notes on its Web site, [www.rscds.org](http://www.rscds.org). There are other advantages as well. In Glasgow, according to a recent news report, "country dancing is the newest weapon against childhood obesity."

Classes in schools there have proved hugely popular. An hour of vigorous country dancing has the potential to burn off up to 800 calories.

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**On the Branch website:** If you have not yet explored the Branch website, you might want to check it out (<http://rscds-chicago.org>). Things you can find there:

A list of classes in the Chicago area with contact information, dates and times, including the planned special classes at the Loch Mich class.

Information about upcoming events, such as the New Year's Ball with date, time, location, dance program, crib sheets, and registration form and the Weekend Workshop. Information about events is added as it becomes known.

A membership application form.

Scottish Country Dance links for the Chicago Area, local Midwest, and worldwide links.

Pictures from dance events.

Feel free to contact the webmaster (Sue McKinnell at [lvsacd@suedan.com](mailto:lvsacd@suedan.com)) to suggest other material for the site or to submit information or pictures.

- Sue McKinnell

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